



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



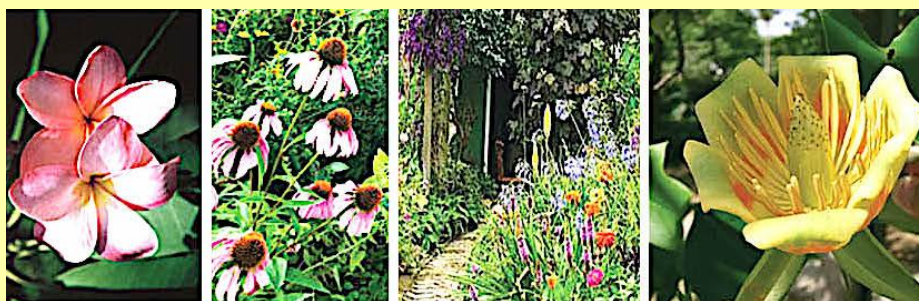
Jun-11-2021 | Issue 391

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Nature's Way Resources owner John Ferguson, "The Lazy Gardener" Brenda Beust Smith and Pablo Hernandez welcome your feedback and are so grateful to the many horticulturists who contribute their expertise

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NATIVE PLANTS — WIN-WIN IF YOU USE THEM SMARTLY

"Consult the genius of the place in all . . . "

— Alexander Pope (poet & gardening philosopher), 1688-1744.

by BRENDA BEUST SMITH

WHEN ALEXANDER POPE spoke of the "genius of the place," he referenced a centuries old belief that every location has its own distinctive atmosphere, not only its physical aspects but, more importantly, how it makes us feel inside (*to put a very simple face on a very complex subject*) His point: our landscaping should recognize and enhance intangibles as well as more concrete aspects.

CONTINUING LAST WEEK'S "before actual plant selection decisions" . . . at least think about replacing high maintenance and non-returning plants with native plants.

First: what you DON'T want to do is transplant natives in the wild to your garden without serious advance research. Many



wild varieties spread quadrillions of seed and/or roots for very short seasons of attractive foliage or beautiful blooms.

So where do you find landscape-friendly natives? Many can be found now in retail shops, including [Nature's Way Resources](#) (largest selection in this area, [Buchanan's Native Plants](#), [Joshua's Native Plants](#), [Maas Nursery](#), [Wabash Feed & Garden](#), [Enchanted Gardens](#), [The Arbor Gate](#), to name just a few. If your favorite isn't listed here, send it in and I'll share.

A steadily growing number of group-sponsored plant sales now introduce landscape-friendly natives appropriate for specific locales, especially our very active Native Plant Society of Texas chapters, including [Houston](#) and [Clear Lake](#). Other chapters: npsot.org/wp/resources/texas-ecoregion-map/

A new Native Plant Society chapter in our area, sponsored by Nature's Way Resources, is the NPSOT/Pines and Prairies Chapter based in Montgomery County and surrounding areas: npsot.org/wp/pinesandprairies/contact/. A good time to meet, greet & shop is SAT., JUNE 12: **PINES AND PRAIRIES CHAPTER PLANT AND YARD SALE**, 8:30-10:30am Nature's Way Resources, 101 Sherbrook Cir, Conroe 77385. [Current plant inventory](#)

Fortunately fantastic research is ongoing into specific varieties of favorite wildflowers that don't become invasive and/or look totally unacceptable when not blooming. Next week, Martha Richeson of NPSOT's Clear Lake Chapter has put together some great **"Plant This, Not That"** recommendations for gradually introducing natives into a typical suburban landscape.

First, best to listen to [Lauren Simpson](#) who, in our Spotlight Article below, is putting us in the right mindset on how to maintain a peaceful co-existence between increased native plantings and HOAs/POAs/neighbors who all too often, go into fits of apoplexy when natives are even mentioned.

Lauren has become a very effective mediator for above groups with her [St. Julian's Crossing Wildlife Habitat](#) proving natives need NOT affect neighbors' property values -- a very legitimate fear. First, however . . .

* * *

LOCAL PLANT SALES ARE starting to return to normal. Most of our speciality plant groups hold regular sales. For example, although plumerias are not native to Texas, they sure are gorgeous and love our heat:



- **SAT., JUNE 12 -- PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SHOW AND SALE**, 9am-3p, 5002 Nasa Parkway. Seabrook theplumeriasociety.org

But you will be able to find plenty of natives at:

- **SAT., JUNE 19 -- MERCER BOTANIC GARDENS FATHER'S DAY VIRTUAL PLANT SALE**, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

And, so your new plants will have the best start ever, join John Ferguson and the [Houston Urban Gardeners](#) Monday, June 14, for a virtual look at the best mulches for specific gardens. Sign on 10 minutes early to chat. OR... a limited number can attend in person at a Heights location. Reserve your spot on [Eventbrite here](#).

* * *

Brenda's LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER

column is based on her 40+ years as Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener

Email: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com



TEN TIPS FOR CREATING A HOME WILDSCAPE

by **LAUREN SIMPSON**

Creator of [St. Julian's Crossing Wildlife Habitat](#)

Back in 2015, my family started "wildscaping," which is simply landscaping with the primary purpose of supporting wildlife. Because I didn't know anything about wildscaping (or gardening, either!), I found mentors, read voraciously, and experimented in the gardens—learning as much from my mistakes as from my successes. As a result, our home gardens have welcomed a wide variety of wildlife, including 51 species of butterfly!

Here are 10 helpful things I've learned on my wildscaping journey:

- Use native plants. If I could give only one tip, it would be to incorporate plants that are native to your eco-region as much as possible. There are many reasons for this, but one of the most important is that insects often cannot consume plants that they have not co-evolved with because they cannot digest the chemicals in the leaf or pollen. Our gardens should sustain insects because insects provide billions of dollars annually in

pollination, pest control, and decomposition eco-services. They are also indispensable to the food web—including for baby birds, the majority of which feed only on insects and other arthropods. Moreover, if an aggressive native plant gets out of your garden, it's fine because it was always in this area. But if a non-native, invasive species that nothing here eats escapes, it can crowd out native plants, leaving less food for our native insects. Because insects are facing devastating challenges, it's our job to help them survive, including in our gardens. So always lean toward using native plants. And when you incorporate non-native plants, always first ensure that they aren't invasive.

- Don't use pesticides. Pesticides might kill those insects eating your plants, but they will also kill many other insects—including those that would keep pests in check naturally. In a healthy garden, predators and parasitoids—many of which are insects themselves—will take care of the pests in our gardens.
- Plant in clusters of species. The more you plant in clusters of individual plant species, the more intentional your garden will look. A good rule of thumb is to plant clusters of odd numbers of a single plant: three, five, seven. You can have multiple clusters of the same species in different parts of the garden. Clustering also serves a biological function. For example, some insects (especially bees) practice “flower constancy,” where they like to feed on the nectar and pollen of a single plant species before moving on to another. So if you give them a cluster of a single plant species, you make their life easier. The same goes for pollen and leaf specialist insects, who can digest the leaf or pollen of only those plants in a particular family, genus, or species. By clustering some of your plants in the garden, you might be helping them find the food sources they need more easily.



- Incorporate plants in a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes. Variety is the spice of life, including for insects! This takes several forms. First, you want to ensure that you have something blooming in the garden during all seasons, to feed critters throughout the year. So when you select plants, look for bloom time. Second, you want flowers of different colors because insects see colors differently. For example, bees have a hard time distinguishing red from green, but they can see yellow, white, and purple well. In contrast, hummingbirds and butterflies are particularly drawn to reds. So having an assortment of colors in your garden supports more insects. Third, you want a variety of flower shapes and sizes because insects have a wide range of mouthpart shapes and sizes, and their bodies are bigger or smaller, relative to each other. So the more shapes

and sizes of flowers you have, the wider variety of insects you will invite.

- Plant for the babies. When we think of pollinators, we often think of the adults and what they need to survive—for example, adult butterflies and nectar sources. But insects may eat very different things in their larval stages. So make sure to incorporate plants that feed the larvae, not just the adults. As an example, to support a robust butterfly population, you need not just nectar plants, but plants with leaves the caterpillars can eat (“host plants”).



- Aim for density. Density without overcrowding is a good thing, similar to what we see in our native coastal prairie. For example, dense plantings suppress the growth of weeds underneath. This means less weeding. Plants can also hold each other up better when placed closer together.
- Put plants with similar needs together. Make sure that you plant things that have similar needs for sun, water, and soil in the same area. For example, you don't want to put a plant that wants lots of water beside a plant that doesn't.
- Think about plant height and layering. Put tall “structural” plants in strategic areas, with medium and low plants around them, to make your garden look intentional. Doing this will also provide a variety of layers to shelter wildlife.
- Use borders. Border your garden beds distinctly. Doing this shows intentional design, which can help the community accept your wildscape.
- Embrace imperfection. Doing less in a wildlife-habitat garden can benefit wildlife. For example, we shouldn't cut back stems over winter. Some native bee species nest in pithy or hollow stems, so that if we cut back dead stems, we might be discarding bee larvae. We should also leave fallen leaves, or collect them and use them instead of mulch. Some wildlife overwinters under leaf cover, and other insects' pupae might be attached to fallen leaves. And we should also avoid mowing over early spring wildflowers because these may be the only food source available to insects coming out of diapause (like hibernation).

NOTE: Lauren can be contacted at [SJCWH website](#) and [FB community](#).

DO YOU WANT TO ROCK THE FOUNDATION OF LIFE?

OHBA

Join us for a special night with....

JEFF LOWENFELS, LORD OF THE ROOTS

Jeff is the author of the best-selling book trilogy on the science behind Organic gardening 'Teaming with Microbes, Teaming with Fungi, & Teaming with Nutrients'. From this event you will learn the latest in science & get a sneak peek of his new book in the Teaming series. Start your earthly journey with an extensive look into the captivating power of the soil food web.



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For any event questions please contact Daniel Millikin at daniel@ohbaonline.org



John's Corner



BOOK REVIEW:

**The Nature of Oaks – The Rich
Ecology of Our Most Essential Native
Trees** by Douglas Tallamy, 2021, Timber
Press, ISBN: 978-1-64326-044-0

I am a big fan of Dr. Tallamy and his

insight into the natural world that God has given us. However, this insight has cost me a lot of money.

After reading his first book ("Bringing Nature Home - How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants"), I was so inspired that my wife and I accelerated our plans to buy some land in the country for our retirement home. Over the last six years since then, I have planted over 2,000 trees and shrubs (142 species) as part of a habitat restoration on the property. It has been very rewarding to watch the land heal and wildlife return.

Next, I read his book ("Nature's Best Hope- A New Approach to Conservation That Starts In your Yard") a few years ago. This caused me to start replacing many imported plants with native plants in both my yard and at our nursery.

After the big freeze a couple months ago, I am even more interested in hardy native trees.

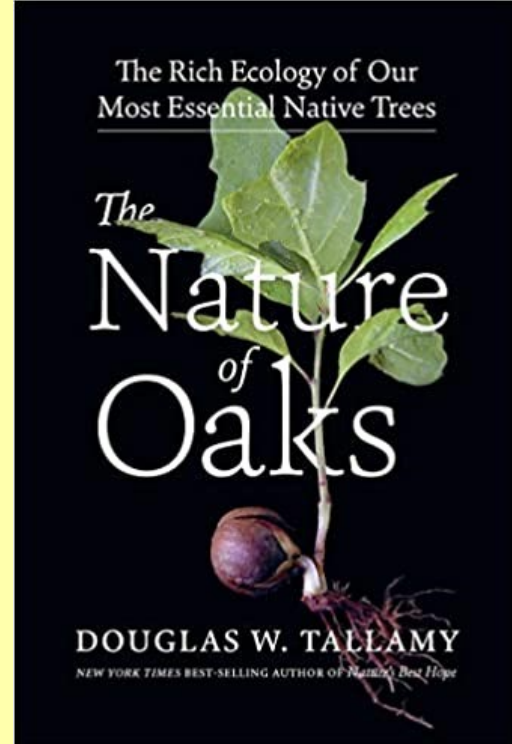
Now he has done it to me again! As soon as I heard about his new book above, I ordered it and it arrived last Friday afternoon. I was fascinated by his description of Oaks and what they do for us hence I finished it on Tuesday of this week (only 4 days). Now again he is going to cost me a lot of money. I learned that of the many oaks species I planted as singles for diversity, they are more effective when planted in groves of at least 3-5 trees each. Now I will have to purchase a few dozen more trees of each of the species previously planted, as I want the restoration to be as effective as possible.

From the Timber Press website:

"A timely and much needed call to plant, protect, and delight in these diverse, life-giving giants." —David George Haskell, author of *The Forest Unseen* and *The Songs of Trees*

With *Bringing Nature Home*, Doug Tallamy changed the conversation about gardening in America. His second book, the *New York Times* bestseller *Nature's Best Hope*, urged homeowners to take conservation into their own hands. Now, he is turning his advocacy to one of the most important species of the plant kingdom—the mighty oak tree.

Oaks sustain a complex and fascinating web of wildlife. *The Nature of Oaks* reveals what is going on in oak trees month by month, highlighting the seasonal cycles of life, death, and renewal. From woodpeckers who collect and store hundreds of acorns for sustenance to the beauty of jewel caterpillars, Tallamy illuminates and celebrates the wonders that occur right in our own backyards. He also shares practical advice about how to plant and care for an oak, along with information about the best oak species for your area. *The Nature of Oaks* will inspire you to treasure these trees and to act to nurture



and protect them.

A U-tube lecture by Dr. Tallamy of this subject can be found at:

www.youtube.com

Note: The new chapter of the Native Plant Society for Montgomery County and the Woodlands, will be having a "Meet and Greet" along with a plant swap at the Nature's Way Resource facility this Saturday morning (June 12) from 8:30-10:30.

* * *

Have you tried ... TULIP TREE

(Liriodendron tulipifera)

Tulip trees make magnificently shaped large (100') specimen shade trees, growing best in deep well-drained loam with thick dark topsoil. A Magnolia family member, tulip tree's flower resemblance to tulips accounts for this nickname for a tree that's also called violin or fiddle tree for its leaf shape, whitewood for its pale wood, or canoewood for its use by Native Americans in dugout canoes, proof that fast-growing does not always mean weak wood! Pale green or yellow flowers with a distinctive orange tepal band appear April-June and produce a reddish, distinctively strong honey favored by some bakers. Leaves turn rusty orange in fall color.



TULIP TREE is carried by Nature's Way Resources ([Map](#)).

Or contact our other sponsors below

or your neighborhood nurseryman for possible sources

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LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

All events in Houston unless otherwise specified.

See Farmers Markets at end of calendar

ADULT GARDEN PLANT EVENTS ONLY

ALWAYS CHECK TO MAKE SURE YOUR EVENT IS IN! HOWEVER ...

PLEASE READ BEFORE SUBMITTING EVENTS!

- ***Events NOT submitted in the EXACT format below may take 2 weeks or longer to be reformatted/retyped and added to calendar.***
- **FARMERS MARKETS** -- Normally we do not run non-gardening/plant events. During this pandemic, when most gardening events have been cancelled, we are happy to publish a running list of local Farmers Markets. See at end of calendar.

**NOTE: IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT MASKING
POLICIES AT EVENTS, CHECK WITH CONTACTS LISTED**

FRI., JUNE 11: LOUISIANA IRISES by **MONICA MARTENS**, Ed.D. (Zoom), 12 Noon-1:00. Pre-register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

FRI., JUNE 11: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4, 9am & 11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Ages 60+ or 12+ with transport needs. Register: 713-274-4160

SAT., JUNE 12: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SHOW AND SALE, 9am-3p, 5002 Nasa Parkway. Seabrook theplumeriasociety.org

MON., JUNE 14; MAGIC OF MULCHES by **JOHN FERGUSON** (virtual), 7pm., [Houston Urban Gardeners](#) event. Sign on 10 minutes early to chat.

TUES., JUNE 15; PLUMERIAS IN YOUR GARDEN by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 11am-noon, HCMG & Harris County Public Library System event. Free. Facebook Live: facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

THURS., JUNE 17: ART FROM THE GARDEN by **BRANDI KELLER** (virtual) 10am, Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. Register early: homegrown2021Q2.eventbrite.com/

SAT., JUNE 19: HOW TO KEEP INSECTS AWAY THIS SUMMER, 10-11am, Wabash Feed & Garden, 4537 North Shepherd, free, wabashfeed.com, register: <https://bit.ly/3bUWKlq>, 713-863-8322

FRI., JUNE 25: BEYOND BEES!, 9:30-10:30am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160

SAT., JUNE 26: ALL ABOUT INVASIVES, 9am-11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160

THURS., JULY 8: AMERICAN HANDS IN HYBRIDIZING EASY CARE ROSES by **PING LIM** (virtual), 7-9pm, Houston Rose Society/Houston event. Free. Meeting link: houstonrose.org/

MON., JULY 12: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING (virtual), 10-11:30am. Harris County Master Gardeners with Houston Community College event. Free. Register early: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops

THURS., JULY 15: GARDEN HUMMINGBIRD SAFETY (virtual) by **BRANDI KELLER**, 10am. Must register: <https://homegrown2021Q3.eventbrite.com/>

TUES., JULY 20: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING (virtual), 11am-noon, Free. Watch via Facebook Live at: facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS

- [URBAN HARVEST FARMERS MARKET](#), Saturdays, 8am-noon, in St. John's School parking lot, 2752 Buffalo Speedway.
- [FULSHEAR FARMERS MARKET](#) Saturdays, 9am-1pm, 9035 Bois d'Arc Lane @ FM 1093, Fulshear.
- [THE WOODLANDS FARMERS MARKET AT GROGAN'S MILL](#), Saturdays, 8am-noon, Grogan's Mill Shopping Center Parking Lot, 7 Switchbud Pl., The Woodlands
- [BEAUTY'S GARDEN](#). Acres Homes Farmers Market Saturday, 10am-2pm, 4333 W Little York Rd.

- [WESTCHASE DISTRICT FARMERS MARKET](#), Thursdays, opens 3pm, St. Cyril of Alexandria Catholic Church, 10503 Westheimer Road (at Rogerdale Road, one block west of Beltway 8)
- [MEMORIAL VILLAGE FARMERS MARKET](#), Saturdays, 9am-1pm, 10840 Beinhorn Rd.

Although normally we do not run out-of-garden events, during this pandemic period when most gardening events have been cancelled, we are happy to publish a running list of local Farmers Markets.
Send notices to lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com



For event submission rules, see top of calendar

If we inspire you to attend any of these,
please let them know you heard about it in . . .

THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!
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RESOURCES
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About Us

BRENDA BEUST SMITH

WE KNOW HER BEST AS THE LAZY GARDENER . . .

but Brenda Beust Smith is also:

- * a national award-winning writer & editor
- * a nationally-published writer & photographer
- * a national horticultural speaker
- * a former Houston Chronicle reporter

When the Chronicle discontinued Brenda's 45-year-old Lazy Gardener" print column -- started in the early '70s as a fun side-, it then ranked as the longest-running, continuously-published local newspaper column in the Greater Houston area.

Brenda's gradual sideways step from reporter into gardening writing -- first as a just-a-fun side Chronicle assignment in the early '70s -- led first to an 18-year series of when-to-do-what Lazy Gardener Calendars, then to her Lazy Gardener's Guide book which morphed into her Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD. which she now emails free upon request.

A Harris County Master Gardener, Brenda has served on the boards of many Greater Houston area horticulture organizations and has hosted local radio and TV shows, most notably a 10+-year Lazy Gardener specialty shows on HoustonPBS (Ch. 8) and her call-in "EcoGardening" show on KPFT-FM.

For over three decades, Brenda served as as Production Manager of the Garden Club of America's BULLETIN magazine. Although still an active broad-based freelance writer, Brenda's main focus now is THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER with John Ferguson and Pablo Hernandez of Nature's Way Resources.

A native of New Orleans and graduate of St. Agnes Academy and the University of Houston, Brenda lives in Humble, TX, and is married to the retired Aldine High School Coach Bill Smith. They have one son, Blake.

Regarding this newsletter, Brenda is the lead writer, originator of it and the daily inspiration for it. We so appreciate the way she has made gardening such a fun way to celebrate life together for such a long time.

JOHN FERGUSON

John is a native Houstonian and has over 27 years of business experience. He owns Nature's Way Resources, a composting company that specializes in high quality compost, mulch, and soil mixes. He holds a MS degree in Physics and Geology and is a licensed Soil Scientist in Texas.

John has won many awards in horticulture and environmental issues. He represents the composting industry on the Houston-Galveston Area Council for solid waste. His personal garden has been featured in several horticultural books and "Better Homes and Gardens" magazine. His business has been recognized in the Wall Street Journal for the quality and value of their products. He is a member of the Physics Honor Society and many other professional societies. John is the co-author of the book Organic Management for the Professional.

For this newsletter, John contributes articles regularly and is responsible for publishing it.

PABLO HERNANDEZ

Pablo Hernandez is the special projects coordinator for Nature's Way Resources. His realm of responsibilities include: serving as a webmaster, IT support, technical problem solving/troubleshooting, metrics management and quality control.

Pablo helps this newsletter happen from a technical support standpoint.

