



# LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



Jul-22-2021 | Issue 397

Nature's Way Resources is proud to produce & email you this free weekly newsletter. We have no ads, but sponsors do graciously help support this project as a public service. Please note their names below & show your gratitude for this free service by patronizing their businesses! To become a sponsor, call (936) 273-1200

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

[Click here to join our email list](#)

[CLICK HERE for PDFs OF PAST LG&F NEWSLETTERS](#)



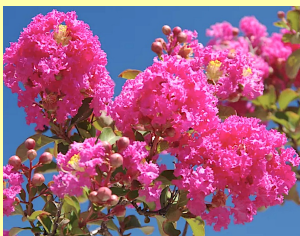
*L to r, incorrectly-pruned crape myrtle (aka "crape murder"), correctly-pruned crapes without & with blooms and winter bark on correctly-pruned mature tree. File photos)*

## 'MURDER' ON THE DECLINE? SUGAR LAND DELIGHT!

***"Nature to be commanded must be obeyed."***

*-- Francis Bacon, (1561–1626), English philosopher, statesman and essayist.*

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**



The good news is — all over Houston are gorgeous, so **HEALTHY** crape myrtles in full bloom. A steadily increasing number of owners/caretakers now recognize the dangers of "crape murder" (improper pruning) and help these gorgeous trees -- that love us so much -- to grow as their genetic makeup intends them to grow.

We're a far cry from a couple of decades back when so many crapes were routinely, unnecessarily and expensively

(in some cases) pruned back to nubs (aka "fists"), each of which then proceeded to sprout dozens of tiny spindly, disease-/insect-susceptible stalks.



True some of these produce blooms. But insect and disease damage often follow because the plants' natural development and life-systems have been disrupted. it's not nice to mess with Mother Nature. Trees grow naturally in the best formations for their optimum health. *(File photo pictured)*

Just ask **Cookie Feagins** who wrote seeking help for crape myrtles in her new home's landscape: *"I have moved to a smaller place in Katy where previous owners murdered the crape myrtles. Is there a way to repair or help these trees after such treatment or shall I just remove them? I hear people talk about 'don't do this' but have not been able to find information on helping the tree."*



Linda Gay to the rescue. For those of you who have been missing this wonderful Houston horticulturalist, see below for her update. But first, off the top of her head, even before she saw Cookie's photos, Linda *(pictured)* replied:

*"If there is a knot (fist) on top of the stalk where it has been cut annually, you would cut off the knot. When the new sucker growth appears, remove most, but leave three dominant shoots equally spaced to become the dominant branches."*

Then Cookie sent in photos of her crape. Looking at her closeup shot of old "fists" (*white-outlined blackness*), Linda added, *"She also has crape myrtle asian bark scale in swollen areas (fists) where annual pruning occurred."* Linda's advice:

1. Cut below the swollen area, removing all the blackness, which will also allow for more sun and air flow.
2. Feed the trees to get them growing
3. When the new growth appears, let it grow for 30-60 days
4. Choose three dominant stems equally spaced in a triangle.
5. Then remove unwanted sucker growth.



**PS:**

- *In John's column below, he agrees with all Linda's recommendations and expands on treatments.*
- *Is it crape or crepe? Botanically, it's "Lagerstroemia crape myrtle." But "crepe" is used extensively throughout the South ( flowers so resemble crepe paper).*
- *Never expect hort powers-that-be to make plant names easy on us gardeners!*

**UPDATE ON LINDA GAY**, one of our most influential horticulturists ever, as

longtime Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens Director, then McGovern Centennial Gardens Horticulturist and all along a ubiquitous instructor/lecturer, to name just a few of her contributions. No one could possibly have called on Linda for help more than I. Never once, over the decades, has she failed to immediately recognize and identify plant photos readers sent to me that I didn't know! Never once!

As many of you know, Linda has been battling pancreatic cancer for some time (in itself a major accomplishment) and is now in her 3rd and hopefully final cycle of promising treatments that, this time, have thankfully not robbed her of her energy and drive.

The great news is she's scheduling gardening lectures again for this fall and focusing on her latest project: growing and propagating what she calls "*crazily-expensive aroid houseplants*," such as Philodendrons, Alocasias, Monstera, ZZ plants, Aglaonemas, Arrowhead vines, Colocasias, and similar houseplants.



Above, a few of her efforts well underway:

- Left - *Rhaphidophora* 'Ginny' (left) with *Epipremnum pinnatum*
- Center - yellow Pothos Lemon Lime with ZZ Raven (black leaves)
- Right- Philodendron 'Neon' with Syngonium cultivars.

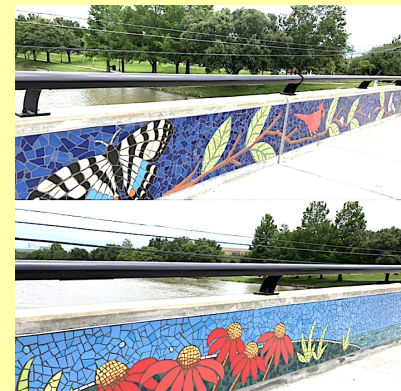
Linda explains: "*I want to root and grow starts for people that will be easily affordable. Not through auctions, which is just ridiculous! These plants are easy to grow, they purify our indoor air and should be grown and shared among friends.*"

Linda's experimentation results will make for great lectures! She can be contacted at [lgay4756@gmail.com](mailto:lgay4756@gmail.com)

\* \* \*

## TIP O' THE TROWEL TO:

- **KATY ANTILL**, founder/lead artist of [Legacy Mosaic](http://LegacyMosaic.com), commissioned by City of Sugar Land to create "Natural Rhythm," 460+ sq. feet of colorful, hand-cut tile murals on Brooks Street Bridge. Large scale images of Sugar Land's native flora & fauna feature a mockingbird, cardinal, American white ibis, yellow crowned night heron, muscovy ducks, red-eared slider and a monarch butterfly amongst the native purple

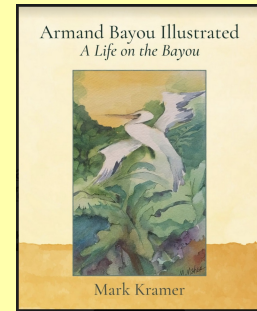


cone flowers and black-eyed Susans -- [katyantill.com](http://katyantill.com);  
[legacymosaic.com](http://legacymosaic.com).

- **HARRIS COUNTY AGRILIFE EXTENSION CALL FOR VETERANS, & ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY** in the Houston-Area interested in starting a business in agriculture. **"Battleground To Breaking Ground"** offers business planning courses, hands-on-training, and online courses. Limited tuition waivers. Registration deadline: July 28.  
[txagrability.tamu.edu/bgbg/training/](http://txagrability.tamu.edu/bgbg/training/)



- **MARK KRAMER** on publication of "Armand Bayou Illustrated: A Life on the Bayou." Mark, [Armand Bayou](#) Conservation Director/Chief Naturalist Emeritus, recalls his 40 years of living, working, and playing on the bayou. Award winning photographer Gary Seloff's pictures help detail the best ways to enjoy the nature center in every season. Books purchased at ABNC's gift shop benefit the [Armand Bayou Nature Center](#).



\* \* \*

**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](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)

\* \* \*



## John's Corner



### NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 158

**A few additional thoughts on Crape Murder:**

1) To help our crape myrtle trees recover from the abuse and stress of crape murder we need to fertilize them. When fertilizing only use organic fertilizers. Artificial fertilizers produce fast weak growth that actually attracts insect pests from scale to aphids.

2) Always keep crape mulched for healthier trees, especially in this recovery stage. A composted (aged) native mulch works best. A three-inch-thick layer at least out 3-4 feet from the trunk. Do not let the mulch touch the trunk of any tree, always leave an air gap. The mulch moderates soil temperatures and evens out the moisture in the soil, reducing tree stress helping them recover.

3) Super Seaweed from Microlife as a foliar spray will help the new growth strengthen up quicker and discourage aphids, scale, white flies, etc.

4) Scattering a little fire ant bait around tree is also useful. Fire ants love the honeydew produced by these insects hence they will protect them from beneficial insects trying to eat these insect pests.

5) A couple cups of trace minerals (Re-Mineralizer) around the base of the tree would be beneficial if it has never been done. Trace minerals are to plants as vitamins are to humans, we don't need a bunch but if they are not there, one is not as healthy as one could be (same for plants). Works best if they are placed down before mulching.

I often enjoy a dark beer in a frosted mug while grilling during the summer evenings. This week I read an article in *Frontiers of Sustainable Food Systems* (2021). This paper was on the use of recycling waste products from the brewing of beer like rapeseed cake and beer bagasse (spent beer grains) on agricultural crops.

These waste products were incorporated into the soil along with some fresh cow manure. Not only did organic matter and nutrients in the waste promote the growth of beneficial micro-organisms, it increased yields by 15%. Additionally, it caused a significant reduction in galling from root knot nematodes.

Maybe to help farmers out we should consume more beer.

The British journal *Ecological Solutions and Evidence* (2021) recently had another article on the values of recycling organic waste. For every two tons of commercial coffee produced there is one ton of coffee pulp produced.

This test was an experiment in regeneration of trees in Costa Rica. The test area had been stripped of trees and intensively farmed for decades, hence had severely degraded soil. They placed a 20-inch layer of the pulp over the ground. This technique greatly speeded up forest recovery and reduced invasive grasses that were preventing forest recovery.

Speaking of coffee, there is new study underway on coffee wilt disease that was published in the journal *BMC Genomics* (2021). Back in the 1920's this disease infected many varieties of coffee. By finding resistant cultivars and through selective breeding, coffee strains that were resistant were developed. However new fungal strains have developed that only attack certain varieties of coffee.

By reactivating a frozen sample of this old pathogen, they could study how it has changed over the decades. They discovered that this new version of the disease now had genes from a banana disease known as *Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. Cubense*, that is closely related. Coffee and bananas are often grown together as coffee plants like the shade provided by the bananas. By studying how the fungus changed they hope to provide new treatment

techniques.

**M**ore and more people are suffering from resistant fungal infections. A paper in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* (2021) has found one of the causes.

These infections have been linked to a class of chemical fungicides in the “triazole” family. Triazole fungicides are used both in medicine and in agriculture.

As a result, these pathogenic fungi are becoming resistant.

More reasons to grow or purchase organic produce and be part of the solution instead of part of the problem. If people would not purchase the chemically contaminated, nutrient deficient produce in grocery stores would not sell it, and farmers would change how they grow food.

The journal *Nature Communications* (2021) has found that the surge of nitrogen into the oceans has caused major changes in the growth of the seaweed called sargassum.

They found the excess nutrients from artificial fertilizers, sewage sludge, and waste water treatment plants discharge, has turned the seaweed from a beneficial nursery habitat into harmful algae blooms. “This is causing catastrophic impacts on coastal ecosystems, economies, and human health”.

**S**cientists continue to learn about the importance and interactions of microbes. A study published in the journal *PLOS ONE* (2021) has found a symbiotic relationship between algae and bacteria. They found that algae depend on B-12 produced by bacteria and in return the bacteria get carbon produced by algae (from CO<sub>2</sub>) obtained from the atmosphere.

The journal *Science* (2021) had another example of microbial partnerships. Plants fall into two broad categories called vascular (having stems and roots) and non-vascular like mosses.

We know that most vascular plants live in a symbiotic relationship with fungi in the soil. By studying the moss *Marchantia paleacea* they discovered a lipid transfer between the moss and the fungi.

This means that the common ancestor to both groups of plants that colonized dry land millions of years ago, must have exchanged lipids also.

When I read something like this the biblical verse “...study nature and let it teach you” always comes to mind.

**A** study by several universities from Europe to Africa published in the journal *Nature* (2021) has found that minor and micronutrients in cereal grains varied a lot depending on where they were grown.

These micronutrient deficiencies lead to what the study defined as “hidden hunger” which were found to be very common. They concluded that “micronutrient deficiencies pose a serious risk to human health, including the growth and cognitive development of children and susceptibility to infectious and non-communicable disease”.

We have seen this in the pandemic, as multiple studies have linked the susceptibility and severity of covid directly to poor nutrition especially micronutrients. As gardeners we need to grow more of our own fruits and vegetables organically and use rock dust products like re-mineralizer to ensure the trace, micro- and pico- elements are in the soil.

More and more medical doctors, nutritionists, soil scientists, etc. are now linking most of our health problems to the poor quality of our food supply. The website below has a lot of information on the importance of getting these needed minerals (elements) back into our soils.



### Remineralize the Earth

better soil, better food, better planet.

[Read more](#)

[www.remineralize.org](http://www.remineralize.org)

## LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

All events in Houston unless otherwise specified.

**ADULT GARDENING 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.

Submit events to: [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com).

**PLEASE ALWAYS put group's FULL name in email subject.**

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

**FRI., JUL. 24: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4**, 9am & 11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Ages 60+ or anyone age 12+ with transportation needs. [Register](#); 713-274-4160.

**SAT., JULY 24: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SALE**, 9:30am-1pm (or sell-out), Bay Area Community Center, 5002 Nasa Parkway, Seabrook. [theplumeriasociety.org](http://theplumeriasociety.org)

**THURS., JUL. 29: MERCER BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION**, 6-7pm, Timber Lane Community Center. [Register](#). 713-274-4160.

**THURS., JULY 29: FORT BEND REGIONAL VEGETABLE CONFERENCE SUMMER SESSION** (virtual) 8:30am-noon. Counties of Waller, Wharton, Harris, Galveston, Brazoria, Colorado, Austin and Fort Bend event. [Register](#). 281-633-7029 or [brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu)

**SAT, JULY 31: A DOZEN FERNS FOR HOUSTON GARDENS** by **PATRICK HUDNALL**, 10:30-11:30am, Houston Botanic Garden, 8210 Park Place Blvd. \$15. [Register](#).

**MON., AUG. 9: GARDENING FOR BEGINNERS** (virtual), 10-11:30am, free, Harris County Master Gardeners/Houston Community College event. Register: [hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops](http://hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops)

**THURS., AUG 12: "OH #!&\* I DID IT TO MYSELF (AND HOW TO FIX IT IF YOU DID)"** by **GAYE HAMMOND** (virtual), 7- 9pm, Houston Rose Society/Houston event. Free. Meeting link on [houstonrose.org/](http://houstonrose.org/)

**FRI., AUG. 13: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4**, 9am & 11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Ages 60+ or anyone age 12+ with transportation needs. Register: 713-274-4160.

**SAT., AUG. 14: VIRTUAL CACTI & SUCCULENT SALE**, 8am-8pm, [Themercersociety.square.site](http://Themercersociety.square.site). 713-274-4166.

**TUES., AUG. 17: GARDENING FOR BEGINNERS** (virtual), 11am-noon, free. Harris County Master Gardeners/Harris County Public Library System event. Facebook Live: [facebook.com/harriscountyppl/live](https://facebook.com/harriscountyppl/live)

**THURS., AUG. 19: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING** (virtual) by **PAUL WINSKI**, 10am. Register: [homegrown2021Q3.eventbrite.com/](https://homegrown2021Q3.eventbrite.com/)

**THURS., AUG. 25: MERCER BOTANIC GARDENS VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION**, 6pm-7pm, Timber Lane Community Center. Free. Ages 16+ (12-15 w/adult). Register: 713-274-4160.

**FRI., AUG. 27: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4** 9am & 11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Ages 60+ or anyone age 12+ with transportation needs. Register: 713-274-4160.

**WED., SEPT. 1: LESSONS LEARNED FOLLOWING FEBRUARY 2021 FREEZE**, 9:30-11am, Webster Presbyterian Church, 201 NASA Pkwy, Webster. Free. Gardeners By The Bay event. [gbtb.org](#)

**THURS., SEPT. 2: FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENER TRAINING BEGINS (weekly, 10-month program)**, 9am-1pm, Fort Bend County Extension office, 1402 Band Rd, Rosenberg. Details/application: [fbmg.org/become-a-master-gardener/](#); 281-633-7033 or [mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu).

\* \* \*

**PLEASE READ BEFORE SUBMITTING EVENTS!**

- *Adult gardening events only.*
- *ONLY EVENTS SUBMITTED FOR THIS NEWSLETTER ARE USED. NONE ARE PICKED UP FROM NEWSLETTERS OR MASS MAILINGS*
- *Events NOT submitted in the EXACT format below may take 2+ weeks to be reformatted/retyped and added to calendar.*
- *Submit events to: [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)*
- *PLEASE ALWAYS put group's FULL name in email subject.*
- *ALWAYS CHECK TO MAKE SURE AN EVENT IS IN! If not, let us know!*



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!**  
& please patronize our Newsletter & Calendar sponsors below!

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS MADE POSSIBLE  
BY THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS**

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact us  
at 936-273-1200 or send an e-mail to: [lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com)



# YearRound

Organic Fertilizers  
Core Aeration  
Compost Top Dressing  
[YearRoundHouston.com](http://YearRoundHouston.com)

# MicroLife<sup>TM</sup>





## 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.

