



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



Aug-13-2021 | Issue 400

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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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PUT ON FALL GARDENING HAT -- EVENTS AROUND

"Everyone should join a local garden tour . . . unusual solutions to everyday problems are ingeniously devised."

--- League City Garden Club, League City, TX
by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

MEA CULPA TO OUR BEAUTIFUL BLEEDING HEART VINES Normally this column is aimed at experienced local gardeners who, we have observed, make up the core of our email list. They know a lot about growing plants here. But as the scope of available plants for our specific subtropical region is increasing exponentially, expanding their horizons frequently takes them across uncharted horizons where, let's face it, we're all novices! Bothers me not at all to be corrected when I stumble, rather than "cross," a new horizon and I always will share these corrections with you!

Good example below. One of this column's best friends, Jere Noerager, with great kindness and diplomacy, pointed out my "illustration" of our great bleeding heart vines featured a picture (left below) of a "foreign" bleeding heart

(common name) totally unsuited for us:



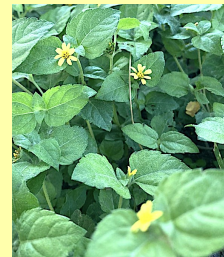
Left, *Dicentra* — a not-good-for us "bleeding heart." Center & right, our bleeding heart vines: *Clerodendron speciosum* and, right, *C. thomsoniae*)

In touting last week our great-for-Houston "Bleeding heart" as a shade vine, -- I meant *Clerodendron thomsoniae* or *C. speciosum*. But I mistakenly clicked on a picture of *Dicentra*, also known as bleeding heart, but one labeled invasive by many and definitely NOT good for our climate! Sorry. But to emphasize a warning: be careful using only common names in shopping online. At very least, check zones. Thanks, Jere, for the heads-up on this slip!

* * *

POTPOURRI:

- **SHADE GROUNDCOVERS:** In response to **LESLIE WONG's** plea last week for shade-loving choices to plant under trees, **PETER SCHAAR** suggest trying *Calypocarpus vialis*, horseherb (pictured)
- **CACTUS2021** - If your yard is like mine, some winter survivors have bitten dust with our 3-digit-feels-like temperatures. The Mercer Society may have great replacements in this weekend's CACTUS2021 online sale of cacti, succulents and other sun-loving & heat/drought-tolerant plants,. Public shopping: Sat., Aug. 14, 8am-8pm (members get to order early). Online preview details: <https://themerchersociety.square.site/>
- With schools starting back, the Citizens Environmental Coalition (CEC) has two links that have helpful free ecology education materials:
 - hereinhouston.org
 - [Environmental education newsletter](#)
 - [The Texas Association for Environmental Education's "Rooted in Environmental Education Conference"](#) - Sept. 24-25 at [Houston Arboretum & Nature Center](#) will include a tour of Houston area school gardens and a pocket prairie.



* * *

- **NATIVES FOR SHADE?** Ironically one of the most common gardening questions heard at The [Woodlands Environmental Services](#) is: "What native plants and pollinator plants can handle shade?" **AMBER BARNES**, Environmental Education Specialist, says they recommend (pictured l to r below) turk's cap, blue mistflower, fall obedient plant, Gulf Coast penstemon and spiderwort.



- The Woodlands Township is sponsoring two upcoming gardening events:
 - **SAT., OCT. 2: THE EASY PATH TO A BEAUTIFUL, HEALTHY LANDSCAPE**
 - **SAT., NOV. 6: RAINWATER HARVESTING CLASS**

Both these events are free, 9am-noon, at The Woodlands Emergency Training Center, 16135 IH-45 **South**, The Woodlands. Register: thewoodlandstownship.tx.gov/environment

* * *

FALL BRINGS GARDEN TOURS - NOT TO BE MISSED! Some of the most valuable advice shared by neighbors (especially for newcomers or those new to Houston-area gardening) can so easily be learned -- with visuals! -- on Garden Tours. Backyards are opened to the public, often for the first time, by many gardeners who have been the most successful in their specific areas

In our Spotlight Article below, League City Garden Club members expand on this and will open for tour many of their own landscapes for "Renaissance in the Garden," Sat., Sept. 25, 10-am-4pm in League City. Details: leaguecitygardenclub.org. Tickets \$15, available at Nana's Attic, 501 E. Main, League City.

One query sure to be heard on all such tours is "*How do I find a garden club to join?*" Ideally, it should be in your immediate or close-by area to ensure plants shared will be proven choices. Can't find one? Try . . .

- <https://www.houstonfederationgardenclubs.org/>
- <https://texasgardenclubs.org/find-a-club/>
- Your local nurseries may know of small groups that don't belong to major organizations.

NO LUCK? Start your own! How? One link to try: [Suggestions](#). Ideas in this one are pretty detailed and time consuming. Use them as a long-term guides, not as carved-in-stone, my-way-or-the-highway rules!

In fact, League City GC members suggest simply spreading your idea by word of mouth is the most fun and probably the most effective method of gathering like-minded potential members.

Save long term goals until you have a core group with ideas similar to yours. There's no set rules. Heights Garden Club has no officers. Other similar successful groups have unique setups. Think outside the box.

If your garden club is thinking of a sponsoring a garden tour, let the League City Garden Club help get you started below.

* * *

* * *



Garden club tours are a great way to learn about unusual plants such as this fragrant Paduca Plumeria, left and, clever ways to use plants like plumerias and fruits in a landscape (all past-tours photos, courtesy of League City Garden Club)

GARDEN CLUB TOURS WIN-WIN FOR EVERYONE, ALWAYS SURPRISES

by LEAGUE CITY GARDEN CLUB

leaguecitygardenclub.org/

Everyone should join a local garden tour...any place, any time. Surprises await you just beyond the garden gate:

- Displays are arranged in ways you have never imagined.
- Color and landscape design of wonderful plant specimens are expected, but unusual solutions to everyday problems are ingeniously devised.
- Natural landscapes for wildlife can be explored as well as educational opportunities for xeriscaping. (*pictured: Wildlife Habitat in the city.*)
- Garden tours sometimes have home grown plants for sale, always an added pleasure!



Over the past ten years that League City Garden Club has held its "Garden Walk," many diverse personalities have displayed unique, beautiful and timeless ways to grow outdoor plants. These hidden backyard gems are treasured by their homeowners, where only the most discriminating of visitors are allowed "inside."



What is a “water smart” garden? What is a bog garden? Have you ever witnessed aquaponics in action? Trendy rain water collection systems are displayed in beautiful and remarkable ways. Have you ever seen snail eggs? Have you ever witnessed a Red Tailed Hawk Release? Did you know people keep outdoor tortoises as pets?

Did you know that wild native grasses can be beautiful in your landscape? Bird habitats are explored and enhanced beyond your imagination. Special water features, such as blue pools, colorful koi ponds, natural creeks and winding “lost rivers” inviting wildlife, butterflies and hummingbirds, are mesmerizing. *(Pictured: cleverly placed bridge)*



So, have fun and take a garden tour. At the same time, helping local nonprofits sponsor scholarships for youth, contribute to civic beautification, and increased environmental awareness are added bonuses. Consider the benefits of self-education, outdoor enjoyment, and meeting the neighbors. Win, win, win!

* * *

NOTE: See something you like? Although these are pictures from past League City Garden Club tours, members will be on hand to answer question at:

- **SAT., SEPT. 25: LEAGUE CITY GARDEN CLUB'S GARDEN TOUR,** “Renaissance in the Garden,” 10am-4pm, Tickets \$15, Nana's Attic, 501 E. Main, League City, leaguecitygardenclub.org.

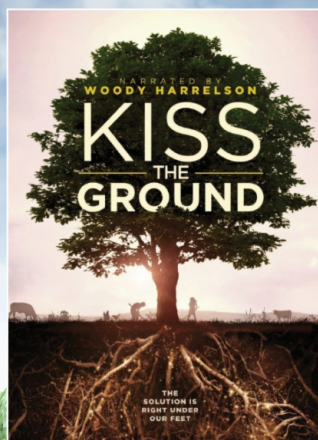
* * *

COMING AUGUST 19TH

A free showing of an exciting new movie about
caring for our home, Earth:

KISS THE GROUND

Spectacular photography, exciting animation, great story telling, noted
experts & very motivating. See Mother Earth like never before!



Brought to you by OHBA &
local Fayette county businesses.
A thrilling evening awaits you.

August 19TH • Historic Casino Hall
254 N. Jefferson La Grange, TX 78945

ITINERARY:

5–6 PM Social, Light Refreshments
& Visit Exhibitors

6–7:30 PM Movie Showing, Kiss the Ground

7:30–7:50 PM Panel Discussion with
local experts (optional)

Free but must Register Here as seating
is limited: ohbaonline.org/register

THANK YOU SPONSORS!!



For any event questions please contact Mike Serant mserant@sanjacsupply.com



John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 161

Research by the American Chemical Society have found that agricultural chemicals applied to land persist in the soils for decades after the last usage. These chemicals can continue to influence soil health even years after converting to organic practices.

They studied 46 regularly used pesticides and their breakdown products, where samples were taken from 100 different fields. The total number and concentrations of these synthetic chemicals decreased significantly the longer the fields were under organic management.

They also found lower levels of beneficial microbes in the fields with the

highest levels of these toxic chemicals, which strongly suggests these chemicals decrease soil health. Environmental Science & Technology (2021).

A few weeks ago, I talked about types of coffee and how its grown affects its benefits. A new study from Virginia Tech, Columbia, and Cornell universities has found that shade grown coffee is also more bird friendly. Shade grown coffee provides crucial habitats for migrating birds hence purchasing organic shade grown coffee is not only better for one's health it also protects our birds, especially the migratory species. People and Nature (2021)

The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and the university of Sheffield have found that nitrogen fixing legume trees play a major role in the health of tropical forests

Many tropical soils are low in nutrients which limits growth. These trees were able to accelerate the weathering processes in nutrient poor soils, releasing important nutrients (elements), for themselves and surrounding trees.

In addition to providing nitrogen, these trees were able to acidify the soil by feeding acid loving bacteria that helped breakdown the minerals releasing the required elements. Proceedings of The National Academy of Science (2021). Several studies have suggested one way to fight climate change is reforestation. This effect above would allow trees to grow faster and sequester more carbon.

To maximize our results this study suggests this method would work in our area also, as we have many clays where minerals are tied up chemically, or sands where there are very little available nutrients.

Our native Black Locust tree (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) is a legume that grows well in almost any soil, has essentially zero pest problems, it is freeze and drought tolerant, fast growing, helps with erosion control, plus beautiful flowers in the spring. The wood is also very straight and extremely rot resistant, hence was almost eliminated along the gulf coast as it was cut to make sailing masts or used for wood to build buildings. The seeds are eaten by birds, squirrels and other animals. The only possible negative is that in good conditions it often spreads by suckers. (Picture from internet images)



Speaking of fighting climate change. Researchers at the University of Texas have discovered a new phylum of microbes that breakdown plants (organic matter) without producing methane a potent greenhouse gas.

These microbes can live in extreme environments like the hot springs of Yellowstone Park. This new phylum is named *Brockarchaeota* after Thomas Brock whom studied microbes in extreme environments and are part of a poorly studied group of microbes called archaea. These microbes recycle carbon without producing methane (a potent greenhouse gas) which makes

As the dangers of pesticides and other synthetic chemicals are becoming known researchers are turning to nature to find solutions. These may be biological or chemicals derived from plants.

To use an example of an insect pest that many are aware of is the common bed bug that causes lots of misery around the world. This insect pest has evolved to be resistant to almost every synthetic chemical control measure. New research has found that essential oils derived from plants are lethal to bed bugs. These essential oils are often natural chemicals like thymol from thyme, carvacrol from oregano and thyme, eugenol from cloves, etc. Pesticide Biochemistry and Physiology (2021)

Gardeners have known for years that orange oil is very effective in controlling many pests, garlic oil is very effective in repelling mosquitos and used in products like Mosquito Barrier.

Microlife has a product made from essential oils derived from plants to control pests like chinch bugs and sod webworms, called Eco Smart. Neem oil (from the Neem tree) is frequently used to control over 200 insect pests. AgraLawn Crab grass killer is very effective at killing weeds in St. Augustine, Zosia and Bermuda lawns and is made from cinnamon bark. I spray cedar oil on the drywall of my closet a couple times a year to keep moths away, that like to eat my wool suits and shirts.

The examples above, are all organic methods that have been proven to be very effective.

We all are aware of bioremediation, using microbes to clean up things like oil spills (Exxon Valdez, the BP disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, etc.) and degradation of other toxic chemicals from jet fuel to explosives. We talked about phytomining a couple week ago, using plants to pull elements out of the soil and concentrate them to levels where they can be recovered from the plants.

Another growing area of natural method research is known as “phytoremediation”. Similar to phytomining where plants collect and concentrate elements, phytoremediation is where plants are used to collect toxic chemicals and remove them from soil or water.

This is a process of using plants to clean up contaminants in our soils, or leachates from mine tailings or landfills, etc. The US Forest Service and the University of Missouri is studying the use of trees to clean up landfill leachate as it may have thousands of chemicals in it.

An example of phytoremediation is *Populus deltoides* the common Cottonwood. It is being used to eliminate toxins from groundwater due to its quick water intake and high respiration rate. For example, toxins like TCE (trichlorethylene which is used to degrease parts) are absorbed and removed from soil and water.

We often talk about fungi in the soil and how they help protect plant roots and help plants collect water and nutrients. Many of us enjoy mushrooms (the fruiting spore of fungi) on our salads or sautéed on our steaks.

Mushroom (fungi) have been studied for their nutritional benefits and found to be very high in vitamins, nutrients, and antioxidants.

Mushrooms are now being studied for their medicinal benefits. Research at Penn State University analyzed data from 19,500 cancer patients and found people who ate 18 grams of mushrooms daily had a 45% lower risk of cancer. *Advances In Nutrition* (2021)

Several environmental groups filed Freedom of Information claims against the EPA and they found some very disturbing reports that the media is not covering.

They found that in 2016 the EPA reviewed seven studies on Round-Up and cancer. All of the studies found increased risks of cancer, especially non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

The EPA chose to lie and state that glyphosate did not cause cancer. How many lives in America and around the world could have been saved if they had told the truth? What effect is it having on our children as cities and schools spray glyphosate all over the parks and playgrounds?

A recent study published in JAMA by the Health Science Department at Tuft's University was on shifting the focus of food production from "food insecurity" to "nutrition insecurity". *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2021)

A summary from Science Daily states "The concept of food security focuses on access to and affordability of food that is safe, nutritious, and consistent with personal preferences. *In reality, however, the "nutritious" part often has been overlooked or lost in national policies and solutions, with resulting emphasis on quantity, rather than quality, of food.*"

"Food is essential both for life and human dignity. Every day, I see hunger, but the hunger I see is not only for calories but for nourishing meals. With a new focus on nutrition security, we embrace a solution that nourishes people, instead of filling them with food but leaving them hungry," said Chef José Andrés, founder of World Central Kitchen.

The authors define nutrition security as having consistent access to and availability and affordability of foods and beverages that promote well-being, while preventing -- and, if needed, treating -- disease. Nutrition security provides a more inclusive view that recognizes that *foods must nourish all people*.

"'Nutrition security' incorporates all the aims of food security but with additional emphasis on the need for wholesome, healthful foods and drinks for all. COVID-19 has made clear that Americans who are most likely to be hungry are also at highest risk of diet-related diseases including obesity, diabetes, heart

disease, and many cancers -- a harsh legacy of inequities and structural racism in our nation."

This is additional support that as gardeners we need to grow more of our own fruits, vegetables, and herbs organically, on mineral rich soil if we want to be healthy and protect our families.



OHBA Organic Gardening Workshop

Want to make this your most successful Fall?
Join Us for this Fantastic Workshop!

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26TH • 2 PM TO 6:15 PM
Plants for All Seasons 249 • 21328 TX-249, Houston, TX 77070

Stephen Duckett 2PM - 2:30PM Proven Native Plants for the Landscape Founder & Owner of Glenbrooke Ecologic	Carol Burton 2:45PM - 3:15PM Veggie Growing for Right Now, Fall & Winter Director of Garden Education	Sherri Harrah 3:30PM - 4PM How to prepare your lawns & gardens for ultimate success, NOW! Owner, Nursery Manager of Plants for All Seasons
 <div>Brad Phillips 5PM - 6:15PM Trees Talk Owner & Founder of Arbortrue</div>		

REGISTER HERE TODAY:
ohbaonline.org/register

Ticket Prices
OHBA Members: \$20
Non- OHBA Members: \$40

Thank You Sponsors!



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.
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., 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](#). 713-274-4166.

SAT., AUG 14: SEEDING THE FALL HARVEST by PHILIPPA JOHNSTONE, 9-10am, Beauty's Community Garden, 3201 Airline Dr. [Preegistration required](#).

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

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

SAT., AUG. 21: FALL ORGANIC VEGETABLE GARDENING CLASS (virtual) by THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP, 9am-noon. Free. Register: [thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov/environment](#)

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](#).

SAT.-SUN., SEPT. 11-12: HOUSTON CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY SHOW AND SALE, Sat: 9am-5pm; Sun: 9am-3pm. Free. Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray. [hcsstex.org/](#)

SAT., SEPT. 25: FALL IS FOR PLANTING, 10am, Wabash Feed & Garden, 4537 N Shepherd Dr. Free. [Register](#). 713-863-8322, [wabashfeed.com/](#)

SAT., SEPT. 25: LEAGUE CITY GARDEN CLUB'S GARDEN TOUR, "Renaissance in the Garden," 10am-4pm, Tickets \$15, Nana's Attic, 501 E. Main, League City, [leaguecitygardenclub.org](#).

SAT., SEPT. 25: 24th ANNUAL WOODLANDS LANDSCAPING SOLUTIONS by THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP, 9am-noon, The Recreation Center at Rob Fleming Park,

6464 Creekside Forest Dr., The Woodlands. Free. thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/landscapingsolutions

SAT., OCT. 2: EASY PATH TO A BEAUTIFUL, HEALTHY LANDSCAPE by **THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP**, 9am-noon. Free. The Woodlands Emergency Training Center, 16135 IH-45 South, The Woodlands. Register: thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/environment

SAT., OCT. 16: THE LAWN CARE: GREEN WITH ENVY (virtual) by **THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP**, 9am - noon. Free. Register: thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/environment

SAT., NOV. 6: RAINWATER HARVESTING CLASS by **THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP**, 9am-noon., The Woodlands Emergency Training Center, 16135 IH-45 South, The Woodlands. Free. Register: thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/environment

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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!

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MicroLife™



Complete Organic Solutions



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-project to reporting, 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.

