



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



Sept-3-2021 | Issue 403

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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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ATTRACTING HUMMERS, WELCOME INVADERS

"Garden for wildlife and enjoy the benefits!"

— KAYE COREY, Galveston County Master Gardener
by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**



Happiness is seeing hummers on my Mexican orchid tree (shrub). It's that time of year, but wondering if I'm the only one seeing more this year than usual on their annual Fall migration back to Mexico? Ironically also seeing them flitting around plants not in bloom too.

KENDRA KOCAB -- who is with the upcoming free, Sat., Sept. 11, **HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL** at [Kleb Woods Nature Preserve](#) in Tomball -- says

they've not seen or heard of any noticeable population change triggers. More likely, Kendra says, my hummer bonanza could be due to a slight shift in migration routes for a variety of reasons or my "appetizing" plants, as they mature, are gradually drawing more of these jewels of nature. Want more

hummingbird-attracting plants? Check Wabash's list below. In the meantime ...

[**KLEB WOODS HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL**](#) ([click for flyer](#))

Sat., Sept. 11, 9am-3pm, at in Tomball — FREE

Kleb Woods Nature Preserve, 20303 Draper Road, Tomball

[**WABASH FEED & GARDEN' s newsletter**](#) lists many hummer-attractors, including my Mexican orchid (*Bauhinia*). Among others, below, l to r, firespike, cigar plant (*Cuphea ignea*), flame anisacanthus, lobelia and Turk's cap.



Get the feeling hummers prefer red/orange flowers? Not always. Below, Wabash also recommends, l to r, Mexican oregano, pride of Barbados, salvias and (*one of my Lazy Gardener Hall of Fame-ers*) shrimp plant.



HUMMER FEEDERS -- Most experts recommend appropriate plants over feeders. But that doesn't mean you can't use feeders too. Here's Wabash's recipe: Bring 4 cups of water to a boil, add 1 cup of granulated sugar, stir until dissolved. Allow to cool, then add to feeders. Not only do you NOT need to add red food coloring or dye liquids, they're NOT good for hummers!

* * *

"INVASIVE" SOMETIMES JUST IN EYE OF BEHOLDER --Two examples of how, in some cases, "invasive" isn't such an unwelcome attribute:

- **PASSION VINE IN FRIENDSWOOD.** Galveston County Master Gardener **KAYE COREY**, replying to last week's comment about passion vine being an aggressive grower in Friendswood, does agree, but adds:
 - *"Friendswood has a beautiful [Pollinator Garden in Stevenson Park](#), a [Keep Friendswood Beautiful](#) project, that enjoys the benefits of the Passion Vine as the host plant for the Gulf Fritillary, Julia and Zebra butterflies. Bees love the beautiful flowers as do visitors. Yes, it spreads and we simply pull it out and give it away."*

Kaye will expand her thoughts on pollinators in the Nov./Dec., issue of the [Galveston County Master Gardener's Newsletter](#). Her goal is to spread the word: "Garden for wildlife and enjoy the benefits!"

- A couple of years ago, to hide a rather ratty-looking ramada, I planted a Mexican flame vine on

one front piling and a red passion vine (not native) on the other. To my great delight, both grew up and across the ramada. Sadly, Mexican flame vine succumbed this last winter, never returned. But red *Passiflora vitifolia* is already exceeding expectations!



(**Note:** although red passion vine will attract a few adult butterflies, this Central/South American import is not generally recommended for a habitat or butterfly garden.)

* * *

TIPS O' THE TROWEL TO . . .

- **DON VERSER** (prairie conservationist) and the [Native Plant Society of Texas/Houston](#) for the great YouTube video: "[Mandell Park: Lush Native Plant Landscape in the Heart of Houston](#)" about this treasured Central Houston site on Richmond & Mandell Sts. And to . . .
- **SUZY FISHER** (landscape architect/Fischer Schalles & Urban Harvest co-founder) for her recent [Houston Chronicle article](#) on Mandell Park's incredible vegetable-filled [Meredith Garden](#).

Hopefully both these presentations will inspire and help other neighborhoods create their own oases.

* * *

Brenda's LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER

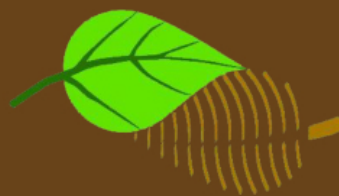
column is based on her 40+ years as Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener

Email: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

* * *



John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 164

One of the most desired oaks in the world is *Quercus crispula* known as Mizunara that take 200-500 years to reach maturity. This oak grows on the Northernmost Island of Japan and struggles to survive.

In recent years Japanese whiskies have been winning awards all over the world in taste tests. These whiskies were aged in barrels made from this oak as it imparts many very distinctive flavors and aromas to the whiskey like sandalwood and spice.

An article in Whiskey Advocate magazine stated that barrels made from Mizunara Oak wood are selling for \$3,055 each.

During this heat and humidity, I am inclined to do less gardening and more inclined to have a refreshing cold drink, especially on hot afternoons.

I read an article the other day titled “A Walk in The Weeds”, that found another use for some common plants like weeds (by Matthew Biancaniello), that he collects by foraging. The first is a cocktail made from stinging nettle. This is something I will have to try.

The recipe is:

- 2 oz. stinging nettle infused bourbon (info below)
- ¾ oz. fresh lime juice
- ¾ oz. Agave syrup (1:1 agave nectar to water)
- 1 oz. fresh blood orange or pomegranate juice

Sting Nettle-infused bourbon:

Collect fresh stinging nettle leaves and stems

750 ml of high -proof straight bourbon (a little less than a quart)

Fill a large quart size glass or bottle three quarters full with stems and leaves. Pour in enough bourbon to fill the jar and cover. Let it sit for 7-10 days. Strain and refrigerate for up to 6 weeks.

For those interested there are several other recipes using weeds to make cocktails in the spring issue (2021) of Whiskey Advocate.

Along the same lines, a few years ago, I reviewed a very interesting book, **The DRUNKEN BOTANIST- The Plants That Create the World's Great Drinks**,

By Amy Stewart, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2013, ISBN: 978-1-61620-046-6

This book is about all the plants, trees, herbs fruits and flowers used to make alcoholic beverages and their history. The book is broken into three sections.

Section 1 is on the alchemical processes of fermentation and distillation from which we get our wines, beer, and spirits. It includes obscure sources of alcohol from around the world including many strange brews.

Section 2 is on the herbs, spices, flowers, trees, fruits, nuts, seeds, and grains that are used to make the wonderful beverages and the methods used.

Section 3 covers the array of botanical mixes and garnishes that are used in the final stages of preparation to create our wonderful cocktails.

We as gardeners need to rethink the plants we call weeds. In some states they are now called “lawn herbs” and the state is paying homeowners hundreds of dollars to remove one’s grass and plant these lawn herbs and wildflowers.

I was asked for an example of why minerals (actually trace elements) are important in growing plants. From our study of all 79 elements in the human body a few years ago, we know that the molecule we know as vitamin B-12 is built around an atom of cobalt.

Hence, if we want B-12 in the fruits and vegetables we grow, it (cobalt) has to be in the soil. For decades we have known that vitamin B-12 (methylcobalamin form) which is one of the two active forms, and is required for our body to regulate our immune system.

A new study has found the other active form of B-12 (adenosylcobalamin) has properties the other form does not. This form of B-12 protects neurons in our brains and prevents a decline of the neurotransmitter dopamine, hence helps prevent mental decline as we age. Life Extension (May 2021).

This is why these trace elements are so important to our health and as gardeners we need to re-mineralize our soils with these essential elements. B-12 starts with the element cobalt in the minerals we add to our soil. The microbes break the mineral down and use the cobalt to produce the B-12.

Plants grown on mineral rich soils tend to grow faster and larger and with less disease or pest issues. Additionally, they are more heat, drought, flood and freeze tolerant.

Another person asked that we reprint the link to a lecture on soil, minerals and health. Below is a link to a talk that we mentioned a few years ago, that started researchers to study the link between elements (minerals) in the soil, plants and human health which was given by Dr. Joel Wallach in 1994. Everything he mentioned in this talk has been confirmed numerous times by other researchers. This talk is now available on YouTube for free. The talk is not only informative but at times funny with his country boy humor to make a point.

["Dead Doctor's Don't Lie"](#), by Joel Wallach, DVM, DO – nominee for a Nobel Prize.

Over the last few years there has been a lot of new research on the benefits of all these trace elements for plants, animals, and humans which has emerged as more and more scientists study them. I plan to go through all of the 79 elements again with all the new information in the future.

Mulches are not equal. When gardeners use vermicompost from earthworms as a soil amendment, it prevents many plants from absorbing toxic heavy metals like cadmium (Cd), chromium (Cr), lead (Pb), etc.

So, for all you gardeners out there, "Which type mulch is best to encourage and feed lots of earthworms"?

The answer is an aged (partially composted) Native Mulch made from recycled branches and limbs.

Why not use the whole tree? It is the smaller branches and limbs that are nutrient rich (minerals, protein, vitamins, energy, etc.). This is why animals like deer, beavers, squirrels, etc. eat them as a food source. The whole tree is like

using sawdust or ground up old pallets which is what dyed mulches use.

Mulch made from smaller branches and limbs are also food for microbes including the microbes that break apart heavy clay and turn it into rich loam. The earthworms actually feed on the microbes living in the mulch, hence they grow numerous, large and fat.

This increases their ability to aerate the soil, create drainage channels for water, and produce chemicals that are powerful plant growth hormones like auxins, and produce lots of vermicompost directly in one's flowerbeds where it can do the most good.

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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: ONLINE EVENTS SO MARKED, ALL OTHERS IN PERSON

*Check contacts listed for covid-triggered
changes and/or masking policies*

SAT., SEPT. 4: TOP TEN COOL WEATHER VEGETABLES (Zoom live class in Spanish) by PILAR HERNANDEZ, 10-11am. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

SAT., SEPT. 11: KLEB WOODS HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL, 9am-3pm, Kleb Woods Nature Preserve, 20303 Draper Road, Tomball. [Details.](#)

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 2: GROWING BLUEBERRIES by **ROBERT MARSHALL**, 9-11am. Free.
Galveston County Master Gardener event.
Register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

MON., OCT. 4: ONLINE ORDERING ENDS for OCT. 14-16 HOUSTON BULB & PLANT MART. store.galvestonmg.org

SAT., OCT. 9: FALL FAVORITE VEGETABLES by **GENE SPELLER**, 9-11. Free.
Galveston County Master Gardener event. Pre-
register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

THURS.-SAT., OCT. 14-16: HOUSTON 2021 BULB & PLANT MART, St. John's Church 2450 River Oaks Blvd. gchouston.org/bulb-plant-mart-info/

FRI.-SAT, OCT 15-OCT 16: GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FALL PLANT SALE (Online only). Noon Fri. to noon Sat. Browse begins Fri, Oct 8. store.galvestonmg.org

SAT., OCT. 16: THE LAWN CARE: GREEN WITH ENVY (virtual) by **THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP**, 9am - noon. Free. 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., OCT 30: KOKEDAMA by **KAT TONDRE**, 9-11am. \$20. Galveston County master Gardener event. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

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

NOTE: ONLINE EVENTS SO MARKED, ALL OTHERS IN PERSON

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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 . . .
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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-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.

