



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



May-27-2022 | Issue 438

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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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WHAT'S YOUR #1 GARDENING GOAL?

By BRENDA BEUST SMITH

"In some Native languages the term for plants translates 'those who take care of us'."

-- Robin Wall Kimmerer,

"Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants"

GARDEN DREAMING Survey results abound with "gardener goals" interviews, but one always rises to or near the top: *"Plant something new!"*

Folks don't add this, but we know what we're all thinking: *"Something that will really wow the neighbors!"* Well, folks, in our Spotlight Article below, noted Houston horticulturist Mike Howlett may have just what you need, and the epiphany for his latest advocacy will definitely put a smile on your face!

In the meantime, recent rainfall notwithstanding, mid- to high 90s are forecast

for this weekend and that can be even more dangerous with the humidity rise because of rains. Therefore . . .

TIP O' THE TROWEL to . . .

- **HOUSTON AREA GARDENERS** reporting heat stroke warnings on the ["Houston Gardening" Facebook page](#), including nose bleed or runny nose, NOT sweating when should be, headaches, vomiting, pain in heart area, chill bumps or shaking (as from cold), and more. DRINK LOTS OF WATER! More tips: [cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/heatrelillness.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/heatrelillness.html)
- And to **SUSAN CHAPPELL** who posted great preventative tips on the [Lake Jackson Garden Club Facebook Page](#), including:
 1. BEFORE you go out, prepare a big glass of ice-cold water or tea ready to drink when you come in.
 2. Follow the shade whenever possible; take frequent breaks.
 3. Keep ["cooling bandanas"](#) in the freezer and change frequently. (See Susan's Facebook tips - some cooling hats are not designed for our high humidity heat — [Consumer Reports](#)). Want more? [Click here](#)
- **TAKE A TIP FROM FELDER RUSHING** who, in his book, describes his Determined Independent Gardeners (DIGs) -- not as lazy gardeners -- but as those of an independent frame of mind which allows them to do as much & what they feel like doing, then stop, regardless of what "experts" say they need to be doing at any given seasonal point.
- As Felder puts it, his DIGs are *"quirky, odd-sock" gardeners who are "not rebellious nonconformists; they are merely other-motivated."* □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ His own descriptions of DIGs are the best advice possible for gardening in our heat waves (WILL be more to come!), They spread out chores, "doing a little as you go" and don't get uptight about hodge-lodge areas usually with *"an old queue of pots of stuff waiting to be planted (often in vain)"*
- And, my favorite ('cause I do qualify) *"...deal with weeds by just planting stuff that's taller."*

LIGULARIA, WHEREFORE ART THOU? Several readers have asked why no giant ligularia (aka leopard plant, tractor seat plant) in nurseries? **JOSHUA KORNEGAY** ([Joshua's Native Plants](#)) explains the small rooted plant plugs that originate in Asia are victims of supply-chain interruptions, increased popularity and their propensity to be very slow-growing. Joshua reports latest word is these will start showing up in nurseries in late June. So don't give up!



* * *

VITEX NIRVANA? Several readers, myself included, are awed by this spring's spectacular vitex tree displays. *(Mine pictured)*. **DR DAVID CREECH**, Stephen F. Austin Gardens Director, says it's possible they're just now fully recouping with vigorous energy and growth after 2021's hard freeze. But he reports blooming as spectacularly as ever are the numerous gorgeous-as-usual vitex varieties



at SFA's gardens in Nacogdoches, many now available in nurseries, thanks to SFA folks. [Take a garden tour!](#)

MEANWHILE, A TIP O' THE TROWEL to DR. CREECH, SFA professor emeritus of agriculture, who received the **2022 Outstanding International Horticulturist Award** from the American Society for Horticultural Science, to recognize "*his decades-long contributions to international horticultural science, education, research and outreach.*" Here's one example of his outreach: [Sharing our Texas natives with China.](#)



PS to LINDA WORKMAN in Katy, who's looking for a local Azalea Society, Texas has only one chapter of the National Azalea Society, headed by none other than Dr. Creech. azaleas.org/texas-chapter/.



SPEAKING OF TEXAS TREASURES & REMEMBERING MR. MOY: My ['Moy Grande' hibiscus](#), a Texas Star selection -- whose up-to-12" wide flower holds the "largest, open-faced hibiscus bloom in the world" title -- has returned after going dormant (or so I hoped!) even pre-2021's mega freeze.

I might not have noticed had **MIKE ROGERS** not reported his young bougainvillea starts (rooted last spring from a mature plant cuttings), have finally returned! Reminded me to check what I call "my Dr. Moy." Thanks, Mike!

San Antonio Botanic Garden's famous Research Director, the late [Ying Doon Moy](#) (he disliked the title "Dr.") put SABG on the horticulture world map with numerous incredible new varieties of old favorites. Click his link for listings.

POTPOURRI:

- **ALAN RAYMOND** had just about given up on his 10-year-old variegated pineapple, left uncovered in this past February's freeze, when a welcome green stalk has just appeared. And yes, sources say this unusual specimen does bear edible fruit. *Pictured: Alan's new stalk.*



- **IPHONE PHOTO ID.** I'm sure everyone else knows this, but just discovered my iPhone 8 has a built-in photo ID option! Click on picture in "Photos." At bottom is an "i" inside a circle (next to trash can). Click on it, then on 2nd line below photo that says: "*Look Up - plant >*" So far has been accurate in the few I've tested.
- **NOW, BELOW, MIKE HOWLETT'S** unique flora!

* * *

Spotlighting our . . . Local Experts

Lazy Gardener and Friends Newsletter



North American Pitcher Plants (Sarracenia), l to r, S. 'Maroon' without and with flash), S. x moorei and S. 'Scarlet Belle' (closeup and in group)

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

*SOME LOVE OUR GARDEN, OTHERS
DON'T -- BUT ALL ARE FASCINATING!*

By **MIKE HOWLETT**
PETFLYTRAP.COM

Gardening attracts folks mainly for three reasons: beauty, healthier food and wildlife value. But how about growing plants that turn the tables on the animal world and eat THEM?

As a retired herpetologist and longtime nature guide, especially for children's activities at Jesse Jones Park in Humble, I often heard adults comment about how easy it is to get kids interested in animals. But they were often clueless about how to get these same kids interested in plants!

Then I had an epiphany: Plants that EAT animals! The rest is history. Pretty soon I was hooked, and 25 years later, my wife Stephanie and I tend 20,000+ plants daily in our Spring area backyard and greenhouse, the base of PetFlyTrap.com, one of the largest online carnivorous plant nurseries in the nation, with the nation's most diverse selection in stock. Talk about a conversation starter!

We import nursery- or lab-grown plants from across the globe and clone them—a year or more process that results in thousands of plants. Intrigued about

growing some?

Over 850 species of carnivorous plants (CPs) are found from the Arctic Circle to the tropics. CPs have the ability to attract, capture and digest prey because they grow in acidic, nutrient-deficient soil. They die if planted in alkaline, nutrient-rich potting soil or in the ground.

Not all CPs have the same care requirements! Because of this, most CPs are not suited for in-ground home gardens. On the other hand, others like North American Pitcher Plants in the genus *Sarracenia* (***pictured at top***) are wonderful in outdoor raised beds, planters, and even in a properly prepared landscape bed.

With carnivorous plants found all over the world and in different habitats, if there's a place you want to grow a plant (indoors, outdoors, full sun, full shade), chances are carnivorous plant can be grown there. Carnivorous plants are non-specific: anything they can catch – pests and beneficial insects alike – will be digested.



Most CPs do not have well-known common names. Scientific names, such as *Sarracenia*, are often the only ones used. An exception: Venus Flytrap, seasonally found in nurseries and plant centers. Know the genus name? It's *Dionaea*.

(Pictured ready to snap shut on a meal!)

On the plus side, Venus Flytraps ARE suited for year-round outdoor growing in Houston. They grow and divide indefinitely with partial sun in summer, especially in the afternoon. However, they are not the monstrous plants Hollywood makes them out to be! Traps of the largest are little over two inches in length.

Because of their unique soil and habitat conditions, most CPs are very uncommon in the wild, and are usually illegal to collect. Even within a given genus, some varieties might be good choices for your growing conditions, while others might not.

For year-round outdoor growing, North American Pitcher Plants (genus *Sarracenia*) are most ideal, as they can handle our scorching summer heat/sun and moderate winter freezes.

Venus Flytraps (*Dionaea*) and certain sticky-leaved Sundews (*Drosera*), Butterworts (*Pinguicula*), and Bladderworts (*Utricularia*) can be grown outdoors in our area year-round as well. Many of the spectacular Tropical Pitcher Plants (*Nepenthes*) can also be grown outdoors in full shade, when temperatures are above 55°.



Sarracenias, left, in inground beds. Center: Sticky tentacles of the Sundew plant (Drosera) are a death sentence for pest insects. Right: With preparation, Pitcher Plants (Sarracenia) can be a unique and spectacular addition to the garden.

As with many horticultural businesses (and subsequent online ordering), we have seen skyrocketing interest in CPs; so much so, we have increased donations to some favorite nonprofit organizations such as [Hope Center Houston](#) and the [Watson Rare Native Plant Preserve](#). The Watson Preserve is a spectacular place to see native Texas carnivorous plants in the wild.

Hopefully this article helps you understand that carnivorous plants are fun, easy and rewarding to grow; but education about specific choices before planting is essential. But it's also easy to kill them if you try to grow them like mainstream house/garden plants. Whether indoors or outdoors, sun or shade, channel your interest into the ones that are best suited for your growing conditions/climate.

Working with the plants is certainly fun, but as Stephanie will tell you, our larger goal is to teach about wetland loss and preservation, and pull more children into loving plants, by first grabbing their attention with the carnivorous aspects.

* * *

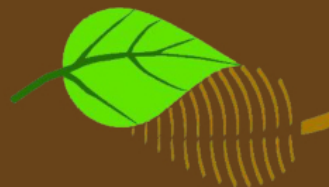
EDITOR'S NOTE: Free PetFlyTrap.com events on the agenda:

- **Sat., June 18. 9 am-4 pm: Free educational opportunities and curbside shopping at PetFlytrap.com. 3826 E. Mossy Oaks Rd. in Spring. orders@petflytrap.com, 281-433-3290**
- **Sat., June 25. 9 am: Carnivorous Plant Lecture and Tour by Mike Howlett, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield, Humble. 713-274-4160**

* * *



John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 198

A rethinking is occurring in gardening across the country as the quality of our food supply continues to decline and be more contaminated with toxic chemicals.

More and more folks are growing herbs, especially “Lawn Herbs” like Dandelions. Some states are paying folks up to \$400/home to replace their grass with wildflowers and native herbs.

Using Dandelion as an example, not only is one of its roles in nature to help fix soil problems, it is also nutrient rich. Every part of the plant from the flower to the roots are packed with nutrients.

The root is packed with soluble fiber that helps our gut microbiome, the flowers contain polyphenols that help prevent blood clots, reduce blood sugar levels, and lower risk of heart disease. Animal studies have shown that dandelions help prevent constipation. Other studies on mice have found that dandelions extract significantly reduced cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

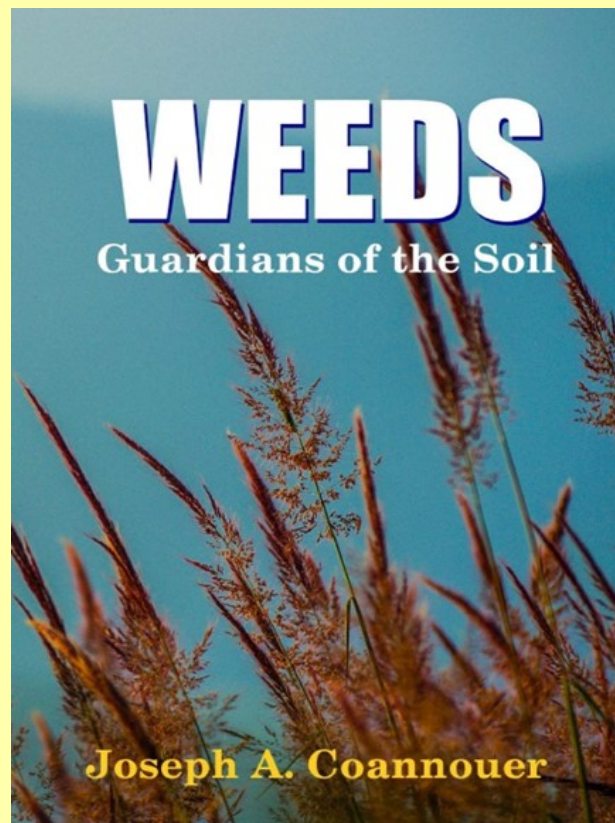
Cell culture studies have shown that Dandelions are great for the skin and leaf and flower extracts help protect skin cells exposed to ultraviolet radiation. Dandelion root extract has been shown to increase the generation of new skin cells which slows skin aging.

Dandelions can be consumed raw or cooked or made into a tea, a real super food that God gives us for free. Life Extension (2022).

All plants we call weeds have a purpose, from food for some life form or have another role in nature like the ability to fix soil problems. The magazine Acres, USA had a nice article on this subject a few months ago.

For example, Foxtail and Fall Panicum indicate a degenerated soil structure where the soil is holding too much water. Once Foxtail and Panicum have done their job in rebuilding soil structure then other weeds (Lambsquarters, Pigweed, etc.) will come in to rebalance minerals, soil pH and add organic matter.

The article was written by Joseph Coannouer, and I just ordered his book shown below.



More and more people are growing their own food from vegetables to fruits and

herbs as they are more nutritious and taste better than conventional food from the grocery store.

However, there is an additional issue that most of us do not think about when buying food. From the Earthjustice Newsletter:

“The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has chosen not to ban chemicals from food packaging that have been linked to serious health impacts including breast cancer, diabetes, asthma and brain development in children.

The FDA’s decision, announced Thursday, came in response to two petitions sent by environmental and public health groups in 2016 asking the agency to ban phthalates from use in food packaging and food production equipment.

“FDA’s decision recklessly green-lights ongoing contamination of our food with phthalates, putting another generation of children at risk of life-altering harm to their brain development and exacerbating health inequities experienced by Black and Latina women,” Earthjustice attorney Katherine O’Brien said in a statement.

Earthjustice was one of the groups behind the petitions, alongside Environmental Defense Fund, Center for Environmental Health, Center for Food Safety, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Clean Water Action, Consumer Federation of America, Improving Kids’ Environment, Learning Disabilities Association of America, Breast Cancer Prevention Partners and Natural Resources Defense Council.

The groups are concerned about phthalates because they are endocrine-disrupting chemicals that have been linked to a variety of health impacts including birth defects, infertility, miscarriage, breast cancer, diabetes, and asthma. Studies have shown that they can leach from packaging into food and drink. They can also transfer to a pregnant woman’s fetus via her blood, according to the Environmental Working Group.

Childhood exposure is especially dangerous because phthalates have been associated with impaired brain development and behavioral disorders. Indeed, Congress decided that many of these chemicals were too dangerous for children’s toys more than 10 years ago, Earthjustice pointed out.

There is also an environmental justice component to the problem: people of color and low-income people are more likely to face health impacts because of phthalate exposure. This may be because marginalized communities are more likely to consume fast food, according to The Hill.”

These chemicals are also used in a range of products from pesticides, cosmetics, to plastic bottles. These chemicals also bioaccumulate in sewage sludge which is applied as fertilizer to many food crops where they are absorbed, which we then eat making the issue worse. Additionally, many companies compost the sewage sludge concentrating these toxic chemicals, which is then sold to unsuspecting customers for their lawns and gardens.

I attended the lecture sponsored by OHBA last night which featured Arden Anderson M.D. whom linked so many of our current health issues to hormone disruption caused by these types of chemicals.

There is also a paper on how common chemicals lower children's IQ on the website Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health (part of Columbia University Medical School):

Prenatal Exposure to Common Chemicals Linked to Lower IQ

Children exposed during pregnancy to elevated levels of two common chemicals found in the home-di-n-butyl phthalate (DnBP) and di-isobutyl phthalate (DiBP)-had an IQ score, on average, more than six points lower than children exposed at lower...

[Read more](#)

www.publichealth.columbia.edu

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LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

SUBMITTING EVENTS? PLEASE READ!

- *Only events submitted specifically to LG&F calendar are used*
 - *Use our exact format, type into email, no pdfs/jpgs/flyers*
 - *3 lines max per entry. We will edit down if you don't.*
 - *Too long links activated by word "Details."*
 - *Submit: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. Check your published entry!*
- EVENTS ARE ON-SITE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED***

TUES., JUN. 7: ALL ABOUT PEPPERS: GROWING & CARE OF FOR A SUCCESSFUL BOUNTY (Zoom) by **TERESA SEE**, 7-8pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

THURS., JUN. 9: OKRA OBSESSION: GROWING, BREEDING, AND UTILIZING THIS INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR by **ROBERT "SKIP" RICHTER**, 10-11am. Urban Harvest event.

THURS., JUNE 9: THINGS I WISH I HAD LEARNED SOONER by **BAXTER WILLIAMS**, (on site & virtual) 7-8:30 pm, St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 1819 Heights Blvd. Free. Houston Rose Society event. meet.goto.com/151838133

THURS., JUNE 9: HEIRLOOM GARDENING: YESTERDAY'S PLANTS FOR TODAY'S GARDENS by **GREG GRANT**, 10am, St. John's UCC, 516 North Colorado, Burton. Register: herbsocietypioneer.org; 281-660-6071

SAT., JUNE 11: PLUMERIA SOCIETY SHOW & SALE, 9am-1pm, 5002 NASA Parkway, Bay Area Community Center, Seabrook, theplumeriasociety.org, 281-796-7185

SAT., JUNE 11: COMPANION PLANTING FOR HIGH DENSITY GARDENS (Zoom) by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 9:30-11:30am. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

THURS., JUNE 11: GARDENING WITH YOUTH, 9am-noon, 9020 Airport Rd Conroe. Montgomery County Master Gardener event. Register: MCMGA.com

WED., JUN.15: CULTURAL CONNECTIONS--ROSELLE HIBISCUS: PRODUCTION TO MARKETING (Zoom) by **STEDMAN DOUGLAS**, 6-7pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

TUES., JUN. 21: SUMMER EDIBLE ACADEMY by **CAROL BURTON, KELLIE KARAVIAS, & GARDEN EDUCATORS**, 9am-3pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

SAT., JUNE 25, CAPTIVATING CARNIVOROUS PLANTS. 9am-noon, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](http://MercerBotanicGardens), 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble. 713-274-4160.

WED., JUN. 29: MARKET GARDENING: THE MONTROSE URBAN FOOD FARM (Zoom) by **SCOTT HOWARD**, 7-8pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

SAT., JUL. 9: LOW VOLUME IRRIGATION (Zoom) by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 9:30-11:30am. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

TUES., JULY 12: GROWING PLUMERIAS, (Zoom & in-person), 7pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavillion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Plumeria Society of America event. theplumeriasociety.org; 281-796-7185

TUES., JULY 12: INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT FOR URBAN GARDENERS (Zoom) by **NATHAN HERMOND**, 7-8pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

SAT., JUL.16: STARTING FALL TOMATOES, ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW! by **MEG TAPP**, 10-11:30am, UHI Patio Garden at Headquarters. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

TUES., JUL.19: POLLINATOR GARDENING: HOW TO CREATE A

BUTTERFLY GARDEN (Zoom) by **SHERRY CRUSE**, 7-8:30pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

SAT., JULY 23: PLUMERIA SOCIETY SHOW & SALE, 5002 NASA Parkway, 9am-1pm, Bay Area Community Center, Seabrook. theplumeriasociety.org, 281-796-7185

SAT., JUL.23: FALL ORGANIC GARDENING (Zoom) by **BOB RANDALL & CAROL BURTON**, 9:30-12:30pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

TUES., AUG.2: GROWING GREAT TOMATOES FOR FALL (Zoom) by **SHERRY CRUSE**, 7-8:30pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

TUES., AUG.9: A RETURN TO WELLNESS (Zoom) by **TAMIKA CASTON-MILLER**, 6-7:30pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

SAT., AUG.13: FALL WORKSHOP: FRUIT TREE CARE (Zoom) by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 9:30am-11:30am. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

TUES., AUG. 16: GARDENING FOR SOIL, COMPOST AND MULCH by **SHERRY CRUSE**, 7-8:30pm, Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

TUES., OCT. 11: GROWING PLUMERIAS, (Zoom & in-person), 7pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavillion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Plumeria Society of America event. theplumeriasociety.org; 281-796-7185

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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. The name, she says, is not just fun, it's true.

Brenda's gradual sideways step from reporter into gardening writing 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.

Brenda became a Harris County Master Gardener and, over the years, served on the boards of many Greater Houston area horticulture organizations. She 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 Assistant 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.

