



June-17-2022 | Issue 440

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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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WEED OR TREASURE? WATER INTELLIGENTLY SHARE HEAT WINNERS

"A weed is but an unloved flower."

*"CUSTER & OTHER POEMS" by ELLA WHEELER WILCOX
(1850-1919), American author and poet*

By **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

OUR SUMMER SOLSTICE begins at 4:13 am, Tues., June 21 -- in case you'd like to celebrate the "longest day & shortest night" on our global homesite.

Whether you do or not, at least know many plants use the length of nights to trigger flowering/fruitle hormone releases. They'll be receiving almost six hours more sunlight now than at the same point during the Winter Solstice.

While this solstice may not affect us, it's a serious matter to many of our native flora and the fauna who

utilize these plants for food, shelter, etc. For example, some bloomers, like black-eyed Susans, are long-day plants, basically flowering nonstop between July and September, providing late season nectar for pollinating insects and animals.



* * *

Most questions coming in now have to do with either dying or insect-eaten plant leaves, flowers and/or fruit. Heat is certainly a main trigger, but common sense often is being ignored. Take watering — overhead sprinklers can lose up to half their potential moisture to evaporation. These should be used mainly in the VERY early morning. Even then, on an exceptionally hot day, they may contribute to leaf scorching.

Overhead watering usually soaks only upper soil levels, from which moisture is lost to evaporation as soil heats up. Even more harmful, tender new roots will grow up toward these temporarily moist, heated soil levels.



Busy lives often dictate watering methods. But if you have a choice, ideal is either a regular, or soaker, hose face down on the soil, with slow-dripping water aimed solely at the plant base. Slow watering, so moisture has time to soak as deeply down as possible, encourages roots to grow downward where heat and drought won't threaten their productive health and natural defenses against insects and disease. Both these enemies are attracted first to weakened plants, flowers and fruit that won't have the energy to fight off invasions. Survival of the fittest.

IF WATERING IS HARD to fit into your calendar, consider replacing wimps with plants that won't be tortured to death by heat such as we're experiencing now. Predictions of climatic extremes (heat and cold) are being proven correct enough to make these an important consideration in garden planning.

The kindest thing we with successful TOUGH plants can do at this point is to share the same sort of information we shared earlier on plants that survived our extreme cold winter spells without any protection at all.

What in your yard is thriving and blooming normally in spite of having had **NO WATERING AT ALL**, except for natural rainwater? (***Email your "Houston Summer Toughs to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com***)

I'll kick it off with some in my yard. I water what's convenient to water when mood strikes and don't waste time & energy on plants I know will survive & bloom without my help. Here are some plants (*mostly shown with file photos, not mine*) that, in my yard, are flowering now with no watering since our last rainfall.



L to r, top row: cannas, coral fountain plant, cosmos, daylilies, Mexican orchid tree. Bottom row: giant white milkweed, plumbago, Rangoon creeper, vitex and red yucca. (Note: that IS my giant white milkweed -- 2021 photo).

NOTE: WATER ESTABLISHED TREES with canopies at the dripline (where rainwater hits the ground as it cascades off the outer canopy of limbs and leaves). [A&M sheet on watering trees \(pdf download\)](#)

* * *

WILT — SIGN OF DYING OR JUST A SMART

COOKIE? Plants do wilt on purpose in very hot weather to reduce exposed surfaces, from which they can lose a lot of moisture. The less exposed-to-direct-sun surface, the more internal moisture they can conserve. Plants use moisture for many reasons; one is to provide support so limbs and leaves look "perky" (aka healthy). But survival tops beauty and even seed production.



How to tell if a plant is wilting on purpose or really dying? Check wilted plants late in evening or early in the morning. As temps drop, plants may open up to breathe more freely. If still really wilted early in the morning, yes, they're stressed, maybe beyond redemption, maybe not. Watering's important, but so is sun protection, especially from intense afternoon rays. Try erecting shade coverings, especially from about 11am to 3+pm.

* * *

DIANNE WELLS in West University was somewhat sad to see last week's link to [Texas A&M picture guide of our worst lawn weeds](#). She wrote: "I was sorry to see some of my favorite wildflowers designated weeds ... evening primrose, frogfruit, etc." (Pictured: frogfruit. right. Below, Dianne's pre-mow spring evening primrose display!)



I love Dianne's pink evening primrose-filled lawn (pictured) and my transplant some from my garden to the lawn.. Remember, "weed" is just a word for



a particular plant someone doesn't want where it's growing. The "weed" designation is all in the gardener's mind, since we alone make the final decision on which plants we want to "cultivate" and which we want to "go away!" One gardener's "weed" is another gardener's "treasure!"

* * *

TIP O' THE TROWEL TO ...

- **TREES FOR HOUSTON.** This nonprofit group is celebrating the end of its 2021-2022 planting season by shattering its single-season record planting of 60,035 trees. The total 200 tree plantings and 71 tree distribution events represents three times TFH's annual total of 23,000 trees added to the Greater Houston area's environment. This was achieved, of course, with the support of donors, volunteers, and community partners. Want to know how you can support, help or benefit from future tree giveaways? Check them out at treesforhouston.org.

ONLINE PLANT INVENTORIES for local sales are a great resource for learning about hardy plants for our area. See calendar below for updates, but two to get you started:

- [THE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS/HOUSTON CHAPTER WILDSCAPES WORKSHOP & PLANT SALE](#)'s inventory list is always an eye-opening introduction to landscape-friendly native plants, often long before they hit the retail markets. Although the Sept. 10, 2022 Workshop is still in the planning stages, the plant & book inventories are already posted (*alho subject to change*). Onsite speakers and virtual opportunities are planned. [Details](#).
- [THE 80TH BULB & PLANT MART](#), Oct. 13-15, 2022, has posted its [Preorder Link](#) for bulbs. Talk about a trip through bulb paradise!



Picture above from Wildscapes inventory: Indigofera miniata (Scarlet Pea, Coastal Indigo, Texas Indigo, Western Indigo)

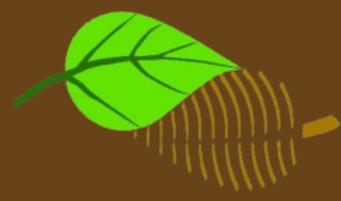
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*Brenda Beust Smith's column in the LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER is based on her 40+ years as Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener
Email: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com*

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John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 200

Last week we were talking about fungi and their importance to soil and plant health. A reader (Joan M.) wrote in with a recommendation on a documentary on Netflix called "Fantastic Fungi". My wife and I watched it this past week and the photography is spectacular. My wife is not a gardener and she loved it. Thanks for the recommendation.

Speaking of fungi, I read a paper last week on a common fungus called *Candida albicans*, a type of yeast. This fungus is all around us, in the soils, in the air we breathe, and lives in our digestive tract. The paper found it exists in two forms, one that is harmless and one that can kill you.

The researchers found that there are chemicals in the mucus that the body produces called glycans (a complex sugar molecule) that prevent the fungus from turning into a bad guy (changing it from a round yeast form to a toxic form growing hyphae).

The researchers at MIT also found that our mucus works on other pathogens like *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Staphylococcus aureus*. Nature Chemical Biology 2022.

This work illustrates the importance of eating nutrient dense food, free of toxic chemicals. The best way to do this is to grow as much as possible our own vegetables, fruits and herbs in organic mineral rich soil, so our immune system has the tools it needs to protect us.

By now we are all aware of the plight of our honeybees called CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder) that has been linked to pesticides especially neonicotinoids.

Our native bees are also responsible for a lot of the pollination of our fruits and vegetables. The American Bumblebee has experienced an 89% decline over the last 20 years and some species over 91% decline and are now listed on the endangered species list.

Researchers at the University of Konstanz in Germany have discovered one of the reasons. They found that even very low exposure to the herbicide glyphosate (found in Round-Up) was the cause. Even though the exposure was sub-lethal as it did not kill them, it caused the bees to lose their ability to regulate temperature in their colonies which prevented larva from developing into adult bees.

I have known about insect decline from Monarchs to Honeybees, but I was

unaware how bad it was on a world-wide basis for all insects until I read a book called:

“**The Insect Crisis – THE FALL of the TINY EMPIRES That RUN the WORLD**”, by Oliver Milman, 2022, W.W Norton and Company, ISBN: 978-1324006596.

From the cover:

“A devastating examination of how collapsing insect populations worldwide threaten everything from wild birds to the food on our plate.

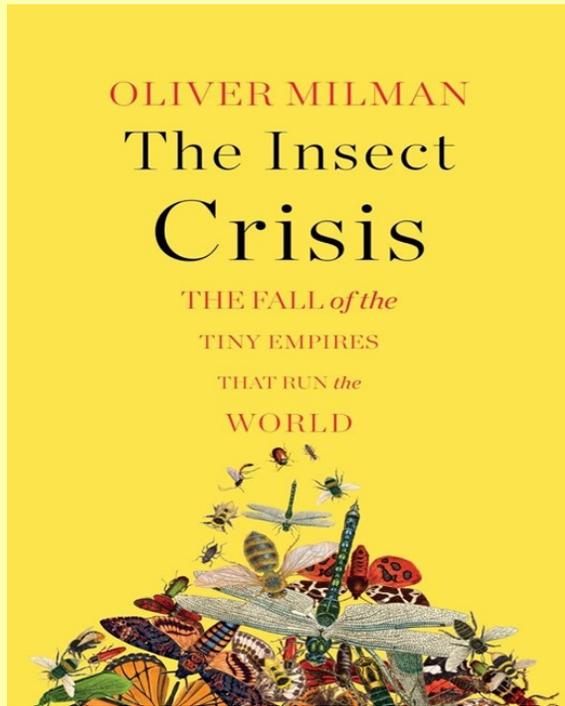
From ants scurrying under leaf litter to bees able to fly higher than Mount Kilimanjaro, insects are everywhere. Three out of every four of our planet’s known animal species are insects. In *The Insect Crisis*, acclaimed journalist Oliver Milman dives into the torrent of recent evidence that suggests this kaleidoscopic group of creatures is suffering the greatest existential crisis in its remarkable 400-million-year history. What is causing the collapse of the insect world? Why does this alarming decline pose such a threat to us? And what can be done to stem the loss of the miniature empires that hold aloft life as we know it?

With urgency and great clarity, Milman explores this hidden emergency, arguing that its consequences could even rival climate change. He joins the scientists tracking the decline of insect populations across the globe, including the soaring mountains of Mexico that host an epic, yet dwindling, migration of monarch butterflies; the verdant countryside of England that has been emptied of insect life; the gargantuan fields of U.S. agriculture that have proved a killing ground for bees; and an offbeat experiment in Denmark that shows there aren’t that many bugs splattering into your car windshield these days. These losses not only further tear at the tapestry of life on our degraded planet; they imperil everything we hold dear, from the food on our supermarket shelves to the medicines in our cabinets to the riot of nature that thrills and enlivens us. Even insects we may dread, including the hated cockroach, or the stinging wasp, play crucial ecological roles, and their decline would profoundly shape our own story.

By connecting butterfly and bee, moth and beetle from across the globe, the full scope of loss renders a portrait of a crisis that threatens to upend the workings of our collective history. Part warning, part celebration of the incredible variety of insects, *The Insect Crisis* is a wake-up call for us all.”

Comment: If this decline of insects and environmental destruction continues, it will make the famines and plagues described in the Bible a reality.

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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***

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

SAT., JUNE 25: POLLINATOR WORKSHOP AND BIOBLITZ. Native Bees by **MICHAEL ECKENFELS**, 8am-noon, Lawther-Deer Park Prairie. Register: Della_Barbato@TexasPrairie.org

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

THURS., JULY 7: IDENTIFYING PEST & DISEASE ISSUES IN THE GARDEN (virtual) by **PAUL WINSKI**, 10am, Free. Harris County Master Gardener event. Register: homegrown2022.eventbrite.com

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

MON., JULY 11, FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING (virtual) by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10-11:30am. Free. Houston Community College event. Register: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops

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/

THURS., JULY 12: CHASING A DREAM by **STEVE ROUSSELL** (virtual & in person), 7-8:30pm, St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 1819 Heights Blvd. Houston Rose Society event. Free. (Virtual: meet.goto.com/917509069)

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/

MON., JULY 18: GENOA FRIENDSHIP GARDEN DAY & PLANT SALE 8:30-11am, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Harris County Master Gardener event.

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/

TUES., JULY 19, FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING (virtual) by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 11am-noon, free. Harris County Public Library event via Facebook Live: facebook.com/harriscountyp/levents/

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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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.

