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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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BRENDA NOTE: Tidbits from favorite columns (with update editing!) while I help my husband recover from West Nile Virus.



WINTER BLOOMERS NIGHT LIGHT WONDERS

By Brenda Beust Smith

Deany Meinke in Southwest Houston asked for some low-growing, shade tolerant, winter color replacement ideas for a front yard planting of caladiums. As pretty as caladiums are, they usually don't survive (in any significant numbers) our erratic winters.

One difference in winter, of course, is many trees lose leaves. So shady spots in summer might not be shady in January & February.

(THE LATE) LINDA GAY, retired Mercer Botanic Garden Director and popular garden club speaker, once listed these winter lovers for me:

- Snowflakes (*Leucojum aestivale*) — delightful bulb with beautiful dark green foliage and spring flowers.
- Violas (violet family) — great low-growing color, come in white, blue and many other colors.
- Columbine, especially Benary's 'Spring Magic' series
- Cyclamen are also a great winter shade color!

A Spring Branch gardener also endorses cyclamens, as well as

- Encore Autumn Ember azaleas in east-facing flowerbeds bloom nearly year-round.

Any more cold weather color to recommend? lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

Photo at top of column, l to r, snowflakes, violas and 'Spring Magic' columbines
Below, cyclamens (garden or container) and 'Autumn Ember' Encore azaleas



PERSONAL NOTE Cyclamen are especially great for lazy gardeners. But these are strictly cold-weather blooming annuals -- won't survive our summers. They tend to be a little more expensive, but produce some of the longest lasting, most eye-catching color you can use here in winter. Mercer Botanic Gardens plants gorgeous cyclamen beds (*Mercer's pictured right*) for winter color. These lasting until late spring and are hardy in containers on patios. (2022 UPDATE: Don't miss Mercer's Dec. 10, 2022 "[Holiday in the Gardens](#)". Click for details

* * *



IF LIGHTING UP YOUR GARDEN AT NIGHT is on your 2022 wish list -- or just want to have a unique holiday treat -- local many [public gardens and nature centers](#) are putting on their festive best -- plants turned into sparkling Yule wonders, that can be real eye-openers for area plant lovers. (*If you know of others not on above link, be glad to share here.*)

Houston Botanic Garden's internationally-acclaimed exhibit *Lightscape* is a unique treat on its own, especially the eye- popping "Cathedral." But don't overlook how they've used lighting to highlight the live plants throughout the gardens.



Look for the delightful live banana tree fruits, and gorgeous lights-enhanced palms and bamboos as you wander through "Neon Tree," "Fire Garden,"

"Nautilus Forest" and (pictured here) the new, exclusive to Texas Bluebonnet display. Houston Botanic Garden is located east of I-45 South on Park Place Blvd., at 1 Botanic Lane.

hbg.org; [@houstonbotanic](https://www.instagram.com/houstonbotanic). Facebook: [@houstonbotanicgarden](https://www.facebook.com/houstonbotanicgarden)

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK BELOW FOR UPDATED CALENDAR EVENTS!

*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 # 221

Since I love soils I thought I would share this with you. The heart of any successful gardening program is getting healthy soil as we have discussed numerous times. The link below connects one to a short 6-minute introduction to the soil food web which is the heart of an organic garden.

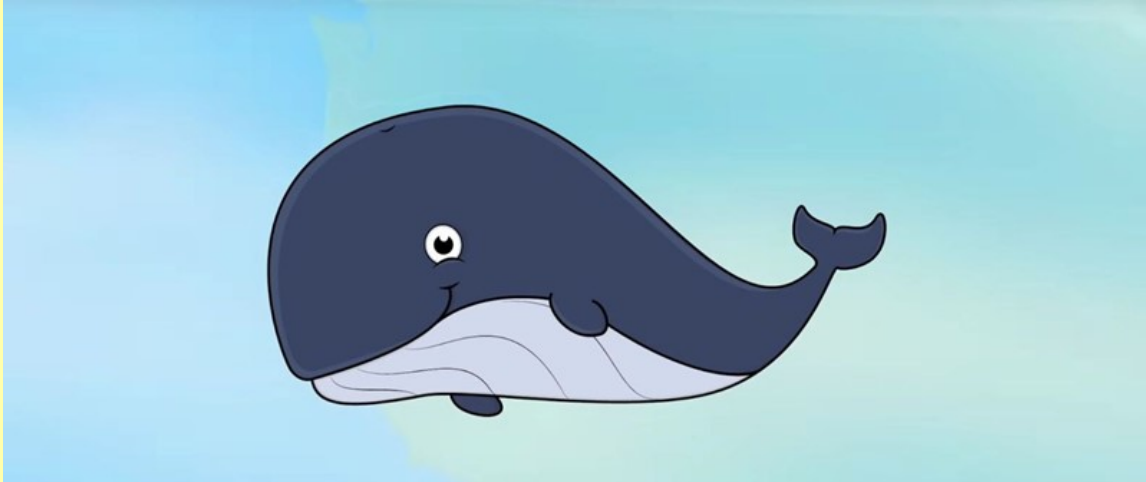
From the GMO/Toxin Free USA newsletter (info@gmofreeusa.org):

World Soil Day is an international day to celebrate soil. Held annually on December 5th, the day is meant to focus attention on the importance of healthy soil and to advocate for the sustainable management of soil resources.



We cannot celebrate World Soil Day without an understanding of the **Soil Food Web**.

So for this World Soil Day, we bring you an **Introduction to the Soil Food Web**. The information and short videos were created by Dr. Elaine Ingham, one of the world's top soil scientists and healthy soil advocates, and her Soil Food Web School.



What is the biggest living organism in the world? Nope. Not a whale. Find out what it is here: <https://toxinfreeusa.org/education/soil-food-web>

For those interested Dr. Elaine Ingham will be lecturing at an OHBA educational event on Friday April 14. For those that attend the seminar there will be an additional event on Saturday that will be available IF one attended the lecture on Friday. For additional information see www.ohbaonline.org

In a discussion the other day the subject of Boron (B) came up in two different conversations.

The first was a plant tissue analysis that showed the plant has a calcium deficiency, hence the person had been adding a lot of calcium amendments and the off color of the plant became worse.

The second was a person whom had a routine physical and the test showed a decrease in bone density and the blood test showed a lack on boron.

So how is boron linked and why is it important?

We will start with the second question. From our study of all the elements found in soil last year we know the following:

Boron has beneficial effects on bone and joint strength in humans and is essential to promoting strong healthy bones. It is estimated that 75% of the USA population is boron deficient. In humans, boron has an important role in mineral and hormone metabolism, cell membrane function, and enzyme's function. Boron affects osteoporosis, heart trouble, diabetes, and senility.

Its deficient effects are more marked when vitamin D₃ and magnesium (Mg) are also deficient. Studies have shown that it protects men against deadly prostate cancer (it selectively kills prostate cancer cells while leaving healthy cells unharmed) as it lowers PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen), elevated PSA has been found to be causative factor in prostate cancer progression.

Boron has been found to fight inflammation and decrease joint swelling as it inhibits lipoxxygenase (LOX) an enzyme that triggers the inflammatory cascade to increase inflammatory leukotrienes.

Most conventionally grown foods do not provide enough boron (Life Extension, November 2015 pp. 33-38). I looked at many artificial fertilizers on the internet and only one contained boron which explains the deficiency in our food supply. An article in Life Extension (April 2018) summarizes studies that found boron also helps prevent lung and cervix cancers. Mice fed a boron deficient diet had 63% reduction in osteoblasts which are the bone making cells. Boron was found to help prevent many forms of cancer from getting started. A lack of boron is associated with osteoporosis, poor memory and concentration, weak muscles, and ageing skin.

A study from Turkey compared women living in areas of Turkey that have boron rich soil to areas that are boron poor. Women living in areas of Turkey that have boron rich soil did not have a single incident of cervical cancer. "Boron interferes with the life cycle of the human papillomavirus (HPV) which is a contributing factor to 95% of all cervical cancers."

A study by The University of Texas at the MD Anderson Cancer Center found increased boron intake was associated with a lower risk of lung cancer in postmenopausal women whom were taking hormone replacement therapy.

Boron regulates the absorption of calcium, and it is used in making estrogen. A lack of boron leads to increased menopause symptoms in women and a lack of testosterone in men.

The November 2021 issue of Life Extension has a nice summary of the benefits of adequate boron.

In the first question above on the plant tissue test, it was not interpreted correctly. There was plenty of calcium in the soil but it was not getting into the plant due to a lack of boron in the soil. Hence, applying more calcium rich amendments made the problem worse.

Boron is characterized as a metalloid which means it has properties between a metal and a non-metal. Many forms of boron minerals or ions are readily absorbable by plants. Boron is an essential element for microbial and plant growth; however, all the functions and relations are not fully understood.

Mycorrhizal plants (90% of all plants) have a greater need for boron than non-mycorrhizal plants. A shortage of boron in the soil is associated with increased insect and fungal damage, and stunting in some plant species while other species seem unaffected. Boron deficiency is often associated with the death of the terminal bud, light green coloring, splintering, or cracking of tubers, root tips swollen and discolored, leaves eventually become brittle and may curl with yellow spotting.

An adequate amount of available boron in the soil is a strong disease fighter since it helps the plants immune system and become more resistant to disease. It is associated with the prevention of many plant problems; cracked

stems in celery, internal cork in apples, black heart in beets and turnips, yellowing of alfalfa leaves, etc.

Other signs of boron deficiency are; tips of growing plant turn inward and dies, buds become light green, roots are brown in center, flowers do not form, leaves are small crinkled deformed with irregular areas of discoloration. Boron deficiency is most likely to occur on sandy soils, soils low in organic matter and in areas of high rainfall or frequent watering.

This element is involved with carbohydrate transportation, it is required for certain physiological processes such as enzyme and co-enzyme systems. Boron influences plant growth in many ways but they not fully understood. It also helps plants use nitrogen efficiently.

Studies have found that it is associated with the translocation of sugars in plants hence closely related to quality and taste of foods. Boron regulates flowering and fruiting, cell division, salt absorption, hormone movement and pollen germination, carbohydrate metabolism, water use, nitrogen assimilation and other aspects of plant growth.

Boron interacts in the uptake of other nutrients by plants (like calcium above) as it influences membrane permeability and cell colloids. This element is associated with energy transformation reactions, carbohydrate transport, blossom retention, and critical for root elongation.

Note: Most artificial fertilizers make the soil too acidic, hence conventional farmers use lime (calcium oxide) to neutralize the acidity. This greatly decreases the nutritional density of our food as too much calcium (lime) will induce boron deficiency in acid soils.

Boron is not found in nature in a pure form as it oxidizes rapidly. Boron is often found in nature as boric oxide (B_2O_3) or borate salts often formed by evaporating seawater or in ocean deposits like greensand.

Sources:

Sedimentary deposits of borate salts, in feldspars and micas, which are common minerals in some clay soils, igneous rock sands like granite and basalt.

Re-mineralizer is a good source as it is a blend of granite, basalt, and greensand.

* * *

A lot of folks have asked for heirloom and non-GMO seeds. We listened, and now we offer Bentley seeds!



VEGETABLE/HERB/FLOWER SEEDS

NON-GMO, HEIRLOOM, OPEN POLLINATED

- | | |
|--|---|
| Forget Me Not-Firmament-Cynoglossum amabile | Eggplant, Black Beauty Seed Packets - 22 |
| Marigold-Crackerjack Mixed-Tagetes erecta | Kale, Dwarf Siberian Seed Packets - 594 |
| Morning Glory Mixed Colors-Ipomoea | Lettuce, Simpson's Curled Seed Packets - 29 |
| Sunflower-Mammoth-Helianthus annuus | Lettuce, Parris Island Romaine Seed Packets - 452 |
| Sunflower, All Sorts Mix | Lettuce, Buttercrunch Seed Packets - 24 |
| Zinnia-Lilliput Mixed Colors-Zinnia elegans | Mustard, Southern Giant Curled Seed Packets - 30 |
| Basil, Genovese Seed Packets - 3 | Onion, Evergreen Bunching Seed Packets - 32 |
| Catnip Seed Packets - 63 | Onion, Sweet Yellow Seed Packets - 589 |
| Garlic Chives Seed Packets - 556 | Pepper, Long Red Cayenne Seed Packets - 38 |
| Cilantro, Coriander Seed Packets - 66 | Pepper, California Wonder Seed Packets - 37 |
| Dill, Long Island Mammoth Seed Packets - 68 | Peas, Sugar Ann Snap Seed Packets - 36 |
| Parsley, Plain Italian Seed Packets - 73 | Pumpkin, Jack O'Lantern Seed Packets - 40 |
| Arugula, Rouquette Seed Packets - 567 | Pumpkin, Small Sugar 'NEW' |
| Beans, Provider Seed Packets - 5 | Radish, Cherry Belle Seed Packets - 41 |
| Beets, Detroit Seed Packets - 8 | Radish, Sparkler Seed Packets - 43 |
| Brussel Sprouts-Long Island Improved | Spinach, Bloomsdale Savoy Seed Packets - 44 |
| Cabbage, Pak Choi 'NEW' | Squash, Acorn Seed Packets - 45 |
| Cabbage, Copenhagen Market Seed Packets - 10 | Squash, Yellow Crookneck Seed Packets - 48 |
| Cantaloupe, Hale's Best Seed Packets - 12 | Squash, Zucchini Seed Packets - 49 |
| Carrot, Nantes Seed Packets - 14 | Tomato, Ace |
| Celery, Tall Utah 'NEW' | Tomato, Cherry |
| Corn-Golden Bantam 8 Row | Turnip, Purple White Globe Seed Packets - 57 |
| Corn, Pearls & Gold Seed Packets - 18 | Watermelon, Sugar Baby Seed Packets - 60 |
| Cucumber, Boston Pickling Seed Packets - 19 | |
| Cucumber, Marketmore 76 Seed Packets - 20 | |

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LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

SUBMITTING EVENTS? PLEASE READ!

- *Only events submitted specifically for 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 published entry!*
- *Always check to make sure event is listed. if not let Brenda know*

EVENTS ARE ON-SITE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

SAT., DEC. 10: GOING NUTS FOR PECANS! 2-4pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension, 4102-B Main St, La Marque. Free but register:

<https://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/>

SAT., DEC. 10: GROWING TOMATOES FROM SEED, 9-11:30am, Galveston County AgriLife Extension, 4102-B Main St, La Marque. Free but register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/

SAT., DEC. 10: GOING NUTS FOR PECANS!, 2-4Pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension, 4102-B Main St, La Marque. Free but register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/

SAT., DEC. 10: MERCER BOTANIC GARDENS' HOLIDAY IN THE GARDENS, 10am-4pm, 22306 Aldine-Westfield Rd., Humble. Free. Friends of Mercer Gardeners/The Mercer Society event. info@themerchersociety.org

FRI., DEC.16, WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE by **URBAN HARVEST**, 8am-3:30pm, \$25. United Way of Greater Houston, 50 Waugh Dr. Register: urbanharvest.networkforgood.com/events/47909-women-in-agriculture-conference

— 2023 —

(Make sure later-2023 events are carved-in-stone before submitting. Complete details a must.)

WED., JAN.4: "NATIVE PLANTS AND HOW TO KNOW THEM" by **DIANE HUMES**/ 9:30-11:00am, Webster Presbyterian Church, 201 NASA pkwy, Webster. Gardeners By The Bay event. gbtb.org

SAT., JAN. 28 — SUN., AUG 13: STEVE TOBIN'S EXPLORING NATURE'S NETWORKS EXHIBIT OPENS. Houston Botanic Garden, One Botanic Lane. Ticket info: hbg.org/visit/

TUES., FEB. 14: NCARBON'S NATURE BASED CREDIT PROGRAM: AN EARTH BASED, EARTH CHANGING CONCEPT by **JIM BLACKBURN**, 1-2pm, United Way of Greater Houston 50 Waugh Dr. Free. Crestwood Garden Club event.

SAT.-SUN., MAY 5-7: ANNUAL SPRING BROMELIAD SOCIETY/HOUSTON SALE, 8am, Judson Robinson, Jr Community Center, 2020 Herman Dr. Free.

SAT, & SUN., OCT 14&15: 2023 SOUTHWEST BROMELIAD GUILD SHOW & SALE, 8am, Holiday Inn 18530 State Highway 249. Free.

NOTE: We do NOT pick up events from other newsletters or general PR releases. See submission policy above calendar.

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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.



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