



Dec-15-2022 | Issue 466

Nature's Way Resources is proud to produce & email you this free weekly newsletter. We have no ads, but sponsors do graciously help support this project as a public service. Please note their names below & show your gratitude for this free service by patronizing their businesses! To become a sponsor, call (936) 273-1200

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

[Click here to join our email list](#)

[CLICK HERE](#) for PDFs OF PAST LG&F NEWSLETTERS

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



The color of springtime is flowers; the color of winter is in our imagination. -- Terri Guillemets, quotation anthologist

Beg to differ, Terri . . .

WINTER FLOWERS PROVIDE WONDERFUL COLOR HERE!

WHEN READERS-IN-THE-KNOW expand on topics in this column, we're all winners! This followup to last week's quick look at some of our more reliable winter bloomers comes from a true Houston gardening guru. Now retired, **JEFF HEILERS** served as longtime Mercer Botanic Gardens Greenhouse Manager and Horticultural Resource Manager until his recent retirement. He oversaw -- among other duties -- colorful plantings to delight winter visitors to this North

Harris County treasure site. A West Montrose resident, Jeff now continues contributing as a Mercer volunteer along with maintaining a garden on the east side of Memorial Park.

Jeff's suggestions for keeping a garden colorful now through hopefully mid-May include, l to r below: *Erysimum* Wall Flower, *Polyanthus primula*, *Digitalis purpurea*; and Foxy Foxglove. Shorter delphiniums, he notes, do well in partial shade. Want color without flowers? Check out assorted Kales and mustards.



NOTE: Ornamental kales and cabbages (above) may or may not be edible. Consider them not-edible unless you definitely know otherwise.

* * *

TIP O' THE TROWEL to [WABASH FEED & GARDENs](#) December Newsletter for reminding folks that poinsettias will last longer with just a little bit of care and proper positioning.

- Pick the right plant...look for plants that have a tightly-closed tiny yellow flowers in the middle. Avoid any that are shedding pollen.
- Protect your plant on the trip home. They do break easy if you handle them a lot. **DO NOT** let it sit in the chilly car while you run errands.
- Poinsettias are tropical, so they love light and will tolerate full sun. They will put up with almost any kind of light. You can put them wherever you like to enjoy a splash of color. In a very dark corner however, they tend to stretch and become leggy.
- Keep your poinsettia well-watered. Poinsettias prefer consistent, light moisture. Add a cup or so of water to the soil every two to three days. Dump out any water that sits in the saucer or foil cover. **DO NOT** let your poinsettia dry out in between waterings!!!
- Don't expose them to temperatures below 50 degrees.



Wabash has been helping Houston gardeners & more for over 100 years, and is a good place to shop now for winter garden edibles, etc.

SPEAKING OF POINSETTIAS AND VERY SPECIAL GARDENERS . . . see the poinsettia bushes pictured here? These plants pictured die back regularly but always return, even after the 15° freeze low we all experienced on February 16, 2021. *When the electricity went out, remember?*

These plants (photographed pre-2021) belong to

my longtime column contributor Ed Holland, who would much rather brag about his fantastic camellia collection at his Memorial area home.



But I was more fascinated at this point to know how he managed to keep in-ground poinsettias alive — albeit underground as they do die back — during 15° weather. Loved his answer: *"Piled leaves on top of them."* My favorite protection! Like many of our "smarter" plants, these poinsettias die back to protect themselves from weather extremes (both cold and hot) -- but come back out when weather is more to their liking. And they have since provided him with numerous cuttings since, so he now has quite a collection of plants that "bloom" every year for him!

This year Ed tried something different. *"When the first hard freeze came up last winter, The cuttings (a flat of 18 4" pots) I took in December last year I kept inside so I had a lot of starts and is why I have an abundance of plants blooming now."*

Leaves, folks, are a great mulch & winter protection!

* * *

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*

* * *



John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 222

Many garden products contain PFAS that are extremely toxic compounds. On

numerous occasions we have talked about the dangers of PFAS chemicals — short for per- and poly fluoroalkyl. There are now over 400 recent studies showing the danger of these chemicals at levels orders of magnitude less than current guidelines.

The most common source of exposure is fertilizers made with sewage sludge like Milorganite or Houactinite which made by the City of Houston and sold as a fertilizer in garden stores around Houston. The second major source is from eating food grown in soil where these fertilizers were used or from sewage sludge applied directly to the growing fields.

Working in the garden to lay grass sod for one's yard is another source of exposure, as Turfgrass farms often use sewage sludge to fertilize the grass. Several pesticides and other gardening chemicals are additional source of exposure.

Exposure shows up in health issues like child obesity which costs society \$2.7 billion annually or hypothyroidism in women which costs \$1.26 billion per year.

The November 19, 2022, issue of Science News had a nice overview of the dangers and health problems caused by these chemicals.

As I was writing this article, I read a new study this morning published in the journal JHEP Reports (2022) by the Keck School of Medicine that these chemicals also cause liver cancer.

With our erratic weather the last few months several folks have mention having Blossom End Rot in their tomatoes this fall.

Most vegetable gardeners know that a lack of calcium (Ca) is often associated to this problem. However, there are other causes that may trigger this issue. Over watering or under-watering can be the trigger disrupting soil microbes leading to the problem.

Over fertilizing with artificial fertilizers is another common cause. Most artificial fertilizers acidify the soil which changes the pH and can cause the end rot to occur. Some varieties of tomatoes are more susceptible to this issue hence choose ones good for our area. Root damage may also be a trigger whether from weeding and cutting some roots or pests eating the roots, both resulting in poor nutrient absorption by the plant. Lastly, sometimes planting too early or late can be the trigger as timing affects many things from microbial activity to opportunity for disease growth.

Some gardeners like to use crushed or powdered egg shells as a source of calcium but they need to be decomposed by soil microbes first. While it works well, it will be the following season before the calcium and other nutrients are available.

I remember when I was a young boy my grandmother would have take a hammer and beat oyster shells into a powder for her tomatoes. This another source of calcium and many other elements that are found in sea water.

In general, a well drained soil made with lots of good compost, fertilized with a

good organic fertilizer and some re-mineralizer every few years, followed with a good composted mulch prevent the problem from occurring.

As gardeners we are always concerned about watering our plants. Many gardeners claim and have found that when they use organic fertilizers and a good compost, they need far less water for their plants to be healthy.

I was reading an article that helped explain one of the reasons why this happens. Artificial fertilizers as they dissolve release ions into the soil. For each nitrate ion it requires three molecules of water to convert it to amino acids that the plant can use. This process increases a plants water requirements and decreases a plant drought resiliency. The reasons to use the modern methods based on soil biology that we call organic increase every day as we learn more.

* * *

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 | |

LOCATED INSIDE THE SALES OFFICE

\$1.99
EACH

NATURE'S WAY
RESOURCES
an organically based service company

www.natureswayresources.com



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

**FRI., DEC.16, WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE by URBAN
HARVEST, 8am-3:30pm, \$25.** United Way of Greater Houston, 50 Waugh Dr.

— 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 7: WEDGE GRAFTING by HERMAN AUER, HAZEL LAMPTON, DEBBIE ESPINOSA; 9-11:30am, & **GROWING PECANS AT HOME** by Stephen Brueggerhoff, 1-3 pm. Galveston County Master Gardeners. Register. 281-309-5065.

TUES., JAN, 17: FEARLESS PRUNING by DEBORAH BIRGE 10am, . St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Free. sugarlandgardenclub.org.

SAT, JAN 21: GROWING GREAT TOMATOES (PART 2) by IRA GERVAIS, 9-11:30am;
PROPAGATING FIG TREES BY BARBARA CANETTI, 1-3
pm, galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/; 281-309-5065.

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.

* * *



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!

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact us
at 936-273-1200 or send an e-mail to:
lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com



Saturdays 7-9am • SportsRadio 610



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.



[Unsubscribe jcfergus@ix.netcom.com](#)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com powered by



Try email marketing for free today!