

LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN
NEWSLETTER



Feb-23-2024 | Issue 526

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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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NOTE: Below, Brenda's regular column will return soon.

***"Money can't buy happiness. But it can buy plants,
and that's the same thing!" --Unknown***

The 10 Commandments of Lazy Gardening

according to
Brenda Beust Smith
"The Lazy Gardener"
Sketches by Pedro Almaraz



I. Thou shall appreciate the Upper Texas Gulf Coast's unique subtropical ecology with often extreme weather changes, and follow local gardening advice — NOT that for Texas in general or, worse, for national audiences.



II. Thou shall not insist on growing "northern" plants in blasting hot, dry Gulf Coast summers.



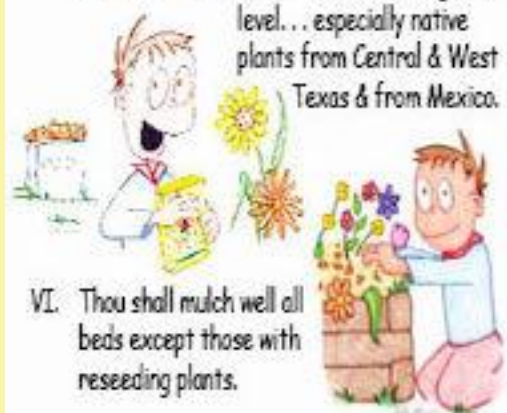
III. Thou shall get to know thy neighborhood nurserymen.



IV. Thou shall learn the sun and drainage requirements of plants BEFORE putting them in the ground.



V. Thou shall put plants listed for "normal-excellent" drainage in organic-enriched beds raised at least 8-10 inches above ground level... especially native plants from Central & West Texas & from Mexico.



VI. Thou shall mulch well all beds except those with reseeding plants.



VII. Thou shall focus more on healthy soil and strong root growth than on what is going on above ground.



VIII. Thou shall NOT treat for insect or disease problems!

Thou shall remove plants with unacceptable insect/disease damage and replace them with plants that don't have unacceptable insect/disease problems in your area!



IX. Thou shall NOT allow fertilizers and other landscape chemicals from your yard to drain into sewers or ditches where they contribute to flooding and other problems.



X. Above all, thou shall have **FUN!** It's YOUR garden. It need NOT be a mirror image of your neighbors' gardens! It should be what YOU want it to be and make YOU happy to look at it!



* * *

SEEDS VS. PLANTS? Why, newcomers from "up nawth" often wonder why we don't use seeds more often than we do? Why do we opt more often for starter plants?

Louise wrote that, since moving to Houston from New Jersey, she used started plants because her neighbors did. In New Jersey, she had used mainly seeds. Now that she's retired, she wants to get back into seeds. Why, she writes, are starter plants used mostly down here? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

Seeds are inexpensive and a lot of fun, especially for children. But do your research. Many seeds require a slow germination period to reach full potential. Our soil heats up so quickly in spring, some seeds germinate too quickly.

Good example, wildflower seeds are usually planted in Spring farther north. We have to sow many wildflowers in late Fall to give them enough prolonged cold germination time — just as we do bulbs like daffodils, tulips & hyacinths, to give them more "growing time" before our hot weather hits. Now that our weather's so unpredictable, that might change. Who knows?

Locally-owned nurseries are FAR more likely to take all of this above into consideration than will box stores or online seed ordering sites. Already-started varieties at local independent nurseries will most likely been grown by local area growers who know well our subtropical pocket benefits and challenges.

Back to seeds vs plants: Don't let all uncertainty stop you from experimenting! Our climate is changing so much, success rates are almost impossible to predict. One good source: neighbors' gardens. Ask about plants you really like and see how they were started.

Seeds are inexpensive and great fun. You might google the name of the plant and "Houston garden" to see what local writers have said about when and where to plant specific ones. Or, just give it a try, keeping in mind Nature always bats last!

PS. just to be on the safe side, keep checking our calendar below for great organizational plants sales -- especially those in your area of town. Often these include overflow from great successes in members' gardens -- a great recommendation for your garden! Great example below: Maryann Readal's **SPOTLIGHT** report on super-hardy herbs that survived this winter's three-day hard freeze unprotected and will be available at the . . .

SAT., MAR. 23: HERB FESTIVAL AT THE WYNNE HOME

8am-1pm, 1428 11th St. Huntsville. Free.

Texas Thyme Unit, Herb Society of America. texasthymeunit.org. 936-891-5024

* * *

Brenda Beust Smith's column is based on her 40+ years as
Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener --- Email: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

Note: This column focuses ONLY on the Greater Houston area.

* * *





L to r: Ajuga 'Pink Lightning' (*Ajuga reptans*); Flowering quince (*Chaenomeles lagenaria*); Heartleaf skullcap (*Scutellaria ovata*); Powis castle artemisia (*Artemisia arborescens x absinthium*); and Soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*)

HERBS ARE TOUGH PLANTS!

By **MARYANN READAL**

TEXAS THYME UNIT

HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA

texasthymeunit.org

Many herbs growing in our USDA Zone 9A gardens survived this winter's three-day hard freeze unprotected. The freeze also did not affect the budding new growth of perennial herbs like anise hyssop, bee balm, salvia, and chrysanthemum, which were already beginning to come back at their roots before the freeze. Onion chives and garlic chives were droopy after the freeze but quickly recovered, sending up new, bright green shoots.

Here are some freeze-resistant herbs to consider planting in your garden this year:

- **Ajuga (*Ajuga reptans*)** Great perennial ground cover for part sun or shade. Some varieties have variegated leaves and all have pink or bright blue flowers in early spring. Deer resistant. Roots are used in Ayurvedic medicine.
- **Flowering quince (*Chaenomeles lagenaria*)** Blooms in January-February. Medicinal plant with edible fruit used to make preserves.
- **Heartleaf skullcap (*Scutellaria ovata*)** Native Americans dried leaves and stems of this native herb to treat anxiety, stress, and insomnia. It is an evergreen plant that thrives in shade or part shade and also produces a blue flower spike in summer.
- **Powis castle artemisia (*Artemisia arborescens x absinthium*)** Also called wormwood is used to make absinthe. The feathery white foliage is an eye-catching plant in the garden all year long. Other artemisias survived the winter as well.
- **Soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*)** A low-growing perennial with rosy pink flowers in the summer. Its leaves have been used to make a gentle soap.

Among the other herbs that sailed through our recent freezing temperatures and remained green were bay laurel, calendula, catmint, culinary sage, dandelion, dianthus, dill, elderberry, fennel, goldenrod, lambs quarters, lavender, lyre leaf sage, mealy blue sage, mints, mullein, parsley, penstemon, plantain, oregano, rosemary, salvia greggii, thyme, violets, winter savory, and yarrow which is the International Herb Association's 2024 Herb of

the Year.

All of these tough survivors make a convincing case for planting not only for culinary and landscape purposes but also for the beauty and life they give your garden in the winter and for the food and shelter they provide for pollinators all year long.

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE: You can find these and other very hardy herbs at the **SAT., MAR. 23: HERB FESTIVAL AT THE WYNNE HOME.** 8am-1pm, 1428 11th St. Huntsville. Free. Texas Thyme Unit, Herb Society of America. texasthymeunit.org. 936-891-5024

* * *



Date
March 9, 2024



Time
9-2

101 SHERBROOK CIRCLE, CONROE, TX, 77385



More Info
www.natureswayresources.com



Contact Us
936-273-1200



John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 274

Subject: Biocontrol Stratification, Compost and Clay, DNA Damage and Glyphosate, Chemicals and Bad Health.

An article in the journal HortScience (2022) found that root rot in Boxwoods, which is caused by a pathogenic fungus called *Phytophthora nicotianae*, could be effectively controlled by the fungi *Trichoderma harzianum* and *Trichoderma virens*.

These good fungi will colonize plant roots and help protect them. These good fungi require highly organic slightly acidic soil for best results. These beneficial fungi are found in leaf mold compost if it is made correctly. Additionally, there are many brands of biological control products that have these good fungi in them.

Since they work best in acidic conditions, over watering with chemical treated municipal water, that is often alkaline, may kill off these beneficial microbes.

There is a new technique of weed control being studied for use in containers. Researchers found that by using substrate stratification with different materials or different physical properties in a container, it reduced water requirements and weed growth of several species of weeds.

The weed reduction effect of this layering can be improved by mixing the fertilizer into the lower substrate, and not using any fertilizer in the top 2–3-inch layer. Journal HortTechnology (2022)

I have been using a version of this technique for years with very good results. I apply 2-3 inches of aged native mulch in the bottom to encourage aeration, drainage and attract earthworms. Next, I always mix in some Microlife organic fertilizer and re-mineralizer into my soil mix which is added to the container on top of the mulch in the bottom. Then I apply a couple inches of Aged Native Mulch to the top of the soil layer and around the plant.

Another study in the Journal HortTechnology (2022) I found to be somewhat humorous. The researchers found that plants grow and establish faster in clay soils when they are amended with compost.

I expect any serious gardener in the last 100 years or so could have told them that.

A new report by the National Institute of Health (2023) found that there was DNA damage to men spraying Roundup and other glyphosate-based herbicides. The DNA damage was in chromosomes that are associated with blood cancers (lymphoma, myeloma, and leukemia) as well as Alzheimer's disease.

Another study by College of Public Health at George Mason University (2023) found a strong association between insecticide exposure and lower sperm concentrations in men globally.

They did a meta-analysis of 185 studies of 45,000 health men over the last 50 years and found Western men have experienced a 50% reduction in sperm counts over the past 40 years.

Additional research results are described in a book by the researchers called "COUNTDOWN". They found "environmental chemicals may be blurring gender and affecting sexual preference," women were also effected as were babies by these chemicals.

[Count Down: How Our Modern World Is Threatening Sperm Counts, Altering Male and Female Reproductive Development, and Imperiling the Future of the Human Race](#) by Shanna H. Swan and [Stacey Colino](#)

The reasons to only use organic methods in our lawns and gardens, and eat only organic foods continue to increase.

A marketing study in the Journal of Environmental Horticulture (2023), found that people with more environmental knowledge are more likely to purchase Native plants.



The advertisement is split into two main sections. The left section has a white background with the company logo at the top, which includes a green leaf and a rake. Below the logo, the address and phone number are listed. At the bottom of this section are three bags of mulch. The right section features a photograph of hands spreading mulch around a young tree. Overlaid on this photo is the sale information in large, bold, green letters.

NATURE'S WAY RESOURCES
an organically based service company

**101 Sherbrook Cir.
Conroe, TX 77385
936-273-1200**

FEB 1-29, 2024
MULCH SALE
20% OFF
ALL MULCH PRODUCTS

CALENDAR EVENTS

CALENDAR SUBMISSION RULES PLEASE READ!

- Use **ONLY** this (3-line max) format & style for **FASTER INCLUSION**.
DAY, DATE: TITLE by NAME (if talk), time, address, Fee/free.
Sponsoring group (if not in title). website/phone (NO MORE!)
- Only events submitted specifically for LG&F calendar are used
- Actual gardening/plant events only. No harvesting, cooking, etc.
- No events picked up from flyers / **NO PDFS! TYPE IN EMAIL**
- Submit: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. Check published entry!
- All events on-site and in Houston unless otherwise noted
- Making us retype to our required format opens door to errors
- **ALWAYS PROOF PUBLISHED WORDING & TEST EMAIL**

FRI., FEB. 23: LANDSCAPE BASICS (Online), 1pm. Free. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Fort Bend County w/ FBC Master Gardeners. fortbend.agrilife.org/landscape-success/

SAT., FEB. 24: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS WESTSIDE TOMATOES, HERBS, PEPPERS & PERENNIALS SALE. 9am-1pm. Cash and cards accepted. hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT., FEB. 24: RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP by GALVESTON BAY FOUNDATION, 10–11:30am, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., \$40, Register: galvbay.org/events

WED, FEB. 28: MOST FAMOUS GENUS OF ALL: ASTROPHYTUM by GIERAYL NACAR CLEPPER. 7pm, Metropolitan Multi-Family Services Center 1475 W. Gray. Houston Cactus and Succulent Society. Free. hcsstex.org

SAT., MAR. 2: COLLABORATION TREE GIVEAWAY, 9am-1pm, Farmers Market Partners, 5855 Sienna Springs Way, Missouri City. Free. 832-347-3811. [Farmtastic Events \(farmersmarketpartners.com\)](http://FarmtasticEvents(farmersmarketpartners.com))

THURS., MAR 7: ORGANIC GARDENING by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 10:30am, Moody Neighborhood Library, 9525 Irvington Blvd, Houston, Free. Available in person and online. facebook.com/houstonlibrary

THURS., MAR. 7: HERBS FOR EVERY GARDEN, by **PHOEBE LAKE**, 9am, Waller County Extension Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead. Free. txmg.org/wallermg. RSVP: 979-826-7651.

FRI.,-SUN., MAR. 8-10: AZALEA TRAIL 2024 "BRANCH OUT!" River Oaks Garden Club event. riveroaksgc.org/azalea-trail-2024

SAT., MAR. 9: WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS PLANT SALE 9-11am, Extension Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead. txmg.org/wallermg.

SAT-SUN MAR. 9-10: HOUSTON ORCHID SOCIETY ANNUAL SHOW & SALE, 10am-5pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun. Memorial City Mall (front of Dillard's), 303 Memorial City Way, houstonorchidsociety.org.

MON., MAR. 11: SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 12:30pm, Fonteno Senior Education Center, 3600

Bissonnet St. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUES., MAR. 12: MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM IMPACT IN 2023 by **BRANDI KELLER & STEPHANIE GRAY**, 11am-12:30pm, Trini Mendenhall Community Center 1414 Wirt Rd., Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

WED., MAR. 13: SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 10am, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

— **MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE FUTURE EVENTS!** —

MON., MAR. 18: EDIBLE LANDSCAPING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (Virtual) , 10-11:30am, Free. Register receive link: hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

MON., MAR. 18: GENOA FRIENDSHIP GARDEN - OPEN GARDEN DAY , 8:30-11am, Free tour, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUES, MAR. 19: EDIBLE LANDSCAPING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (Virtual) 11am-noon. Free. facebook.com/harriscountyp/levents

WED., MAR. 20: EARTHKIND LANDSCAPING (also Virtual) by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10:30am, Ring Neighborhood Library, 8835 Long Point Rd. facebook.com/houstonlibrary

THURS., MAR. 21: PLANT PROPAGATION by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** , 10am, Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Lane. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT., MAR. 23: HERB FESTIVAL AT THE WYNNE HOME . 8am-1pm, 1428 11th St. Huntsville. Free. Texas Thyme Unit, Herb Society of America. texasthymeunit.org. 936-891-5024

SAT., MAR. 23: THE WOODLANDS GARDEN CLUB SPRING PLANT SALE, 9am-1pm, The Woodlands Farmer's Market at Grogan's Mill, 7 Switchbud Place. thewoodlandsgardenclub.org

SAT, MAR. 23: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS SPRING PLANT SALE, 9am-noon, 8am program. AgriLife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd, Conroe. 935-539-7824; MCMGA.com. mcmgacountrystore.square.site/. Bring your wagon!!

TUES., MAR. 26: GROWING ROSES IN OUR CLIMATE by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Fonteno Senior Education Center, 3600 Bissonnet St. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

THURS., MAR. 28: GROWING TOMATOES by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (also Virtual) 10:30am, Johnson Neighborhood Library, 3517 Reed Rd. Free. facebook.com/houstonlibrary

SAT., APR. 6: BRAZOSPORT DAYLILY SOCIETY SALE, 9am-3pm, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 200 Oyster Creek Dr. Lake Jackson. 832-922-5732.

SAT., APR. 6: GARDEN TALKS by **FELDER RUSHING** , 10am, First Baptist Church, 445 Main St., Hempstead. Waller County Master Gardener event. Register: txmg.org/wallermg/felder-rushing-presentation

SAT., APR. 13: LONE STAR DAYLILY SOCIETY PLANT SALE , 9am-4pm, 7124 Booth Lane, Manvel., Free, lonestardaylilysociety.org, 281-331-0162.

FRI-SUN., APR. 19-21: KINGWOOD GARDEN CLUB GARDENSAPES & PLANT SALE, self-guided tours of homes and gardens: \$25. Plant Sale free access. kgc@kingwoodgardenclub.org.

SAT., APR. 27: DEER PARK PRAIRIE POLLINATION WORKSHOP & CNC BIO BLITZ , 9am. Della_Barbato@TexasPrairie.org

SAT., APR. 27: WESTSIDE VEGETABLES & FLOWERS SALE by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9am- 1pm, Alabonson Park, 9650 N Houston Rosslyn Rd. hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT., MAY 4: LONE STAR DAYLILY SOCIEY FLOWER SHOW AND DAYLILY SALE , Sale 8am-3pm, Show 1-3pm, Alvin Senior Center, 309 West Sealy, Alvin.
Free, lonestardaylilyociety.org, 281-331-0162.

SAT-SUN May 4-5: HOUSTON BROMELIAD SOCIETY SHOW AND SALE.
Noon-4 pm Sat.; 11am-3pm Sun. Judson Robinson Community Center, 2020 Hermann Dr. (Hermann Park). Free. bromeliadsocietyhouston.org

*If your event didn't get in right away, one possible reason is
you didn't submit it in our EXACT - NEVER CHANGING format.*

These usually take longer to be re-formatted and open doors to errors.

Your choice! SEE TOP OF CALENDAR FOR DETAILS.

* * *



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 general feature 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 became 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 general reporting into also doing gardening reporting 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.

About her column, Brenda says: "I don't consider myself a 'garden writer.'" I started out 50+ years ago as a very lazy "gardening reporter." I still feel that way today. I hope my columns inspire/help newcomers, but I do not write to them. I write to very experienced gardeners who want to expand their horizons.

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.



Lazy Gardener And Friends | 101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe, TX 77385

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