

LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN
NEWSLETTER



March-1-2024 | Issue 527

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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.

*"A light exists in spring, not present in the year
at any other period, when March is scarcely here."*

-- Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)



SINCE PLANTING'S ON EVERYONE'S MIND . . .

Following up on the [Planting Under Trees column](#) (Feb. 9, 2024): **MARCIA LIVINGSTON** in Southwest Houston (above) has been growing ajuga, peacock ginger and matchstick bromeliads under her live oak tree for years. She does cover them if there's a freeze, but nothing more.

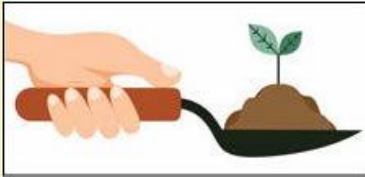
Above right, [Matchstick Bromeliads](#) ([Aechmea gamosepala](#)), bloom Nov./Dec. and provide green frames for summer bloomers. Their shallow roots don't bother tree roots in her front yard bed. (*Marcia Livingston photos*)



Marcia does cover them for frosts and our low in 2021 turned many to mush. But many inground and potted plants recovered from the roots to go on blooming, including (**all file photos below**): curcuma, holly fern, rain lilies, Boston fern, peace lilies and spider plant.



* * *



HOW MANY SEEDS WILL YOU WASTE THIS

YEAR? I don't know if this works or not, but it's interesting enough to share. Most of us purchase & plant seeds on faith, we assume they're viable. Never occurs to "test" seeds before planting!

[The Independent](#) seems to think it's possible with a simple test:

- Wet a paper towel, wring out excesswater.
- Fold 5-10 seeds (same type), depending on their size, into towel and place in a zipper-top plastic bag.
- Check in five days and every day afterward for up to three weeks
- Lightly moist towel as needed.
- After a few days passed with no new sprouts, do the math.
- If 7 out of 10 germinate, that's a 70% germinate rate. So plant 30% more seed than you think you'll need.

And if none germinate? Maybe try another seed source? Author Jessica Damiano goes into a [lot more detail](#) with other suggestions. Might want to start now on testing your fall seeds.

* * *



WE'RE SO QUICK TO BLAME THE WEATHER, ETC., when edibles and other plants don't survive. But, especially with edibles, one problem could be neighbor incompatibility. Beneficial companion plantings have been used for centuries. For example: dill and basil are said to protect tomatoes from hornworms.

But we don't hear much about incompatible pairings, or an "allopathic effect." It's said tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower or cucumbers in too-close contact may compete too much for the same nutrients. Asparagus is said to pout if too near fennel, garlic, onions or potatoes. Garlic won't complain, it's said to dislike growing near asparagus anyway. Onions can inhibit the growth of beans.

* * *

Potpourri

- **HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY, MEMORIAL PARK!** Drop by for many free activities Sat, Mar 9. The **[BIGGEST PICNIC IN TEXAS](#)** starts at 10am at 301 North Picnic Lane Houston Loop, Houston, TX, USA. Free admission. [Details](#)

WONDER WHERE THE GARDEN WENT? [Rice University's Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden](#) is now located on the north side of the Gibbs Recreation Center inbetween the basketball courts and O'Connor Field and can be most easily accessed from Entrance 20 or 4. (Park in one of Rice's several visitor lots.) Great time to visit as early online ordering is open for the big March 11-15 Spring Plant Sale. [Details](#). [Online Store](#). Inventory is primarily vegetables but includes some flowering plants.

* * *

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.

* * *

SOIL SCIENCE CONFERENCE '24 OHBA

UNEARTH THE WONDERS OF SOIL & PLANT SCIENCE AT THIS DAY AND A HALF LONG CONFERENCE!

BUILD STRONG BUSINESS STRATEGIES + PROSPER EVEN MORE!

A special seminar just for you, OHBA's 2024 Soil Science Day. Come learn about working with nature to achieve unparalleled results in your horticulture and agriculture business.

Day 1 starts with globally recognized Dr. Tom Dykstra visiting about energy levels in plants and how to manipulate to make your crops bullet proof against pest insects. Tom will use the 100 years of recorded citrus production as a base model, and we'll learn about using a brix instrument to manage results. After lunch, Dr. Adam Cobb, one of the primary educators from the Soil Foodweb School, will present the latest in soil microbiology. By understanding the microbe roles and how to enhance, you will achieve beautiful, healthy growth with reduced problems & cost.

Day 2 begins at the nationally recognized Nature's Way Resources for a 1/2 day of a brix instrument, hands on workshop. Additionally there will be a tour of Nature's Way in the morning.

FEATURING:



Adam Cobb, Ph. D.

TOPIC: Introduction To Soil Biology & The Benefits of Soil Regeneration

Adam is a Primary Educator & Soil Scientist from The Soil Food Web School.



Tom Dykstra, Ph. D.

TOPIC: Bullet Proof Your Landscape From Pest Insects & Learn the Brix Management System

Dr. Dykstra is a globally renowned Entomologist & owner of Dykstra Laboratories.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3 | 8:00 AM - 3:30 PM
United Way of Greater Houston
50 Waugh Dr. Houston, TX 77007

WEDNESDAY TICKETS:
MEMBER- \$80
NON-MEMBER- \$100

DAY 1

BREAKFAST & LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED!

THURSDAY APRIL 4 | 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM
Nature's Way Resources
101 Sherbrook Cir, Conroe, TX 77385

WEDNESDAY TICKETS:
MEMBER- \$40
NON-MEMBER- \$50

DAY 2

GET TICKETS ONLINE TODAY: [OHBAONLINE.ORG/REGISTER](https://ohbaonline.org/register)



John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 275

Subject: salts water leaf mold compost greenhouse gasses and gardening

I was talking with a customer the other day about why his plants were stunted and yellowing. It turns out he used a cow manure-based compost. Animal manures are often high in salt which becomes concentrated by the composting process.

Many of our area soils are already high in salt. Using this type of product pushed the soil into salt toxicity, which was harming his plants. High salt levels also kill some of the beneficial bacteria that control fungal pathogens. This is the reason salt is often used in foods as a preservative as it kills bacteria. Similarly, the spent mushroom substrate often sold as mushroom compost is also high in salt and other toxic chemicals.

We often talk about water conservation for many reasons. A paper in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters* (2023) found that groundwater pumping and moving groundwater has led to the Earth's rotational axis to shift almost one yard from 1993-2010. While this does not seem like a lot, we have no idea what the consequences are.

Similarly, we have billions of tons of water trapped in glaciers and snow cover at the North and South poles. This huge amount of mass exerts a gravitational pull towards the poles. As the ice and snow melts it will flow and accumulate at the equator due to the Earth's rotation.

The gravitational pull from this amount of mass will now be towards the equator and away from the poles. I wonder if this change will allow fault zones in our rock formations that were previously firmly locked to slip triggering massive earthquakes.

For those that want more, the journal *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment* (2023) has a paper just on the effects of irrigation worldwide and how it affects local climate. Irrigation also accounts for 90% of all water usage worldwide.

We as gardeners can be part of the solution by using modern organic methods. Only using organic fertilizers, top dressing our lawns with compost, using native mulches in our flowerbeds, using native and well adapted plants in our landscapes, reducing the amount or better yet, getting rid of turfgrass. Not only do these newer methods give better results and at lower total cost, they also work to fight climate change, environmental destruction, reduce flooding, and protect wildlife habitat.

A study from the American Society of Agronomy (2023) by researchers at Purdue University found that "Leaf Mold Compost" improved many important soil properties that influence the health and productivity of plants when it is made correctly.

They found that plants that received Leaf Mold Compost produced more tomatoes and had less disease. They also found that the compost helped the survival of beneficial inoculants that can help plants withstand disease pressure.

Note: Nature's Way Resources has been making Leaf Mold Compost correctly

for 30 years! A gardener in the Houston area does not have to settle for a cheap knockoff if you want the most benefits and best results.

We hear a lot about climate change and global warming in the news, and I often get asked about it. But what does it all mean and how do different gasses compare and is it important to gardeners?

Greenhouse gasses like carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), and nitrous oxide (N_2O) have greatly different effects on the atmosphere. Scientists at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change created a unit of measurement called the Global Warming Potential (GWP) so people can easily compare the effects of different greenhouse gases. The larger the GWP the more the gas warms the Earth.

Carbon dioxide (CO_2) is used as the reference gas and is assigned a GWP of 1. Methane (CH_4) has a value of 29.8 and nitrous oxide (N_2O) has a value of 273.

In other words, one molecule of nitrous oxide has the same effect as 273 molecules of carbon dioxide! Journal of Environmental Quality (2023)

Where does nitrous oxide (N_2O) come from? A couple of very large sources are from the use of artificial fertilizers and feedlots.

Plants are not designed to absorb nitrogen (N) that has been dissolved in water. Much of the nitrogen escapes to the atmosphere as nitrous oxide and more runs off as nitrate and pollutes our waterways. This is why one must use an artificial fertilizer 4-5 times per year to give the same results as an organic fertilizer once or twice a year.

When cattle are fed grain in a feedlot, they produce a lot of methane. However, when they are raised on grass (grass fed) they do not produce the methane. New studies have shown the action on their hooves pushing grass, manure, and other organic material in the soil actually helps store carbon in the soil forming humus, reducing the greenhouse effects. Think of the millions of head of buffalo that created the great fertile soils of the great plains.


So, as a gardener when we use modern biological methods (sometimes called organic) we get better results, at lower cost, and we reduce greenhouse gases. Similarly, when we purchase grass fed beef (which is healthier for us), we become part of the solution.

I started off today's column by talking about damage to plants by using manure-based compost. Where does the manure come from.... feedlots. Hence when we purchase a product like that, not only are we hurting our gardens, we are encouraging the environmental damage.

FREE
EVENT

Nature's Way Resources

SPRING GARDEN FESTIVAL

 Spring has sprung, and we're ready to party!
Come join us at Nature's Way Resources for a family-friendly festival
day packed with fun, learning, playing, shopping, and of course, sippin'!



Date
March 9, 2024



Time
9-2

101 SHERBROOK CIRCLE, CONROE, TX, 77385



More Info
www.natureswayresources.com



Contact Us
936-273-1200

LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER 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

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

SAT., MAR. 16: THE JOHN FAIREY GARDENING BUDDING OUT SALE & FESTIVAL, 20559 FM 259 Rd. 9am-4pm, Children free. Non-members: \$10. Hempstead. 979-826-3232. jfgarden.org

SAT., MAR. 16: BROMELIAD SOCIETY HOUSTON SPRING SALE, 9am-3pm, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray St. bromeliadsocietyhouston.org

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

SUN. MAR. 18: FERNS THAT CAN BE GROWN AS HOUSEPLANTS(also virtual), 2pm, Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Herman Dr, Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society.. tgcfernsoc.org

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

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](https://mcmgacountrystore.com). Bring 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

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

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

FRI., APR. 5: CLEAR LAKE NPSOT SPRING PLANT SALE, 4pm- 7pm
Environmental Institute of Houston UH Clear Lake, 2700 Bay Area Blvd 77058

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 GARDENSCAPES & PLANT SALE, self-guided tours of homes and gardens: \$25. Plant Sale free access. kingwoodgardenclub.org

SAT., APR. 27: 2024 OLEANDER FESTIVAL, 8am-noon, Betty Head Oleander Garden Park, 2624 Sealy, Galveston. International Oleander Society event. oleander.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 SOCIETY 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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If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact us
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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 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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