

# LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER



March-19-2024 | Issue 529

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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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**EDITORS' NOTE:** *"Lazy Gardener & Friends Houston Garden Newsletter"* will be now be emailed Wednesdays instead of Fridays. Hope this gives you more time to read/share!

*"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade."*

— Charles Dickens, Great Expectations

## Think ROOTS! when adding new plants

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

Although normally I write mainly to experienced gardeners —*who know all the basic rules, but are mostly interested now in expanding their horizons* — today's column is aimed at newcomers (and the new-to-gardening) who have probably already filled beds with gorgeous colorful plants now in nurseries.

That's great, and hope recent weather fluctuations haven't affected the plants. If they have, don't worry. Most have probably been forced to produce flowers with bloom stimulators. That's understandable with our proliferation of HOA regulations on how front yards should look. Weather fluctuations may trigger some wilting.

In March, warm, sunny days do happen. But they do NOT mean Spring is here to stay. Late freezes can and do still happen. Past true freezes have occurred as late as April 10. Mother Nature carves NOTHING in stone, but weather forecasts seem safe so far..

Still, buying plants before warm weather is likely to stay for sure (usually late March) should be done with awareness. One safe route (unless you're looking for immediate full bed color):

1. Buy & plant only spring-blooming ANNUALS already covered with blooming flowers or buds. Most are going to die anyway when hot weather seriously arrives.
2. Peruse PERENNIAL plant displays covered with flowers ONLY to select plants from groupings with colors you want. Then . . .
3. If you can, buy plants with no (or as few as possible) actual blooming flowers and few buds.

Why? This past Monday's drop into the low 50s° could have wiped out those beautiful flowers. If you want plants for a longer haul, they need to establish strong roots, not produce flowers . . .yet. Will this be our last cold spell? Even weathermen admit only time will tell. Mother Nature always bats last and loves tricking anyone who has the nerve to predict what she'll do next!

Some annuals do last all summer, but you can't count on that and it might not be just the weather. Bloom stimulants used to force fast flower production to ensure more sales can shorten actual bloom time while the plant recoups from that unnatural energy drain. One way to help the plant recoup is to keep dead/fading flowers picked off.

Would love some input from readers on their spring experiences with various varieties. If you know names of specific long lasting (here!) annuals. do share!

\* \* \*

**IF YOU HATE** waiting for late March to fill the yard with color next February/March, consider planting right now **Bridal wreath (*Spiraea prunifolia*)**, so it'll begin establishing good roots). This past Feb/March bloom display was one of the best bloom years in a while! This old fashioned, early-spring flower has been used as bridal flowers for centuries almost world-over. During summers, its green foliage makes a nice backdrop for other bloomers.



Bridal wreath doesn't usually need pruning but doesn't mind it and now's the time to do it. It's starting to set buds for next year's blooms . Want taller with longer cascades? Prune from sides. Lower and/or wider, prune from top down. It will explode with solid white blooms in February when little else is blooming. Like azaleas, camellias, dogwoods and other spring bloomers, it should never be pruned later in the year. You'll cut off next Spring's blooms.

\* \* \*



**WILDFLOWERS A'COMIN'!** A recent quick trip to Sinton (near Corpus Christi) confirmed what folks are saying about this Spring's wildflower bloom potential. We saw so many pink evening primroses, bluebonnets, Indian Paintbrushes, and

other wildflowers in bloom, it was an incredible confirmation of the better-than-usual prediction of the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#) in Austin's recent declaration:

*“On a scale from one to 10, this year looks like it could be an eight, for bluebonnets in particular, if not even better,”*

Also check out: [The Houston Chronicle's bluebonnet-viewing tips](#)

### LEGEND OF THE PINK BLUEBONNET

I've seen blue, white & red bluebonnets but never a pink one, tho they do exist. **Greg Grant** details [the full legend](#) on this (link) to Aggie Horticulture website. Fun read!

*(Note: Aggies often claim red bluebonnets pictured here are actually Aggie maroon.*

*Pooh! Anyone can see they're COUGAR RED!)*



\* \* \*

### BOUGAINVILLEA NOT JUST FOR

**BASKETS ANYMORE.** I remember as a child blocks-long bougainvilleas covered the ol' Moody Cotton Compress and Warehouse on Broadway in Galveston. As a young garden writer, I was amazed to discover way back in the '70s & '80s that we couldn't grow these in Houston. Winters too cold. Talk about a huge climate change!



Now -- especially in Houston's inner-city neighborhoods -- huge bougainville shrubs dot many yards. That's where I photographed this one several years ago! I can't remember where exactly where! But as a lady with a similar one explained to me, the secret is leaves. She piles tons of leaves over the plant base, especially in fall. Not saying works for everyone, but might be fun to try!

### PLUMERIAS, ORCHIDS & BOUGAINVILLEAS

have long been plants that were set outside only in summers. This still is best idea if you have treasured plants. Our winters are so rollercoaster these days. But it's interesting to hear about ones left out that did just fine in years past, like the bougainvillea above. And, at right, **JIM & ANNE'S KADLECEK'S** two-story high plumeria that lived outside here in SW Houston for years, albeit in a recessed area with protection on three sides.



At right is an orchid in a hanging basket hooked to a tree branch. I forgot to bring in one winter. Stayed out there for several years. Bloomed on. Brought it inside because someone told me to. It died. Point is, some plants are like people. They

march to their own drummers, no matter what experts say!



One way to find good, reliable advice and best plants for this area is to shop our many local specialty plant society and horticultural/plant group sales. These folks love their plants and share our growing challenges. They'll ask you a lot of questions so they can give you the best possible (free!) advice. I counted 15 different upcoming specialty plant society sales alone in our calendar below, with even more educational events. If you don't see the plant you're interested in, just google the plant name + "Houston Society."

**Email me ([lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)) a list of as many local specialty plant groups as I know or to make sure your society's contact info is on it!**

\* \* \*

**Brenda Beust Smith's column is based on her 40+ years as  
Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener --- Email: [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto: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 # 277

**Subject: Compost Types**

I often get a lot of questions about compost, so here is a quick breakdown. There are no labeling laws in Texas for compost; hence anything can be marketed as compost. However, there is an easy way to protect your family and garden based on selling price.

Compost can be broken into three basic types based on its quality and usage. These are Biological, Commercial, and Industrial.

**Biological** – This is the highest quality compost and therefore the most beneficial in improving soils, preventing disease, making compost tea, etc. This is the product that experienced gardeners often call *black gold* because it is so valuable to plants. The bag will have holes in it so that air can enter and the beneficial microbes can breathe and be kept alive. This compost will typically sell retail for \$14-20 per bag (40 lb.).

**Commercial** – This is a middle to lower grade of compost made from sewage sludge, construction debris, high salt manures, etc. It will be in a sealed bag and may have a sour or stale odor. The better manure-based composts may be found here. Often high in salt, hence repeated usage may kill plants or stunt their growth. This compost will typically sell retail for \$4.99-8.99 per bag (40 lb.).

**Industrial** – This is the lowest grade of products called compost (it is NOT a true compost). It is made from industrial wastes like boiler ash. It is often very black and sometimes will rub off in your hand. It often contains fillers like sawdust and rice hulls which are chemically burned black from the industrial waste. It may be extremely alkaline and high in toxic salts. This product will typically sell retail for \$2.99-3.99 per bag (40 lb.).

## LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

### CALENDAR SUBMISSION RULES PLEASE READ! EVENTS MUST BE OPEN TO & CAPABLE OF HANDLING PUBLIC ATTENDENCE

- 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](mailto: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**
- **YOU** are responsible for telling us about cancelled 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](https://www.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](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**FRI.-SAT., MARCH 22-23: MARCH MART, MARCH MART**, 8am-4pm, Mercer

Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Online Preview (no sales)  
[/friendsofmercer.com/march-mart-plant-preview--no-online-sales.html](http://friendsofmercer.com/march-mart-plant-preview--no-online-sales.html)

**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](http://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](http://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](http://MCMGA.com). [mcmgacountrystore](http://mcmgacountrystore). Bring wagon!!

**SAT./ SUN., MAR. 23/ 24: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS PLANT SALE**, Sat. 10am- 6pm, Sun. 11am- 5pm, Berry Center, 8877 Barker Cypress Rd, Cypress. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**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](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**WED., MAR. 27: DESERTS FROM CENTRAL NEW MEXICO TO WEST TREXAS PART 2** by **ECHO PANG**. 7pm, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray. [Houston Cactus and Succulent Society](http://HoustonCactusandSucculentSociety)

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

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

**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: TREES FOR HOUSTON TREE SEEDLING GIVEAWAY**, 10am-8pm, Archway Gallery, 2305 Dunlavy, Free. Through April 30. One per person. 713-522-2409

**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](http://txmg.org/wallermg/felder-rushing-presentation)

**THURS., APR. 8: ORGANIC GARDENING** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 1pm, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**SAT., APR. 13: LONE STAR DAYLILY SOCIETY PLANT SALE**, 9am-4pm, 7124 Booth Lane, Manvel., Free, [lonestardaylilysociety.org](http://lonestardaylilysociety.org), 281-331-0162.

**FRI., APR 19: SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Harris County Precinct One, 9500 Hall Rd. Free. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**SAT., APR. 20: PERENNIALS & PEPPER SALE** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am- 1pm. Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Pre-

Order online Apr 1- 18, at [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**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](http://kingwoodgardenclub.org)

**WED., APR. 24: UNDERSTANDING DRAINAGE-PRACTICAL DATA FOR EFFECTIVE POTTING MIXES** by **JOSEPH RODD**. 7pm. Free. Metropolitan Multi-Service Center on 1475 West Gray. Houston Cactus and Succulent Society. [/hcsstex.org](http://hcsstex.org)

**SAT., APR. 27: 2024 OLEANDER FESTIVAL**, 8am-noon, Betty Head Oleander Garden Park, 2624 Sealy, Galveston. International Oleander Society event. [oleander.org](http://oleander.org)

**SAT., APR. 27: DEER PARK PRAIRIE POLLINATION WORKSHOP & CNC BIO BLITZ**, 9am. [Della\\_Barbato@TexasPrairie.org](mailto:Della_Barbato@TexasPrairie.org)

**SAT., APR. 27: 38th ANNUAL HERB DAY** by **THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA, SOUTH TEXAS UNIT**. 8 am-2pm, Museum District. \$65 Pre-registration: [herbsociety-stu.org](http://herbsociety-stu.org)

**SAT., APR. 27: VEGETABLES, HERBS & FLOWERS SALE** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am- 1pm, Alabonson Park, 9650 N Houston Rosslyn Rd.  
[hcmga.tamu.edu](http://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, [lonestardaylilysociety.org](http://lonestardaylilysociety.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](http://bromeliadsocietyhouston.org)

**MON., MAY 8: PLANT PROPAGATION** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10:30am. Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**FRI.-SAT., MAY 10-11: HOUSTON CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY SPRING SALE**. Fri: 9am-5 pm, Sat: 9am-3 pm. Free. Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. [hcsstex.org](http://hcsstex.org)

**SAT., MAY 13: SUMMER GARDENING** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonet St. Free. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**MON., MAY 13: IDENTIFYING “GOOD & BAD” BUGS** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (virtual)**, 10am- 11:30am. Free. Register to receive link: [hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register](http://hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register)

**TUES., MAY 16: RAISED BED GARDENING** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 11am, Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln. Free. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**MON., MAY 20: OPEN GARDEN DAY** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 8:30am- 11am. Free tour of Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

**TUES., MAY 21: IDENTIFYING “GOOD & BAD” BUGS** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (virtual)**, 11am- Noon. Facebook Live. No reservation required: [facebook.com/harriscountyp/1/events](https://facebook.com/harriscountyp/1/events)

**WED., May, 22: ASCLEPIADACEAE - MY JOURNEY WITH STINKY STARRY SUCCULENTS** by **PHILIP RICHARDS, PhD**. 7pm. Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. [Houston Cactus and Succulent Society](http://HoustonCactusandSucculentSociety.org)

**MON., MAY 29: PERMACULTURE GARDENING** by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonet St. Free.



*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 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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