

LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN
NEWSLETTER



March-28-2024 | Issue 530

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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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"Younger generations are rejecting the gardens of their parents and turning to those of their grandparents."

[garden-trends-2024-2025-chlorosphere](#)

PLANT SWAPS ON RISE — BUT MUST PLAY BY THEIR RULES!

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

Did you read the quote above? That's SO nice to hear, especially given I'll turn 81 this year!

Seems to me, looking back over all the changes I've seen in 50+/- years of writing as the Lazy Gardener, gardening has increasingly become more serious. Fun, yes, but more competitive, more ruled by forces outside of the gardener's own personal wishes, needs, desires.

One trend I've seen rise and fall and rise again over the decades is the proliferation of plant swaps. It's exciting to see how many are now (once again) actively helping gardeners these days. Certainly another sign the trend mentioned above is right on target.

New to plant swaps? In our now Internet-ruled world, one has to be on Facebook to access dates and rules of most area swaps. Look up "TEXAS PLANT SWAP" on Facebook.

But be forewarned If you decide to try a swap, certain rules **MUST** be followed. These are **NOT** commercial events — more like friends helping friends.

You can't **BUY** plants or anything else. **NO** money can or will be exchanged. Load your car with already-potted/bagged plants, bulbs, etc., (see details below) that you'd like to exchange. Include a wagon to pull them booths and others trade-sites. Good idea to peruse whole setup before starting to exchange, but know the best plants usually go quickly.

MIND YOUR MANNERS. These folks are eager to share plants, to trade with you, and/or give you growing advice. They also can banish you from future exchanges if you don't follow their strict protocols.

THREE UNBREAKABLE RULES FOR 1st TIME PLANT SWAP VISITORS:

- **NO MONEY CHANGES HANDS.** If you hope to go home with great plants, take something "growable" to exchange — potted plants, cuttings, bulbs, tubers, seeds, etc.) in transportable shape and **CLEARLY IDENTIFIED**.
- **ASK FIRST -- NEVER** just take plants from tops of, OR from under, table, in wagons, etc., without owners' specific permission.
- **PLANTS UNDER OR BEHIND A TABLE ARE 'HANDS OFF!'** May already be taken or promised. This point is **NOT** up for discussion and may result in you be being asked to *"Please leave!"*

More suggestions for first-timers

- Read everything published on a given swap announcement on FB page. (main method used for public, but you have to join website)
- Expect to see seeds, plants, bulbs, wildflowers, garden decor, etc.
- Bring your own snacks, wagon, (or table, etc.)
- Park **ONLY** where designated for plant swap
- Go prepared with some of your own plant cuttings (well rooted if possible), bulbs, seeds with ID, etc., to exchange for plants you want.
- If plants **NOT** already well rooted, mark container: **"NEWLY PLANTED."**
- Know about your offerings, name, varieties (if possible), sun/shade/drainage and other growing info. You will be asked!

- Bring a pen & notebook for information you'll be given. (Also your own drinks, etc)
- Don't be insulted if someone doesn't want to accept your swap plant. Experience swappers know their plants well and want to exchange only for plants of equal or higher value, which novices may not recognize.

REMEMBER: Swaps are for SWAPPING. Solicitors are not welcome nor is anyone looking to PROFIT off swaps. But if you seriously want to learn more about plant swaps, resources join their nonprofit website:

[Facebook.com/groups/PlantMeet/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/PlantMeet/)

Upcoming Greater Houston area swaps include:

- **SAT., APRIL 13: SPRING CYPRESS PLANT SWAP GROUP**
[facebook.com/groups/204439530162221/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/204439530162221/)
- **SUN., APRIL 14: BAY AREA PLANT EXCHANGE SPRING SWAP**
[facebook.com/BayAreaPlantExchange/](https://www.facebook.com/BayAreaPlantExchange/)
- **SAT., APR. 27: SOUTHEAST TEXAS PLANT EXCHANGE**, 9am-3pm, Pedigo Park, Livingston
- **SAT., MAY 4: PLANTMEET HOUSTON SPRING 2024**, Opens 8am. Post Oak Pavilion (across Aldine Westfield from Mercer Botanic Gardens 22306 Aldine-Westfield.

Would love to hear from experienced swappers if you have more advice for first-time-visitors or would like to have your **Greater Houston area ONLY!** swap listed in our calendar below. lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com.

(Thanks to Connie Fitzpatrick Cases for her help compiling these tips!)



Potpourri

- **TIP O' TROWEL, BAYOU PRESERVATION AND QUALITY FEED!** [Bayou Preservation](https://www.bayoupreservation.org/) has opened its first permanent collection bin for used plant pots -- first of hopefully many to come -- thanks to [Quality Feed](https://www.qualityfeed.org/), 1813 Luzon St., BP's first permanent site for its community-driven **POTS FOR PLOTS** initiative to tackle waterway plastic waste.



Pots for Plots gives single-use plant pots a new life at local nurseries and farms. Last year alone, our bayous and other waterways were saved from potential negative impacts from 15,173 single-use pots -- donated instead across 9 temporary sites to 24 local nursery and farm partners, significantly impacting our environment, especially our precious waterways.



IF I MAY TAKE AN OFF-THE-SUBJECT PERSONAL MOMENT?

Our son Blake recently passed away. Blake, 48, was autistic. Autism is now referred to as "[The Spectrum](https://www.the-spectrum.org/)," now estimated to be affecting 1 in 36 Americans -- a massive relative increase over previous "estimates. Blake is now a donor

to [Autism BrainNet](#) (also to [LifeGift](#)). More research is desperately needed. I share this in hopes he, and we, can contribute in a small way to draw attention this [steadily increasing condition](#).

* * *

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



John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 277

Subject: Mulch Types

In addition to compost, I get a lot of questions about mulch so I thought I would do a follow up on mulch. Below is a quick breakdown. Over my career I have visited numerous properties with plant and gardening issues. Using an incorrect mulch or a cheap low quality mulch were the source of the problems.

There are no labeling laws in Texas for mulch; hence anything can be marketed as mulch. However, there is an easy way to protect your family and garden based on selling price.

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

Biological – This is the highest quality mulch and therefore the most beneficial in improving soils, preventing disease, protecting plants, etc. It has a low carbon-to-nitrogen ratio so it does not steal nitrogen from the soil and weaken or stress plants. It has been composted to kill weed seeds and pathogens. Composted (aged) “*native mulch*” and “*coarse screened compost*” are examples of this class of mulch. The bag will have holes in it so that air can enter allowing the beneficial microbes to breathe and be kept alive. This mulch will typically sell retail for \$6-10 per bag (2 cubic feet).

Commercial – This is a middle grade of mulch made from tree barks (pine, hardwood, etc.) and is the most common. It will be in a sealed bag and may have a sour, stale, or strong odor. It has a high carbon-to-nitrogen ratio and robs soil of nitrogen and other nutrients. Tends to float off in a heavy rain or develop unsightly molds and fungal mats and may attract fire ants or termites. This mulch will typically sell retail for \$4-6 per bag (2 cubic feet).

Industrial – This is the lowest grade of products called mulch. It is made from industrial wastes like old pallets, construction wood, wooden concrete frames, etc. It is often chemically burned black with industrial waste, it will sometimes rub off in your hand, and it is often dyed various colors. It may contain arsenic from CCA treated waste wood. It has a very high carbon-to-nitrogen ratio and robs nitrogen and other nutrients from the soil for a long time. It may be extremely alkaline and high in toxic salts. It is often harmful to plants and soil and creates many gardening problems. This product will typically sell retail for \$3-4 per bag (2 cubic feet).

**LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS
HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER
CALENDAR EVENTS**

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

- 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**
- **YOU** are responsible for telling us about cancelled 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](https://www.facebook.com/houstonlibrary)

WED., APR 3: GARDENERS BY THE BAY PLANT SALE, 9am-Noon, Webster Presbyterian Church, 201 W NASA Rd 1, Webster, gbtb.org.

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

THURS., APR. 8: ORGANIC GARDENING by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 1pm, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

THURS., APR. 11: GARDENING WITH A PASSION by KIM & JIM KEELER (also virtual), 7-9pm, St. Andrew's Church 1819 Heights Blvd. Houston Rose Society event. Free. us06web.zoom.us/j/85837921087?pwd=agyYCS3oylwxjzepRE5tLE5uH879PX.1

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

TUES., APR. 16: DAYLILIES by LORIS GARRETT, 10am, St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Rd., Sugar Land. Sugar Land Garden Club event. sugarlandgardenclub.org

FRI., APR 19: SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 10am, Harris County Precinct One, 9500 Hall Rd. Free. 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

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

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: 38th ANNUAL HERB DAY by **THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA, SOUTH TEXAS UNIT**. 8 am-2pm, Museum District. \$65 Pre-registration: 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

SAT., APR. 27: NATIVE LANDSCAPING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (Level 1 Class), 8:30am - 3:30pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble,. \$45, [Native Plant Society of Texas \(neoncrm.com\)](http://NativePlantSocietyofTexas.com)

— MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE FUTURE EVENTS! —

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, 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

MON., MAY 8: PLANT PROPAGATION by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10:30am. Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free. 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

SAT., MAY 13: SUMMER GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonet St. Free. 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

TUES., MAY 16: RAISED BED GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 11am, Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln. Free. 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

TUES., MAY 21: IDENTIFYING "GOOD & BAD" BUGS by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 11am- Noon. Facebook Live. No reservation required:
facebook.com/harriscountyp/levents

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](#)

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

*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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