

LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN
NEWSLETTER



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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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*"The little darling, Spring ...
Has run away too hot for her to stay...
Now reigns the Lady Summer ...
thousand fairies flock with blossoms sweet"*

-- excerpted from *"Flower-Fairies of The Summer"* by Cicely Mary Barker, 1895-1973

SOME PLANTS 'TOO' SUCCESSFUL? READERS' COPING TIPS!

It isn't often readers complain about their favorite plants being TOO happy. Until this year, that is. Peggy Martin roses' even-more-enthusiastic-than-usual growth/blooms this year delighted many. But she can be a little intimidating. If this applies to you, think outside the box, as **JOYCE GANDOLFO** did below.

First, however, hope for all folks delighted, overwhelmed and/or scared by Peggy Martins' incredible growth and blooms this spring will be relieved to know often she might continue -- with less energy -- off and on until fall.

Remember: Plants produce flowers not to please us, but to attract pollinators vital to their survival. Hand removal of spent blooms may seem overwhelming now. But often strong hose spray helps dislodge them, usually triggering longer

and repeat blooming.

In meantime, she can do double duty. Most plant Peggy on a tall lattice or other vertical support, making pruning more challenging. Here's a great option posted on the [Houston Gardening Facebook Page](#) by Joyce, who lives on the Galveston coast.

JOYCE GANDOLFO's neat Peggy Martin hedge was pictured on [Houston Gardening Facebook Page](#). She faces Galveston Gulf waterfront (so receives plenty of salt water spray). Joyce created this wonderful easy-to-maintain low hedge using only ONE single plant.



If Joyce sees it's getting a little unruly, which may happen twice a year, she re-routes branches back into the "hedge" or cuts them off. She adds, *"No special pruner just handheld clippers. They bloom this time of year and also in the fall."*

ANYONE ELSE have a Peggy-Martin-enthusiasm problem solution to share? Do send with picture(s) to lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com.

* * *

IN SPOTLIGHT ARTICLE BELOW, [Bromeliad Society /Houston's](#) RICK AND CAROLE RICHTMYER offer sympathetic advice to collectors of their favorite plants (and to all plant lovers) on curbing explosions that appear overnight or irresistible purchases or too-enthusiastic reproduction, a natural result of tender loving care! If the pictures (above) leave you with questions or drooling envy, know these and more will draw enthusiasts from across the nation and beyond to the **SAT-SUN MAY 4-5: 50th 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**

Potpourri

- **TIP O' TROWEL** to HEB stores working with with [Native Plant Society of Texas](#) to offer a select group of specifically-identified Texas natives that will carry NPSOT logo and the **QR code:** [NPSOT's native plant database](#)



Among NPSOT-tagged Texas natives are (l to r above) Autumn Sage 'Lipstick' and (insert) "Furman's Red" (both *Salvia greggii*); Black Eyed Susan 'Goldstrum' (*Rudbeckia fulgida*); and Blackfoot Daisy (*Malvaviscus arboreus*). Kudos also to participator Spring Creek Growers.

NPSOT notes while they encourage use of straight native species where possible, cultivars included in this project are better choices than non-native alternatives.

* * *

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.

* * *



MORE BROMELIADS THAN YOU CAN HANDLE? EXPERTS EMPATHIZE!

By RICK & CAROLE RICHTMYER

[BROMELIAD SOCIETY /HOUSTON](#)

Rick and Carole Richtmyer photos

OVERCROWDING is one of the main problems for experienced Bromeliad growers. Bromeliads can be beautiful with their colorful foliage and beautiful blooms, many with fragrant flowers. There are many varieties for growers to choose from, with 80 genera and over 3800 species.

Add to this the several thousand hybrids and cultivars, and it's easy to see why a grower would desire to accumulate as many as possible.

Pictured: Neoregelia 'Hypnotic'



Let us examine the causes, consequences, and solutions to collecting more plants than your growing area can successfully handle.

Causes:

- Bromeliads are generally easy to grow,
- Can tolerate periods of poor care,
- Plenty of opportunities to acquire bromeliads at sales, shows, from friends or online,
- After blooming, the mother plant is likely to generate multiple offsets/pups and collections can quadruple in just a few years.



As your collection increases beyond your available growing space, you may end up with conditions less than ideal for cultivating your bromeliads and it can:

- Lead to reduced health of plants due to poor air circulation and difficulty in effective watering and grooming,

Pictured: Hohenbergia 'Karla'



- Affect conformation of plants, smaller size, and fewer leaves,
- Require additional supplies and time to water, fertilize, re-pot plants and remove pups, especially in summer

Pictured: Aechmea 'Mend'



- Pose problems in providing light, water, and heat to your collection in extreme wintertime cold conditions as Houston has experienced in recent years,
- Cause difficulty in storing excess plants outdoors or in garages in extreme cold

Solutions:

How can we limit our collection to a manageable size? This is a tough problem to solve. Perhaps we might want to specialize in collecting just a few genera, and/or only species in those genera. Sharing your extra offsets/pups is a good way to reduce your collection as well as finding new homes for those plants that are no longer needed.

It is not always easy to part with our plants, but to grow beautiful plants, you need to balance the time you have available to the number of plants you can care for. Joining a local bromeliad society gives you another avenue to sell or share extra offsets/pups.

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bromeliads will draw experts from across the country and beyond to the . . .

* * *



John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 282

Subject: Healthy Soils – part 4

Continuing our discussion of what is a healthy soil, we are going to continue to discuss the second part of item #2 below.

1. Organic matter from almost fresh to totally decomposed in the form of humus (humins, humic, ulmic, and fulmic acids)
2. Minerals (nutrients, sand, silt, and clay)
3. Soil life (microbes and macrobes)
4. Air & water
5. Plant choices
6. Care for and do not destroy the health of the soil one has

Today I am going to continue our discussion of soils by looking at the base materials that form all soils (sand, silt, and clay).

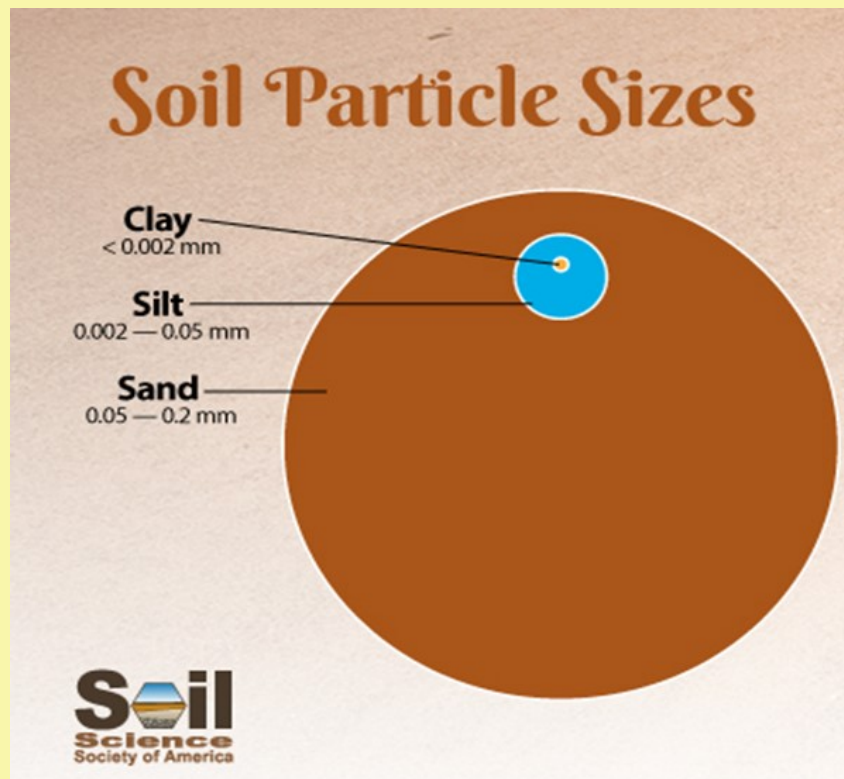
We have talked about humus and minerals which play extremely important roles in the soil, but typically compose less than 10% of the total volume of the soil. The remainder of the soil consists of sand, silt, and clay particles. These are technically minerals which are called silicates; an example is the feldspars that have quartz (SiO_2) as their basic building block. Of these, clay is the most important and valuable in horticulture and agriculture. Clay contains nutrients, it helps the soil hold onto other nutrients (high cation exchange capacity or CEC) which prevents leaching of the nutrients, and helps the soil hold water.

Clays are the smallest of soil particles, they have high nutrient and water retention capability, and they help bond larger soil particles together. However, a high percentage of clay can make the soil difficult to work, shrink and swell as water content changes; they become slippery when wet, very hard when dry, and have very poor aeration. Clay particles are so small that it might take a hundred's or more to be the size of a silt particle. When wet and rubbed between one's fingers, clays feel smooth and slippery.

Silt particles are also made of quartz minerals that are between clay and sand in size and properties, they are important in loam soils but not important by themselves. If one rubs a silt soil between their fingers it feels like talcum powder.

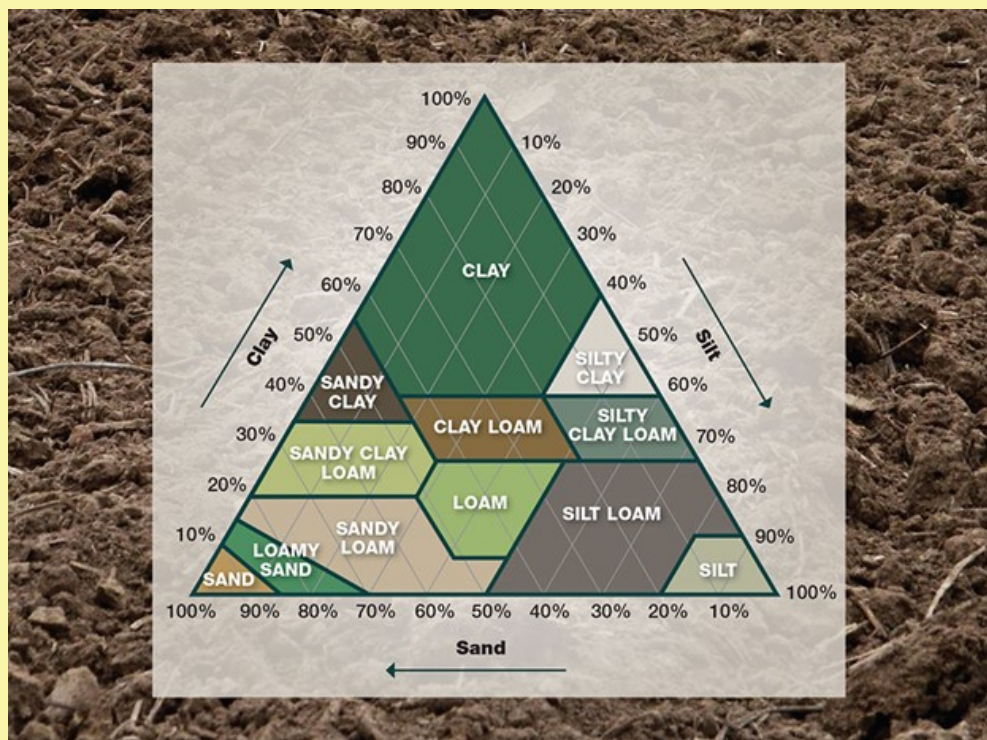
Sands are the coarsest of all soil particles and made almost exclusively of quartz minerals. Sandy soils are well aerated, they drain rapidly, and the looseness is ideal for root growth; however, moisture and nutrient retention are very poor.

The chart below from the Soil Science of America association, gives an example of the different particle sizes.

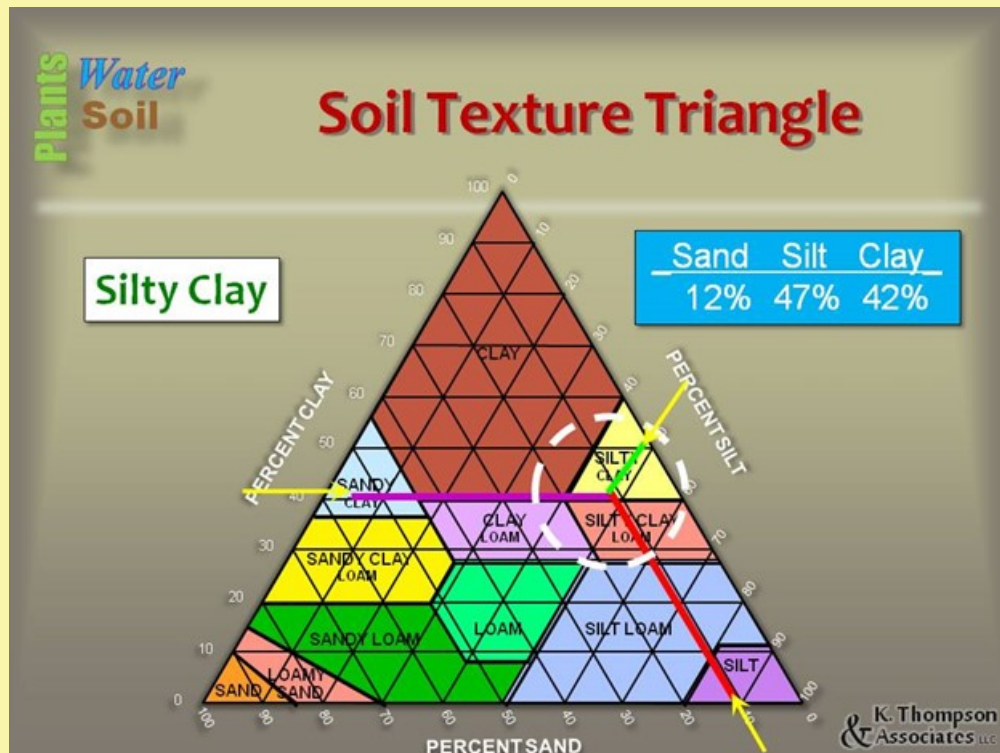


We often characterize soil with names like clay loam or sandy loam, but what does that mean?

The chart below which is known as the soil triangle, lets each side represent each of the components (sand, silt, clay) from zero to 100%.



Hence, by measuring the amount of each type component in percentages, we can look at the chart where all the lines cross and it gives us a verbal description of the soil. The chart below illustrates a silty clay.



I will not go into all the technical ways to measure the percentages. However, for homeowners there is an easy way to obtain a good approximation. Use a tall *straight walled* jar at least 12 inches tall and 2-3 inches in diameter, fill halfway with soil, then add water till two thirds full, leaving some room for air. Then shake vigorously till all soil components are in solution. Now let the jar sit at least overnight undisturbed.

Note: I found my jar which is 15 inches tall and 3 inches in diameter at Hobby Lobby 15 years ago.

By morning all the components will have settled. Sand, the coarsest particles will settle first and will form a layer at the bottom. Silt particles will be next and clay the very last (sometimes it may take 2-3 days for all the clay particles to settle out).

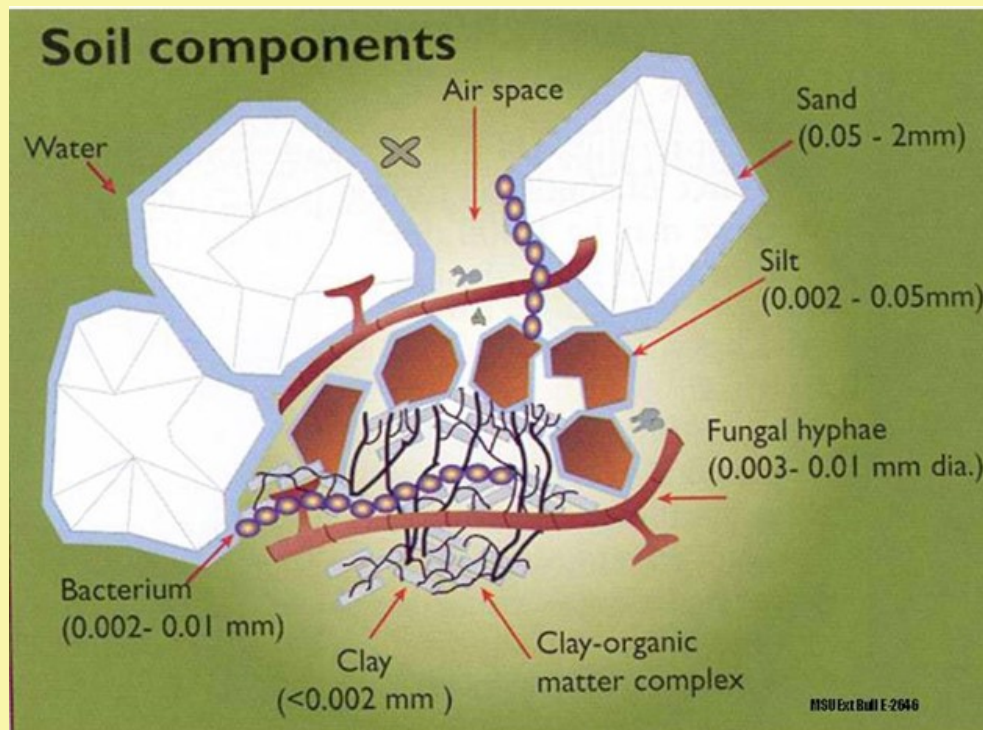
Next take a ruler and measure the total height of the soil column and then measure the height (thickness) of each of the layers. Take the individual layer thickness and divide by the total thickness and one has the percentage.

Each soil component has good and bad points so how do we as gardeners overcome this problem? We use, find, or make, what is called loams which are soils that contains equal amounts of clays, silt, and sand, plus some organic matter. Is this the ideal garden soil?

Pretty close. It is easy to optimize soil conditions from here for a given plant. For example, the brassica family (cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, etc.) prefers a slightly alkaline soil with a higher percentage of clay. This contrasts with peppers and tomatoes that prefer slightly acidic soils high in silt and sand with less clay.

However, both plant groups grow better in soils high in humus and both will grow fine in opposite conditions **IF** there is enough good quality organic matter (quality compost) mixed in.

The diagram below illustrates what a healthy soil might look like with all its components.



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. 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., 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)

FRI., APR. 26: FLOWERING PLANTS FOR FOUR SEASONS (virtual), 1pm, Fort Bend County Master Gardeners. Free. [Landscape Success - Fort Bend \(agrilife.org\)](http://Landscape Success - Fort Bend (agrilife.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.org)

SAT., APR. 27: POLLINATOR GARDEN FOR A BACKYARD, 9am; **FRUIT TREES** by **Robert Marshall**, 10 am; and **PLUMERIAS** by **LORETTA OSTEEN**, 11:30 am,(all at) 112 W.Spreading Oaks, Friendswood. Heritage Gardeners event. Free [.facebook.com/FriendswoodHeritageGardeners](https://facebook.com/FriendswoodHeritageGardeners)

SAT-SUN., Apr. 27-28: HERITAGE GARDENERS ANNUAL SPRING TOUR, PLANT SALE, VENDOR MARKET, 9 am-4pm (tours 1-5 pm), 112 W. Spreading Oaks, Friendswood, Tickets for tour, Others free. [Heritage Gardeners](http://HeritageGardeners.org)

THURS., MAY 2: HEALTHY SOIL, HEALTHY PLANTS by John Ferguson, 9am, Waller County Extension Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead. Free. RSVP 979-826-7651

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

SUN.,MAY 5: PLUMERIAS 1:30–4:30pm Bay Area Community Center, 5002 E. NASA Pkwy. Plumeria Society of America event. Free, theplumeriasociety.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 11: DAYLILY SHOW AND SALE,Sale: 10am-3pm. Show 1-3pm.4040 Watonga Dr. Free.Houston Hemerocallis Society.

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

WED., MAY 15: GARDENING FOR BEGINNERS by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am, Peckham Aquatic and Fitness Center, 5597 Gardenia Ln. Katy. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

— MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE FUTURE EVENTS! —

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. HoustonCactusandSucculentSociety

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

SUN., JUNE 2: GROWING BEGONIAS IN HOUSTON???? 2-4pm, Plants for All Seasons - 21328 State Hwy 249. Houston Astro Branch Begonia Society. begoniahouston.org; facebook.com/BegoniaHouston

TUE., JUN. 4: RAINWATER HARVESTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 6pm, Pasadena Public Library, 4330 Fairmont Pkwy. Pasadena. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT., JUNE 8: PLUMERIA SALE #1, 9 am -1:30pm Bay Area Community Center, 5002 E. NASA Pkwy, Seabrook, Texas 77586 Free access to sale. theplumeriasociety.org/

MON., JUN. 10: SEED SAVING AND STARTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (virtual)**, 10am- 11:30am, Free. Register in advance to receive link: hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

WED., JUN. 12: RAINWATER HARVESTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10:30am, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

THURS., JUN. 13: COMPOSTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 1pm, Katy Branch Library, 5414 Franz Rd. Katy. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

MON., JUN. 17: GENOA FRIENDSHIP GARDEN- OPEN GARDEN DAY, 8:30am- 11am, Free tour of Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUES., JUN. 18: SEED SAVING AND STARTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (virtual)**, 11am- 12pm. facebook.com/harriscountyp/levents

WED., JUN. 20: RESIDENTIAL RAINWATER HARVESTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUE., JUN. 25: COMPOSTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Steve Radack Community Center, 18650 Clay Rd. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

WED., JULY 13: TROPICAL PLANT SYMPOSIUM, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. . friendsofmercer.com/

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.



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

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