

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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*"Probably some of you remember this old Morton salt advertisement.
We have known for decades that salt can be very harmful to our plants."*

-- John Ferguson, JOHN'S CORNER" (see below)

HERE'S HOPING EVERYONE'S GARDEN & MORE SURVIVED NOW COME . . . MOSQUITOES!

Before you buy all those plants recommended to stop mosquitoes from laying eggs, download Texas A&M's recent warnings from entomologist Dr. Sonja Swiger. ["MOSQUITO SEASON IS HERE: HOW TO CONTROL THEM AND PREVENT BITES."](#) Plants may help but know not all mosquito mamas are attracted in the same way. Various types prefer clear floodwater as in ditches, others stagnant water in buckets, etc., still others (drat!) love birdbaths.



Lantana (pictured) is one plant said to help. But most important step, eliminate potential stagnant water situation. *(Husband's a victim of West Nile virus -- older you get, more serious this can be. But note: this disease-carrying mosquito type prefers stagnant water puddles in hot, DRY weather.)*

Birdbaths may be good spot for mosquito-repelling plants in a sunny spot (no help when it's cloudy). Add a floating solar-powered fountain (only works when the sun's out). Mosquito dunks aren't very attractive but are safe and harmless to birds & animals. Look for EPA-ok'd label.

In meantime, no harm in planting touted mosquito repelling plants to stop at least some of the pesky mamas (some of the time) from dropping eggs. In general, said to help are lantana (pictured above), marigolds, basil, rosemary, catnip, among others. Oft-recommended lavender and citronella grass are hard to grow here. Fun to try but . . . Have anything that really works? Do share!

* * *

GET HEAT PREPARED! 2023 saw Houston's record-breaking summer heat (National Weather Service): 45 days 100° or higher, topping out at 109°F. Prediction: Summer '24 will be worse. Poor plants! At least we can go inside.

Plants are often smarter than people. Many deliberately go dormant out of season (top growth dies back) as self protection. That doesn't necessarily mean "died." We accept this in winter, but won't stomach it in summer.

Good example, St. Augustine grass. Summer dieback is normal, a self-defense mechanism. But everyone screams **MY LAWN IS DEAD!** and pours on chemicals that, in all likelihood, will force new top growth for heat to kill, stressing roots that can't handle growth to point where they can't function when temps drop which they probably could have had they been left alone.

In our yard, "lawn weeds" that can take the heat soon send up greenery. I think mowed weeds look a LOT like mowed grass. But maybe not HOAs. Can't help you there, folks. Anyone want to chime in on how they (organically!) handle summer lawn dieback?

* * *

Last year's July/August blasting hot temps (predicted worse this year) gave us a taste of what experts have long warned is coming. Thinking it's time to switch to cactus? But know we'll still have heavy rains & flooding. So make sure cacti and succulents are planted high with good drainage as **JACOB MARTIN** points out in our Spotlight Article below. Mercer Botanic Gardens has a great event coming up to get you started on the right succulent foot. First tho, a bit of . . .

* * *

Potpourri

- **SPEAKING OF "FREE" WATER** for gardens, condolences for those hurt by recent storms. Such traumas can really only understood by others who have experienced them. Insane that we don't save as much of that water as we can for droughts periods! One good step: the [City of Houston Green Building Resource Center's annual rain barrel project](#) sold out but is taking reservations for the fall sale. Better get on it now! Includes entire Greater Houston area.
- **AND . . . TIP O' THE TROWEL** to our Green Building's retiring **STEVE**



STELZER, for his decades of help to this column and Yours Truly! Steve will continue to share expertise as a [Citizens Environmental Coalition](#) volunteer. CEC's free monthly email event calendar is a great resource in our area for "green" events/projects than you can ever imagine. Click link to sign up! Far broader overview and tips than just gardening!

- **200+ PRIZE CACTI AND OTHER SUCCULENTS** from Mercer Botanic Gardens private collection are going on display -- for one weekend only JUNE 29-30 in Mercer's Visitor Center. A wide variety of rare specimens have been donated to Mercer, including many from noted local grower **THOMAS CARDINAL**. Staff will be on hand to review pictures (only!) of visitors' own plants for professional identification and diagnosis. No plants will be available for sale and no advance registration is needed.

SAT.-SUN., JUNE 29-30: CACTUS & SUCCULENT SHOWCASE,
8am–5pm. Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Humble.
Free and open to the public. Pct3.com/mbg 713-274-4160.

In our Spotlight Article below, Mercer Botanic Gardens Greenhouse Manager & Head of Horticulture **JACOB MARTIN** offers reminders of often-overlooked needs of individual cacti & other succulents -- they are not all created equal!

*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.*

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*L to r: Stetsonia coryne; Echinopsis subdenudata; Cliestocactus winteri ssp. colademononis;
Pseudolithos caput-viperae; Eulychnia castanea cv. varispiralis and Melocactus bahiensis
-- Jacob Martin Photos (see end of column for more on these)*

What many Cactus/Succulent owners are doing wrong

By **JACOB MARTIN**
Mercer Botanic Gardens

- Know whether the succulent or cactus is dormant in the summer or winter. If it is dormant in the summer, you shouldn't be watering it when it's hot or it will die. Research whether the plant is winter or summer dormant; most plants have a dormant period.
- Does it have excellent drainage – basically granular rocky soil, aggregate. Because of all the rain, it's easy to lose valuable succulents due to too much water.
- Know your growing season (opposite of the dormant season) and fertilize accordingly. Jacob feeds a balanced all-purpose granular top dressing fertilizer every 6 weeks during the growing season.
- Container plants won't grow without fertilizer.
- Pollinate cactus flowers by hand if you want seeds. Jacob says the best instrument to pollinate is with disposable make-up lip wands that you can buy by the dozens online or in discount stores.
- Acclimate plants to full sun – even cactus can burn our Texas sunlight.
- If you buy from big-box stores, remove all commercial potting soil and replace with your preferred mix because the plants were probably grown in a more arid climate (CA, NM, AZ) than our beloved humid Houston.

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE: This and more advice on successfully growing cacti & other succulents in our area will be abundant at the **SAT., JUNE 29 & SUN., JUNE 30: CACTUS & SUCCULENT SHOWCASE**, 8am–5pm. Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Humble. Free and open to the public. Pct3.com/mbg 713-274-4160

PS: No plants will be for sale but, as a bonus, here is more information from Jacob Martin on plants pictured here, which will be on display at Mercer's June 29-30 event.

- ***Stetsonia coryne*** (*extremely long spined **Toothpick Cactus***) — sole species in cactus genus *Stetsonia*. From high-altitude arid regions, deserts, and dry forests of Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Brazil.
- ***Echinopsis subdenudata* (**Easter Lily Cactus**)** – From Bolivia, almost spineless cactus that grows in grasslands, shrublands, and forests. Also called for huge night/early morning blooming white fragrant flowers. Great for beginner collectors.
- ***Cleistocactus winteri* ssp. *colademononis*** – Endangered species in native habitat in Santa Cruz area of Bolivia where it hangs on to rocks in altitudes of 1400-1500 meters above sea level. Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit. Columnar cactus that forms huge mound of rapidly growing hanging or creeping shoots. Anyone can grow this one in Houston! Loves aggregate.
- ***Pseudolithos caput-viperæ* (**Viper's Head; Snake Head**)** – Rare, slow-growing leafless succulent, native to Somalia. Small star-shaped, pungent flowers attract carrion flies and beetles. Water wrong just one time, will die. Not for beginners.
- ***Eulychnia castanea* cv. *varispiralis*** – Rare, beautiful spiral torch cactus native to Chile. Slow-growing, can reach 6' high. Collector's favorite.
- ***Melocactus bahiensis* ('**Turk's Cap**' or '**Pope's Head**' cactus)**. Slow growing in open savannahs of eastern Brazil, a small globular cactus, known for beautiful unusual cephalium at top. Finicky cacti best for experienced growers and appreciated by all as a conversation starter.

* * *

NOTE: Please check calendar below if your event info was changed by our recent tornado invasion.

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John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 286

Subject: Healthy Soils – part 8a

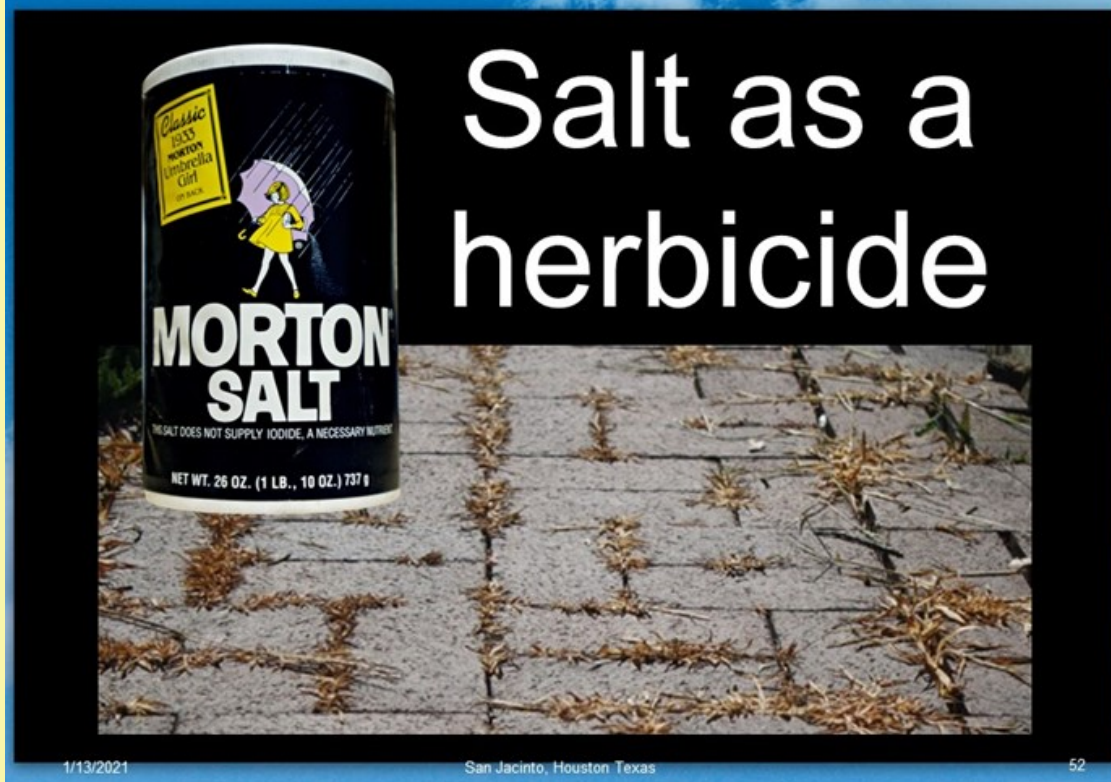
Continuing our discussion of what is healthy soil, we are going to continue with the fifth section below.

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**

How to quit destroying your soil (The "Do Not's")- When I was in college over 40 years ago, it was all about the chemistry and physics of the soil. Today we know the biology of the soil is 10-15X more important to plant growth and health than chemistry and physics combined. This new knowledge has caused our understanding of healthy soil to change dramatically.

• DO NOT USE HIGH SALT PRODUCTS. THEY DESTROY SOIL, WEAKEN PLANTS, AND CAN CREATE HARDPAN.

Probably some of you remember this old Morton salt advertisement. We have known for decades that salt can be very harmful to our plants.



Example 1: We now know that there is a good bacterium in the soil whose major function is to control soil diseases like the fungal disease called brown patch (*Rhizoctonia solani*), and other turf disease like Take-All and St. Augustine decline.

Ask yourself this question: "Why do we put salt into canned goods, ham, jerky, etc.?" - TO KILL BACTERIA!

All synthetic fertilizers are chemically salts. They kill this good bacterium and with no natural control, we get Brown Patch, Take-All, St. Augustine decline, and several other fungal soil diseases.

Often soils along the Gulf Coast are naturally high in sodium (Na) from many sources that range from salt domes to salt swept inland from tropical storms. Salts kill beneficial microbes, stunt a plants growth, and prevent plants from absorbing water. Plants roots cannot tolerate salts.

This means if we want a beautiful garden along the Upper Texas Gulf Coast, we do not use high salt products. These include cow manure, poultry manure, spent mushroom substrate (sold as Mushroom compost), sewage sludge compost (Biosolids), and artificial/synthetic fertilizers.

As we all know salts dissolve in water and gravity pulls the salts downward into the soil. As the soil dries the salts are left behind forming a layer a few inches down into our soil. The salt does two things: first - it prevents the roots from growing deep into the soil as they sense the presence of this salt layer and quit growing down which results in a very shallow root zone.

As a result, roots cannot reach moisture deeper in the soil and it dries out quickly. Hence, we must water very frequently and 2nd - the salts lock the soil particles together forming a hardpan layer that prevents air and water from penetrating the soil. The low oxygen conditions favor the growth of many soil

pathogens.

To give an example of how salt locks soil particles together, think of a pair of pliers left outside for a few weeks. The pliers rust and the pliers are frozen and will not open. Rust is chemically a salt composed of iron and oxygen. All artificial fertilizers are chemically salts.



The diagonal line is a special membrane that does not let salt pass through. The photo on the left does not have any salt in the growing media and the roots penetrate the membrane and grow into the medium below. However, on the right picture there is a very mild salt solution below the membrane. Notice how the roots sense the presence of the salt and grow away from the medium with the salt.

• DO NOT USE ARTIFICIAL FERTILIZERS

In addition to the negative salt effects, we started learning as far back as 1999 that insects are attracted to plants fertilized with synthetic fertilizers (***Journal of Environmental Horticulture***, 17(2):95, June 1999). Due to osmotic pressure, plants will absorb nitrogen faster than they need or can use it.

To prevent nitrous which could kill the plant, it causes fast growth made of weak tissue (the lignin of the cell walls becomes thinner) that actually attracts pest insects as they see in the ultraviolet portion of sunlight and can see the weakened tissue; hence they know it is easy to eat into. This also decreases a plants resistance to disease as the thin cell walls are easy for pathogens to penetrate.

• DO NOT USE TOXIC PESTICIDES.

They work, but they kill beneficial insects, butterflies, and bees. One of the

problems is that most pest insects breed ten times faster than the beneficial insects hence the pests come back worse than before the pesticide was applied. When it rains or we turn on our sprinklers it is washed into the ground and kills earthworms, good nematodes, microarthropods, etc. that aerate the soil and turn dead leaves and grass into valuable humus just to name a few.

The same idea applies to herbicides and fungicides. [Read the articles on Round-Up](#) on our website to get an understanding of the toxic and extremely dangerous nature of these products.

Toxic synthetic horticultural chemicals do not work. According to USDA data, in 1900 crop loss due to insects was 3-4%. By the 1940's crop loss due to insects was 7% and by the 1990's crop loss due to insects was 13%, despite thirty-three times increase in the volume of pesticides applied and at least a tenfold increase in toxicity. This is over a 330-fold increase in killing power and yet the problems have gotten worse.

The bottom line is that these toxic chemicals are expensive, time-consuming to use, do not work very well, create many additional problems, and this does not mention the side effects to one's health and to the environment. This is why more soil scientists and horticulturalists are using modern methods based on soil biology that is often referred to as "organic methods".

When we use dangerous synthetic chemicals in our gardening, we create our own problems. It is like a bunch of dominoes going down.

Turf grass Example: It starts when we use a synthetic fertilizer on our lawns in spring. The salts present kill off the good bacterium that controls fungal diseases and earthworms, which results in soil compaction and poor drainage. Without the good bacterium, fungal problems like brown patch develop.

We are told to treat brown patch with a broad-spectrum fungicide like terraclor which kills all fungus in the soil (This is analogous to going to a Texan's game with 80,000 fans in the stadium and killing everyone to get the one criminal).

This does several things as it also kills beneficial fungus living in the soil like the endophytic fungus which lives in a symbiotic relationship with grass roots. This good fungus receives food from the grass and in return produces toxins that repel/kill chinch bugs and sod webworms. The fungicide also kills the good fungus that breaks down dead grass, so we get a buildup of thatch as the weather warms up. This thatch layer makes a lovely home for chinch bugs (or webworms) since the fungus that repels and kills them is gone.

The chemical companies then tell us to apply Diazinon or other pesticides to control chinch bugs. Pesticides kill the earthworms and microarthropods that aerate soil preventing compaction. Earthworms also eat weed seeds destroying them. Air (oxygen) can no longer get into the soil hence root growth is very shallow. This requires us to water several times a week as the soil cannot hold much water and there is very little root zone for the grass from which to draw water.

Note: This excessive watering leaches nutrients from our soils that pollutes our bayous and streams and eventually leads to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. Now we must apply the artificial fertilizer 3-4 times per year to replace

what was lost. Additionally, the chlorine (Cl) in our public water systems in combination with the sodium (Na) in our soils forms sodium chloride which is known as table salt. This additional salt aggravates the problems a gardener experiences.

We are now told that we need to do a core aeration to break up the compaction and help air and water move into the soil since we no longer have earthworms and other soil life doing that for us. Many of the plant species we call weeds are designed to grow on compacted and chemically out of balance soils. So, without the earthworms and other soil life we have created a condition that favors weeds. The salts from the artificial fertilizer can cause a calcium (Ca) tie-up in the soil.

For weeds like Dandelions to germinate and grow they require soils with low available calcium and low oxygen (compaction) hence we have created conditions that favor weeds over turf grass. Now the chemical companies tell us we need to use an herbicide or a weed and feed fertilizer since we have weeds.

The above scenario is extremely easy to avoid. One just needs to use an organic fertilizer instead of an artificial one. My favorite organic fertilizer is called Microlife™, which I use for everything from house plants to fruit trees and turf grass. Next apply a compost top dressing to the lawn to build organic matter and inoculate the soil with beneficial microbes.

Note: Cheap low-quality compost does not work well, and some may actually kill the turf one is trying to save.

Continued next week in Issue 287 part 8b

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

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*

SAT., MAY 25: THE JOHN FAIREY GARDEN SUCCULENTS SALE, 10am-3pm, 20559 FM359, Hempstead. jfgarden.org/

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

SAT., JUNE 1: WESTBURY COMMUNITY GARDEN 8TH ANNUAL TOMATO TASTING FESTIVAL, 10:30am-12:30pm. 12581 Dunlap St. westburycommunitygarden.org; (832) 792-5701

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

TUE., JUNE 4: USDA REPRESENTATIVE VISIT by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 11am- 12:30pm, Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu/lecture-series

THURS., JUNE 6: COMPANION PLANTING FOR PEST CONTROL by GERALD DUPONT, 1pm, Waller County Extension Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead. Free RSVP 979-826-7651

SAT., JUNE 8: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SALE, 9am - 1:30pm Bay Area Community Center, 5002 E. NASA Pkwy, Seabrook. theplumeriasociety.org/

SAT., JUNE 8: BLACKBERRIES & BLUEBERRIES by MONICA MARTENS, EdD, 10am-Noon; Carbide Park, 4102-B Main (FM 512), La Marque. Galveston Cty. Master Gardener event. Free. galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture, 281-309-5065.

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/1/events

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

— MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE FUTURE EVENTS! —

FRI., JULY 5: ORGANIC GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 1pm, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

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

MON., JULY 8: COMPOSTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 12pm, Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonet St. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

MON., JULY 8: FALL'S BEST VEGETABLE GARDEN by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 10am- 11:30am. Register in advance to receive link: hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

TUE., JULY 9: IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING BUGS by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 1pm, Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

WED., JULY 10: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10:30am, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

WED., JULY 10: GROWING AND COOKING MUSHROOMS by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 6pm, Pasadena Public Library, 4330 Fairmont Pkwy., Pasadena. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

WED., JULY 10: PLANT PROPAGATION by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 6pm, Tuttle Neighborhood Library, 702 Kress St. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

WED., JULY 10: LANDSCAPING FOR THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE by **MARK VORDERBRUGGEN**, 12 – 2 pm. Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Humble. Free. Registration required. Pct3.com/mbg 713-274-4160.

WED., JULY 13: TROPICAL PLANT SYMPOSIUM (GINGERS, TROPICAL HIBISCUS & FERNS, BROMELIADS & PLUMERIAS), Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. . friendsofmercer.com/

SAT., JULY 13: COMPOSTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Fonteno Senior Education Center, 6600 Bissonet St. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

MON., JULY 15: GENOA FRIENDSHIP GARDEN- OPEN GARDEN DAY by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 8:30am- 11am, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUE., JULY 16: FALL'S BEST VEGETABLE GARDEN by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 11am- 12pm, No reservation required: facebook.com/harriscountyp/1/events

THUR., JULY 18: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUE., JULY 23: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**,

10am, Steve Radack Community Center, 18650 Clay Rd. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

THU., JULY 25: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**,
12pm, Dr. Shannon Walker Neighborhood Library, 5505 Belrose Dr. Free and open to the
public. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUE., JULY 30: GROWING TOMATOES IN FALL by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**,
10:30am, Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

OCT., 11-12: 82nd ANNUAL BULB AND PLANT MART. gchouston.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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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.



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