

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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*"Perhaps he knew, as I did not, that the Earth was made round
so that we would not see too far down the road."*

-- Karen Blixen "Out of Africa"



DON'T MAKE HEAT TRAUMAS WORSE THAN ALREADY ARE!

Enjoying our occasional (now) cooling rainfall? Hope so. Between showers, more mid>high 90's are projected. 2023 brought 45 days of record-breaking temps [100+](#) (peak:109°F). Predictions warn 2024 will be higher.

Heat-loving, already-well-adapted plants, especially natives, should be fine. But know when temps rise, most native and imported plant growth will slow down as plants self protect, dropping leaves so roots will absorb as much water as possible, assuming you've been watering correctly.

Some plants (eg. St. Augustine) gradually go dormant (just as many plants do in winter). Folks in know let heat-loving native "weed grasses," etc., grow, mowing them flat just like they would St. A. Both groups add nutrients to soil as they die back and add some greenery to lawns.

Very young and newly-planted flora may need a little (or a lot of) TLC. Stocked up yet on plant umbrellas? Don't laugh. Cheap, easy-on/off, cute, handy and work! Discount & party stores may carry small ones. Amazon too.

Don't block all sunlight. Just very hottest, direct overhead sun, noon to 3+/- . If plants still can't take it, consider switching to hardier, or native, varieties or moving them into more shade. Or plant taller, overhanging plants to provide mid-day shade. As any experienced Houston gardener will tell you, this is just the beginning, folks.

Watering advice bounds. One cardinal rule: If hot air touches water (whatever source/distribution method), you WILL lose a significant percentage to evaporation. Most efficient water sources touch only soil with a downward flow. Eliminate as much air contact as possible. Early morn best; next late evening.

Baking hot days are ideal for long, hard look at what's beautiful in your area. If you can't ask owners to ID, zoom phone camera in as close as can & snap picture. More detail, the better. Most cellphones now have photo ID. If not, ask nearest **independent** nurseryman to ID. Or, join/post it on [Houston Gardening Facebook Page](#). (gold mine for area gardeners). Still no luck? Email me: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. I know folks. Need immediate gardening answers? Keep reading . . .

* * *

Potpourri

- **HOUSTON AREA RADIO SHOWS** are great call-in resources for locally-specific, accurate advice. Have questions, paper, pencil ready before calling! Tell them your broad general area (north, south, etc.). Our local show hosts know US, have long, impressive, professional backgrounds. Know other LOCAL gardening shows, do share! lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com



GARDENLINE WITH SKIP RICHTER, Saturdays, 7-9am NewsRadio 740 KTRH-AM (Call-in: 713-212-KTRH)

HOME SHOW GARDEN PROS, 610AM, SportsRadio 610 Saturdays 9am-noon and Sundays 8-11am. (Call in: (281) 833-3333)

Some of the biggest problems I've seen over 50+ years of writing this column develop from failure to research, and respect our various growing challenges — sometimes very different, even between our counties. Before you commit significant \$\$\$ on plant purchases or landscaping, at least be aware about Texas' many separate soil regions: texasalmanac.com/articles/soils-of-texas

- **MONARCH MIGRATING EARLY! JOURNEY NORTH website** reports migrations watchers are seeing monarch caterpillars on milkweeds earlier

than usual this year! . . . In Friendswood ... "Erin" photographed a large caterpillar on June 2, writing, "A few days out from making a chrysalis." Also reported: "...tattered wings, likely from enduring high winds" during recent Southern storms. Great website for watching butterflies, hummingbirds, etc., migrations. [Journey North photo](#)



**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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**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 # 287

Subject: Healthy Soils – part 8b

Today we continue with the second half of section 6
How to quit destroying your soil (The "Do Not's") – part two

• AVOID MUNICIPAL WATER IF POSSIBLE

City water is full of toxic chemicals from chlorine, chloramine, fluoride, etc., that hurt soil life. Several plant families are directly hurt by fluorine, causing weak growth that encourages insects and disease.

"Disinfection is hugely important. We have to kill those pathogens," says Dr. Richardson. "We had millions of people dying from waterborne illnesses before we started disinfecting water in the 1800s."

"Take a glass of water. You may or may not have pesticides, pharmaceuticals, PFAS and lead in it. Usually not," says Susan Richardson, a professor of biochemistry at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. "But there's always something that is in your drinking water, and that's disinfection by-products."

At issue wasn't any of the well-known and widely feared water infiltrators such as *E. coli* or [per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances \(PFAS\)](#), in fact, less recognized yet more ubiquitous: disinfection by-products.

Aptly named, the chemicals form in water when disinfectants that are widely used to kill pathogens in municipal drinking water facilities react with organic compounds. These compounds may be present in the water because of natural processes such as the decay of leaves and animal matter, as well as human activities that may release solvents, pharmaceuticals, pesticides and industrial chemicals.

Unintended Consequences

Chemists first discovered disinfection by-products in treated drinking water in the 1970s. The trihalomethanes they found, they determined, had resulted from the reaction of chlorine with natural organic matter. Since then, scientists have identified more than 700 additional disinfection by-products. "And those only represent a portion. We still don't know half of them," says Richardson, whose lab has identified hundreds of disinfection by-products.

Identification of disinfection by-products is incredibly difficult, she explains, because these chemicals are not simply flowing down a river from an industrial site or running off a farm. "They didn't exist before," she adds. "It's a complete unknown — there's no preconceived idea of what these chemicals look like."

Another research team recently discovered more previously unidentified disinfection by-products. As they described in a January 2020 [study](#), potentially carcinogenic chemicals are formed through the interaction of chlorine and not only organic matter in the environment but also manmade materials that include phenols such as [bisphenol A \(BPA\)](#) and other plasticizers, as well as sunscreen agents and antimicrobials.

"These phenol compounds are incredibly widespread because of their properties," says Carsten Prasse, a coauthor on the study and an assistant professor of environmental health and environmental engineering at Johns Hopkins University. He highlights their use in both plastic pipes and plastic bottles, which frequently carry drinking water.

All the chemicals found in municipal water supplies kill microbial life that is required for healthy fertile soil.

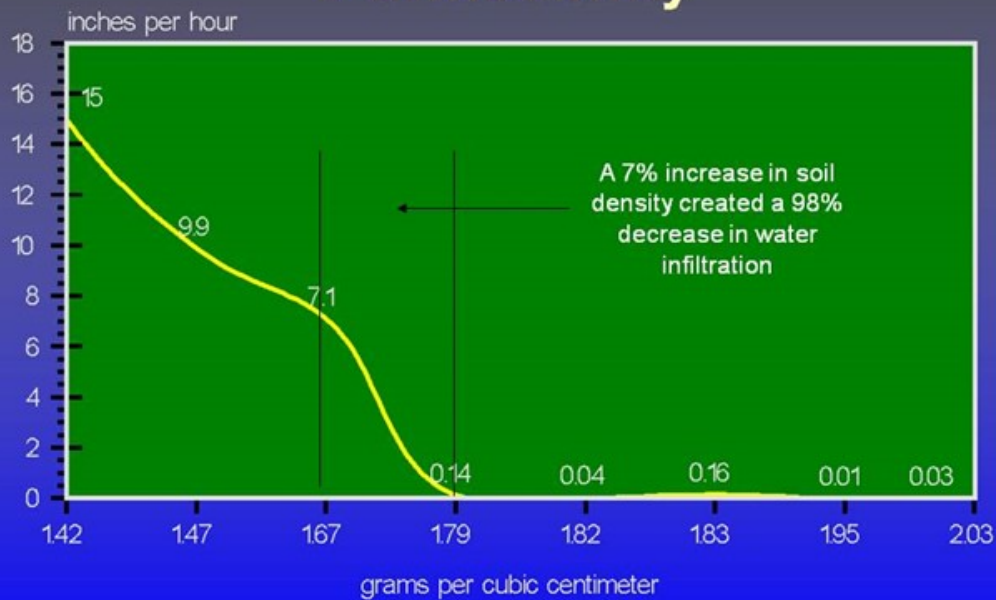
This is another reason healthy soil is so important. Along the Gulf Coast we get enough rainfall to provide all the water our plants need IF we capture it.

Note: At the August 10th educational event OHBAPALOOZA, put on by OHBA I will be giving a talk on soil as the ultimate water storage device. More information at: www.ohbaonline.org

Note: Several companies make filters to remove many of these chemicals that screw right onto your outdoor faucet and the garden hose screws on to them.

1. The slide below illustrates how even a small amount of compaction from hardpan caused by artificial fertilizers, salts, etc. hurt the soil's ability to absorb water.

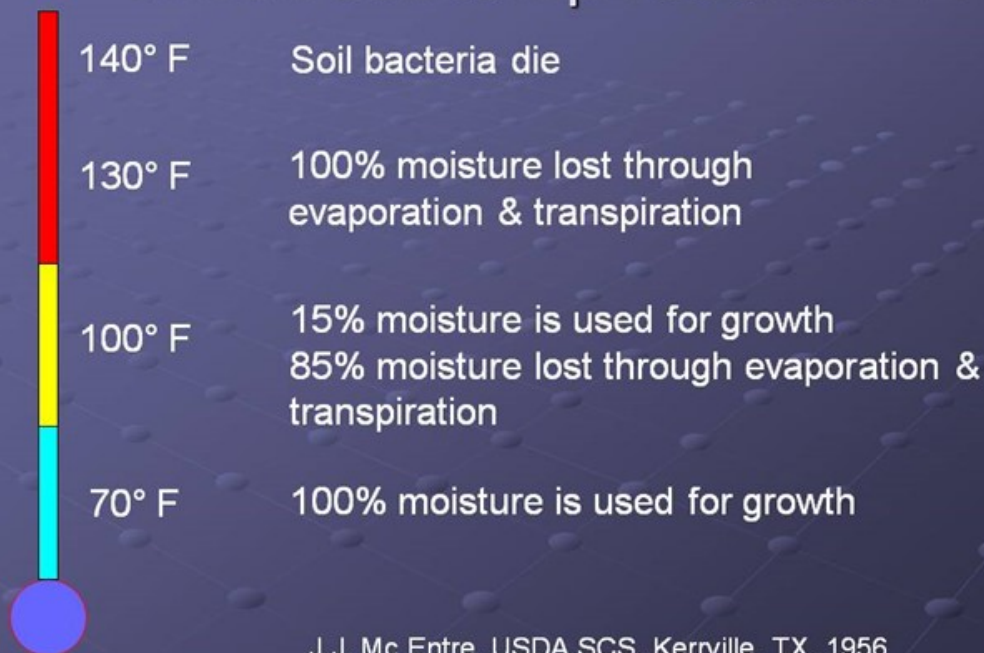
Influence of Soil Density on Water Permeability



Adapted from Ocean County Soil Conservation District

The next slide illustrates why topdressing one's lawn with compost (acts as a mulch) or using a three-inch-thick layer of Aged Native Mulch in our flower beds is so important. When we keep the soil cooler, plants use far less water.

When soil temp reaches. . .



J.J. Mc Entre, USDA SCS, Kerrville, TX, 1956

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

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 Gardeners. 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/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

FRI., JUNE 28: SHADE GARDENING IDEAS AND TIPS (ONLINE), 1pm, Fort Bend County Master Gardeners. Free. [Landscape Success - Fort Bend \(agrilife.org\)](http://Landscape Success - Fort Bend (agrilife.org))

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

— MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE FUTURE EVENTS! —

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/l/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

*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.



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

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