

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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TRUTH IN REPORTING:

Mother Nature always bats last. Can't blame this on Beryl — this was our house (our bedroom) in 1983's H. Alicia

***'One of worst mistakes
you can make as a
gardener is to think
you're in charge.'***

-- Janet Gillespie, "Stories from my Sketchbook"



Irony to be talking about watering deep one week and the next to be warning about working in wet soil! Mother Nature has left so many of us with soggy messes. These do make it easier to pull out weeds! On other hand, remaining/new plants won't thank you one bit.

Why? Is planting in soggy soil really that bad? Unfortunately, yes!

Not unlike us, soil has very definite ideas about when it feels good and productive and when things just aren't right. I leave it to John to get technical. Just remember working in damp soil will "compact" it, squeeze out oxygen, making life more difficult for the "life" we want to thrive down there so plants will thrive above ground!

Compacted soil becomes like a lake bottom holding incredible water weight, It can take decades to repair itself. Be patient. If you HAVE to have beauty immediately, buy plants, slice off bottom of the pot, set it on ground (maybe slightly buried) and then hide the upper pot views with mulch.

To be honest, almost every plant in my own yard is still planted exactly this way. Since they're fine (or were before Beryl), apparently they're happy! One reason is our yard is very low and water stands almost everywhere. This way

plants always have some dry, above-ground soil during our rainy seasons. Why haven't I raised beds? (Just look at title of this column!) Easily 90% of the plants put in when we moved here 7 years ago are doing great. Or, at least, they were pre-Beryl.

To hide my above ground pots (and not shock neighbors), I put word out I would happily pick up bagged leaves set out by street ("*neighborhood bag lady!*"). Those leaves not only hide my partially above ground black nursery pots, they also helped raise a really low area in the back. It was always a lake. Now, after heavy rains like Beryl, it's just a marsh!

The thing to do now is watch plants for damage that might not show up until later. Post-Beryl leaves may look fine now, but later suddenly wilt and turn brown round the edges. Could be result of wind pulling moisture out of foliage faster than roots can draw it up from the soil.

We tend to take our trees for granted. Not smart. Valuable investments deserve attention, no matter how old or how young. As many of us learned the hard way, we ignore them at our own peril! Do you even know what kind of trees you have? This may be a good time to find out, and to research their needs. You can find tons of free advice on specific trees, and often get them identified if you don't know (take pictures of leaves) at your County Extension Office (agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/counties/).

You can replace damaged shrubs and flowers now, but to be on the safe side. Shop a nursery you trust since August is one tricky month. In 2023, Houston's August temps reached 109°, highest temp ever recorded here, twice within the span of one week as a matter of fact. Predictions aren't any better for this year.

If you're determined to replant, in sunny now-vacant areas, might consider edibles instead of ornamentals. For the best varieties for your specific area, visit your County Master Gardeners' Community Garden txmg.org/contacts/by-county. In our area (depending on county) many vegetables actually SHOULD be planted in August, including beans, corn, cucumbers, malabar spinach, peas, sweet potatoes, onions, cherry tomatoes, to name a few. Let a responsible independent nurseryman help you with your selections!

With ornamentals, Texas natives might be your best bet. Not many imported plants will thank you for planting them in our Augusts! A typical heat-tolerant native is giant white milkweed (pictured) among other beneficial pollinator plants. [Great list](#).

For most plants, watch for wilted leaves or "suspicious" changes. If you can resist the urge, don't cut back now. That stimulates new growth an internally stressed plant may 1. not want and 2. might be more susceptible to even more damage. Mulch well.



Potpourri

- **COMMUNITY GARDENS NEEDING POST-BERYL HELP?** Probably aren't many of us who didn't suffer at least some garden/landscape damage. A unique group of gardeners could certainly use help, because helping to feed others is their primary goal. Talking about our hundreds of volunteer community gardens so vital to our food banks.

For that reason, for next few weeks, glad to list community gardens that could use some volunteers to help them get restart their wonderful contributions to those in need. Email info to lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. Good example...

- ***PLANT IT'S FORWARD'S*** main goal is empowering refugees with training and a head start on organic farming. Their next virtual volunteer orientation is Thurs., Aug. 29: 6pm. Details: <https://forms.gle/k46x57rPm4px3A6k6>





- **NATURE'S WAY OFFER TO GARDENING GROUPS** Silver lining in wake of Hurricane Beryl! [Nature's Way Resources](#) is offering free guided extensive nursery/soil/mulch facilities to garden/plant-oriented groups. As usual, NWR's expanded meeting site is free to gardening groups. Reservations are required for both.

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Brenda Beust Smith's column is based on her 40+ years as
Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener — lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com
Please NOTE: this column focuses ONLY on the Greater Houston Area

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JOIN US FOR THE 3RD ANNUAL ORGANIC FAIR & WORKSHOP

OHBAPALOOZA

Saturday
August 10, 2024

*Save
THE
Date*

**United Way of
Greater Houston**

TIME:
8:00 AM - 3:30 PM

50 Waugh Dr.
Houston, TX 77007

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Brad Phillips | Dr. Mila McManus | Chaz Daughtry
Dr. Joe Novak | Glenn Olsen | Diana Liga | John Ferguson
Brienne Bernsen | Diana Wilson | Mike Serant | Erin Mills
Chrissy Doolen | Joanna Botvin | Dr. Mark Vorderbrugger

2 HEADLINERS | 3 CONCURRENT SESSIONS

ORGANIC EDUCATION, NETWORKING & MORE

Discover the power of Organics at OHBAPalooza! From cultivating organic foods to fostering community through urban farming, dive into topics like therapeutic gardening, water conservation, and the fascinating world of beneficial insects. Join us for an immersive journey through native plants, medicinal herbs, and even explore the secret language of trees—all in one dynamic educational event!

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John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 293

Subject: Atrazine, NO and Moths, Microbes and Flavor, Gayfeathers, Carbon Sequestering, Toxic Chemicals

Another research study has added to the weight of data on the dangers of the herbicide atrazine. Amphibians and reptiles are very sensitive to this toxic chemical.

The African clawed frog's intestines grow like humans in a counterclockwise

manner. When tadpoles are exposed to trace amounts of this chemical their intestines grow in the opposite direction or clockwise which prevents them from functioning properly.

Intestinal malrotation occurs in the USA in 1 out of 500 babies, I wonder if there is a connection. Journal Development 2024.

Last week Brenda talked about moths. A study from the University of Washington has found that air pollution prevents moths from sensing the fragrance of the flowers they need to feed on. They found that ozone reacts with nitrogen oxide to produce nitrate radicals. These radicals react with plant fragrance molecules preventing moths from sensing them. Journal Science 2024

Field studies at the University of Naples have confirmed this eliminated a moth's ability to find a flower.

A paper in the journal Current Biology has found that it is microbes living on the roots, that give chai tea its flavor. They also found that bacteria boost the plant's production of the amino acid theanine. Theanine is believed to be the agent that helps us relax.

One thing I really enjoy about living in the country is the constant parade of wildflowers that starts in late January and continues till late in the fall, one species after another. One of my favorites starts in late August and that is the Gay feathers (*Liatris* sp.).

I read an article in the Texas Wildlife magazine the other day on this amazing wildflower. Most gardeners know that all the *Liatris* species are great for our butterflies and other pollinators.

I learned that the seeds are eaten by quail in late winter after the bristles have fallen off. They also provide valuable pollen for Monarch butterflies during their fall migration when other plants are hard to find.

Gayfeathers often bloom during heat waves and droughts when other plants cannot survive. Prairie ecologists have found that the *Liatris* roots can go 16 feet deep into the soil, hence they reach sub-surface water that other plants cannot.

The article also stated that Texas is home to 15 distinct species of *Liatris*.

My recent CSA News (2023) had some interesting data related to climate change and lawns. A study in the Journal of Environmental Management (2015) found that traditional management (mowing, irrigation, use of artificial fertilizer, etc.) on a half-acre of lawn, generates about 20,000 kg a year of greenhouse emissions!

Conversely, they found that (no mowing, irrigation and use of organic fertilizer), would sequester about 80,000 kg annually. This is a difference of 100,00 kg

per year! This is a difference of 220,000 pounds of carbon in just a half-acre.

Using artificial fertilizers releases nitrogen oxides (N₂O). One molecule of nitrogen oxide has a global warming impact as 265 molecules of carbon dioxide. Hence the benefits of using modern biological methods (organic) are greatly multiplied.

Additionally, that carbon would be in the form of humus and humus can hold 25 times its weight in water greatly reducing the water required to keep the lawn looking nice.

As noted above the nitrogen oxide emissions prevents moths from finding flowers pollinate and to feed on the pollen and nectar.

There is a new documentary called "[Eating For Tomorrow](#)" that has excellent reviews and is available to view for free for a few more days.

We have talked about the dangers of PFAS on many occasions. There is a new video on the subject.

"*The Poison in Us All*," a documentary by Bloomberg Investigates, explores the origins of per- and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals, more commonly known as PFAS or "forever chemicals," and how they are putting our lives and the lives of future generations at risk. I encourage you to watch this eye-opening film as it will expose just how pervasive these deadly chemicals have become. Excerpt from the [Dr. Mercola newsletter](#).

Speaking of toxic chemicals, 68 countries have banned the pesticide paraquat due to its toxicity and harmful effects on our health and environment. It is amazing to me how the EPA thinks this chemical is not toxic in the USA.

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

TUES., AUG. 3 (RESCHEDULED): TROPICAL PLANT SYMPOSIUM & (GINGERS, HIBISCUS & FERNS, BROMELIADS & PLUMERIAS) SALE, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Sale free / [Symposium register](#)

TUES., AUG. 6: MYCORRHIZAL FUNGI by **DR. LISA MORANO**, 11am, Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu/lecture-series

THURS., AUG. 8: CREATING A POLLINATOR GARDEN (virtual too), 7-9pm, St. Andrew's Church, 1819 Heights Blvd. Houston Rose Society event. Free.
[us06web.zoom.us/j/8186999785?
pwd=JrgelM9cJYNz0mKP2lb05byOSxgGxp.1&omn=89117848066](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8186999785?pwd=JrgelM9cJYNz0mKP2lb05byOSxgGxp.1&omn=89117848066)

SAT., AUG. 10: OHBAPALOOZA GARDENING & MORE, 8am-3:30pm, 50 Waugh Dr. \$70. Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance event. Register: OHBAonline.org/register

MON., AUG. 12: GROWING BULBS IN TEXAS by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 10am- 11:30am, Register in advance to receive link: hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

WED., AUG. 14: COMPOSTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10:30am, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

THURS., AUG. 15: CONTAINER GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

MON., AUG. 19: OPEN GARDEN DAY by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 8:30am- 11am, Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. hcmga.tamu.edu

MON., AUG. 19: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 5pm, Hockley Community Center, 28515 Old Washington Rd., Hockley. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUES., AUG. 20: GROWING BULBS IN TEXAS by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 11am-12pm, No reservation required: facebook.com/harriscountyp/1/events

SAT., AUG. 24: ONIONS AND GARLIC by **KEVIN LANCON**, 9-11am AgriLife Extension Bldg., 4102-B Main St. (FM 512), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener events. Free. Register: txmg.org/galveston/; 281-309-5065

SAT., AUG. 24: INTERNATIONAL VEGETABLES GROWN LOCALLY by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 11am, Pasadena Central Library, 1201 Jeff Ginn Memorial Dr., Pasadena. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUES., AUG. 27: RAISED BED GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am, Steve Radack Community Center, 18650 Clay Rd. Free and open to the public. hcmga.tamu.edu

WED., SEPT. 4: CONTAINER GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10:30am, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

MON., SEPT. 9: HEIRLOOM AND PASS-ALONG PLANTS by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 10am- 11:30am, Register in advance to receive link: hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

WED., SEPT. 11: DECORATING FOR GARDENING FUN by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10:30am. Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

MON., SEPT. 16: GENOA FRIENDSHIP GARDEN- OPEN GARDEN DAY by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 8:30am- 11am, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUE., SEPT. 17: COMPOSTING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10:30am. Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

TUE., SEPT. 17: HEIRLOOM AND PASS-ALONG PLANTS by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 11am- 12pm. Free, Facebook Live, no reservation required: facebook.com/harriscountyp/levents

WED., SEPT. 18: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 12:30pm. Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

THUR., SEPT. 19: A FEW PERENNIALS by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am. Glazier Senior Ed Center, 16600 Pine Forest Ln. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT., SEPT. 28: FALL PLANT SALE by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am- 1pm. Alabonson Park, 9650 N Houston Rosslyn Rd. Pre-order online for pickup at the sale, Sept 18-24. hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales

SUN., SEPT. 29: CONTAINER GARDENING BY by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10am. Steve Radack Community Center, 18650 Clay Rd. Free. 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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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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