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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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Eastern Black Swallowtail on Stokes Aster (Benoit Kanarche photo, Houston Botanic Garden)

***"A hurricane is just a temporary disruption,
but the lessons it teaches us last a lifetime."***

— Hurricane Season

DISCOURAGING SQUIRRELS & HELPING POLLINATORS POST- BERLE

We're so quick to turn to commercial chemicals for creating our own image of what an ideal garden should look like, we're losing touch with time-honored, perfectly safe, kitchen cabinet solutions.



One example: We have a picture window table/hanger/feeder setup that attracts various birds, hummingbirds and -- if only they'd behave! -- squirrels. I don't mind them all feeding, plenty of seed for everyone. But squirrels were destroying the hanging basket they used to reach the birdseed, etc.

THEY SAY squirrels don't like coffee. I began pouring

leftover coffee and grounds in/around the basket (*on pole in garden*). Lo & behold . . . squirrels quit using basket! Also suspected squirrels (& heat) killed my native Texas clematis on wire stand in their pathway. (*I transplanted this native Texas clematis back in 1960s from atop a heavily wooded lot's adjacent ditch bank. I was so awed by its delicate flowers and obvious hardiness! She always dies back in winter, reappears spring, even after being transferred (yet again!) 6 years ago from our Harvey-destroyed home to new site.*) Clematis do like slightly acidic soil. Suddenly she sent up new stalks! Stay tuned!



Speaking of hummers, I was surprised to see them so quickly after Beryl passed. Turns out hurricanes don't seem to bother most hummers! Their feet are so strong and bodies so tiny, they can safely hide in dense vegetation on tree downsides. Who else would tell you these things?

Another hurricane silver lining — wildflower enthusiasts credit "blows" with "sowing" seed over hundreds of miles, often resulting in introducing new flowers and other plant species to areas where never been seen before.

On the downside, besides the physical damage they do, hurricanes moving in from Gulf more often than not coat us with saltwater which, generally speaking, isn't good for many garden plants. Even northern/western parts of the Greater Houston are so relatively close to the Gulf, maybe it would behoove us to research flowers that seem to thrive despite occasional saltwater baths!

Have you ever seen Galveston's oleanders and coreopsis blooming in the Galveston cemeteries along Broadway? SPECTACULAR! And they're getting constantly coated with salt water. Those two are just a few of great coastal plants. If you're looking for edible trees that can handle salty winds, Texas A&M has a neat list: **2019-04-25-HAB-Fruit-Trees-in-the-Coastal-Bend(1)**

* * *

NOW, A REAL TREAT! When it comes to experts in attracting native pollinators (best gardening technique of all!), **ERIN MILLS** — former Cockrell Butterfly Center Director, now Houston Botanic Gardens' Associate Director of Family Programs — is always happy share tips on how to invite the right insects to help! Below, Erin shares free expertise and answers questions both virtually and in person at the next [*Houston Rose Society*](#)'s gathering! Drop in or tune in to



THURS., AUG. 8: CREATING A POLLINATOR GARDEN (virtual too), 7-9pm, St. Andrew's Church, 1819 Heights Blvd. Free. **Virtual details:**

us06web.zoom.us/j/8186999785pwd=JrgelM9cJYNz0mKP2lb05byOSxgGxp.1&omn=89117848066

(or click on [*Houston Rose Society*](#) for link)

* * *

HOW DID BERYL AFFECT OUR POLLINATORS?

By ERIN MILLS

**Associate Director of Family Programs
Houston Botanic Garden**

Each time a weather event happens, it raises a question among conservation-minded folks in the gardening community: How did this effect our pollinators/monarchs/etc?

*Pictured: Longhorn bee pollinating a sunflower
(*Helianthus*) (Benoit Kanarche, photo) HBG)*



We tend to anthropomorphize in these situations. We project our hardships on them, because we care, but let's think about it.

Hurricane Beryl caused plenty of hardships for humans, but the effects on our pollinators may range from destructive to constructive. Heavy rains and flooding may have destroyed the habitat of some ground nesting bees and wasps, but it created plenty of habitat for mosquitoes (we hate them, but hey, they're pollinators and a food source for lots of other animals!), as well as other insects that need wet/moist soil to reproduce.

Downed trees may have displaced honeybee colonies, but broken branches and tree snags are the perfect habitat for cavity nesting native bees looking for a place to raise their young. I don't know about you, but the rains from Beryl and others throughout this lovely summer have my garden green, blooming, and thriving, so there should be no lack of flowers. It is a stark contrast from the drought and extreme heat last summer, which was surely much harder on our pollinators.

Individual weather events do not deliver a devastating blow to our pollinators, and in many ways they can be beneficial. But they do point to the larger picture, which is climate change, and our increasingly unpredictable weather changes from year to year. No matter what storms we weather, our efforts to support our pollinators should remain the same:

- Provide plenty of floral resources, especially from native plants that bloom during each season throughout the year
- Provide habitat, in the form of plants (grasses, vines, shrubs, ground covers, trees) and other things like leaf litter, bare soil, hollow stems, and snags
- Avoid pesticides!

What can and should change is our garden structure and plant choices. Raise beds and amend soil to make sure it drains well in times of too much water and choose native, drought-tolerant plants for times of not enough. Winterize your garden with more native plants, that will bounce back in the spring (in most cases!). Continue to adapt and keep your backyard habitats thriving. Our pollinators need it!

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE: ERIN MILLS will share even more expertise and answer questions (virtually & in person) at the [Houston Rose Society's](#) gathering:

THURS., AUG. 8: CREATING A POLLINATOR GARDEN (virtual too),
7-9pm, St. Andrew's Church, 1819 Heights Blvdt. Free. Virtual details:

us06web.zoom.us/j/8186999785pwd=JrgelM9cJYNz0mKP2lb05byOSxqGxp.1&omn=89117848066

(or click on [Houston Rose Society](#) for link)

Potpourri

- **ATTN. GARDEN/PLANT GROUPS** -- In wake of Hurricane Beryl, [Nature's Way Resources](#) is offering free guided tours of NWR's extensive nursery/soil/mulch facilities to garden clubs, plant societies and other plant-oriented organized groups. As usual, NWR's expanded meeting site is free to above groups. Reservations required for both..



* * *

**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**

* * *

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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OHBA MEMBERS: \$50
NON-MEMBERS: \$70

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John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 294

Subject: Corrupt Regulators, Pecans, Bagged Soil Products, Fluoride

The reason to “Go Organic” continues to increase.

The EPA is not known as the Enhanced Profit Agency for nothing. A couple years ago four scientists at the EPA turned whistleblowers in a report to congress on agricultural chemicals. They made their complaints through a

group called Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER).

They reported that EPA managers were altering their reports on the dangers of various chemicals and their recommendation to remove them from the market.

As far as I know, Congress has done nothing to protect us. I guess the huge campaign contributions are too important to them.

Often EPA managers after a few years go to work for the chemical companies at huge salaries as they are rewarded for their corruption.

The books below are additional detailed reports on the corruption in the EPA and FDA.
Science For Sale: How the US Government Uses Powerful Corporations and Leading Universities to Support Government Policies, Silence Top Scientists, Jeopardize Our Health, and Protect Corporate Profits, by David Lewis, PhD., Skyhorse Publishing, 2014, ISBN: 978-1-62636-071-6

Note: All proceeds from this book go to the National Whistle Blower's Center (www.whistleblowers.org)



FDA - Failure, Deception, Abuse - The Story of an Out-of-Control Government Agency and What It Means For Your Health, Life Extension Foundation, Praktikoa Books, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-60766-001-9

FDA

Failure, Deception, Abuse

The Story of an Out-of-Control Government Agency
and What It Means For Your Health

From *Life Extension Magazine*

■ a non-profit research-based organization est. in 1980

This book documents how the FDA

- denies the introduction of life-saving therapies
- suppresses safe methods of preventing disease
- causes the price of drugs to be beyond the means of most
- intimidates those who develop innovative methods
- fails, by its own admission, to keep pace with science
- criminalizes giving scientific information to consumers
- censors medical information that would educate doctors
- fails to protect the safety of our food
- approves prescription drugs that prove lethal

Active ingredient

Information

Purpose

To protect you and your family

Even the USDA gives grants (taxpayer dollars) to promote toxic chemicals and low-quality food that results in many health problems. This has resulted in trillions of dollars being needlessly wasted on health issues that could have been prevented.

A few years ago, the New York Times in an article titled “Attack of The Superweeds” (August 22, 2021) reported on how the usage of herbicides has promoted the development of super weeds that gardeners and farmers now must deal with. Over 263 species in 71 countries are now resistant to herbicides at the time of the article.

On a more positive note, researchers have found that eating pecans can

dramatically improve a person's cholesterol levels. Pecans are high in healthy fatty acids and fiber, both of which have been linked to lower cholesterol. Maybe that is why I love pecan pie so much. Journal of Nutrition, 2021

Note: I have read previously that our native pecans are much higher in nutrients than many of the pecans bred for larger nut size. They also have a richer flavor for most people.

A question I was asked a while back was: "Why do we have to add fertilizer to potting mixes and soils we purchase?"

There are several reasons.

1. Many people purchase on price buying the lower priced bag. To keep costs down many producers, add sawdust, bark, peat moss or other low-cost items.
2. These types of material have a very high carbon to nitrogen ratio and are very low in nutrients which requires a lot of fertilizer to have enough nutrients for plants to grow.
3. These type products do not feed (support) beneficial microbes that the plants require to be healthy, hence makes it harder for plants to absorb what nutrients that are there.
4. If a producer adds a couple ounces of fertilizer to a bag of soil it not only raises costs a little, but it may also require increased government regulations.

This occurs in Texas. To use an analogy, if one places a tablespoon of milk into a gallon of water, regulators believe it turns the whole gallon into milk. Hence if a producer mixes in a couple ounces of fertilizer to a 40-pound bag (640 ounces) it miraculously turns the whole bag into fertilizer. By making this claim regulators can now require the fertilizer tax be applied to the whole 40 pounds. This is also double dipping as the fertilizer producer has already paid the state fertilizer tax.

Even small amounts of fluoride weaken the natural immune system of many plant species making them more susceptible to insect and disease issues.

Minerals are formed from the chemicals in our municipal water supply that cement our soil and create hardpan. Two common ones are Fluorapatite $\text{Ca}_5(\text{PO}_4)_3\text{F}$ and Chlorapatite $\text{Ca}_5(\text{PO}_4)_3\text{Cl}$, (from Principles of Soil Chemistry, 4th Edition, Kim H. Tan).

If you notice the chemical formulas above, we first notice our friend the phosphate ion (PO_4) that is required for healthy soils and plants. We next notice calcium (Ca) that all gardeners know is essential to having healthy plants.

However, when these good guys are exposed to fluorine (F) as in the fluoride and chlorine (Cl) that are found in our water systems it turns them into minerals that cement our soil particles together creating hardpan. So, the more one waters, the more often one will need to aerate and in general the more problems one will have.

So, additional food for thought: Fluoride is an endocrine-disrupting, neurotoxic,

and bone weakening substance that the FDA defines as a drug when used to prevent disease. Unlike the minerals we need to be healthy like calcium and magnesium to name a couple, humans have no known physiological requirements for fluoride according to the FDA.

Sodium fluoride has been used as a roach poison for many years and is added to many consumer products and our water supplies. It is very disturbing to me that if fluoride is in a drop or capsule, it is a dangerous drug. According to the FDA, "removing harmful fluoride drugs from the market will protect the health of millions of children."

It is also very unsettling for me that if fluoride is a dangerous drug, how can it be added to public water systems.

Recent research has found that very very small amounts of fluoride are required for humans to be healthy.

If you would like to learn more the [Fluoride Action Network](#) is another good source of information.

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

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

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/levents

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: txmq.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. Reformatting delays publication and opens doors for errors. Your choice! SEE TOP OF CALENDAR FOR EXACT FORMAT.

* * *



*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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