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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

LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN
NEWSLETTER



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Fall bloomers l to r: Lobelia (cardinal flower), vitex and gerbera daisies

"September tries its best to have us forget summer."

--Bernard Williams (1929–2003) English moral philosopher

**FALL? NOT YET FOR US . . .
BUT SEPTEMBER DOES MEAN
IT'S ACTUALLY COMING!**

SEPTEMBER (hopefully) will, sooner or later, encourage a new, cooler, growing season, a good time to plant delights that do best for us if planted in fall. Good example: some wildflowers, bluebonnets for sure! Spring/summer delights may go dormant, especially this year.



Keep this in mind if plants are marching to their own drummers this summer.

May be absolutely nothing you did wrong! Most readers already know these things below. But asking your patience just this once, while I address newcomers. Might trigger some ideas about why things didn't work out for you too. And, below, are some Sept. tips from my **Lazy Gardener's Guide** *

(Pictured above: bluebonnets; below: caladiums)

In Sept., we really should...

- Reduce watering on caladiums toward the end of the month. Bulbs will start to go dormant.
- Sow wildflower seed in raised beds as soon as it gets a little cooler. Dance on beds after planting wildflower (or any) seed. Seed/soil contact vital.
- Plant bulbs in clumps among perennials and shrubs. Their sculptured greenery intensifies colors of other flowers even when not in bloom.
- Refrigerate tulips, hyacinths, muscari and crocus bulbs (**mixture right**) at least 4-6 weeks before planting. If you don't, they might "blast" (bloom too quickly on too short stalks)
- Do you have a favorite local bulb book for Houston? If not, try to find "A Gardener's Guide to Growing Bulbs on the Gulf Coast" by Sally McQueen Squire (available on Amazon).



- **GREAT LOCAL BULB RESOURCE: GARDEN CLUB OF HOUSTON BULB & PLANT MART** — a local tradition since 1942. Fri., Oct. 11: 9am –1 pm and Sat., Oct. 12: 9am–3pm, The Church of St. John the Divine, 2450 River Oaks Blvd. [Online Pre-Ordering](#) closes Sept. 30. The Mart's two GREAT free downloadable resources: [2024 BULB Catalog](#) and [2023 Horticulture Guide](#).

MORE SEPT. NOTES

- Deadhead (remove spent blooms) gerber daisies, crape myrtle, vitex & other summer bloomers so maybe they'll bloom again, hopefully into fall. Plants bloom to produce X amount of seed to drop. Removing spent flowers before seed develops fully tricks plant into repeat blooming.
- Plant shrubs & perennials, especially natives, to give time to establish strongest possible root systems before another Gulf Coast summer.
- Thin vegetable seedlings for more productive plants.
- Feed mums and returning gerbera daisies with a high phosphorus fertilizer. Water well.
- Divide cannas, daylilies, Louisiana iris and violets if they didn't bloom up to par this year.
- Check nursery for fall-blooming perennials. Many are more beautiful now than in spring.

NEXT WEEK: SEPTEMBER TIPS FOR THE REALLY ENERGETIC GARDENERS AND "DON'T DOs" FOR REALLY LAZY GARDENERS
(DON'T MISS MANY FALL PLANTING EVENTS IN CALENDAR BELOW)

- **UPSET BOUGAINVILLEA ISNT BLOOMING?**
Could just be a evanescent period. Favorite gardening guru, **GREG GRANT**, noted in his

Tyler Morning Telegraph column: days are just too long right now! But could be the way you feed & water! More: tylerpaper.com/lifestyle/grant



- **AFTER BLOWS OUR GARDENS HAVE ENDURED LATELY**, we really need our local independent nurseries! They know our area-specific challenges. Don't know your local nursery? Read *Houstonia Magazine* April 16, 2024, issue's excellent article: "[Our Favorite Nurseries and Garden Centers in the Houston Area](#)" by **STEPHANIE BARTELS'** and **DANIEL RENFROWS**. Remember: your garden's success ensures you'll return as faithful customers. Don't see your favorite local, independent nursery in the Greater Houston area (only!) listed, send name and address to me. If I can, I'll include here with your recommendation: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. In fact, I'll add one right now: **Maas Nursery | Seabrook TX**. Next?
- **ATTN. GARDEN/PLANT GROUPS** -- In wake of Hurricane Beryl, [Nature's Way Resources](#) offers 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 a must for both.



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*Brenda Beust Smith's column is based on her 40+ years as the Houston Chronicle's "Lazy Gardener" column -- lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com
Brenda's column focuses ONLY on the Greater Houston Area*

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John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 296

Subject: Soil microbes and health cost of toxic ag chemicals gardening chemicals and health

One of the benefits of being an organic gardener is the microbes in the soil that one is exposed to. It is well established that 80% of our immune system is located in our digestive tract.

When we dig in the soil to plant seeds or transplants, we are exposed to millions of microbes that help us be healthy. The larger the diversity of microbes (bacteria, fungi, etc.) the healthier and more robust is our soil system. As we get them onto our hands and breathe them in, they help populate our digestive system.

If one applies a fungicide to their lawns or their roses for example, we lose many of the species of beneficial fungi also. When we apply a pesticide to control an insect pest as it gets washed into the soil, we lose microarthropods, the tiny insects that shred leaves and other organic matter into smaller pieces. Similarly, when we apply an artificial fertilizer the high salt content kills good bacteria that we need.

As the old saying goes: Healthy Soil = Healthy Plants = Healthy people”.

Past studies have shown that children living in the country or on a farm that drank unpasteurized raw milk, worked with horses and other animals, had 50% less asthma than children in the city. The researchers at Yale University found that air quality inside of homes is often far worse than outside. Journal Trends in Microbiology (2016)

A few years ago, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization found that the cost of the industrial toxic chemical rescue model of farming is causing \$ 3 trillion in environmental damage each year.

Good news on one front. The very dangerous herbicide called DCPA which is sold under the trade name Dacthal, and used to control weeds in cole crops has been outlawed.

It causes irreversible harm to fetus's and causes brain damage and impaired development. The EPA used its emergency authority that allows them to stop all pesticides (including herbicides) that cause serious health issues. Unfortunately, thousands of mothers and their babies were injured before the EPA acted.

Soil scientists at the University of Illinois using data collected on research fields for over 100 years have confirmed other studies that using artificial fertilizers destroys soil organic matter (humus) releasing the carbon as carbon dioxide.

Worldwide this toxic rescue agriculture is a major contributor to global warming. The excess nitrogen ends up in the oceans causing dead zones. This also reduces the soil's ability to absorb and store water.

Another consequence of using toxic chemicals in addition to causing dead zones, is destruction of soil health. These chemicals destroy soil tilth and do not let the soil drain properly after a rain.

As a result, there are now over 38 million miles of underground pipes that we do not see that are used to drain soils in just the corn belt states. This drainage network allows these toxic chemicals applied to the fields to go quickly into our lakes and streams contaminating our water supplies.

A few years ago, there was another study published in the medical journal The Lancet, that has classified fluoride as a neurotoxin which has a negative impact on brain development.

Fluoride has been shown to hurt plant growth of many species and to contribute to creating hardpan in our soils.

It is also a major chemical warfare agent of the USA military. Fluoride is an industrial chemical often contaminated with trace amounts of heavy metals like lead and arsenic.

"The study notes that neurodevelopmental disabilities, including attention deficient disorder, hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, and other cognitive impairments, are now affecting millions of children worldwide." Natural News 2016

From Acres USA:

"The Cal Poly soils department at that time was free from the shackles of a crop science department. Professors taught the natural properties of soil function — what we called soil quality. We did not spend much time talking about replacing nutrients on a soil test; in fact, in that department, we were taught this was incorrect. There were no debates or opinions of what constituted soil function — it was fact, already understood going back to the early 1900s. It simply came down to a soil that optimized its ability to manufacture, process and accumulate soil organic matter, or organic carbon. From there, everything else took care of itself. Ecosystems functioned, water ran clean, and plants grew with vigor. It was human intervention that disturbed the system — or could potentially enhance it. "

When universities are not funded by money from chemical companies they get a different answer.

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

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., AUG. 28: GRAFTING CACTI by **ECHO PANG & JOSEPH RODD**, 7pm, Metropolitan MF Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. Houston Cactus & Succulent Society event. Free. Aug. 25 register deadline: kaktoskomments@gmail.com

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

WED., SEPT. 4: TEXAS NATIVE PLANTS FOR SHADY GARDENS, 9:30-11:30 am, Webster Presbyterian Church, 201 W NASA Pkwy Webster. Parking is at back of church. Gardeners by the Bay event. Free. gbtb.org

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

THURS. SEPT. 12: ROSE EXPERT PANEL, 7-9pm, St. Andrew's Church, 1819 Heights Blvd. Houston Rose Society event. Free. houstonrose.org

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

TUES., SEPT, 17: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING by **LAUREN MARTIN**, 10am, : Free, St. Basil Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land, **FORT BEND MASTER GARDENER** event. Free. sugarlandgardenclub.org

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

WED., SEPT. 25: UNIQUE CACTI OF COCHISE CTY., AZ by **ROB ROMERO** (also Zoom),. 7pm, Metropolitan MF Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. Houston Cactus & Succulent Society event. Free. Zoom Link: kaktoskomments@gmail.com

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

FRI.& SAT., OCT., 11-12: 82nd ANNUAL BULB AND PLANT MART. Garden Club of Houston event. Free. gchouston.org/

WED. OCT. 23: GROWING CACTUS & SUCCULENTS FROM SEEDS by **JACOB MARTIN**, 7pm, Metropolitan Multi-Family Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Cactus and Succulent Society event. Free. hcsstex.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.

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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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