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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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Ingrid Hamilton photo of hummer, her lantana and camomile blooms

*"Like thoughts that flit across the mind / Leaving no lasting trace behind,
The humming-bird darts to and fro, / Comes, vanishes before we know."*

-- Jones Very (1813-1880) American poet

HUMMERS ABOUND & DO & DON'T DO LAZY GARDENER TIPS!

Hummingbirds already seem abundant and -- in part -- thanks to Beryl! Altho main migration through here is in late September, always are some early birds, some who stay year-round, and many probably hunkered down during Beryl.

Their tiny size and extraordinarily strong tiny claws make it easy to cling to tree

backsides and bark crevices during heavy winds.

If you took feeders down, get them back up! One caution: extreme heat can have a negative effect on hummingbird feeders. If you can, change sugar water every 3-4 days. Best recipe: 1 part plain white sugar to 4 parts water. Don't add color or anything else! More advice: [Houston Audubon Society](#).

Replacing Beryl-slaughtered trees and plants? A few recommended below by Houston Audubon Society are listed here. For many more, check out rest of Houston Audubon Society's list that includes planting for longest appeal:

- **Small Flowering Trees.** Red Buckeye: spring. Mexican Buckeye: spring. Mimosa: late spring.
- **Shrubs.** Hardy Hibiscus: summer. Buddleia: summer. Abutilon: all year.
- **Vines.** Carolina Jessamine: winter. Wisteria: spring. Coral Honeysuckle: spring.
- **Perennials.** Gulf Coast Penstemon: spring. Iris: spring. Columbine: spring.

MORE HUMMER ATTRACTORS:

houstonaudubon.org/programs/learn/hummingbirds.html and audubon.org/app. If you're fascinated by their anatomy, check out hummingbirdspot.com/anatomy

* * *

NEW ROSE NOTES & GREAT LEARNING

OPPORTUNITY! If you're planning to buy roses this fall, take a tip from **DARCY BURNS**, [Antique Rose Emporium](#) Head Horticulturist: Do not overwinter roses in their "purchase pots." If you buy from a reputable nursery, roots are established and ready to grow in the ground. Ideally, here, you should set mail-order delivery time for your zone's best planting time.



We're in Zones 8-11 (*depending on where you live in the Greater Houston*) with ideal planting any time between October and May as long as there are no freezing temperatures forecast. Overwintering roses in the purchased nursery pots increases the risk of loss that would otherwise be minimal if the rose was received and planted during optimal planting time. Your own already started/growing roses should be fine.

A great place to learn more about growing roses in this area: Houston Rose Society's **THURS. SEPT. 12: ROSE EXPERT PANEL**, 7-9pm, St. Andrew's Church, 1819 Heights Blvd. Free. houstonrose.org. Consulting Rosarian experts will include **DONALD BURGER, MARIA TRAVINO, MARY FULGHAM** and **RANDY KEEN**.

As Promised . . . (Tips continued from last week's

Notes from the "Lazy Gardener's Guide" book)*

SEPTEMBER TIPS FOR REALLY ENERGETIC GARDENERS

- Leach potted plants to remove accumulated salts. Set on a raised platform with the drain hole free. Repeatedly pour water through the soil.

- Prune off little branches that hide spectacular pyracantha berries.



- Picking flowers to enjoy indoors may trigger more blooms!
- Give groundcovers a slight haircut to encourage spreading.
- Start cuttings of favorite impatiens (*pictured*), begonias and similar softwood plants. New plants started from cuttings will often be stronger than plants that winter over

AND . . . DON'T DO: SEPT. TIPS FOR REALLY LAZY GARDENERS!

- Don't overwater. Overwatering is one reason plants don't bloom well.
- Don't remove dead roses. Plants will know dormant time is coming.



- Don't panic over fuzzy brown balls on the backsides of oak (and other tree) leaves. These are insect galls, good guys. Just leave them alone. They may also appear as woody balls on trunks. When the insect inside hatches (by spring), they'll disappear.

- Don't plant pansies (*pictured*) yet. It's still too hot.
- Don't water aloe veras as much as before. They're going dormant.

Wondering "Why Didn't My Plant Bloom?" Could it be in the wrong spot? Too much/not enough sun? Not enough/too much shade, moisture? Too little/too much/wrong fertilizer? High phosphorus = more flowers; high nitrogen = more green growth.

Monthly 'don't do's' in the "Lazy Gardener's Guide" book - now available only as pdf - free. lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

* * *

BELOW . . . John gives tips/warnings on using Beryl fallen foliage, etc. Also . . . check Calendar at end. Fall gardening events abound!

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 for garden clubs, plant societies and other plant-oriented, organized groups. As usual, NWR's now-expanded meeting site is free to above groups. Reservations a must for both.



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John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 296

Subject: What to do with all the storm cleanup mulch chips.

Brenda asked me to offer a few comments on how to use or dispose of all the mulch produced from the storms that hit Southeast Texas that is piling up in people's yards. The ground up branches and limbs from the recent storm cleanup can make a good mulch for one's yard and flower beds but one needs to be aware of some of the issues involved.

First, there are two major types of equipment to reduce the branches and limbs into mulch. These are chippers and shredders. The mulch produced has very different physical, chemical and biological properties.

Chippers are the most common and use a rotating blade to cut up the branches and limbs into chips. Think of a roll of salami where one cuts off a slice. These are flat chips that pack down easily and have less cell wall destruction hence biodegrade at a slower rate than shredded chips. They do not physically lock together hence are more subject to float off in a rain.

Shredders use what is known as a hammermill to rip the wood apart into longer stringy pieces often with frayed ends. Hammermills cause a lot of cell wall destruction, and the frayed ends allows for much faster decomposition. It also allows for physical locking of the chips to each other and for fungal mats to form tying the chips together. As a result, shredded chips are far more resistant to erosion and floating away.

The second consideration is the size of the limbs that were chipped up. Longtime readers of this newsletter know that healthy soil has a carbon to nitrogen ratio (C:N) of 30:1. Smaller branches 4 inches in diameter may have a C:N of only 150:1, while larger limbs over 4 inches the C:N ratio may be 500:1. This is important as chips with a higher C:N ratio often cause nutrient tie-up if applied more than 1-2 inches thick.

The third consideration is smaller diameter limbs also have a much higher nutrient density and provide nutrients to the soil as they decompose feeding microbes and plants. To use an analogy, we all know that spinach is nutritious and good for us. However, if spinach is all we had to eat we would die of malnutrition. Similarly, if chips from only one species of tree are used then there would not be a diverse range of nutrient as if dozens of species were used to make the chips and similarly less diversity of microbes.

Now let's look at ways to use the chips. The fastest and easiest is to use the chips to mulch the pathways in one's garden. A thick layer 4-6 inches works well as it is slow to break down, it will help suppress weeds, and it will improve the soil over time. In this application chip type, C:N ratio, etc. are not as important and it puts a lot of chips to good use.

If one has room, move it out of the way and create a pile 4-5 feet tall and wide (or even larger if there is the need). Water the pile till it has moisture levels like a squeezed-out sponge. Then water it as needed and let it decompose over the next 12 months (partially composting it) and it will shrink concentrating the nutrients, a turn a beautiful dark chocolate brown. Microbe levels will greatly increase, after aging it can be used anywhere in the gardens and earthworms will love it.

If one has different species of material that was chipped up, then alternate layers when forming the pile. If one has only one species and the chips are from larger pieces of wood with a high C:N ratio then one can take it a step further by adding a high nitrogen fertilizer to it like Microlife™ Hybrid. Apply the fertilizer as you form the piles so that it is scattered throughout the pile. This will provide the extra nitrogen required for it to quickly decompose. Remember for maximum decomposition rate the pile will need to be kept at 50% moisture content.

If one has been using a good composted (aged) native mulch or a good compost on their flower beds regularly, then the chips can be applied to the flower beds 2-3 inches deep without hurting the plants.

If starting a new raised garden, either chipped or shredded pieces can be used as a base often 10-12 inches thick across the bottom of the bed and then apply one's soil on top. This is a popular way to make flower or vegetable beds in Europe.

Other uses include erosion control if one has shredded mulch, as a 4-6 inch layer will make a huge reduction in erosion on slopes. Chipped mulch does not work well.

Another use of the chips is to use it as a filter media. One can make a bin (or pile) and fill it with the mulch and use it to filter water (a natural bioreactor). It

will remove sediment from rain runoff and as it ages it can biodegrade many chemicals in the water.

The mulch chips 1-2 inches thick can also be used to top dress flowerpots and other containers. It will help the soil stay cooler and slow evaporation.

A few things to consider. During a tropical storm like Ike, Harvey, Beryl, etc., weak or damaged trees are the first to be blown down. Some common diseases of these weakened trees are *Verticillium wilt* which is caused by a soil-borne fungus resulting in the decline or death of many shrubs and trees. *Rhizoctonia solani* is another plant pathogen that is stimulated by freshly ground mulches as it feeds off the cellulose in the wood. If diseased trees are ground up and used for mulch, it is possible that these diseases can spread to mulched plants. Proper composting can eliminate this issue.

Another problem that sometimes occurs in mulch is called the "Toxic Mulch Syndrome" or "Sour Mulch." This most often occurs with bark mulches (pine, hardwood, etc.) and mulch from storm clean-up but can happen with almost any organic mulch. It occurs when a fine grained (small particle size) mulch is stacked over 6 feet high, remains wet for long periods of time and does not get airflow through the pile. The material compresses and starts fermenting (anaerobic decay instead of beneficial aerobic decay) and produces chemicals (methanol, acetic acid, ammonia, hydrogen sulfide and others) that can kill annuals and damage many woody perennials. Note: It only takes 1 ppm (part per million) of alcohol (like methanol) to kill a plant root!

This is more common on mulch from storm cleanup sites where large commercial grinders are used to reduce the volume of material and quality is of no concern.

There is lots of info on the NWR website from previous newsletters and info sheets on mulch for additional information. www.natureswayresources.com

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., 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/1/events

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.

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

SAT., OCT. 12: VEGETABLE/HERB PLANT SALE, 9am-noon (or sold out). AgriLife Extension Range, 1402 Band Road, Rosenberg. Fort Bend County Master Gardener event. fbmg.org

SAT., OCT. 19: NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS PINES & PRAIRIES NLCP LEVEL 3 CLASS, 8am-4pm. Mercer Botanical Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble. Signup: npsot.org/our-work/class-schedule/

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.

* * *



*If we inspire you to attend any of these,
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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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