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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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"The loss of a single monarch butterfly may seem insignificant, but it can ripple through the ecosystem, impacting other species and ultimately affecting the delicate balance of nature." -- Oft-repeated quote, origin not credited



Left, Monarch on native pink milkweed (or swamp milkweed, Asclepias incarnata). Right, volunteers sought to seed Texas prairies. (Katie Sierra photos)

By **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

WANTED: HELP PLANTING 20,000 MILKWEEDS IN 2 YEARS

NATIVE PLANTS are sure to grow in popularity as do Gardeners concerned for our native wildlife and planet. As **KATIE SIERRA of Coastal Prairie Conservancy** begins her invitation below to area gardeners: . . .

"If you're really serious about incorporating more natives into your landscapes, a smart route would be to take

Corporate & many other groups and individual volunteers are needed to plant specific Greater Houston prairies with additional 20,000 milkweeds in 2 years! Ideally they will provide acres of new nesting habitat for the monarch butterflies this summer.

As CPC points out, Monarchs are being considered as threatened species additions under the Endangered Species Act. Milkweed is the ONLY plant on which monarch butterflies lay eggs . . . and also supports other pollinators essential to healthy ecosystems. Milkweeds being grown in CPC's natives nursery need to be planted soon.

Before you decide, view this *inspirational* [video](#). This CPC pollinator restoration project is undertaken in cooperation with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. [Volunteer here](#), or email [Bethany Foshee](#).

Primary species CPC is growing include (left) below) *Asclepias viridis* (green milkweed), *Asclepias oenotheroides* (Zizotes milkweed). Zizotes is a tough, mowable milkweed that grows wild in many landscapes — sun, shade, wet, or dry. Wavy leaf margins resemble primrose, hence the species name “oenotheroides.”

Zizotes photo by Iris Poteet



This month, you really should . . . (*EXCERPTED FROM 'LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE):

- Mow lawn once now to allow sun to reach roots.
- Prune grafted roses; Valentine's Day is traditional pruning time to trigger healthy new growth.
- Plant later-blooming bulbs, corms and tubers like amaryllis, canna and gladiolus.
- Appreciate the beauty of bare bark! Show kids how to spot bird and squirrel nests.

If the spirit moves . . .

- Root vine cuttings now. Should grow quickly.
- Plant Louisiana phlox and oxalis around late-appearing shrubs like lantana and hamelia.
- Plant beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, chard, collards, green onions, Irish potatoes, lettuce, mustard greens, turnips. In pots, start crookneck and zucchini squash.
- Divide crowded perennials like daylilies and daisies.
- In water gardens, raise potted water lilies closer to warmer surface water.

If you're really feeling energetic . . .

- Pinch tops off groundcovers to make them spread faster.
- Pot plumerias. Set outside on pretty days; move inside at night. Make sure bring in for late freezes.
- Put in plants, not seeds, of alyssum, asters, delphiniums, hollyhocks, larkspur, marigolds, poppies, snapdragons, stocks — they need cold. (Most fade when it gets hot.)
- Remove spent blooms on pansies, daffodils, dianthus, calendulas,

cyclamens, snapdragons and other early-bloomers so they will produce more flowers.

Great Don't-Do tips for really Lazy Gardeners

- Don't fertilize plumerias or lawn yet. Wait until needs to be mowed so you'll stimulate grass root growths, and not winter weeds.
- Don't remove greenery from fading daffodils and other naturalizing bulbs. Dying foliage replenishes bulb. If too unsightly, roll foliage up, anchor to ground.
- Don't prune climbing roses. Wait until after they bloom.

Our Gardening Year Starts This Month . . .

. . . so I'd like to share some personal observations made over (now 50+) years I've been writing as the "Lazy Gardener":

- **Watch pecan trees.** They bud after all danger of freezes have passed. (Smart old wives suggestion!)
- **Quit looking north or west** for gardening advice. Not like us! Stick to LOCAL!
- **Put drought-tolerant plants in beds 10-15" above ground level** otherwise EXTREMELY well-drain. Don't overwater! Especially important with native flowers.
- **Use our County Extension centers'** beautiful demonstration gardens manned by Master Gardeners. They test for right varieties for YOUR area.
- Make soil your primary focus. Leaves make great compost.

ON THE OTHER HAND . . .

- Since another cold spell's ahead, good time to think about where to put colorful new bloomers. Check Texas hot sun tolerance! In blasting hot sunny areas, pale pastels may wash out, variegated plants may look like dying if used all alone. Strong solid greens, reds, oranges, yellows, etc. may compete better.



- Less-than-preferable views in backyard? Use hot colored plants to draw visitor's eye to more attractive off-site view from house, patio, etc.
- Color's impact multiplies when coupled with hardscapes (rocks, birdbaths, fences, benches, etc.). Large rocks draw the eye, anchoring us to Mother Earth offering sort of a strong metaphysical protection from the stresses of everyday life. Locate at least one large interesting rock somewhere near the site where you sit outside at night.
- If you're new to a subdivision with HOA/POA regulations about gardening in the front (and sometimes back) yard, be sure to check these before spending a lot of money on plants. Sometimes these are VERY strict.

(Above quoted Lazy Gardener Guide's advice no longer in print.

For pdf version, email lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)

Potpourri

GARDENING TIPS FROM MERCER BOTANIC GARDEN . . .

- **JACOB MARTIN**, Mercer Horticulture Greenhouse Manager, says their frost-damaged perennials & annuals are now being cut back, dead leaves/stems removed to help prevent future disease problems.



Mercer's famous camellia collection (*above right*) is looking great despite snow and freezes. Dropped flowers are being cleaned up, hopefully preventing thrip damage. texasinsects.tamu.edu/thrips/ Check calendar below for Mercer events.

- **ATTN. GARDEN/PLANT GROUPS** -- In wake of Hurricane Beryl, [Nature's Way Resources](#) offers free guided tours of NWR's extensive nursery/soil/mulch enterprise to plant-oriented, organized groups. As usual, NWR's now-expanded meeting site is free to above groups. Reservations a must for both.



- Just realized John's column below touches on one of my most favorite, most fascinating plant articles. It's about how Houston Cactus & Succulent Society member and concert pianist **CHADEN YAFI** was going to "play" a barrel cactus!! <https://www.natureswayresources.com/lazy-gardener-friends-478/>

* * *

Brenda Beust Smith's column is based on her 40+ years as the Houston Chronicle's "Lazy Gardener" column, continuing sponsored by Nature's Way Resources in 2013 — (lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)
Brenda's column focuses ONLY on the Greater Houston Area

* * *

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SPRING GARDEN FESTIVAL

03.22.25

8:00AM-2:00PM

PLANT SALES	FUN FOR ALL AGES CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES	FREE ENTRY
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John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 316



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LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

WANT YOUR EVENT IN RIGHT AWAY? FOLLOW THESE CALENDAR RULES!

ALL EVENTS MUST BE OPEN TO & CAPABLE OF HANDLING PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

- Use this 3*-line (max) **EXACT FORMAT/STYLE** (*reformatting=delay!*)
DAY, DATE: TITLE by NAME (*if talk*), time, address, Fee/free.
Sponsoring group (if not in title). website/phone (**NO MORE!**)

--*2 events same day/site, 4 lines ok (ONLY if we can't tighten text to fit in 3)--

- Only events submitted/earmarked specifically for LG&F calendar are used
- Actual gardening/plant type events only. No harvesting, cooking, etc.
- NO events picked up from general flyers. NO PDFS! TYPE IN EMAIL
- Submit: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. Check published entry!
- All events on-site and in Greater Houston area ONLY!
- ALWAYS PROOF PUBLISHED WORDING & TEST EMAIL
- YOU are responsible for telling us about cancelled events
- **PUT YOUR GROUP NAME IN THE EMAIL SUBJECT WHEN SUBMITTING!!!!**

WED., FEB. 5: HOW TO START & MAINTAIN AN ORGANIC GARDEN, 9:30-11:30am, Webster Presbyterian Church, 201 W. NASA Pkwy, Webster. Gardeners by the Bay event. gbtb.org

SAT., FEB 8: HERBS FOR BEAUTY (9-11am) & **BACKYARD CITRUS**, (1-3pm) by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512), La Marque. Free.
Register: galveston.agrilife.org/events/, 281-309-5065.

SAT., FEB 8, TOMATOES by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**,

9-11am, Texas A&M Agrilife Ext., 9020 Airport Rd, Conroe, \$5. 936-539-7824, montgomery.agrilife.org; mcmga.com, Register: Event Brite,

MON & TUES, FEB. 10-11: SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (virtual), 10-11:30am, Free. Register in advance to receive link: hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

WED., FEB. 12: PLANTS, PESTS, & DISEASES by SARAH ELLIS, Noon- 2pm, Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free, Register: pct3.com/MBG

FRI & SAT., FEB. 14 & 15: FRUIT & TOMATO VIRTUAL PLANT SALE, Friends of Mercer Botanic Gardens, friendsofmercer.com, 713-274-4166

SAT., FEB. 15: FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS 2025 FRUIT TREE SALE, 9am-noon, County Fairgrounds, Barn H, 4310 Texas 36 S. Rosenberg. [*Fort Bend Master Gardeners 2025 Fruit Tree Sale-Open to the Public*](#)

SAT., FEB 15: GROWING CITRUS by DR. MONTE NESBITT, 8-9am, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Harris county Master Gardeners event. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT., FEB 15: SOUTHEAST FRUIT TREE & TOMATO SALE by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9am-1pm (or sold out), 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Pre-order online Feb 3-13. txmg.org/hcmga/shop

MON-TUES., FEB. 17-18: GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS SPRING FLING! PLANT SALE. Online only. Details & shopping: galvestonmg.square.site/.

TUES., FEB. 18: SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (virtual), 11am-noon, Free on Facebook Live. facebook.com/harriscountypg/events

TUES., FEB. 18: ALL ABOUT DYCKIAS by BRYAN WYNDAM, 7pm, West Gray Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Free, *Bromeliad Society/Houston*

TUES., FEB 18: THE BULB HUNTER by CHRIS WIESINGER, 10am: Free, St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. sugarlandgardenclub.org

FRI., FEB. 21: TREE GIVEAWAY, 11am-2pm or last tree is gone, Waller County AgriLife Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead, 979-826-7651, waller.mg@ag.tamu.edu

SAT., FEB 22: GROWING AVOCADOS by GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 1-3 pm. AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512), La Marque. Free. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/events/, 281-309-5065.

SAT., FEB. 22: FULSHEAR FARMERS MARKET/FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS TREE GIVEAWAY, 9am-sellout, 9035 Bois d'Arc Lane @ FM 1093, Fulshear. foreverfulshear@gmail.com, 713-703-4129

WED., FEB. 26: A LEATHER-LIKE PRODUCT DEVELOPED FROM PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS by KARLA HALPAAP-WOOD, 7pm, Multi-Family Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Cactus and Succulent Society event. Free. hcsstex.org

PLAN AHEAD!

SAT., MAR. 1: SETTING UP A RAISED GARDEN, 9-10:30am, 4310 Texas 36 S. Bldng B, Rosenberg. Fort Bend County Master Gardeners event. Register: fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-own-2/

SAT. MAR 1: PLANT SALE - NATIVES & GARDEN TREASURES 9am-1pm, Trinity UMC, 3430 Harrison Ave. Beaumont, Free. Magnolia Garden Club event. 615-944-4829

SAT., MAR. 1: SETTING UP A RAISED GARDEN, 9-10:30am, 4310 Texas 36 S. Bldng B, Rosenberg. Fort Bend County Master Gardeners event. Register: fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-

SAT., MAR. 8: WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PLANT SALE, 9am-noon, AgriLife Extension Office, 846 6th St., Waller. 979-826-7651, txmg.org/wallermg waller.mg@ag.tamu.edu

SAT, MAR. 8: FORT BEND MASTER GARDENER SPRING VEGETABLE & HERB PLANT SALE, 9-noon, Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd, Rosenberg. [Ft. Bend Master Gardener Spring Vegetable & Herb Plant Sale](#)

SAT., MAR. 8: MERCER GARDEN TOUR by HORTICULTURE STAFF , 10:30–11:30am, Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free, Register: pct3.com/MBG

SAT-SUN., MAR. 8-9. HOUSTON ORCHID SOCIETY SHOW & SALE, 10am-5pm Sat; 10am-5pm, Free. Memorial City Mall (Dillard's Wing) Gessner@ I-10, [.houstonorchidsociety.org](http://houstonorchidsociety.org)

SAT, MAR. 8: WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ANNUAL PLANT SALE, 9am-noon, Waller County AgriLife Extension Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead. 979-826-7651, txmg.org. wallermg.org, waller.mg@ag.tamu.edu

WED., MAR. 12: GARDEN FOR HEALTH by DR. JOE NOVAK, Noon–2pm, Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., FREE, Register: pct3.com/MBG

FRI., MARCH. 14: MERCER GARDEN TOUR by HORTICULTURE STAFF, 9 – 10am, Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., FREE, Register: pct3.com/MBG

SAT., MAR. 15: BUDDING OUT PLANT SALE & FESTIVAL , 10am-4pm, The John Fairey Garden, 20559 FM 359 Hempstead. \$10 for GA, \$10. JFGARDEN.ORG, 979-826-3232

SAT., MAR. 22: HERB FESTIVAL AT THE WYNNE HOME . 8am-Noon. 1428 11th St., Huntsville. Free. Herb Society of America, Texas Thyme Unit, texasthymeunit.org/

FRI., MAR. 28: FLOWERING PLANTS FOR 4 SEASONS, 1-2:30pm, Zoom. Free. Fort Bend County Master Gardener event. Register: fortbend.agrilife.org/landscape-success/

WED., APRIL. 9: GROW YOUR BEST ROSES 2025 by Suzanne Gilbert, Noon–2 pm, Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. Register: pct3.com/MBG

Wed., MAY. 14: HISTORY OF MERCER ARBORETUM & BOTANIC GARDENS by Jamie Hartwell, Noon–2pm, MA&BG Visitor's Center, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. Register: pct3.com/MBG

-- PLEASE READ BELOW IF YOU WANT TO SUBMIT EVENTS -

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 your publication & 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 later was said to rank 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 show 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 had 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 35 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. For years he represented 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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