



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



July 31, 2020 - Issue # 350

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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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[CLICK HERE](#) for PDFs OF PAST LG&F NEWSLETTERS

CORONAVIRUS CANCELLATIONS

If your event in our calendar below is cancelled, please let us know as soon as possible at lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com



"DANCES BEAUTIFULLY IN THE WIND" CREATES MAGIC IN A GARDEN

"Nature sure makes sure we don't get bored"

-- -- Paula Bazan, gardener & LG&FHGN contributor

by BRENDA BEUST SMITH

**CHERYL FAWVOR's
WOW NOW! dancing
ladies** made me want
some, especially when
she described how the
ginger bloom "*dances
beautifully in the wind*" --

exactly why they were so delightfully named. They go dormant in winter, but resurface each spring.



Great landscapers employ many techniques to gently pull the eye from one horticultural vista to another. But for a lazy gardener, how much easier to just let Nature to do it for you, to let natural winged jewels and wind orchestrate eye-drawing movement in the garden. Can't you just picture these lovely ginger ladies dancing merrily on soft breezes? I want some!

Cheryl's other two WOW NOW!s are equally delightful. A 7-year-old elegant white **Musical Notes clerodendrum** (*Clerodendrum incisum*) has proven cold hardy, perhaps due to its protected area by the back door (the better to enjoy it's unique beauty!). And, although it's not a problem for Cheryl, others might like to know standout orange **Disney Ginger** (*Hedychium coccineum*) is listed as "not likely to be bother by deer."



SHERYL ALBERS longed for an orchid tree ever since reading about one in our newsletter. Her **Mexican orchid tree** (*Bauhinia mexicana*) is now 3 years old and still potted (although they are hardy inground here as well). It did okay in a semi-sunny spot on a covered porch. But since moved to a larger pot on a sunny patio, it has more than doubled in height and flowered. It has, she says, "found it's Happy Spot!"

It's common Mexican name, **Pata de cabra** (goat's foot) refers to distinctive sharply cloven leaves. A favorite of hummingbirds, butterflies and bees, it's usually grown as a shrub.

SUSAN WHITE sent in four WOW NOW! from her Bellaire garden:

- Delicate blue **chicory** blooms,
- **Golden (yellow) cestrum** (a great lazy gardener shrub for sun/part shade and a surprise volunteer in Susan's garden!),
- **Purple trumpet flower** and **blue butterfly bush** with its blue and white blooms.



Susan cheerfully admits that she is always tempted to accept unusual plants from friends and

neighbors and, when her plants are TOO happy, she invites folks in to "help themselves" to her extras. I love the way she writes about "... *the old, treasured value of gardeners giving away plants to other gardeners (new & seasoned) and perpetuating the stuff that really grows well here in Houston in our ever-changing and goofy climate, keeping the unusual, the heirlooms, and the hardy going.*"



Public plant swaps used to abound but are seldom submitted for our calendar anymore. They're such a good idea. Anyone want to share advice on how to hold a neighborhood plant swap?



DENISE MASON in Katy has a WOW NOW! but no idea what it is. Any day now, she says, her 4' x 4' bush will be totally covered with these velvety purple flowers. It's been winter-hardy now for two winters and thrives in full sun ("*I never water it.*"). What is it?

It's a **princess flower, *Tibochina***, and It sounds as if Denise has a dwarf (*T. lepidota*). But beware! Standard-size princess flowers (*T. urvilleana* or *T. grandifolia*) can reach 12' if they really like you. Dwarfs top out about 3-4'. Both take part shade or full sun spot. Mine's just started to bloom and it's been evergreen so far in Humble (north Harris County).

* * *

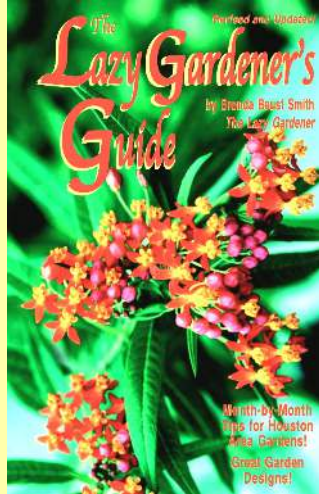
UNSOLICITED SEEDS FROM CHINA have prompted a slew of "DON'T USE" Facebook posts. Now comes an official warning from Texas A&M's Kevin Ong about "... *packages containing seeds from China ... labeled as jewelry or other items to individuals (who did not order such things) in the U.S.*"

DON'T PLANT SEEDS! If you recognize this package, don't even open it. The US Department of Agriculture urges anyone who receives an unsolicited package of seeds immediately contact their [State plant regulatory official](#) or [APHIS State plant health director](#). Seal seeds in original packaging and set aside in safe place. You might be contacted with further instructions. At this time no evidence points to anything but a "brushing scam" (unsolicited items from a seller who then posts false customer reviews to boost sales). USDA is continuing to test contents. *Thanks to the Galveston County Master Gardeners for sharing and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Carol Motloch, Texas PPQ Area Manager, for sharing and confirming this information for us.* [More seeds from China info](#)



* * *

Brenda's column in the LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER is based on her 40+ years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener



PDFs of Brenda's now-out-of-print "LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE"

can be downloaded free here

[Lazy Gardener Guide Front Cover](#)

[Lazy Gardener Rest Of Covers](#)

[Lazy Gardener Guide Book Pages](#)

In exchange for this free book, all I ask is
you be safe . . . **PLEASE WEAR A MASK!**
Protect yourself and the rest of us!

* * *

OHBA Organic Online Workshop Week

REGISTER ONLINE @
OHBAONLINE.ORG/WEBINAR-EVENTS

6 FABULOUS ORGANIC EXPERTS:



DANIEL MILLIKIN

Do you know about Summer dormancy? This 1 hour webinar will teach you about the transition from Summer to Fall. Daniel will also talk about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats for Fall gardening. Join us for some helpful tips on dealing with the seasonal transition!

**AUGUST 18TH @
5:00PM CST**



BRAD PHILLIPS

Trees are the most valuable plant assets on all properties. Come learn the best practices for sustainable tree care in & out of the landscape. You will learn how to reduce cost, improve results and increase property value of all types in this one hour special presentation.

**AUGUST 20TH @
5:00PM CST**

WATCH 4 OF OUR PREVIOUSLY RECORDED ZOOMINARS ON THE OHBA WEBSITE UNDER 'WEBINAR EVENTS':



Mike Serant
Love Mother Nature



Suzanne Wainwright
The Buglady



Betsy Ross
The Rain Dance



Molly Pikarsky
Summer Plants

Links for live Zoominars will be sent out one day prior to the event, via email. After watching the 6 presentations, take a small quiz & earn the very first OHBA Organic Workshop Week Certificate! Submit your quiz by August 28, 2020 @ 4:00 PM.

For more information head to OHBAonline.org

THE FIRST EVER CERTIFIED ORGANIC WORKSHOP WEEK

August 18TH & 20TH @ 5:00 PM

OHBA
ORGANIC HORTICULTURE
BENEFITS ALLIANCE

From this workshop you will get:

TICKETS

REGISTER ONLINE @
ohbaonline.org/events
OHBA members: \$25
Non-OHBA members: \$50



2 live OHBA Webinars featuring
Organic experts:
Daniel Millikin & Brad Phillips



4 fascinating OHBA Zoominars
(previously recorded)

Take a small quiz to receive an OHBA
Organic Workshop certification!

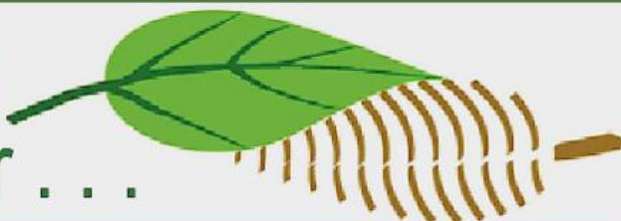
SPECIAL TOPICS INCLUDE:

Summer to Fall transition
Summer dormancy
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats
Organic Tree Management & Maintenance

THANK YOU SPONSORS!



John's
Corner . . .



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS #125

A couple weeks ago I wrote an article on fire-ants. A few years ago, I was attending a workshop on environmental health and they were talking about using the artificial sweetener called "Aspartame", to kill fire ants. It is used in several brands of artificial sweeteners, and in many low-calorie food and drinks.

According to the professors, aspartame is a neurotoxin and 4-5 packs of the artificial sweetener will kill a small fire ant mound. So, I decided to test it and collected a few packs from a restaurant (I will not consume it or even keep it in my house as it is very bad for our health) and emptied them on a fire ant mound. In a few days they were gone.

Note: In the human body aspartame breaks down into phenylalanine, aspartic acid, methanol (wood alcohol which is toxic) and above 86 degrees (F) it converts to formaldehyde a known carcinogen (What temperature is the human body?)

A paper in the journal Veterinary and Animal Science (June 2020) has found more evidence on the toxicity of glyphosate used in the herbicide Round-Up. To quote from their conclusion: "Based on the literature reviewed in this paper, some ingredients of GBHs (glyphosate based herbicides), both active and inert, appear to act as reproductive toxicants, having a wide range of effects on both male and female reproductive systems, including endocrine disruption, tissue damage, and disfunction of gametogenesis."

The exposure to this toxic chemical comes from the feed they eat. Another reason to grow our own food or at least buy organic.

Many of us like to grow the herb called Catnip or Catmint (*Nepeta cataria*) an ornamental plant that drives cats crazy or into feline ecstasy. Researchers have identified the chemical responsible which is a terpene called nepetalactone. Terpenes are often used as communication and defensive chemicals by plants. Journal of Nature Chemical Biology 2018.

Catnip is cultivated as an ornamental plant in our gardens as it attracts cats and butterflies. It is drought tolerant, deer resistant, and repels some insect pests.

We have often talked about the dangers of fluorine in past issues. A new paper in the journal American Society of Agronomy 2020 from Massey University. They found that high fluorine levels hurt a microbe called Rhizobium.

Gardeners know that this good bacteria lives in the root nodules found on many plants called legumes. This bacterium takes nitrogen (N) from the air and gives it to the plant all for free.

They found that fluorine hurts white clover and the animals that eat the clover in addition to the bacteria.

They found a major source of fluorine was from the phosphate rock material used in artificial fertilizers. This fluorine builds up over time and becomes toxic. When we water with municipal water contaminated with fluorine this toxic chemical builds up in the soil even faster.

Researcher have found that switching from organic natural fertilizers to artificial fertilizers causes microbes to metabolism more carbon.

In healthy soils low nitrogen levels limits microbe's ability to use carbon. As a result, they excrete carbon in the form of soil glues, creating a porous, interconnected structure in the soil that allows water, air and nutrients to circulate.

When artificial fertilizers are used, the microbes can use more carbon so they excrete less glues which alters the state of the soil. As carbon is lost, the pores within the soil become smaller and less connected. This results in fundamental changes (reductions) in the movement of water, nutrients and oxygen into the soil which causes large changes to the microbe's behavior.

Low carbon soils (another way of stating low organic matter) are not very good at supporting plant growth and cycling nutrients. The side effect is also increased greenhouse emissions. Journal Scientific Reports 2020

Gardeners and farmers have a new revenue source – Selling Edible Weeds. Many of our current vegetable crops were at one time considered weeds (ex. tomatoes). Many of these plants are extremely nutritious and have been used for centuries to help one's health. With the Covid-19, several studies have found that Elderberry syrup helps suppress the virus and make great wine and jam. The flowers are edible and pollinators love them (News From the Wonderful World of Plants #109 was on the benefits of elderberries).

Edible weed varieties harvested from participating farms in 2017 and 2018 included:

- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
- Purslane (*Portula oleracea*)
- Wood sorrel (*Oxalis stricta*)
- Amaranth (*Amaranthus spp.*)
- Wild mint (*Mentha spp.*)
- Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)
- Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
- Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)
- Burdock (*Arctium spp.*)
- Field Onions (*Allium vineale*)
- Stinging Nettles (*Urtica dioica*)
- Black Locust Blossoms (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)
- Ground Ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*)
- Wild Lettuce (*Lactuca spp.*)
- Lamb's Quarters (*Chenopodium album*)
- Elderberries (*Sambucus canadensis*)

Regional survey findings have revealed Purslane (*Portula olearacea*) and Stinging Nettles (*Urtica dioica*) to be the most common edible weeds species sold by farmers. The top three sales venues for edible weeds are (1) farmers' markets, (2) restaurant sales, and (3) CSA shares.

The full report is at: www.projects.sare.org

The Journal of General Virology 2020 had a recent article on the spice Turmeric that we get from the plant *Curcuma longa* of the ginger family. The

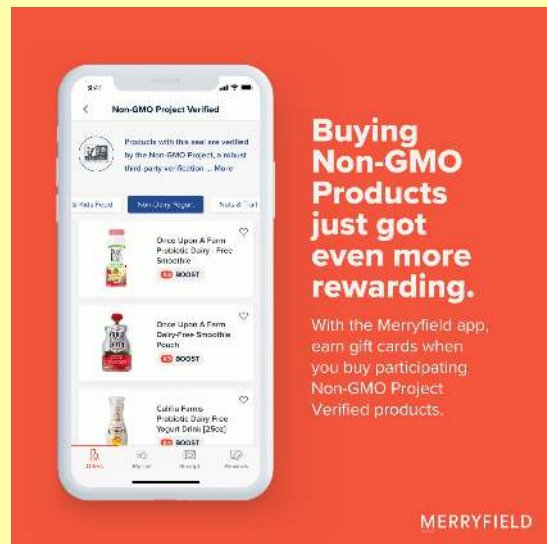
chemical curcumin found in this spice has been shown to inhibit the replication of viruses like dengue, hepatitis B, and Zika. It also prevents transmissible viruses like gastroenteritis virus (TGEV) found in pigs which is a corona virus. The compound is also found to be anti-tumor, anti-inflammatory, and anti-bacterial.

I have often written about the dangers of eating GMO foods. This is even more important today as eating foods with glyphosate on them has been linked to increased severity of the Corona-19 virus. GMO foods often have the most glyphosate (Round Up herbicide) on them.

I received an e-mail for a new app that looks very interesting. If anyone has used it please let us know. Below is the text from the e-mail.

Here's how it works:

- Download the [Merryfield app](#), then follow the prompts to enter your information.
- Next, browse products (with attributes like Non-GMO Project Verified and USDA Organic) and activate offers from better-for-you brands.
- After that, all you have to do is go shopping, then take a photo of your receipt, showing your clean label purchases. You'll earn points instantly that can be redeemed for great gift cards in dozens of categories.



Not only will you be rewarding the good habit of shopping for clean label products, but being a part of Merryfield also gives you the opportunity to give back. Merryfield donates 1% of sales directly to No Kid Hungry, supporting its mission to end childhood hunger.

HAVE YOU TRIED
is taking a break. It will return soon!

LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

(See Farmers Markets at end of calendar)

ADULT GARDEN PLANT EVENTS ONLY
ALWAYS CHECK TO MAKE SURE YOUR EVENT IS IN! HOWEVER...
PLEASE READ BEFORE SUBMITTING EVENTS!

- Events NOT submitted in the EXACT format below may take 2 weeks or longer to be reformatted/retyped and added to calendar.
- Events in this EXACT format (below) are copied/pasted immediately in upcoming calendar. Pdfs or flyers need re-typing - only delay publication.
- Submit to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. Put group name in email subject.

CHECK WEBSITES FOR . . .

- COVID-19 - RELATED PRECAUTIONS AT EVENTS
- UPDATED CALENDAR BEFORE ATTENDING ANY PREVIOUSLY-SCHEDULED
- LAST MINUTE CANCELLATION.

SAT., AUG. 8: BOKASHI – WASTE NOT, WANT NOT , 9:30-11:30am. ZOOM class, Urban Harvest. \$20. Register: urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

WED., AUG. 12: BIG BEND CAMPING AND COLLECTIONS TRIP (virtual event) by JACOB MARTIN & BRANDON HUBBARD, noon-1pm, Mercer Botanic Garden Free. 713-274-4160. bit.ly/302GAjb

WED., AUG. 12: BIG BEND CAMPING AND COLLECTIONS TRIP by JACOB MARTIN & BRANDON HUBBARD, virtual event, noon-1pm, Online Only. Free. 713-274-4160. <https://bit.ly/302GAjb>

THURS., AUG. 13: DROUGHT, virtual event, 7-9pm, free. Houston Rose Society event. <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/714588565> access code: 714-588-565. Or dial in: United States +1 (646)749-3122

AUG 18: TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTERS FALL TRAINING CLASS BEGINS. \$125. Evening & Saturday classes. coastalprairie.org; carol@coastalprairie.org.

THURS., AUG. 27: BIRD SURVEY led by Paul Gregg and Christy Jones, 8am-10am, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160. <https://bit.ly/2On3WdT>

SAT., AUG. 29: THE MERCER SOCIETY - VIRTUAL SPECIALTY PLANT SALE - PLUMERIA, 8am-8pm, Online Only. 713-274-4166. themercersociety.square.site

TUES., NOV. 17: HEIRLOOM PLANTS by GREG GRANT, 10am; St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Free. Sugar Land Garden Club event. sugarlandgardenclub.org

* * *

LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS

- [URBAN HARVEST FARMERS MARKET](#), Saturdays, 8am-noon, in St. John's School parking lot, 2752 Buffalo Speedway.
- [FULSHEAR FARMERS MARKET](#) Saturdays, 9am-1pm, 9035 Bois d'Arc Lane @ FM 1093, Fulshear.
- [THE WOODLANDS FARMERS MARKET AT GROGAN'S MILL](#), Saturdays, 8am-noon, Grogan's Mill Shopping Center Parking Lot, 7 Switchbud Pl., The Woodlands
- [BEAUTY'S GARDEN](#). Acres Homes Farmers Market Saturday, 10am-2pm, 4333 W Little York Rd.
- [WESTCHASE DISTRICT FARMERS MARKET](#), Thursdays, opens 3pm, St. Cyril of Alexandria Catholic Church, 10503 Westheimer Road (at Rogerdale Road, one block west of Beltway 8)
- [MEMORIAL VILLAGE FARMERS MARKET](#), Saturdays, 9am-1pm, 10840 Beinhorn Rd.

Although normally we did not run out-of-garden events, during this pandemic period when most gardening events have been cancelled, we are happy to publish a running list of local Farmers Markets.
Send notices to lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com



For event submission rules, see top of calendar

If we inspire you to attend any of these,
please let them know you heard about it in . . .

THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!

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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 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-, it then ranked as the longest-running, continuously-published local newspaper column in the Greater Houston area.

Brenda's gradual sideways step from reporter into gardening writing -- first as a just-a-fun side Chronicle assignment in the early '70s -- 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.

A Harris County Master Gardener, Brenda has served on the boards of many Greater Houston area horticulture organizations and has 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 as 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.

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 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.

