



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



Jun-4-2021 | Issue 390

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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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FIRST . . . THINK SHAPES ONLY THEN . . . THINK PLANTS

*"Take something round and put it with something spiky,
and then put those two things with something frilly."*

— [Felder Rushing on garden design.](#)

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

PASSIE ROTMAN on the northern edge of Montgomery County is facing a dilemma that probably sounds familiar. She has to replace a LOT of freeze-killed plants. She's waited long enough. She also wants to change the look of things as well, but says she can't afford a landscaper.

Landscapers can save you money by eliminating a lot of wasted expensive experimenting. But if you have time, patience and desire to learn, that too will pay off in the long run.

Where to start? Passie already knows to research sun, shade and drainage demands of new plants. But that still leaves a lot of decisions, such as how does one know which plants will be hardiest? And where to put what?

First thought: Forget specific plants. Instead, think shapes.

Stand in the street. Look at your house. Focus on shapes and heights you think would look best in specific spots. What aspects (on- and OFF-site) would you like hidden? Which emphasized? What size and shape plants would best accomplish this? Again, specific plants don't matter at this point.

Make a rough draft with just shapes and sizes. It doesn't have to look professional. It can be one big sketch or individual ones of smaller areas, corners or neighbor's nasty stuff. It's just for you.



Then go inside. Look out windows, especially ones you tend to look through often, such as over the sink, or from the den, first sight out the bathroom window in the morning. Maybe a little rearranging will create more desirable views. Don't worry about being artistic. You know what your scribbles mean.

Not happy with your plan? Drive around for additional "looks" you like. It's your plan, change as often as you like. Again, don't worry about specific plant varieties. Just note shapes, heights, widths, maybe neat contrasts of foliage.

Once you have these, it's time for some free advice from folks who know YOUR area well. Be prepared to answer questions about the amount of sun, shade and type of drainage each site gets.

But, be reasonable. Don't ask for advice for the whole yard at one time. No one has that kind of free time to share with one person. Prioritize. Break your sketches down into very small segments and ask for plant suggestions on that section only. You will probably change your mind a lot along the way!

Check with:

1. **Your neighborhood independent nurseryman.** His business is TOTALLY dependent on your satisfaction. He knows your area's challenges and, most important, he will have available plants he'll recommend. Nothing's more frustrating than being advised to plant something and then can't find it!
2. **Your neighbors.** They're experienced sources for recommendations of plants extremely hardy in your area. Drive around, see what's blooming. Don't know what the plants are? When someone's outside working in the yard, stop and ask!
3. **Your County Extension Service** and the **Master Gardeners** who are based there.

Most of our 8+ counties in the Greater Houston area have incredible Master Gardener programs with eye-popping demonstration gardens. MGs man phone lines to answer gardening questions. Tons of free printed gardening advice-for-your-area is available at the AgriLife office. To find yours:

mastergardener.tamu.edu/county-programs/.

If you don't see your county listed, try the next closest. They don't discriminate. You'll be welcome at any of these sites.

Don't know what independent nurseries are near

you? Google to the rescue: "Nurseries near ____ (your address) ____."



This is not to say you won't find great plants at box or other nationwide stores. But know what you're buying! When national headquarters stock stores, most do try to think local, but we're so different. Also be aware that massive displays of color in tiny pots have probably been treated with hormones to force blooms, perhaps at the expense of strong root development.

While these may continue to bloom in your garden, they're equally as likely to fade/die when hit by our intense heat, monsoon rains and later prolonged droughts. Try a few, but don't buy masses until you see how they do through our summers. You can always buy more. For long lasting plants, you need great root systems. It's hard to get plants to produce both at the same time.

Local nurserymen are more likely to recommend plants that actually like our specific subtropical challenges. Home landscape-friendly Texas natives, especially our Gulf Coast natives, are increasingly found in our local retail trade. Many local nurseries also now have specific displays of butterfly-/pollinator-specific natives.

I know no one's going to do this, but when you get new plants home, to give root systems the best start possible, remove flowers as soon as they fade. At least that will allow more strength to go to the roots. *(I know it's pointless to suggest you cut off all the blooms when planting! I can't either!)*

* * *



LITTLE SNAPDRAGON THAT COULD! Weeds thrive in minute spaces where our backtopped drive meets brick wall. Just for fun, I tossed snapdragon seeds along the junction. To my delight, this snapdragon not only sprouted, it's now covered with blooms! A second barely-sprouted plant is blooming above this one. A glimpse of Nature's toughness!

Which is why I still have hope for . . .



. . . MY POTENTIAL LAZARUS PLANTS. Almost all the plants I can identify (remember) have finally returned, except for --l to r above -- my two Mexican flame vines, thryallis and snail vine. It was getting hard to tell if it's my plant or weeds sending up tiny green shoots. Helping me a lot are pictures of desirable leaves on each plant (hung in ziplock bags)!

* * *

RAINS FILLING LOW SPOTS? LOUISIANA IRIS TO RESCUE! LA iris, native swamp flowers, easily tolerate alternating soggy and bone dry conditions. Sound familiar? They multiply easily and tall spike foliage gives a unique accent. Lavender is the most common color, but now also available are white, pure blue, yellow, red, orange, you name it. For more on LA iris, register for:



FRI., JUNE 11: LOUISIANA IRISES by MONICA MARTENS, Ed.D. (Zoom),
Noon-1:00. Pre-register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

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POTPOURRI:

- **CYBERGREMLINS!** Typo in [last week issue](#)'s link to area gardens worth visiting. Trying again! holidify.com/collections/gardens-in-houston
- **ROSARIAN BAXTER WILLIAMS** noted before [Tyler became "Rose Capital of the World."](#) . . . *major rose industries in Texas were in Victoria, ... a hurricane ... wiped them out. They relocated to Tyler.* ([download link](#))
- **SIGNING IN TO VIRTUAL EVENTS:** Don't feel alone if you are having trouble finding/signing into virtual events. Only register-in-advance events have early access. For free events, log on shortly before the event's start time. Best to check out sponsor's website in advance just to be sure.

For example, to "attend" the free Houston Rose Society's event with Mark Chamblee on June 10, Gaye Hammond recommends logging on early to the [Houston Rose Society website](#). Select 'Next Meeting' tab on left side for Mark's program for instructions on how to log on the evening of June 10.

And, note to sponsoring groups ...ALWAYS include a website and/or phone number in addition to sign-on links for those of us to whom this is brand new!

* * *

Brenda's LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER
column is based on her 40+ years as Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener
Email: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

* * *

DO YOU WANT TO ROCK THE FOUNDATION OF LIFE?

OHBA

Join us for a special night with....

JEFF LOWENFELS, LORD OF THE ROOTS

Jeff is the author of the best-selling book trilogy on the science behind Organic gardening 'Teaming with Microbes, Teaming with Fungi, & Teaming with Nutrients'. From this event you will learn the latest in science & get a sneak peek of his new book in the Teaming series. Start your earthly journey with an extensive look into the captivating power of the soil food web.



ZOOM OR LIVE WATCH PARTY, YOUR CHOICE!

MONDAY
JUNE 21ST, 2021

LIVE ITINERARY:
5-6 CT PM Happy Hour
6-7 CT PM Live Watch Party & Zoom
7-7:30 CT PM Live Panel Discussion

TRUE ANOMALY BREWING CO.
2012 DALLAS ST
HOUSTON TX 77003

REGISTER HERE TODAY: [OHBAONLINE.ORG/REGISTER](https://ohbaonline.org/register)

LIVE WATCH PARTY TICKETS

True Anomaly Brewing Co.

\$20 for members

\$30 for non-members

Refreshments & Socialize with Live Human Beings!

ZOOM TICKETS

\$10 for members

\$20 for non-members

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For any event questions please contact Daniel Millikin at daniel@ohbaonline.org



John's Corner



BOOK REVIEW:

Animal, Vegetable, Junk – A History of Food, from Sustainable to Suicidal by Mark Bittman, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021, ISBN: 978-1328974624

We often talk about issues with our food

supply and how it is behind so many of our health problems, and why we need to garden organically and grow as much of our own food as possible.

I love the opening sentence in the book “YOU GOTTA EAT. Since survival is the most basic imperative of all living things, it is no surprise that obtaining food has driven human history from the start”.

Mark has done a good job of explaining how food was grown throughout history and how it evolved into the toxic adulterated garbage we have today.

From the books cover:

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author and pioneering journalist, an expansive look at how history has been shaped by humanity’s appetite for food, farmland, and the money behind it all—and how a better future is within reach.

The story of humankind is usually told as one of technological innovation and economic influence—of arrowheads and atomic bombs, settlers and stock markets. But behind it all, there is an even more fundamental driver: Food.

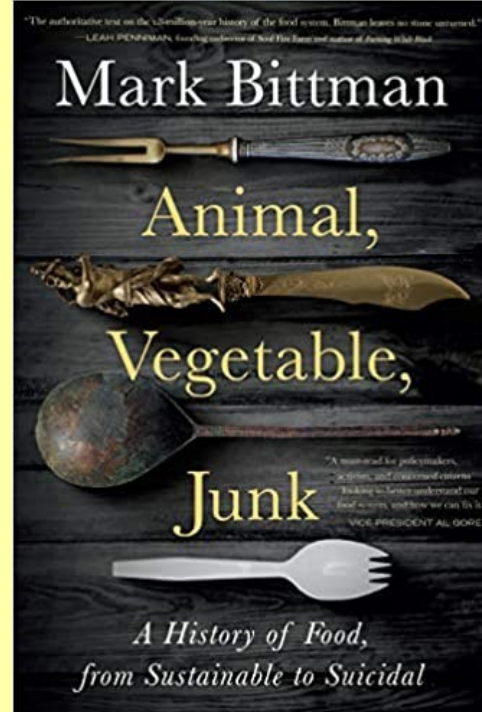
In *Animal, Vegetable, Junk*, trusted food authority Mark Bittman offers a panoramic view of how the frenzy for food has driven human history to some of its most catastrophic moments, from slavery and colonialism to famine and genocide—and to our current moment, wherein Big Food exacerbates climate change, plunders our planet, and sickens its people. Even still, Bittman refuses to concede that the battle is lost, pointing to activists, workers, and governments around the world who are choosing well-being over corporate greed and gluttony, and fighting to free society from Big Food’s grip.

Sweeping, impassioned, and ultimately full of hope, *Animal, Vegetable, Junk* reveals not only how food has shaped our past, but also how we can transform it to reclaim our future.”

From Mark Bittman’s website in his own words:

In *Animal, Vegetable, Junk*, I try to provide an understanding of these three things:

- That **human history can be usefully viewed through the lens of food** This has been done, but not recently and hardly at all in a popular (that is, non-academic) style. Nothing is more important than food, nothing you can think of (including war, the economy, even money) has had more influence, and nothing of its stature has been so ignored by historians and the press. (In 2010, when I proposed a weekly column that took food seriously to the *New York Times* Opinion editor, he wondered whether it was “interesting” enough.)
- How **the history of food has shaped where we’re at today**, in the world



generally (U.S. inequality, for example, could hardly be as extreme had not farmland been first stolen from the Indigenous People and then given away by the Federal government exclusively to white males), but particularly in the realm of food, which has had historic and deadly effects on public health, the environment (including climate change), resource use, and the economy.

- And finally, that **we need to create a kind of road map that will lead us to a just food system**, one that will nourish us all, make good food universally affordable, sustain and protect the land, and provide more dignified and well-paying jobs in food and farming.

With these three themes as guideposts, I think I've managed to integrate what I've learned to be true about food into a single narrative, one that's manageable to most readers of general non-fiction and which is in a way complete without being overwhelming.

I can tell you that I was nearly overwhelmed by it, and had nightmares of never finishing, of it becoming one of those old-fashioned multi-volume history books, like HG Wells' "An Outline of History," or, even more ridiculous, Will and Ariel Durant's "The Story of Civilization." This was not (I hope), out of arrogance or a sense of grandeur, but of the sheer volume of information I had to consider when looking at our ongoing and changing relationship to food and agriculture.

* * *

Have you tried ... MOY GRANDE HIBISCUS

(Hibiscus 'Moy Grande')

This Texas Superstar hibiscus is named for beloved San Antonio Botanical Center's Ying Doon Moy, who cross-bred an *Hibiscus moscheutos* hybrid with *Hibiscus grandiflorus* to create what may be (says A&M) the largest, open-face hibiscus flower in the world. A root-hardy perennial (loses leaves but returns), it prefers full sun but tolerates light shade. Notes say 5'x5', but here expect it to get bigger. Low care, tolerates droughts and high temps, dish plate-size blooms attract bees & butterflies summer through fall. Remove old blossoms and developing seed pods to foster rebloom. Water thoroughly, but not too frequently. May be grown in containers. Pluck off spent blooms to encourage more flowers.



MOY GRANDE HIBISCUS is carried by Nature's Way Resources ([Map](#)).

Or contact our other sponsors below

or your neighborhood nurseryman for possible sources

**LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS
HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER
CALENDAR EVENTS**

All events in Houston unless otherwise specified.

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.*
- **FARMERS MARKETS** -- Normally we do not run non-gardening/plant events. During this pandemic, when most gardening events have been cancelled, we are happy to publish a running list of local Farmers Markets. See at end of calendar.

Submit events to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com.

PLEASE ALWAYS put group's FULL name in email subject.

***NOTE: IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT MASKING
POLICIES AT EVENTS, CHECK WITH CONTACTS LISTED***

FRI., JUNE 4: A PASSION FOR PLUMERIA by **LORETTA OSTEEN** (Zoom), 10-11:30. Pre-register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

SAT., JUNE 5: MORNING FAMILY HIKE, 9am-11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160

THURS., JUNE 10: PRODUCTS TO BOOST YOUR ROSES IMMUNE SYSTEM by **MARK CHAMBLEE** (virtual), 7- 9pm, Houston Rose Society/Houston event. Free. houstonrose.org/

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FRI., JUNE 11: LOUISIANA IRISES by **MONICA MARTENS**, Ed.D. (Zoom), 12 Noon-1:00. Pre-register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

FRI., JUNE 11: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4, 9am & 11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Ages 60+ or 12+ with transport needs. Register: 713-274-4160

SAT., JUNE 12: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SHOW AND SALE, 9am-3p, 5002 Nasa Parkway. Seabrook theplumeriasociety.org

TUES., JUNE 12; PLUMERIAS IN YOUR GARDEN by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 11am-noon, HCMG & Harris County Public Library System event. Free. Facebook Live: facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

TUES., JUNE 15; PLUMERIAS IN YOUR GARDEN by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (virtual), 11am-noon, HCMG & Harris County Public Library System event. Free. Facebook Live: facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

THURS., JUNE 17: ART FROM THE GARDEN by **BRANDI KELLER** (virtual) 10am, Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. Register: homegrown2021Q2.eventbrite.com/

SAT., JUNE 19: HOW TO KEEP INSECTS AWAY THIS SUMMER, 10-11am, Wabash Feed & Garden, 4537 North Shepherd, free, wabashfeed.com, register: <https://bit.ly/3bUWKlq>, 713-863-8322

FRI., JUNE 25: BEYOND BEES!, 9:30-10:30am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160

SAT., JUNE 26: ALL ABOUT INVASIVES, 9am-11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free.

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 do 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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Saturdays 7-9am • SportsRadio 610

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Core Aeration
Compost Top Dressing
YearRoundHouston.com

MicroLife™



Complete Organic Solutions



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 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.

