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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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"My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view."

– H. Fred Dale (1924-1994) -- Canadian gardening writer



Montgomery County Master Gardeners Open Garden Day viewing delights, l to r, Mrs. N Thompson clematis, water lily in the Bog Garden, and a bush cucumber grown in floral beds.

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

GET GROWING ADVICE FROM THOSE WHO KNOW YOUR AREA BEST!

MOST OF OUR GREATER HOUSTON COUNTIES* have [Master Gardener Programs](#) (either single or combined) that in turn -- at individual times -- have [Open Garden days](#). (*Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller).

Most of these county MG groups have Community Gardens attached to their County's [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#)'s local headquarters. Master

Gardeners plant and test potentially great specific varieties of ornamentals and edibles to see which are best for their specific areas. Many winners end up in their wonderful plant sales (*may or may not be part of Open Garden Days*).

OPEN GARDEN DAYS are especially exciting for Master Gardeners to in-person share successes and commiserate with visitors over failures, offering potential solutions or alternate options! Although they welcome visitors from all areas, these are especially great opportunities for each area's local gardeners to see which new varieties of edibles and decorative plants might be great choices for their own home gardens.

Smart gardeners not only visit their own Master Gardeners' Open Garden Days but neighboring ones as well for more success stories. Take notes/pictures on your gardening problems and problem sites. Good chance to get a free diagnosis of questionable growth or lack thereof from folks who have probably seen similar challenges. Be sure to pick up schedules of special upcoming sales and programs.

Even if your MG Open Garden Day has passed, demonstration gardens are usually open to visitors and members can usually be found in gardens to answer questions, and perhaps direct you to upcoming public classes and/or area-specific gardening advice in among the Extension's printed materials.

Special thanks to Montgomery County Master Gardener **VELTA WORLEY**, who, below, offers this insider view of their Open Garden Days:

* * *

Why Go to Master Gardeners Open Garden Days? VELTA WORLEY explains! Montgomery County Master Gardener

"Master Gardener's Open Garden Days are so beneficial to both newbie gardeners as well as experienced gardeners. Anyone who has purchased a plant knows that there is a lot involved in planting, growing, and keeping plants alive! And then there is feeding and watering, pruning, weeding, raking, protecting from the elements – the list goes on.

"Just walking around looking at beautiful plants that are flourishing – or sometimes not – lifts one's spirits. Below are a few benefits of going to a variety of County Open Garden Days:

- ***Master Gardeners are on site in all the garden areas.*** What a great opportunity to ask your gardening questions, and get answers that are research-based. Master Gardeners like to share their passion for plants!
- ***We live in very diverse climate zones in our area of Southeast Texas.*** We have everything from blizzard to monsoon to hotter than you know what, to cool days, to cloudy days – well you get it. Going to an Open Garden Day can help you see (below) the types of supports and plants that do well in particular areas, like water gardens



- *And there is so much plant diversity. From hybrids, to natives, to Texas Superstars to plants that love water to plants that do well in dry soils – many County gardens will have species of plants that you have never heard of or didn't know they existed. Because if we are shopping at big box stores, we pretty much are stuck with what they try to sell us (no insult intended, they are just trying to provide what they think the public will purchase.)*

SAT., JUNE 7: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS' OPEN GARDENS DAY, 8:30–11 am. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd, Conroe. 938-539-7824. Free. mcmga.com
Check Calendar below for more
Greater Houston area gardening events

* * *

Potpourri

TULIPS BLOOM EARLY ON TOO SHORT STEMS? "PROBABLY "BOLTED." I first learned this term from Houston bulb expert, the late Sally McQueen Squire. Our fluctuating late winter/early spring temps can be very confusing to tulips and other Holland-type bulbs from areas with more predictable seasons! To tulip bulbs, warm temps mean Spring! Some sprout too soon, Temps drop, stalk-growth stops too soon for buds already showing heat-triggered color. In our subtropical area: 1. buy only pre-chilled tulip bulbs or 2. put unchilled bulbs in paper bag in (NOT touching wall) in refrigerator 4-5 weeks before planting. Note: [2025 Garden Club of Houston Bulb & Plant Mart](#) is Oct. 9-11. Check link for posted Inventory in early fall.



- **WANT TO GARDEN BUT NO ROOM?** Reader asked if Houston has public areas to grow edibles

vegetables? Suggested: urbanharvest.org/gardens/ for info on Urban Harvest's now-160 community gardens, manned by volunteers always looking for more participating folks throughout Greater Houston area!



- **FRIDAY IS NATIONAL WATER A PLANT DAY.** (HA! *Nature's taking care of that for most of us!*) June 1-7 is [National Gardening Week](#); June 6 is [National Gardening Exercise Day](#). Experts say watering plants can increase OUR mental well-being. If you're stuck inside, tune in to our three Houston-specific radio gardening shows:



- **MEG TAPP's GARDENING SHOW / HOUSTON MATTERS** airs on 2nd Monday of each month at 9 AM on 88.7 FM
- **GARDEN LINE WITH SKIP RICHTER, 740AM KTRH** — Saturday & Sunday, 6–10 AM. Call in line: 713-212-5874. SportsRadio 610. (Also on Heart Radio app.)
- **HOME SHOW GARDENING PROS with TOM TYNAN, SPORTS RADIO** Saturdays, Sat. 7-9 AM. Call-in line: 281-833-3333

- **ATTN. GARDEN/PLANT GROUPS --** [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. Great time to visit!



- **SUBMITTING A CALENDAR EVENT?** For next upcoming newsletter, submit in exact format (see top of calendar below. Reformatting = delay)

* * *

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

* * *

SUMMER CLEAROUT SALE

Save up to 50% off on
select nursery items!

Our Summer Clearout Sale is going on now at Nature's Way Resources! For a limited time, enjoy up to 50% off of select trees, shrubs, perennials, and more. Whether you're planting for pollinators, refreshing your beds, or just adding a splash of color, now's the time to stock up and save.



John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 331

Subject: fluoride plant and human health biodiversity gluten

Good news for gardeners as Fluoride is being removed from public water systems. I have reported multiple times on the harm that fluoride does to our gardens. Below is a quick summary.

A Few Landscaping Problems Associated with Fluorine (Fluoride)

Fluoride generally remains in solution, and plants are exposed to this chemical by water, air and soil. Fluoride is a poison that accumulates in plant foliage and often leads to toxicity symptoms on sensitive plants. This happens over time thus we may not realize why are plants are getting sick and declining or just die suddenly. Fluoride strongly inhibits photosynthesis and other processes in the plant. It is absorbed by the roots (or stomata) and moves through the plant accumulating in the leaf margins.

Plant pathologists at OSU have found that typical fluorine injury symptoms on broadleaf plants include marginal and tip necrosis (pre-mature cell death) that spread inward. On conifer needles it spreads towards the base of the needle. The symptoms produced often look similar to drought or salt stress.

A wide variety of plants are fluoride sensitive. A few examples by common name are: apricots, box elder, blueberry, sweet corn, Douglas-fir, gladiolus, grapes, Oregon grape, western larch, peach, pine, plum, blue spruce, tulip, corn plant, yucca, spider plant, Tahitian bridal veil, lillium spp. (list from Plant Disease Handbook).

Another study found by botanical name that *Calarhea* spp., *Chamaedorea elegans*, *Chlorophytum comosum*, *Cordyline terminalis*, *Ctenatthe oppenheimiana*, *Dracaena* spp., *Gibasis pellucida*, *Lilium* spp., *Maranta leuconeura*, *Spathiphyllum* spp., and *Yucca* spp. are very fluoride sensitive to as little as 1 ppm in water.

As you can see a wide variety of plants are subject to fluoride damage. Other plants, although not sensitive, are hyper accumulators of fluoride like spinach.

If you have ever wondered who benefits from adding fluoride to our water system, fluoride is a waste product from the manufacture of aluminum and phosphate fertilizers. This has saved those companies billions of dollars in toxic waste disposal. They took the playbook from the tobacco companies, improved by Bayer-Monsanto (glyphosate fame) and have improved it again using many of the same public relations firms. The new book *Sweet and Deadly* (2025) by Murray Carpenter is about how Coca-Cola used the same playbook to spread disinformation and make us sick.

If one understands the relationships in nature, growing any plant becomes much easier.

Microbes in the soil affect the flavor and nutrients of our food. Studies have shown that carrots grown with the correct bacteria on their root system increase the amount of carotene in them making them far healthier.

When there is a healthy soil microbiome plants grow faster, produce more flowers and fruits and grow with less insect and disease issues. We are learning something almost daily about the soil microbiome. I read this week that new research indicates that fungi and slime molds have a sense of smell and use it to find food resources.

The International Institute for Applied System Analysis published a paper on carbon sequestering. They found the world's soils store on the order of 2,500

gigatons of carbon, which is three times the amount in the atmosphere.

It was believed for years that organic matter build up in the soil was caused by microbes not being able to decompose all organic matter, since theoretically microbes should decompose all organic matter in the soil.

However, the researchers found that microbes self-regulate in a manner to allow organic matter to build up in the soil. God's creation is marvelous.

More and more health issues are being linked to [gluten](#) sensitivity. A paper published in the International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition compared ancient grains to modern grains. They found that ancient grains contain far more vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

They found that when people eat ancient grains their harmful cholesterol and blood glucose declined. Both conventional and organic grown ancient grains showed the same benefits.

Another paper found that the ancient grains had less than ½ percent gluten, while modern grains were over 21%.

This reminds me that a few years ago the FDA came out with a report that found Frosted Flakes cereal was healthier than Avocados! They also found that Pop Tarts and Spaghetti-O's were healthier than salmon and almonds. The corruption in the FDA is a major cause of the USA being one of the sickest countries in the world.

The corruption in the FDA was bad enough 15 years ago when the book below came out and it has only become worse. **FDA - Failure, Deception, Abuse - The Story of an Out-of-Control Government Agency and What It Means For Your Health**, Life Extension Foundation, Praktikoa Books, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-60766-001-9

Nature loves biodiversity. Researchers in Germany found that in monocultures flooding was very damaging to the plants. However, when there were 16 or more species the plants survived flooding without any damage.

We have seen this principle in nature many times. When we plant lots of different species, we have less disease and insect problems, and we have more insect and animal species in our gardens.

Researchers from the University of Washington found that when plants had a wider diversity of microbes in the soil, they could tolerate drought and other stressors. This could be growing more leaves to reducing water usage.

The reason for growing or at least purchase organic food continues to increase every day. The group OHBA (Organic Horticultural Business Alliance) has recently published a booklet called "Organic Lifestyle" composed of topics by multiple experts from gardening to cosmetics. It will be available at the next OHBA event.

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LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

WANT EVENT IN RIGHT AWAY? FOLLOW RULES! GREATER HOUSTON AREA EVENTS ONLY!

3-LINE (max) **EXACT FORMAT** (our re-formatting = *delay!*)

DAY, DATE: TITLE (by **NAME if talk**), time, site. Sponsor (*if not in title*).
website/phone (NOTE CAPITALS VS lower case)

- **Gardening w/plants events ONLY!** No harvest, cooking, shows, etc
- **ONLY events sent SPECIFICALLY TO US FOR CALENDAR are used!**
- **NO events picked up from flyers. NO PDFS! TYPE IN EMAIL ONLY.**
- **No city unless not "Houston" -- Don't add "Houston" or "Texas"**
- **Submit to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. Check published entry!**

WED. MAY. 28: BRING BACK THE POLLINATORS by **ELLIOT GORDON**, (Zoom) program), 7pm, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Cactus and Succulent Society event. Free. hcsstex.org

SAT., JUNE 7: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS' OPEN GARDENS DAY, 8:30–11am. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd, Conroe. 938-539-7824. Free. mcmga.com

MON., JUNE 9: COVER CROPS AND LIVING MULCHES (virtual) by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10-11:30am, Free. Register in advance to receive link: hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

THURS., JUNE 12: ROSES by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION**, 6:30-8 pm, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd, Conroe. 936-539-7824 mcmga.com

THURS., JUNE 12: ROSES AND SANDLOTS: HYBRIDIZING COMMUNITIES THAT GROW by **CLAYTON HAHN**, 7pm, Houston Rose Society. Free. [ZOOM link](#).

SAT., JUNE 14: SUCCESSFUL CONTAINER GARDENING by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**. 9-11am AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main (FM 519), La Marque. Free. [Register](#), 281-309-5065

SAT, JUNE 14: CONTAINER GARDENING by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION**, 9-11am, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension 9020 Airport Rd, Conroe. 936-539-7824 mcmga.com

SAT. JUNE. 21: PLUMERIA SOCIETY SALE, 9am-1pm, **Bay Area Community Center, 5002 E. NASA Parkway, Seabrook.** . Free admission and parking. theplumeriasociety.org/

SAT., JUNE 28: WOODY SHRUBS & TREES, 9-11am, and **SPECIALTY PLANTS** 1-3pm, by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**. Discovery Garden, 4102 Main St. (FM 519), Carbide Park, La Marque. Free. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/events/ 281-309-5065

SAT., JUNE 28: HEAT PROOFING YOUR GARDEN by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 10am–noon, 10000 Emmett F Lowry, Texas City, \$29. College of Mainland, 409-933-8461. Register: [Heat Proofing Your Garden online](#)

SAT., JULY 12: SQUARE FOOT GARDENING – NOT BY THE BOOK! by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 10am–noon, 10000 Emmett F Lowry, Texas City, \$29. College of the Mainland. 409-933-8461; register: [Square Foot Gardening](#)

SAT. JULY 12: AMAZING SUCCULENT PLANTS, by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**. 9-11am, AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. Free. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/events/

MON., JULY 14: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING (virtual) by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 10-11:30am, Free. Register in advance to receive link: hcc.idloom.events/gardening-series/register

TUES., JULY 15: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING (virtual) by **HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 11am-noon, Free. Facebook Live, no reservation required: facebook.com/harriscountyp/levents

SAT., JULY. 19: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SALE , 9am-1pm, Bay Areal Community Center, 5002 E. NASA Pkwy, Seabrook. Free admission and parking. theplumeriasociety.org

SAT., JULY 26: HERBS FOR HEALTH OF IT by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9-11am, . AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. Free. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/events/; 281-309-5065

***If your event didn't get in right away,
PROBABLY NOT In our EXACT - NEVER CHANGING format.
REFORMATNG (WE WILL!) delays event publication
and opens doors for errors. Your choice!
SEE TOP OF CALENDAR FOR EXACT FORMAT.***



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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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