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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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*Debbie Leflar photo
Dominican Community
Garden bounty*

RECOGNIZE THIS LAZY GARDENING ADVICE?



ONE OF THE MOST PUBLICIZED TRENDS IN GARDENING-- say those who know these things -- is **HANDS-OFF GARDENING**. *(May not have stolen my name, but the general approach is the same!)*

We're all always looking for new labor-saving ideas, right? As near as I can research, this exact approach below comes from ***"The Autopilot Garden" by Luke Marion***. My kind of gardening!

LUKE'S "Hands-Off Gardening" minimizes direct human intervention and maintenance, allowing plants to thrive with minimal input, where plants support each other and a garden essentially manages itself. *(Personally, my guru is Mother Nature. I try to do what she does. But his ideas are interesting.)*

Some of Luke's general suggestions: Mulch well (if you don't already) with local successful trees' leaves (instead of setting them out with garbage), use rain barrels & drip irrigation. All these will help tremendously during what's predicted to be a horrible summer.

One of the best ways to learn about gardening in your specific Greater Houston area? Volunteer at one of this area's literally hundreds of Community Gardens. Looking for one in your area? Or, want to start one? Urban Harvest is the place to begin: urbanharvest.org/gardens/

Many successful community gardens start out very small -- a vacant lot used with permission, neighbors whose gardening urges supersede their own

available space, a school wanting children to learn where food comes from, a church with now-vacant "future expansion" space . . .

Community gardens can be found in all sizes and area locations. One of my favorites: Dominican Garden (www.domhou.org/) near the Texas Medical Center. This 30-year-old, small, five-raised-beds garden donates food to [Star of Hope for Women and Children](#). (Note: Dominican garden needs more volunteers. Email Sr. Heloise Cruzat, hcruzat@domhou.org)



Above: a few of Dominican Garden's harvest delights. (Debbie Leflar photos)

Happy to share this report from Dominican Garden's Debbie Leflar

At Dominican Sisters garden we donate everything to Star of Hope for Women and Children so we want to produce as much as we can in our 5 raised beds. These work well for us.

- **'Provider' (green beans)** - heavy producer, bulk seed planted 2-3 times a season. Can get 2-3 pickings if we get good rain.
- **Banana and Bell peppers** - plants from box store.
- **LaSota new potatoes** - we cut them so there's an "eye" in each piece then dust with sulphur prior to planting.
- **Beauregard sweet potatoes** - order slips (sometimes grow our own). We put newspaper and alfalfa under plants to avoid vines rooting. We want all the energy to go to the main vine for good production.
- **Sweet Success cucumbers** - very hybrid seeds we get from Parks - heavy producer, can get large with very little seeds, hence we cannot save seeds for replanting.
- **Z-best okra** - very heavy producer, tall plants. Pods do not have ridges and even if they get long they're still tender. We save seeds from year to year.
- **Sweet 100s cherry tomatoes** - have to find plants as soon as we can.
- **Celebrity, Champion, Early Girl large tomatoes** - when we can find the plants. Squirrels are our biggest problem then stink bugs. Occasionally we have blossom end rot but a tea made with good quality compost is often beneficial.
- **Dancer, Ichiban, and Black Beauty eggplants** - we find plants as soon as available.
- **Snow Peas** - we save seeds from year to year.
- **Bright Lights swiss chard** - we plant seeds.
- **Asian Mustard** - Heavy producer and not as spicy as other mustards. Seeds collected from year to year.
- **Curly Mustard** - plant from seeds.
- **Collards** - we plant seeds.
- **Cabbage** - we find plants at box store. Problem with loopers on occasion.

- **Purple Top turnips** - we plant seeds and thin as needed.
- **Danverse Long carrots** - we plant bulk seeds. (Do not plant near dill).
- **Detroit Red beets** - we plant seeds.
- **Parsley, Dill, Sage, Mexican Marigold Mint (tarragon), Basil, Cilantro, Rosemary** - we plant from seeds; rosemary is a plant and our tarragon grows wild. We get rosemary plants from nurseries/plant sales and rotate our plantings.

We also plant onions early (red, yellow, white) what we can find . When the bulbs begin to form, we knock tops down which encourages growth in the bulb.

We follow [Bob Randall's Planting Guide](#), which is updated regularly. We also use MicroLife and compost from Nature's Way Resources. Dr. Bob Randall's book is the best resource for gardening in the Houston area, I highly recommend it!

-- Debbie Leflar

EDITOR'S NOTES: Dr. Bob Randall, Urban Harvest co-founder, and the UH staff publish their annual, regularly updated, free, online Greater Houston area Planting guides which can be downloaded at:

urbanharvest.org/gardening-advice/gardening-basics-and-planting-guides/

Check calendar below for Greater Houston's numerous vegetable gardening educational events!

* * *

Potpourri

- **3-HOUR GARDENING RULE!** We all need to stay out of hot sun as much as possible, but British doctors' are getting serious with their warnings: **Stay out of sun 11am-2pm!** U.S. doctors also report rises in skin cancers on hands, arms, ears and necks.



Too much sun can trigger dehydration, heat exhaustion, sunstroke or other , especially for folks over 60. Go inside if you experience: painful muscle spasms, often in legs, abdomen, or arms, accompanied by heavy sweating; headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, weakness, and fatigue, altered mental state (confusion, delirium, seizures), change in sweating (dry), skin irritations, red bumps (neck, upper chest, skin folds); fainting, dizziness, Rapid breathing or pulse, throbbing headache, muscle twitching or seizures, reduced appetite.

- **PLANTING ALONG FENCE-- HAVE DO/DON'T ADVICE?** We touched previously on planting fences in HOA neighborhood where many folks now share these with neighbors. A reader asked for more, actual planting experiences, successes, failures and problems solved? Our weather can be

so different from national challenges.
Pictures welcome Nothing published without
your permission. Email to:
lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com.



- **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 best chance of getting it in
next upcoming newsletter, submit in exact requested format (see top of
calendar below. Reformatting by us may = delay in publication)*

* * *

JOIN US FOR THE 4TH ANNUAL
ORGANIC FAIR & WORKSHOP

OHBA PALOOZA

This full-day celebration of organic gardening, sustainable living, and ecological inspiration features keynote speaker **Joe Lamp'l** and 8 other organic expert-led breakout sessions. With engaging talks, hands-on insights, exhibitor booths, and community connection, this event is perfect for anyone passionate about green living and growing with purpose.

**SATURDAY
AUGUST 2, 2025**

**8AM TO
4PM**

**UNITED WAY OF
GREATER HOUSTON**

50 WAUGH DRIVE
HOUSTON TX 77007

HEADLINER JOE LAMP'L



+ 2 CONCURRENT
SESSIONS

TICKETS

OHBA MEMBERS: \$100
NON-MEMBERS: \$125

EVERY MEMBER TICKET GETS A FREE
COPY OF OUR NEW ORGANIC
LIFESTYLE BOOKLET!



SCAN ME!



**ORGANIC EDUCATION,
CEU'S, NETWORKING + MORE**

OHBA
MORE COMING SOON!
OHBAONLINE.ORG/REGISTER



OHBAFALOOZA

AGENDA

EDUCATIONAL SCHEDULE

8:00 - 8:45 AM REGISTRATION, NETWORKING & EXHIBITS

9 AM - 10:30 AM Joe Kamp'l

ECOLOGICAL GARDENING FOR BEAUTY & BIODIVERSITY

10:30 - 11 AM BREAK + EXHIBITORS

11 AM - 12 PM SESSION 1

BABY STEPS TO GOING ORGANIC: HEALTHIER YOU, HEALTHIER PLANET
DR. MILA MCMANUS

COMPOSTING IN SMALL SPACES
DIANA LIGA

"PRETTY" IS THE EASIEST THING WE DO
FRED BILLINGS

TITLE COMING SOON!
KEIJI ASAKURA

12 - 1 PM LUNCH + EXHIBITORS

1 PM - 2 PM SESSION 2

BENEFICIAL INSECTS: A KEY INGREDIENT IN SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES
SKIP RICHTER

THE HOW'S & WHY'S OF HOMESTEADING
BRIANNE BERNSEN

ABUNDANT LANDSCAPES: PERMACULTURE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DESIGN
CAROL BURTON

CREATING A HEALTHY BACKYARD BIRD HABITAT
RICHARD EDIE

2 - 2:30 PM DESSERT + COFFEE

2:30 PM - 4 PM Joe Kamp'l

GROWING A GREENER WORLD - STORIES THAT INSPIRE & MOTIVATE

Tickets: \$100 Members & Organic Lifestyle Booklet Included in Ticket Purchase | \$125 Non-Members

\$15.00 ORGANIC LIFESTYLE BOOKLET AVAILABLE FOR SALE

Register Online: www.ohbaonline.org/register



John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS # 337

Subject: Fungi, nutrient recovery, pollinators, nitrogen and phosphorus

We have known for some time that fungi form beneficial relationships with plants if we let them. Plants share many of the carbon-rich molecules they make from photosynthesis with fungi, anywhere from 4% to 40% of the total. In return, fungi collect and provide nitrogen and phosphorus along with other elements to the plant.

Research from several universities South Dakota Agricultural Station, University of Amsterdam, University of British Columbia, and several others have found that it is a supply and demand relationship.

A host plant is colonized by multiple fungi species at the same time, and the host plant knows exactly which fungi are providing the benefits. The plant can distinguish between good and bad fungi and allocate resources accordingly.

These fungi also form common mycorrhizal networks that give them access to multiple hosts and act as trading partners by collecting elements that are high in one area and delivering them to a plant without the elements in a different area. Messages about insect pests or disease issues can also be transmitted. This is sometimes referred to as the “Wood Wide Web”.

One of the studies examined 31 different isolates of 10 arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal species, each providing different benefits. The high-performance isolates increased biomass and nutrient uptake by 170%.

Other fungal isolates protected the plant from drought, salinity, heavy metals, and diseases.

An old wife’s tale says if you urinate on your plants, they will grow better. Research has now found that each human on average excretes 1.32 pounds (0.6 kg) of phosphorus each year, and 58% is in a soluble form in our urine, which does help plants grow better.

As a result, some Waste Water Treatment Plants are now beginning to capture this phosphorus (and other elements) from the sewage sludge they process. They use new technology that allows them to capture and remove struvite, which is magnesium ammonium phosphate ($\text{MgNH}_4\text{PO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$). This can then be used in fertilizers.

A study from the University of Texas has found that increasing the diversity of pollinator species, including bees, flies, and butterflies, can dramatically increase cotton production by 18%. *Journal of Agricultural Ecosystems and Environment* 2016. This is another example of the benefits of having a lot of plant diversity in our landscapes.

Heirloom plant species often work better at attracting pollinators as they are richer in nutrients in their pollen and nectar. Planting flowering plants that flower at different times also helps create pollinator diversity.

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LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

WANT EVENT IN RIGHT AWAY? FOLLOW RULES!

-- ONLY GREATER HOUSTON AREA NONPROFIT GROUP EVENTS --

Expect delay if we must reformat: 3-LINE (max) EXACT FORMAT:

DAY, DATE: TITLE (by NAME if talk), time, site. Sponsor (if not in title).

website/phone (NOTE CAPITALS VS lower case)

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

SAT., JULY 26: HERBS FOR HEALTH OF IT by GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9-11am, AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM519), La Marque. Free. galveston.agrilife.org/events; 281-309-5065

SAT., JULY 26: CONTAINER GARDENING, 2pm, Sugar Land Branch Library, 550 Eldridge Road, SL. Free. Register: Master Gardener Talk - Container Garden, Fort Bend County Libraries, 281-238-2140.

SAT. AUG 9: ONIONS & GARLIC, 9-11am, and FALL VEGETABLES, 1-3pm by GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. Free. Register: <https://txmg.org/galveston/>

SAT., AUG. 9: COOL SEASON VEGETABLES & HERBS, 9am, 1330 Band R, Rosenberg. Free. Fort Bend Master Gardeners. Register: 281-342-3034 or brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu

TUES., AUG., 19: CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS EFFECTS ON PEOPLE AND PLANTS by DR. SYLVIA DEE, 7pm, West Grey Multi-Service Center 1475 West Grey. Bromeliad Society/Houston. bromeliadsocietyhouston.org

MON - TUES: AUG 25-26: SUMMER SUNDOWN ONLINE PLANT SALE by GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 1-3pm, .
Details: <https://galvestonmg.square.site/>

SAT., AUG, 16: VEGGIE GARDENING 101 by MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9am-4pm, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

SAT., AUG.18: RAINWATER HARVESTING by THERESA SEE, 10am-noon, Bayou Preservation Assn., Magnolia Multi-Service Center, 7037 Capital St. .
RSVP: bayoupreservation.org/events/2025-summer-resiliency-workshop

SAT., SEPT.13: TURF FOR THE FALL by MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9-12am, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

SAT., AUG 23: TEXAS SUPERSTAR® - BE A SUPERSTAR WITH ANNUALS by. Discovery Garden in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St (FM 519), La Marque. Free. Register: txmg.org/galveston/

SAT., SEPT. 27: LEAGUE CITY GARDEN CLUB "BEAUTIFUL BACKYARD VIBES" GARDEN TOUR, 10am-4pm, League City, TX, \$20 per person. leaguecitygardenclub@gmail.com

SAT., OCT. 11: GROWING CITRUS by MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9-11am, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

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



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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 (at that time) 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 (lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)

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.



Lazy Gardener And Friends | 101 Sherbrook Circle | Conroe, TX 77385 US

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