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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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BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH



L to r, Peppermint Lace (pink/white), Mandevilla, [Dr. Moy hibiscus](#), Tecoma Stans (Yellow Bells) or Esperanza, and my Cassia (tho it has many other names).

DON'T TEASE YOUR PLANTS WITH SHALLOW WATERINGS!

This is a great time to note which plants are going strong in your yard and in yards of your lazy neighbor who never waters at all. Might want to consider some of his to replace wimps in your yard! In fact, how about sharing with our readers word of your "watered-only-by-rain" plants now blooming?

Some of mine are beautiful, 'tho not as lush as many I've seen (*Lazy gardeners don't get jealous, we know it's our fault*). But that makes blooms we do get all the more precious! Above are my (L to R), 'Peppermint Lace' crepe myrtle, *Dr. Moy hibiscus*, *Tecoma Stans* ("Yellow Bells" or "Esperanza"), and what I always called a *Poinciana*, but might be one of a dozen other names.

Texas Superstar® 'Dr. Moy' Hibiscus produces some of the largest (12" across!) record-setting flowers of any any such cultivars. Mine die back in winter but have come out faithfully every spring. (So far!) The deep cherry pink-

to-near red flowers of Moy Grande can measure over 12" across! Recommended was a full-to-mostly sunny position in a moderately-moist fertile soil for the most flowers and vigorous growth. No, I've never protected it in winter. It dies back, and (so far) returns (in late spring! [Developed by Dr. Moy at San Antonio Botanic Gardens.](#)

Where to get these and other highly recommended plants for our area? Unfortunately some (not all!) plant sale sites will deliberately mis-name similar plants. Your safest bet: your area's independent nursery. Your success ensures their success and the reliability of plant names.

CREPE NOTES: Most folks don't realize crape myrtles range from dwarf shrubs (under 5') to mid-size shrubs or small trees (6'-12') to trees (the ones which should NOT be "murdered"). Note: My 'Peppermint Lace' crape is labeled a "moderate grower — 15'-20'." (Growers may put different or slightly-altered names on their own cultivars. I've seen identical ones labeled "Peppermint 'Ice,'" 'Peppermint Lace' (one I ordered online) and simply "Peppermint" crape. Must admit, I don't water. Figure if a plant needs more than our rainwater, it's downright mean to plant it in my yard.



On the other hand, too many folks "tease" their plants by giving them far too LITTLE water in this horrible heat. Or, even worse, they hold the hose for only a few minutes over each plant. This only encourages roots to grow up closer to the surface, in soil that will heat up too quickly.

Best idea -- if you don't have any deep water attachments for your hoses -- is to lay the hose next to plant stalks and let it trickle down into lower soil levels. Water at near ground level will evaporate more quickly than most plant roots can absorb it.

Crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), a true Lazy Gardener plant, is our Official State Shrub, thanks to a national group organized by McKinney, TX, which claims the title, America's Crape Myrtle City. The annual [The annual Myrtle Trails of McKinney](#) run through August.

* * *

SPEAKING OF TEXAS SUPERSTARS®, in our Spotlight Article below, Galveston County Master Gardeners take a closer look at these great friends of gardeners! Don't miss this preview below, then mark your calendar to attend: **SAT., AUG 23: TEXAS SUPERSTAR® - BE A SUPERSTAR WITH ANNUALS**, Discovery Garden in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St (FM 519), La Marque. Free. Register: txmg.org/galveston/



* * *

Potpourri

- **HAVE YOU TRIED ... CORAL VINE?** (^a*Antigonon leptopus*)?

Beautiful, hardy (when established), and a great source of food for bees late in the season. It will die back in a freeze, allowing you to manage its growth. Its growth has never been a problem in the nursery, where there are a few patches planted. They love to climb up the base of pine trees, thriving in sunlight.



(Pictured:) **CORAL VINE** (*Antigonon leptopus*) can be found at **Nature's Way Resources** and many local independent nurseries.

- **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)*

* * *



Popular Texas Superstars, l to r, Texas Bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*); Gold Star Esperanza (*Texoma stans* 'Gold Star'); Belinda's Dream (*Rosa*, woody shrub) and (below), Basham's Party Pink Crape myrtle, *Lagerstroemia indica* x *L. fauriei*
All photos: Stacy D. Mills, GCMG & Karen Nelson, GCMG



WHAT EXACTLY ARE Texas Superstars®?

BY **SUE BAIN and KAREN NELSON**
Galveston County Master Gardeners

The **Texas Superstar®** Program was identified in the early 1980s when landscape plants were ill adapted for our tough weather conditions. We needed plants that could survive weather extremes, droughts and heavy rainfall and varying soil conditions. The Texas A&M AgriLife Research/ Texas A&M AgriLife Extension faculty, researchers, extension specialists, county horticulturists and executive board spearheaded the plant selection and trials.

Combined with the Texas Department of Agriculture through its Go Texan program, printed brochures of the Texas Superstar® plants to give to the public and retailers. The Texas Nursery & Landscape Association (TNLA) helped “spread the word” about the latest selections through their monthly publication. The Texas Superstar® program started with these partnerships, and the future of the program is dependent on the continuing growth and strength of these partnerships.

Texas Superstar plants are proven to be Texas tough that will bring easy care and beauty to anyone’s landscape. Only the most reliable, toughest, and best-looking plants become a Texas Superstar®.

To earn the Texas Superstar ® designation, every plant undergoes several years of extensive field trials and in several Texas locations. The trial testing includes using Earth-Kind® methods through water conservation, reduction of fertilizer and pesticides use, landscaping for energy conservation and reduction of landscape waste entering landfills.

To become a Texas Superstar® plant, it must have the following qualities:

- Overall attractive appearance
- Must appeal to the average homeowner regardless of gardening expertise
- Being pest resistant
- Must “sell itself” in sales container
- Must perform well in our heat by being drought resistant



- Must propagate and mass produce in sufficient quantities for the consumer

The Texas Superstar® brochure provides plant listings and descriptions that have met all qualifications and qualities. The plants are grouped in sections of Annuals, Perennials, Per-Annual Plants, Woody Shrubs, Trees and Specialty Plants (see attached examples). There are over 90 Texas Superstar® Plants. New Texas Superstars® are announced yearly.

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE: SAT., AUG 23: TEXAS SUPERSTAR® - BE A SUPERSTAR WITH ANNUALS, Discovery Garden in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St (FM 519), La Marque. Free. Register: txmg.org/galveston/. <https://texassuperstar.com/>

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

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



OHBA PALOOZA

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: Citrus Greening Water Movement in Soils

I was reading a recent article on a new treatment for citrus greening disease. Researchers at Texas A&M University have discovered that an antimicrobial peptide found in common spinach plants has anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties.

These peptides occur naturally, and we consume them when we eat spinach,

hence they are considered very safe. They used a common benign virus to carry the peptides to the infected trees.

After only one application they saw promising results, as there was a 50% increase in yield on infected plants. Plant Biotechnology Journal (2025)

After the flooding in central Texas a couple weeks ago, I was asked the other day about how water moves through the soil.

Water movement through the soil can be both very simple and complex. The type of soil, whether sand, silt, or clay, organic matter content, microbial content, and things like earthworms, all affect how soil allows water to move through it.

Let's look at two major factors that affect water movement, porosity and permeability. First, porosity varies from different types of soil or rock. Styrofoam has a very high porosity, but zero water will move through it (zero permeability). Limestone rock often has very low porosity, but large amounts of water can move through it (high permeability). Porosity measures the pore space in the material which affects a materials density. Permeability measures how much of a liquid like water or air can move through it.

The Woodlands Water newsletter has a YouTube link to a short video on Texas aquifers that is very good. It is from the Texas Water Development Board and can be found at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HJ5Q2yH5S8>

In the video they explain two properties of aquifers called *porosity* and *permeability*. These two properties are involved with soils also. Understanding these two properties is essential to having healthy soil and beautiful gardens.

The photo below shows two different soils, one is granular, and one is plate like. The plate-like soil has more open space which is called porosity than the granular soil, hence will hold more water or air. However, the pores are not connected, and air and water cannot move through the soil except very slowly. Gardeners often refer to this type of soil as poorly draining.

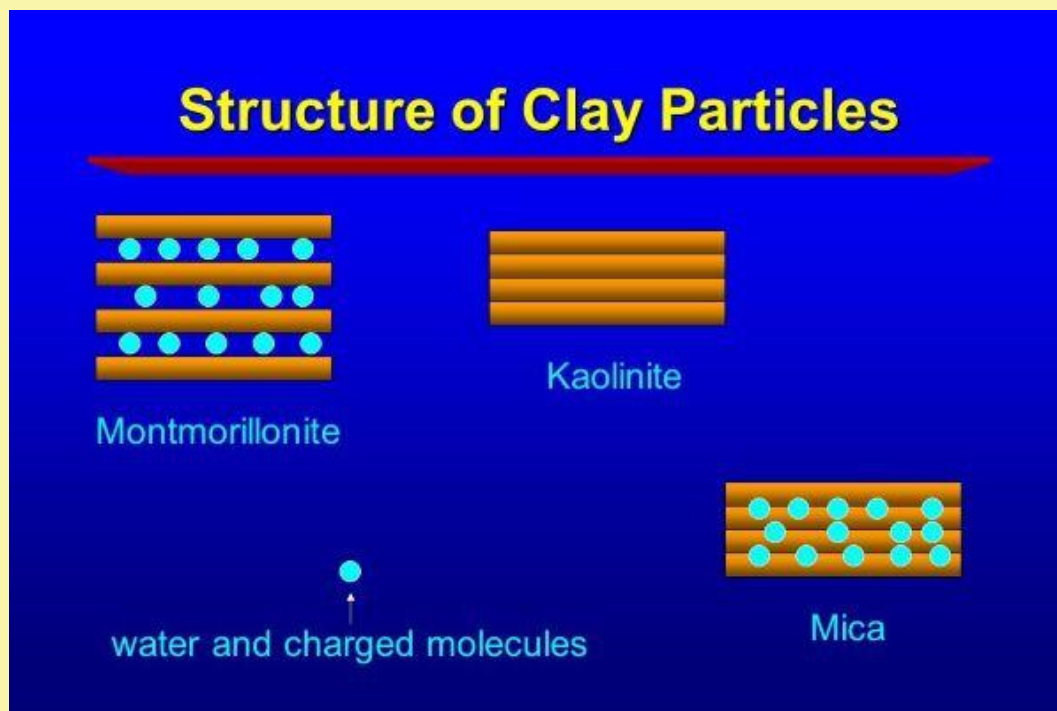
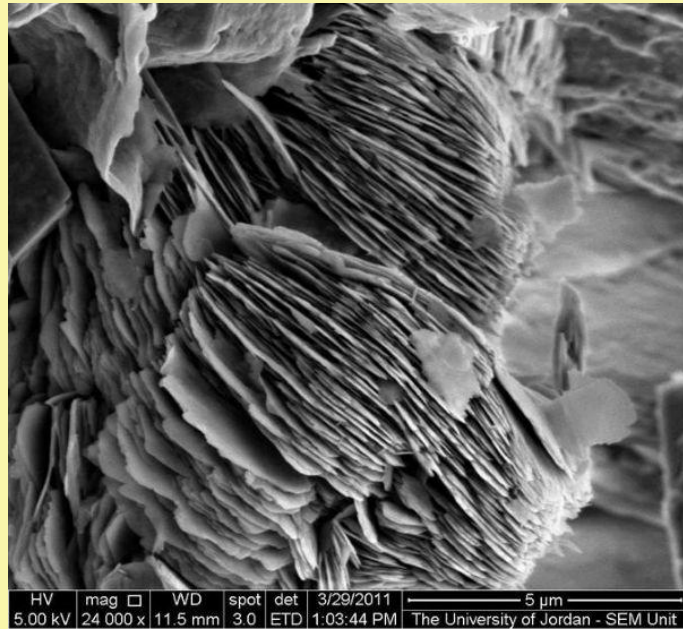
The granular soil will have far less pore space (porosity) but water and air will move through the granular soil easily (high permeability).



The photo below is a very platy soil that we know as clay. Lots of porosity but

very little permeability. This is why clay soils are used to line lake bottoms or build the dams.

When water gets into the plates it acts as a lubricant allowing the plates to slide over each other as shown in the slide below. This property is why some clay soils are very slippery when wet.

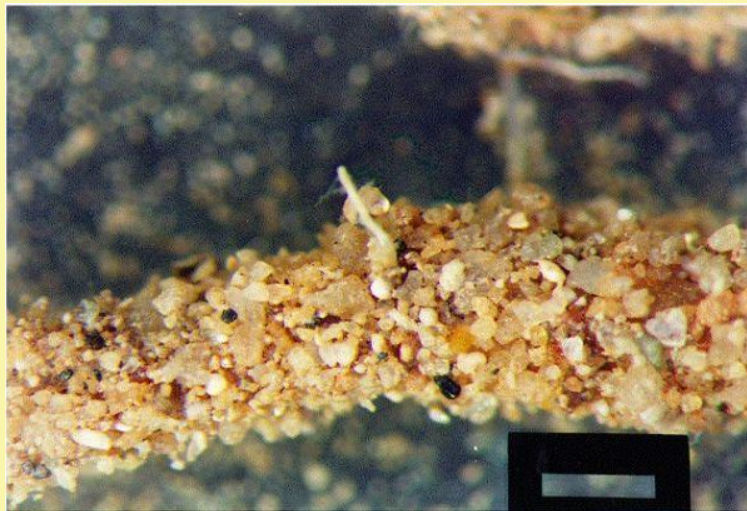


When our soils have good organic matter content the microbes feeding on and living in the organic matter can help hold the soil particles apart and glue them together to increase both permeability and porosity by producing soil glues called glomalin. The organic matter is also home and food for many species of microbes that help plants grow.

As shown in the photo below, this type of soil makes it easy for plant roots to grow into. This allows the plant to spend more of its energy on growth, flowers, and fruit.



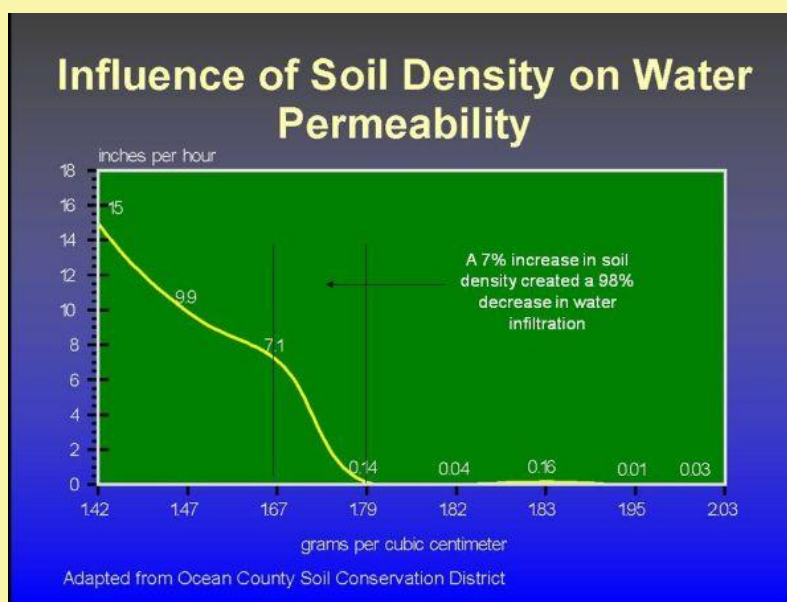
The photo below shows a mycorrhizal fungal hypha that colonizes plant roots, produces soil glues that hold sand particles to its body giving the soil some structure. The sand helps protect the fungi from being eaten by other microbes and this process will help the soil resist erosion better.



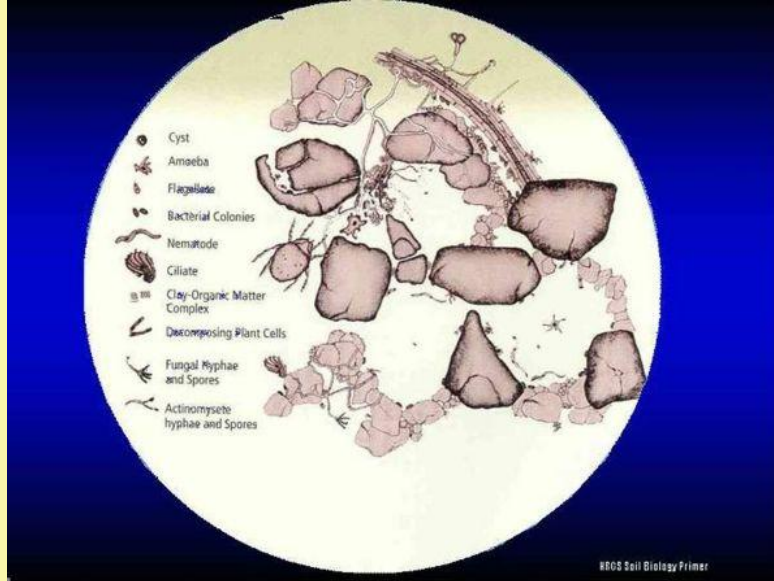
The chart below from USDA studies shows how organic matter helps the soil hold water. Good quality compost is one of the best ways to build soil organic matter along with an aged (partially composted) native mulch.



Compaction is a major factor in preventing water (whether from rain or irrigation) from entering the soil. Obviously, compaction reduces permeability, and it also reduces porosity, so the soil holds less water or air. Think of a slice of bread with all its large pores is light and fluffy. If we squeeze it hard, all the pores are gone, and it is harder and tighter and denser (compaction).



The picture below depicts a healthy soil with all its components from sand and clay to microbes, earthworms, and organic matter. This is the type of soil our plants love.



Developing good soil structure is the most important part of water conservation in our landscapes and essential to have beautiful gardens. It is also the most cost-effective tool we have.

The benefits are many times greater than irrigation systems, rainwater harvesting, and water reuse combined. By using compost, native mulches, organic fertilizer, and trace minerals, our soil gets healthier, and problems decrease.

For example, a topsoil with a 3% organic matter content by weight can have a 60% porosity. If filled with 35% air and 25% water, it can hold over 120,000 gallons of water in the top 18" per acre and the subsoil can hold even more! A gardener can save hundreds of thousands of dollars every year just on their water bill.

A great topsoil can have over 8% by weight (25% by volume) in organic matter. This was the organic matter content of the soils of the great plains before it was tilled under for agriculture. It supported enough vegetation to easily feed millions of buffalo and other animals.



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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!

FRI., AUG. 8: MERCER GARDEN TOUR by **HORTICULTURE STAFF**, 9–10 am, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Free, Register: pct3.com/MBG

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

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. 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

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

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

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

WED., SEPT. 10: EVERYTHING ORCHIDS by **BRANDIE HILL** 12 – 2 pm, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Free. Register: pct3.com/MBG

FRI., SEPT. 12: MERCER GARDEN TOUR by **HORTICULTURE STAFF**, 9–10 am, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Free, Register: pct3.com/MBG

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

PLAN AHEAD . . .

THURS., SEPT. 18: LEARN TO GROW PICKLES by **ERIKA RUTZ**, 10–11 am, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Free, Register: pct3.com/MBG

TUES., SEPT. 23: FALL PLANTING GUIDE by **ISABELLA FOWLER**, 10:30 am–noon, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. Register: pct3.com/MBG

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

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

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

TUES., OCT. 28: CONTAINER GARDENING by **BRUKENDRA FILMORE**, 10:30–1:30 am, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Free. Register: pct3.com/MBG

***If your event didn't get in right away, probably was set aside to be rewritten in our exact, never-changing format (See top of calendar)!
Your choice!***



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

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at 936-273-1200 or send an e-mail to: lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com





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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