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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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"WE CAN TAKE IT" plants.

by Brenda Beust Smith (aka The Lazy Gardener)

If you think it's hot out there, imagine what your plants must be feeling! But there's no reason to just ignore the garden in August (tho that's what most of us probably would like to do). Instead, make notes of the plants that look the worst. Then see if you can fill in with some "WE CAN TAKE IT!" annuals like mums, zinnias, cockscomb (celosia), that should hold color. It's risky to invest too much in plantings this month.

Last week I used pictures of several of mine in full bloom now, with one mistake! That was not a bougainvillea vine, it was a mandevilla vine! Sorry. My crapejas are full of a new batch of buds. The giant white milkweed is covered with buds ready to pop. I know most folks hate the native blue morning glories, but I love mine. They cover trellises that used to host tomatoes. A few August reminders from my Lazy Gardener's Guide.*





Normally by now, my roof-high giant white milkweed is covered with flowers (see insert). But probably the intense heat has her blooms coming out late.

THIS MONTH YOU REALLY SHOULD ...

- Watch for hummingbirds! Soon migrating species come through. Keep feeders clean, full.
- Give perennials, annuals, roses and fall-blooming shrubs a light feeding and slight haircut.
- Order a free best fall vegetable varieties planting list from your county [Extension Service / Master Gardeners](#).
- Prune deadwood from trees. Hurricane season's here.
- Let cactus roots dry out (callous over) before replanting. Plant in well drained spot.
- Keep the lawn well watered but keep sprinkler (if used) as LOW as possible to eliminate some evaporation. Mow more often to force sideways growth to fill in bare areas.
- Water less often, but leave the sprinkler on for an extended period (watch for runoff). Shallow waterings encourage problems.

IF THE SPIRIT MOVES. . . .

- Set out fall tomatoes (plants), green onions, cucumbers, corn and green beans. Water ONLY at base of plant.
- Later in month, start (& protect) seeds of broccoli, cabbage, chard, garlic, kohlrabi, squash. When temperatures drop in September, plant in garden. Or, protect new seedlings from hot afternoon sun with newspaper or cloth shade.
- Feed plumerias toward the end of this month with a high phosphorus (high middle number) fertilizer. Hibiscus like a low-phosphorus fertilizer.
- In the water garden, feed all water plants.

IF YOU'RE FEELING REALLY ENERGETIC . . .

- Work organic matter into beds. This holds water in a form plants can use.

- Visit nurseries for great clearance sales on plants as they make room for fall stocks.
- Prune newly-purchased plants slightly and soak in a rooting stimulant before planting.
- Collect the air conditioning drip water for potted plants. They'll love it.
- Divide crowded iris. Remove old foliage.
- Remove moisture-grabbing weeds or smother under a thick mulch.
- Potted hybrid (modern) roses may need watering twice a day.

GREAT **DON'T DO!** Tips for REALLY Lazy Gardeners

- Don't cry over plants that die in the heat of August. They don't belong in Lazy Gardens!
- Don't assume dead plants are really dead. Some, like maidenhair and other ferns, oxalis, some roses, phlox and German primroses, may just be dormant (natural heat protection) and will return in fall.
- Pinching faded flowers prolongs bloom periods and is a good way to relieve stress (yours).
- Stop feeding and watering potted amaryllis. Lay pots on sides out of the way (to remind you not to water). When foliage dies, cut it off.
- Don't fertilize a heat-stressed lawn. (Okay to apply seaweed extract or fish emulsion.)

My "Lazy Gardener's Guide" is available free as a PDF.
(Email request to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)

If you just want flowers to be pretty now through, say, the rest of this year, probably doesn't matter where you buy them. But if you want them to last through winter and beyond, follow the advice above. For all of them, however, and existing plants, it's better to put the hose at the base of the plant and let it run for a while, so the water goes straight down before it starts to evaporate.

And remember, your area independent nurseries want you to succeed (they survive on happy customers) as much as you do. Ask their advice if you're not sure what to plant where.

* * *

Potpourri

- **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)*

* * *

Address questions, suggestions, and your successes to lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

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



John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS #340

Subject: Mulches

This past Saturday at OHBAPALOOZA the speaker stated his favorite mulch was shredded leaves. From some of the comments from the audience, many people are still unaware of the quality of different types of mulch. In the Houston area we have over 20 types of mulch being sold to consumers. Mulch can be broken into three basic types based on its quality and usage. These types are Biological, Commercial, and Industrial.

Biological – This is the highest quality mulch and therefore the most beneficial in improving soils, preventing disease, protecting plants, etc. It has a low carbon-to-nitrogen ratio so it does not steal nitrogen from the soil and weaken or stress plants. It has been composted to kill weed seeds and pathogens. Composted “*native mulch*” and “*coarse screened compost*” are examples of this class of mulch. The bag will have holes in it so that air can enter allowing the beneficial microbes to breathe and be kept alive. This mulch will typically sell retail for \$7-10 per bag (2 cubic feet). Shredded leaves would be in this class.

Commercial – This is a middle grade of mulch made from tree barks (pine, hardwood, etc.) and is the most common. It will be in a sealed bag and may have a sour, stale or strong odor. It has a high carbon-to-nitrogen ratio and robs soil of nitrogen and other nutrients. Tends to float off in heavy rains, develop unsightly molds or fungal mats and may attract fire ants or termites. This mulch will typically sell retail for \$4-6 per bag (2 cubic feet bag). They also tend to be very flammable.

Industrial – This is the lowest grade of products called mulch. It is made from industrial waste like old pallets, construction wood, etc. It is often chemically burned black with industrial waste, it will sometimes rub off in your hand, and it

is often dyed various colors. It may contain arsenic from CCA treated waste wood. It has a very high carbon-to-nitrogen ratio and robs nitrogen and other nutrients from the soil for a long time. It may be extremely alkaline and high in toxic salts. It is often harmful to plants and soil and creates many problems, as well as being flammable. This product will typically sell retail for \$3-4 per bag (2 cubic feet). Mulch or compost made from toxic sewage sludge is found here even though it will be given some friendly sounding name.

So, what's a gardener to do? The top three mulches depending on what we want to accomplish are: shredded leaves, aged (partially composted) Native Mulch, and coarse compost.

If one wants to hold moisture and modify soil temperatures then shredded leaves work great and as they break down, they steadily feed your plants.

If you want to turn heavy clay soil into loam, then Native Mulch (aged) is the best choice as it feeds the microbes that break apart clay particles. Earthworms also love it and their tunneling helps aerate the soil.

If the goal is to improve soil quality and feed the plants, then a coarse screened compost is the way to go.

When I lived in Houston with black gumbo clay soil, I obtained fabulous results by applying 2-3 inches of native mulch and a couple inches of shredded leaves on top of the native mulch. Over time the clay turned into a rich fertile loam several feet deep, full of life from microbes to beetles and earthworms.

I rarely used **commercial-grade** mulches except in special cases, as they just did not perform very well. I never used **industrial-grade** mulches as they generally harm the soil and are full of toxic chemicals.

Click below to learn more about all of the mulches in detail from Nature's Way Resources.

Newsletter Archive

[Click Here](#) to learn more about future OHBA events like OHBAPALOOZA



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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

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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& please patronize our Newsletter & Calendar sponsors below!

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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.



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