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Nature's Way Resources owner John Ferguson, "The Lazy Gardener" Brenda Beust Smith, and Shelby Cassano welcome your feedback and are so grateful to the many horticulturists who contribute their expertise.



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"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." – William Shakespeare



Stephen F. Austin State University's SFA Gardens' Ruby Mize garden photographed a first week in December (SFA photos)

LESSON LEARNED -- DO YOUR HORTICULTURE HOMEWORK!

by Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener

As longtime readers know, I'm a true "lazy gardener" who tends to view Mother Nature as my primary guide. Sometimes this approach doesn't work, but most of the time it does. And thanks to two of my favorite "botanophiles", **Dr. DAVID CREECH** of the SFA Gardens in Nacogdoches and Texas gardener extraordinaire **GREG GRANT** -- I now know my "Rosewood" gardenia is actually the same plant as a 'Martha Turnbull' gardenia, which is -- according to Greg and Dr. Creech -- is the exact same plant as **'Martha Turnbull' gardenia**.

(Be forewarned: Changing plant names is not common, but occasionally is done, especially with very old plants!) Don't give up when you can't find an exact-named flower or plant. Do your research! May discover you've been overlooking it (re-named) all along!

Wondering where my treasure showed up? Turns out she's one of a bonanza of great-for-us plants being prepared for sale just "up th' road" at the big upcoming Stephen F. Austin State University "Fabulous Fall Festival" in Nacogdoches.

Hard to describe this amazing *Plant Heaven*, especially for serious gardeners obsessed with expanding their horizons. So many in this collection are especially "good for us" long-lasting, eye-popping plants (long lived, proven by nature), developed over many decades with the help of outstanding Texas horticulturists. (Check out compiled in Greg Grant's Who's Who of Texas' best Texas' best known horticulturists)

Massive arrays of forms, textures and (soon) spectacular fall colors on incredible 138 acres of often-hard-to-find collectables will make this trip worthwhile for home gardeners, artists, nature lovers and fellow "botanophiles" alike. Wide selections of annuals, perennials, vines, shrubs and trees will make the trip through beautiful East Texas well worth it.

AND, YES, they WILL have more of my wonderful Rosewood (aka 'Martha Turnbull') gardenia for sale!



Acer palmatum 'Beni Kagami' maple leaves falling on a native Illicium floridanum variegated (SFA photo)

PS. Before buying anything new-to-you, tell staffers SPECIFICALLY WHERE YOU LIVE! In Texas and especially in our Greater Houston Area, It may - or may not - make a difference in planting advice between

Remember there's quite a weather difference between fit all in the Greater Houston Area's nine (often very different county climates). These folks will know those differences. Be sure and tell them where you live!

Most of all, go so you can see what treasures in these gardens you haven't been -- but should/could be, -- planting!

***Sat., Oct. 4: Stephen F. Austin State University SFA Gardens'
Fabulous Fall Festival Plant Sale, 9am-pm
Pineywoods Native Plant Center, 2900 Raguet St., Nacogdoches***

* * *

Potpourri

• **A NEW FRIEND WONDERED** what I find to write about when Fall hits,

adding, "Why plant when it's just going to get cold and everything will die?" Obviously not a Houston gardener! I immediately suggested he download [Urban Harvest's 2025 Fall Planting Guide](#). This guide should pop your eyes at how many edibles and other plants can and should go in the ground now. Purple cauliflower and bok choy (pictured l to r) are in this Urban Harvest Fall's spotlight.

- **DON'T FORGET TO CHECK** the Calendar below for all the upcoming plant sales. Even if you can't attend, click on the links and download the inventories on those that have them posted. Great education on which varieties do best here.
- Queen and oldest of our major plant sales is the **Garden Club of Houston Bulb and Plant Mart**. and its annual [Horticulture Guide](#). Free download and early ordering guide. This planting advice treasure you'll never regret adding to your library. Calendar also contains other places to pick up other great fall planting ideas.



- **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)*

* * *

Want to receive The Lazy Gardener & Friends weekly newsletter?

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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

Subject: Fluoride, Frogfruit, Ginger, Edible Fungi, Books, Diet and Dementia

*John's weekly column will resume after a brief hiatus.
Please enjoy this column from October 2024 -- Still as relevant as ever.*

We have discussed on numerous occasions the harm fluoride in our public water systems does to soils and plants. A new study has found that hydroxyapatite works as good or better than fluoride in preventing cavities. Hydroxyapatite is a calcium phosphate mineral found in our bones and is beneficial to our health. *Frontiers in Public Health* (2023).

There is no need to continue poisoning our soil and hurting our plants using water with fluoride in it. I was in Austin last week and saw on their local news another town in the area has voted to remove fluoride from the water system.

This past summer has been brutal on our plants, especially our lawns. However, I have noticed that one of our native plants has been thriving. It is known as Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) which is a groundcover species in the verbenaceae family.

This perennial plant can tolerate drought, floods, scorching heat, hard freezes, and other abuse and grows in part shade to full sun. It has small white flowers often with leaves turning orange, yellow, or even purple. It typically grows only 4-6 inches tall so very little maintenance is required.

It blooms from mid-spring into fall hence the flowers provide pollen almost all season for our pollinators and other insects.

It is also the host plant for the phaeon crescent, white peacock, and buckeye butterflies.

Additionally, this plant will grow in compacted degraded soils and help them recover by supporting the beneficial microbes the soil needs.

Ginger root has been used medicinally for thousands of years as it stimulates our immune system and promotes health.

Researchers at the Technical University of Munich have discovered one of the reasons why ginger works. They discovered that a component found in pungent ginger, stimulates white blood cells, putting them into a more active mode ready to protect the body against invading bacteria. *Molecular Nutrition & Food Research* (2022)

We often talk about the importance of fungi to plants and soils. Over the last few years there has been a lot of research on the culinary and health benefits of eating fungi.

Many species of fungi produce fruiting spores that we call mushrooms which not only taste good (I love a good steak covered in mushrooms or deep fried with salt) but are highly nutritious.

A study from the University of Queensland have discovered an active compound in “Lion’s Mane” mushrooms that has a significant effect on stimulating the growth of human brain cells and improving one’s memory. Journal of Neurochemistry (2023)

For those whom want to learn more about fungi and how they effect our lives a couple good books are:

“Mycorrhizal Planet – How Symbiotic Fungi Work with Roots to Support Plant Health and Build Soil Fertility”, Michael Phillips, 2017, Chelsea Publishing, ISBN: 978-1603586580

Michael has written this book in a down-to-earth format that is practical, warm, and often humorous. All gardeners need to understand the information in this book. It is extremely up to date on the fungi-plant relationship and how critical it is, **IF** we want to grow beautiful flowers, delicious fruits, magnificent shrubs, or trees.

Mycelium Running, How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World, by Paul Stamets, Ten Speed Press, ISBN 978-1-58008-579-3

This book is a deeper look at fungus and how it affects the world around us from plants to humans. It is divided into three parts; the first is how we experience fungal mycelium in nature, the second part is how we use fungi and the third is on the culinary and nutrition aspects of fungi.

The Orthomolecular New Service (February 2023) had an article summarizing many research papers. They found that most dementia is driven by diet NOT genes.

It was the environment (air, water, food, etc.) that we are exposed to that determines if dementia occurs. “Those with a healthy diet were about seven times less likely to have age-related cognitive decline or dementia than those with an ‘average diet’ and nine times less likely to develop dementia than those with an unfavorable diet.”

The reasons to eat foods grown and produced using organic methods continues to grow.

Click below to learn more about mulch in detail from Nature's Way Resources.





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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!

WED., OCT. 1: WORLD OF DAYLILIES by **LORIS GARRETT**, 9:30-11:30 am, Webster Presbyterian Church, 201 W NASA Pkwy Webster. Free. **Gardeners by the Bay** www.gbtb.org

SAT. OCT. 4: PLUMERIA WINTER CARE by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**. 1-3pm, AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. Free. txmg.org/galveston/events/

SAT., OCT. 4: THE BETTY AND JACOB FRIEDMAN HOLISTIC GARDEN FALL PLANT SALE BEGINS. Rice University. garden@rice.edu

THURS-SAT., OCT. 9-11: 83rd BULB & PLANT MART by **GARDEN CLUB OF HOUSTON**, 5-7pm Thurs; 9am-3pm Fri; 9am-1pm Sat., St. John the Divine, 2450 River Oaks Blvd. gchouston.org/bulb-plant-mart-info/

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

SAT., OCT. 11 : ANNUAL FALL PLANT SALE by **WALKER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-noon, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Office on 102 Tam Road, Huntsville. TXMG/walker.org

SAT., OCT. 11: FALL VEGETABLE/HERB PLANT SALE by **FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-noon, Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd, Rosenberg, 281-633-7029, <https://fbmg.org>

SAT. OCT. 18: 4TH ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL & PLANT SALE by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**. 9am-2pm, La Marque. Free Admission. More info at: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/>

SAT., OCT 18: FALL PLANT SALE by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-noon, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

SAT., OCT. 18: PINES & PRAIRIES NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS PLANT SALE, 9:30am-1pm,, New World Botanical, 2701 Lone Star Parkway, Montgomery

SAT., OCT. 18: TEXAS ROSE RUSTLER FALL MEETING AND CUTTING EXCHANGE, 10am –1pm, Nature's Way Resources, 101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe, . Free. (Bring rose cuttings) texasroserustlers.com

TUES., OCT. 21: HORTICULTURE at TAMU by **DR. AMIT DHINGRA**, 10 am: St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Free.
- sugarlandgardenclub.org

SAT, OCT 25: POLLINATOR PLANT SALE. 8am-3pm. Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Humble.

SAT., OCT. 25: CLEAR LAKE NATIVE PLANT CHAPTER SALE, 8-10:30am, UHCL 2700 Bay Area Blvd. clear-lake-chapter@npsot.org

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

SAT. NOV 1: NATIVE PLANTS & BENEFICIAL INSECTS, 9-11am, by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St., La Marque. Free. Register: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/>

SAT., NOV. 8: GROWING TOMATOES & PEPPERS by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 10am–12:30pm, Mainland City Centre, 10000 Emmett F Lowry, Texas City, \$35. College of the Mainland. 409-933-8461; [Register](#)

*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 . . .
THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!
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October 11th, 2025 8:00-2:00 pm

FREE ENTRY

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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.



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