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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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by Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener

No doubt now, fall weather is here, and we're in luck. Take this transition time to think more about what pleases you best in your garden. Then figure out ways to not only improve on that enjoyment, but to enhance the overall look as well.

First, reader LYNN SMITH's love of white flowers has triggered a clever way to utilize different color additions to make the white even more striking. Then LINDA WHIPKEY gets us back into practical mode with tips on helping bromeliads.

Lynn wrote: "BY LYNN SMITH

I am really partial to white flowers, have had all white flowers for many years but lately have gone with colorful blooms in between. This year I planted zinnia seeds and coreopsis seeds and a few came up so a little color now.

My yard is 95% perennials and in spring it is amaryllis--many colors--and oxblood lily(s). Then, when they are going out, it all turns white again, (making a far more striking impression). L-R: Front walkway perennial beds. Color from March thru October. Beginning with 200 red & white amaryllis, spider lily, oxblood lily, tuberose, naturalized chives, white Siam lily, white ruellia, white rain lily. Center: 1st bushy plant next to brick wall: Nuccio's Gem Camellia. Beautiful glossy green leaves, naturally rounded shape bush.

Flowers profusely in Dec & Jan. No bugs, struggles in summer heat but always recovers once cooler days arrive. Survived Uri with some extra attention. I do not cover in cold weather, has to survive as-is. Right: Big pots with ivy, white begonia, Siam lily. The Siam lily is a profuse bloomer in summer heat. Loves heat, only blooms once days are at least 85+. Well drained soil, needs water but tolerates dry spells. Hard to kill, you can ignore it if planted in the ground.

* * *

YOUR BROMELIADS NEED YOU -- NOW!!!

by LINDA WHIPKEY
BROMELIAD SOCIETY/HOUSTON



Mid-October is time to get ready to protect your bromeliads from coming cold, damp winter we get in Houston.

Consider November as a transition month when the average high temperature at beginning of month is usually in the mid-70s. As time goes on, temperatures fall to high 60s. With lows approaching the 40s, if you haven't taken precautions, your bromeliads are in danger.

Precautions include:

- **Sheltering plants** - Most important measure to protect from colder temperatures. Many people bring bromeliads into the house or garage. Due to their primarily tropical nature, almost all bromeliads will need to be brought inside.
- **Inside micro-climates** differ greatly from what they are accustomed to outside in the summer.
- **Check for pests** anytime you bring a plant inside from outside, especially on undersides and at axils where leaves meet the stem.
- **Keep brought-indoor plants separate from usual house plants for a few weeks.** Remove pests such as scale or mealy bugs by swabbing them with rubbing alcohol. Rinse the plant with water and allow it to dry.
- **Clean pots.** Wash each pot with soap and water, rinse with a diluted bleach solution, let dry completely, and then rinse again with water.
- **Cut back watering.** In the house, the warmth can stress the plant. Furnaces and heaters rob the air of water vapor. This doesn't mean that you water more often. It means plants will go through a period

of very slow or absent growth. Thus, watering can be cut back. When you do water, soak the container thoroughly and allow excess water to run out. You do not want potting soil to remain soggy, or the plant could suffer from root rot. Broms can act like succulents, and some are.

- **Increase humidity.** Use a humidifier or group plants together in pebble trays to create the surroundings with higher humidity.
- **Light.** In the house, chances are they still are getting some light. In the garage, plants have to adapt to the amount of light they get. Ensure they receive bright, indirect light, adjusting the plant's location as the angle of the sun changes. Open the garage door on warm days to get light in.

If you can't bring in plants -- too big or inground -- cover with frost cloth or blankets during cold nights -- in the 30s and low 40s. Unfortunately, we as plant growers cannot do anything about the weather.

* * *



Sometimes mushrooms are hard for even experts to identify. Cory thinks these might be green-spored parasol mushrooms. Houston Botanic Garden photo

Don't miss FUNGI FEST!

by **CORY SAUL & JASON LACEY**
Houston Botanic Garden

Mushrooms, like plants, are extremely diverse in our region. Some are more common than others, like Green-spored Parasol (*Chlorophyllum molybdites*), but from the gardener's perspective, it's often enough to simply learn why mushrooms show up, and what they indicate. It turns out, they have a lot to tell us.

Mushrooms are always a sign of decay, but, at least when they are emerging from the ground, they are rarely a sign of parasitism or poor garden health. They aren't the bad guys! In fact, mushrooms (or the fungi they are a part of) are doing their part to recycle organic material.

When we see ground mushrooms at Houston Botanic Garden, we typically glean two things right off the bat: Organic matter is high. The substrate is wet and staying wet

For example, if Flowerpot Parasol (*Leucocoprinus birnbaumii*) is showing up in our Cactus Garden, the nutrient level might be too high for arid plants, and the soil might not be draining as well as it should.

At the Garden, we typically let mushrooms lie. They are fun-looking, show off Houston's biodiversity, and they do not stick around for long. If anything, instead of addressing the mushrooms, we'll adjust the space in which they appear, so it drains better and participates more effectively in the nutrient cycle.

For those concerned about mushroom toxicity, the immediate solution is always to remove the mushrooms as they appear. It's important to remember that many fungicides are non-selective, so when you're killing the bad, you're also killing the good.

Don't miss FUNGI FEST (<https://hbg.org/event/fungi-fest/>)

* * *

SAT. OCT. 18: FUNGI FEST by HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN,
10am-2pm, One Botanic Lane, Houston, TX 77017. Free.
<https://hbg.org/event/fungi-fest/>

Editors Note: Don't miss this educational event hosted at the beautiful Houston Botanic Garden, see more details in event link.

* * *

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)*

* * *

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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: Books: Soil Science for Regenerative Agriculture and The Regenerative Agricultural Solution

*John's weekly column will resume after a brief hiatus.
Please enjoy this column from October 2024*

One of the biggest topics in soil science and plant health is regenerative agriculture and horticulture. Many of the world's problems stem from the toxic chemical rescue industrial agriculture model used since World War Two.

These range from loss of topsoil, dead zones, climate change, poor quality food which causes health problems, behavioral problems and many more.

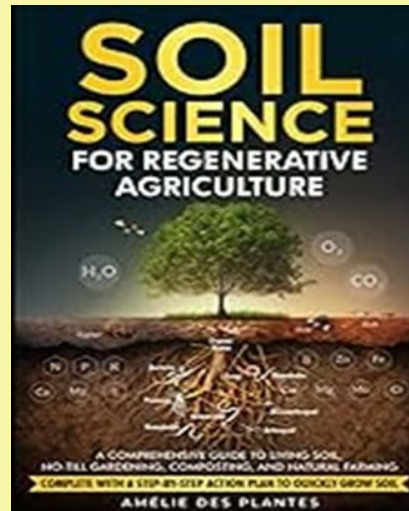
I read two new books this past week that will help the average gardener understand what is happening, and how to be part of the solution, have beautiful gardens and save money. A win-win for everybody. Both books are stories of hope and how to take care of the Earth.

Regenerative agriculture and horticulture uses the modern gardening methods based on organics and soil biology.

The first book is on modern soil science for the beginner or average gardener and is titled:

SOIL SCIENCE For Regenerative Agriculture
– A Comprehensive Guide to Living Soil, No-
till Gardening, Composting, and Natural
Farming by Amelie Des Plantes, 2023, ISBN
979-8391704478.

From the Amazon website: "Work with nature to consistently grow the highest quality produce—all while doing your part in fighting climate change and helping the environment."



Are you stressed out about...

The seemingly steady decline in both the quantity and quality of your crops?

“Technical farming problems” like soil erosion and biodiversity loss?

Climate change—how you can cope with it, and how you can be part of the solution rather than the problem?

If so, chances are you’re suffering from eco-anxiety... and unfortunately, you have good reason to do so.

According to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), each year, an estimated 24 billion tons of fertile soil are lost due to erosion. That’s a whopping 3.4 tons lost every year for each person on the planet.

This is quite a serious issue, considering the fact that it takes approximately 500 years for a 2.5-centimeter layer of fertile topsoil to form under agricultural conditions—and our food security ultimately depends on soil quality.

But the good news is there’s a way to reverse the damage... and you can be part of the solution... through regenerative agriculture!

Regenerative agriculture has countless benefits— producing nutrient-dense food, combating climate change, enhancing ecosystem biodiversity, improving air and water quality, huge savings from higher yields, using fewer synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides... the list goes on and on!

Now, if it sounds like you’re going to need technical expertise to do this... don’t worry. Understanding your soil and giving it what it needs doesn’t have to be complicated.

Start with this easy-to-read guide filled with practical advice and information on how to improve your relationship with your soil and get the most out of it!

Here’s just a fraction of what you’ll discover from this book:

- 8 reasons you should stop tilling RIGHT NOW—and what you should be doing instead
- Why carbon isn’t the main bad guy in our “carbon problem”
- How we’ve been jeopardizing our soil quality—and aquatic life—since the industrial revolution
- Why organic fertilizer won’t solve all your soil problems—and what you should know before grabbing a bag or two for your garden
- 7 essential soil tests to help you figure out everything you need to know about your soil
- The hidden downsides of generating renewable energy through hydropower

- The key to maximizing plant health for optimum crop quality
- How to compost—the right way!
- A Korean farming method that helps you eliminate the need for chemical fertilizers
- A 9-step soil regeneration action plan to produce high-quality topsoil

And so much more.

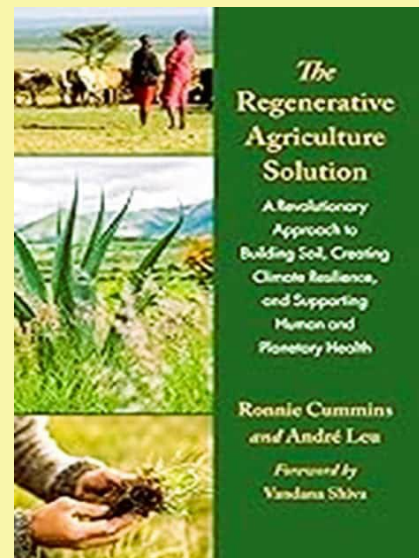
Even if you don't think you have a green thumb and don't have the slightest idea of what soil science is, you'll be able to boost your soil quality in no time with these simple techniques.

Give back to our Earth by giving back to the Earth—starting today!”

Amélie Des Plantes is a permaculture designer and the author of *Think Like an Ecosystem* and *Soil Science for Regenerative Agriculture*. Amélie is a deep-rooted organic gardener and environmentalist with an interest in beekeeping and homeopathy. She is passionate about expanding her own knowledge and views her development as a permaculture designer as a lifelong journey.

The second book: **The Regenerative Agricultural Solution – A Revolutionary Approach to Building Soil, Creating Climate Resilience, and Supporting Human and Planetary Health** by Ronnie Cummins and Andre Leu, 2014, ISBN 9781645022695

From the Amazon website: “Read this book to understand why you should care about regenerative agriculture. Until the public is better-informed and insists on sweeping changes to current agricultural policy . . . we will continue to degrade our planet and destabilize our climate. Leu and Cummins, through inspiring stories and solid science, show just how quickly we could turn that around.” — Allan Savory, president, Savory Institute; chairman, Africa Centre for Holistic Management



Is it possible that the solution to the global climate emergency lies in a “waste” agricultural product?

The best-kept secret in today's world is that solutions to some of our most pressing issues—food insecurity, deforestation, overgrazing, water scarcity, rural poverty, forced migration—lie in adopting, improving, and scaling up organic and regenerative agriculture best practices.

The *Regenerative Agriculture Solution* starts with the story of how two brothers—Jose and Gilberto Flores—are at the leading edge of this approach, pioneering the use of the previously discarded leaves of the prodigious agave plant to regenerate agricultural soils, reduce erosion, and improve water

capture.

When Ronnie Cummins, the cofounder of Organic Consumer Association (OCA) and Regeneration International, met the Flores brothers in 2019 and witnessed their revolutionary agave agroforestry system, he knew they were onto something important.

Cummins had spent decades studying the potential and pitfalls of organic and regenerative agriculture and knew best practices when he saw them. He started to write a book about Flores's brother and other visionary people, such as Dr Vandana Shiva, Allan Savory, and John Liu, who started landscape-scale regeneration projects. The scientific data was even more convincing, suggesting that these projects—and others like it—could revolutionize how we understand the climate catastrophe.

Sadly, Cummins passed away in April 2023, in the midst of working on the book. Not to leave this work unfinished, Ronnie's widow and OCA cofounder, Rose, called on their friend, colleague, and collaborator, Regeneration International's cofounder André Leu, to complete the work and place the Flores brothers' breakthroughs in the broader context of regenerative agriculture solutions to the world's many interlocking ecological crises.

The result is *The Regenerative Agriculture Solution*, a book that shows how regenerating our forests, rangelands, and farming ecosystems can cool our planet, restore the climate, and enrich our communities.

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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. 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

SAT. OCT. 18: TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETIES SALE. 9 am-4:30 pm, Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble. Free

SAT. OCT. 18: FUNGI FEST by HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN, 10am-2pm, One Botanic Lane, Houston, TX 77017. Free. <https://hbg.org/event/fungi-fest/>

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

WED. OCT. 22: INVASIVE ARGENTINIAN MOTH IN HOUSTON by HOUSTON CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY, 7:30 pm. Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray, Free. [Society Page](#)

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. 1: 52th ANNUAL HERB FAIR by THE HERB SOCIETY SOCIETY OF AMERICA, SOUTH TEXAS UNIT. 9am-2pm, Southside Place Clubhouse, 3743 Garnet St. herbsociety-stu.org

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](#)

FRI.-SUN., MAR. 6-8 (2026): RIVER OAKS GARDEN CLUB AZALEA TRAIL, 11am-5pm, 5 sites (Tanglewood/Memorial, Bayou Bend, Rienzi, ROGC's Forum. \$35. riveroaksgc.org.

*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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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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