

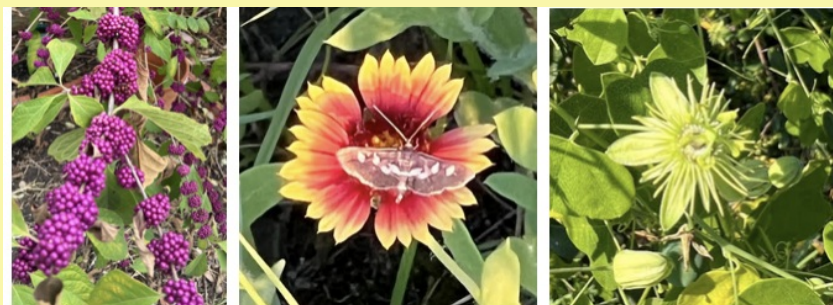
Nature's Way Resources is proud to produce & email you this free weekly newsletter. We have no ads, but sponsors do graciously help support this project as a public service. Please note their names below & show your gratitude for this free service by patronizing their businesses!

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.



[Click here to join our email list](#)

[CLICK HERE for PDFs OF PAST LG&F NEWSLETTERS](#)



Wild native beauties that love our bayous! L to r, American Beautyberry, firewheel (Indian blanket), and yellow passionvine. (See HOUSTON BAYOU PRESERVATION info below)

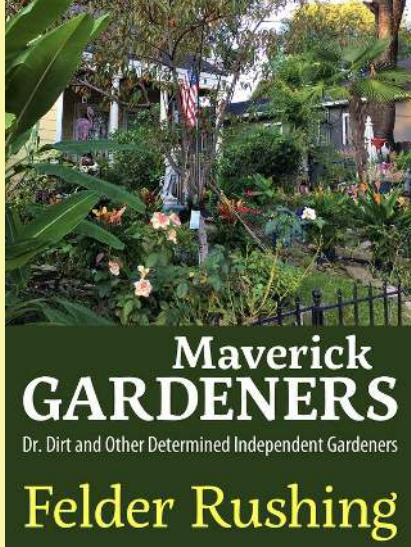
YEA! OLD ENOUGH TO BE A TRUE "DIG"!

by Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener

The older I get, the more I appreciate and --- (now in my '80s) --finally consider myself fully qualified to be one of ***Southern Gardener Extraordinaire Felder Rushing's "DIGS"*** (*Determined Independent Gardeners*). As Felder describes DIGS:

"These earnest, color-outside-the-lines folks (who) garden for the love of it and nurture and share beloved plants and time-tested techniques."

In his ***"MAVERICK GARDENERS"*** book, Felder further describes us (if I may be so bold): *"While they may garden alone, these seeming outliers are a loosely-affiliated tribe bound by plants and attitude. They're modern-day 'keepers of the flame.'*"



AMEN! (If you have trouble finding this book, try: felderrushing.blog/contact-me/). I particularly always liked one of Felder's favorite sayings: "Life already has so many boundaries and pressures - why add more in the garden?" But that's not just what it's all about.

DIGS don't really care what other gardeners are doing. Loosely quoting: *They know what they like and they know their own area*. E.g., altho most (especially beginning) gardeners think of spring as the time to start a gardening year, DIGS in our Southern area know differently.

Spring is too late for us (in lower South) to plant many highly promoted spring bloomers! By spring, we're already at the start of SUMMER heat! That's why — whenever you google advice for growing "anything" — always preface it with "In Houston . . . " Even if you just live relatively close outside this area, you're close enough to need this caution!

* * *

"... TIS THE SEASON" — IN THE PAST, IT WAS GENERALLY THOUGHT (by most folks) that most plants like a bit of beer. Not so much today, to the delight of our plants! Smarter gardeners knows it depends... Generally speaking, tomatoes like beer in moderation. So do most lawns. It's good for compost piles as it helps with break-down. Flies, wasps, snails, slugs and fleas love beer, so it makes a good trap-draw-ingredient. Beyond that, better look up individual plants.

(Personal note: Pictured is a '60s-'70s Houston Chronicle cartoonist Mike Scavel sketch. As a young reporter (too young to decline), I was assigned to temporarily write the gardening column until editors replace the departing columnist. I had never gardened and begged to name it The Lazy Gardener (. . .so no one would take me seriously. "it's only temporary, Brenda!") HA! Wherever you are, Mike, thanks!



* * *

MEA CULPA! (See, Sr. Heloise, I do remember SOME Latin!) Meant to include this tip with last week's wet spell forecast. (But we'll surely have more!) The minute you hear hard rain's coming, water deeply around the base of your favorite plants. Why? ... if it's just going to rain!

During dry periods, our gumbo soil tends to cake up, becoming more solid, causing very heavy rainfall to spread horizontally more than vertically downward. Watering in advance loosens soil so it will absorb water faster than hard-packed clay (*which also may be below your developer's "new" topsoil level*).

Wetting areas around treasured plants makes it easier for rainwater to seep downward faster through water-softened areas than spreading across rock-hard dried areas where weeds and grass will quickly take advantage!

SEE THOSE FLOWERS ABOVE? THEY LOVE OUR BAYOUS! Either directly or indirectly, everyone in the Greater Houston area is affected by at least one of our 22 area bayous and river systems. Smart gardeners keep an eye on their bayou's condition BEFORE their gardens might be affected.

Many gardeners now are going one step further, actually seeking planting natives flowers like these growing around their local bayous, a trend that triggered **HOUSTON BAYOU PRESERVATION** to collect seed (volunteers needed) that will be given away at **HBP's SAT. NOV. 15 Fall Pollinator Gardens Workshop**, 2-4pm, 5715 Canal St., Houston. Must register: bayoupreservation.org/events/resiliency-at-home-fall-pollinator-gardens-workshop. HBP'S free mailings are also a great resource info@bayoupreservation.org (for outlying counties as well.)

* * *

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)

* * *

Want to receive The Lazy Gardener & Friends weekly newsletter?

Subscribe

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 #261

Subject: Tires – Elderberry – Bumble Bees Leaf Mulch

*John's weekly column will resume after a brief hiatus.
Please enjoy this column from October 2023*

Many gardeners enjoy having a pond or other water feature as part of their gardens filled with fish. Most of us do not like mosquitos. Fish and other aquatic life eat mosquito's eggs reducing their population. Less aquatic life means more mosquitos.

A new study has found the cause of many fish kills —chemicals used in automobile tires. We have talked about the dangers of rubber mulch made from recycled tires many times, and this adds to the list as why they should never be used in gardening or anywhere else for that matter.

For years many streams have experienced large fish kills that are called “urban runoff mortality syndrome.” The cause has finally been identified as a chemical that is found in tires. This chemical is known as 6PPD and was added to tires to slow tire degradation.

As tires wear, dust sized particles are released where 6PPD breaks down into 6PPD-q which is the second most toxic chemical known to harm aquatic species. In addition to being very toxic to fish and other aquatic species a recent study found that this chemical can bioaccumulate in mammals, causing inflammation, and increasing liver triglyceride levels in mice. You can find the link [here](#).

Another reason not to use shredded tires as mulch, or weed control mats, etc.

One of my favorite landscape plants is our native elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*). It blooms several times each year producing large edible clusters of white flowerheads loved by our pollinators. The flower heads are used to make

a very nutritious and delicious treat known as Elderberry Fritters.

Elderberries are a native plant that will grow in almost any soil, wet or dry, they are extremely drought and heat tolerant, yet will tolerate flooding and wet conditions. I have had a large plant in my backyard for years, it was a volunteer that popped up in a flowerbed, probably from seeds donated by some bird. It came through the recent heat wave and drought without watering or any other care.

The fruit of this plant has been used for thousands of years for its health benefits. The fruit is high in phytonutrients and when cooked properly also have a lot of anti-oxidants which help give it the flu- and other virus-fighting properties.

The University of Sydney found that chemicals in the berries also prevented cells infected with a virus from replicating. They found that those whom took elderberry syrup recovered from viruses four days sooner than those whom took a placebo syrup.

The berries can also be used to make pies, jelly, and wine. Note that the berries need to be cooked before eating.

I have noticed that several bird species will nest in its branches.

A couple weeks ago I talked about some new studies on bees that they have a form of intelligence. Queen Mary University of London has released a new study that show bumble bees “play”.

They found that the bumble bees went out of their way to roll wooden balls even when there was no reward. Younger bees rolled more balls than older bees. This same behavior of younger animals playing has been observed in mammals to birds. They also found that male bees rolled them for longer time than female bees.

Previous experiments have shown that bees could be taught to score a goal by rolling a ball to a target and offering a food reward. *Animal Behavior* (2022)

I got a chuckle out of an article in the journal *HortTechnology* (2022) on leaves. The Rutgers New Jersey Experimental Station has found that using fallen leaves from shade trees was beneficial for building soil organic matter.

They found it also protects against erosion, and was useful for controlling weeds when used as a mulch. They found increased growth and yield in their test crops and the soil held more moisture.

This was humorous to me as I know that Brenda and I have both been touting leaves as mulch and soil improvement, to do all the above for decades!

Subscribe to our Email Chain.



Sign up for the exclusive newsletter from Nature's Way Resources and be the first to receive updates on special promotions, news, events, and more! Stay informed about all things NWR.

[Learn more](#)



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., NOV. 1: RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP by **GALVESTON BAY FOUNDATION**, 10–11:30am, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Free; but optional rain barrel & kit is \$40, Register: galvbay.org/events

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

WED., NOV. 5: UPCYCLE GARDENING by **TONYA RICHARDSON**, 9:30-11:30 am, Webster Presbyterian Church, 201 W NASA Pkwy Webster. Free. **Gardeners by the Bay** www.gbtb.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](#)

WED., NOV. 12: GROWING CITRUS IN SE TEXAS by **SCOTT JOHNSGARD**, noon-2pm, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Free. Register: pct3.com/MBG

Fri.-SAT, NOV. 14-15: MERCER GARDEN TOUR by HORTICULTURE STAFF, Friday 9–10am, Saturday 10-11am, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free, Register: pct3.com/MBG

Fri., NOV. 21: TOUR OF MERCER BOTANICAL CENTER by HERBARIUM STAFF, 10 – 11 am, Mercer Botanical Center, 22540 Aldine Westfield Rd., FREE, Register: pct3.com/MBG

SAT. DEC 6: GROWING TOMATOES FROM SEED, 9-11AM, by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER**. AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM519), La Marque. FREE. Register: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/>

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 . . .
THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!
& please patronize our Newsletter & Calendar sponsors below!

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact us
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.

SHELBY CASSANO

Shelby Cassano is the communications and marketing lead for Nature's Way Resources and the editor of The Lazy Gardener and Friends newsletter. Through her business, Leaf and Ledger, she exclusively partners with NWR to direct all marketing efforts, from

campaign strategy and content planning to technical production of the newsletter. Shelby holds a B.S. in Agriculture with a concentration in Horticulture from Stephen F. Austin State University and previously managed the company's nursery.



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

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Our Privacy Policy](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!