

**JOHN C. FERGUSON
1951 - 2025**

In loving memory of John Ferguson, a man devoted to learning, teaching, and sharing knowledge. May we each continue to learn in his honor.

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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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**WINTER IS KNOCKING
AT THE GARDEN DOOR . . .**

by Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener

. . But all is not sad in the garden! For one thing -- which proves how different Greater Houston Area gardening can be -- the (free) Urban Harvest Fall Gardening Guide notes that (among many edibles) now is a great time for us to plant strawberries -- if you can find them, says **ANGELA CHANDLER** of The Garden Academy (and Facebook page.) You may have to shop around, but get them into the ground as soon as possible! Fall strawberry-planting has not been overly-publicized for some reason, but they will often grow throughout

winter here, unbothered by frost, and produce by April. Angela notes a new variety named "Ruby June" is said to be more upright with fewer issues.

Biggest mistake we probably make here is planting the wrong strawberry varieties. So many on the market these days, easy mistake to make, especially with box store purchases. Two local sources with plants are Buchanan's in the Heights and The Arbor Gate in Tomball. If you know of other nurseries that do, contact me (I'll share next week).

* * *



Miniature roses are easy to find in large grocery stores, but exact names? Not so easy. Still a great place to start!

Top of column is an easy-to-find standard size: 'Belinda's Dream'

ROSES FOR OLDER PEOPLE!

By BAXTER WILLIAMS
American Rose Society Master Rosarian
Houston Rose Society

So you are 80 years old and have never tried to grow roses, but wish you could be successful at least once? Here's how.

- Pick the right variety. The "*Earthkind Roses*" were tested to see which ones could be grown with the least amount of care, so choose one of them. When Momma said she wanted roses for the Anniversary, she wasn't talking about "Knockout" roses. A much better variety is "Belinda's Dream" which has long stems, not many thorns, 60+ petals, and smells to high heaven.
- Use a raised bed. About 12-inches of height above the existing soil level is about right, and then you won't need to bend over to make minor pruning adjustments. Don't strip up the grass. Build the bed frame on top

of the grass, put newspapers 5-6 sheets thick across the bottom, and then fill the bed with a potting mix. The newspapers will prevent any grass or weeds from growing up through the bed.

- Plant the bushes 30-inches apart. Dig a hole, without making a hole in the paper, the same depth as the soil in the sales pot; put ½-cup of rose food in the bottom of the hole and stir it in. Plant the bush, and then add crushed pine bark mulch about 2-inches deep. Water well every day for a week. Don't fertilize again until after they have bloomed.



- Grow Miniature varieties in pots, rather than in beds. Again, not a lot of bending will be needed. (*Note: Miniatures can readily be found in many grocery stores and similar outlets, but plant quality can't be guaranteed. However, if you find you really like these, research serious growers online.*)
- When blooms come, cut their stems beneath the third or fourth 5-leaflet leaf and about 1/8th-inch above the next one down on the stem. Then re-cut them underwater to remove the air bubble that enters the stem as you cut them from the bush.

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTES:

1. Join the [Houston Rose Society](#) to get the monthly **Rose-Ette newsletter**, best source of printed rose horticulture practices for this area (regardless of your age!). Although parts of website are members only, a great deal of helpful information (and wonderful pictures) is available to the public. **HRS' Rose Demonstration & Spring Fling** is Saturday, April 26, 2025, at Memorial City Mall. Entries start at 8 am; public invited to attend at 10 am.

- Trying to identify a rose? Sometimes it's impossible (too many hybrids on the market). But you can try ARS's website: <https://rose.org/find-a-rose/>

2. Do you have a miniature rose that is growing extremely well in this area? Do share the name (if you know it) and where you bought it: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com.

* * *



NOTICE ANY SOUTH-BOUND MONARCHS?

Reports abound that monarch's fall migration to Mexico's wintering forests is now passing over Central Texas. Husband and I visited one such Mexican wintering mountain. It's so worth the trip! Good news: monarchs are on track in this country to a threatened species designation which prohibits killing or transporting them. Details: monarchwatch.org/listing/

* * *

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

*Brenda Beust Smith's column in the
LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER*



John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL
AND PLANTS #309

In Loving Memory John Ferguson

Founder of Nature's Way Resources, est. 1994
1951 - 2025

John found a calling when *John's Corner* began. He was a force, a voice of truth and passion who wanted nothing but the best for others, their health, and their happiness. He never cared how it might look; he always spoke the truth.

With every subject and every study, John was there to update us, to open our eyes to the realities of the world, and to remind us how often we discover something new and toxic affecting our lives. Through his writing, he changed countless lives, and that legacy will continue within each of us.

He wanted all of us to live naturally and cleanly, as he always said, "the way GOD intended." We will not let John's words, his life's work, or his mission be forgotten. He remains ever-present in every choice we make, as individuals, and as a company here at Nature's Way Resources.

John was never afraid to say the quiet part out loud, and neither will we.

-- Shelby Cassano, Nature's Way Resources

Please take a moment to honor John's legacy by revisiting his words and sharing in the passion that guided his life's work.

We encourage readers to request their favorite past articles from John's Corner to be republished.

BARONS – Money, Power, and the Corruption of America’s Food Industry by Austin Frerick, Island Press, 2024, ISBN: 978-1642832-693

In this newsletter we have talked about the poor quality of the American food and how it harms our health numerous times and is also one of the leading causes of global warming. If you want to know what is causing the rapidly rising cost of food, it is price gouging by these monopolies.

This book is a good summary for those who want to learn more about how a few families control the food market and are monopolies that our government has ignored and even supplemented with tax dollars via the USDA and other agencies.

Besides destroying the environment, the abusive treatment of workers including using and abusing child labor, including constant abuse of animals. These companies would have made the Nazi’s of Germany proud of their abuses.

The book is broken into several sections starting with an introduction and then it looks at each of the Barons:

Chapter 1: The Hog Barons
Chapter 2: The Grain Barons
Chapter 3: The Coffee Barons
Chapter 4: The Dairy Barons
Chapter 5: The Berry Barons
Chapter 6: The Slaughter Barons
Chapter 7: The Grocery Barons

From the book’s cover – “Barons is the story of seven corporate titans, their rise to power, and the consequences for everyone else. Take Mike McCloskey, Chairman of Fair Oaks Farms. In a few short decades, he went from managing a modest dairy herd to running the Disneyland of agriculture, where school children ride trams through mechanized warehouses filled with tens of thousands of cows that never see the light of day. What was the key to his success? Hard work and exceptional business savvy? Maybe. But more than anything else, Mike benefitted from deregulation of the American food industry, a phenomenon that has consolidated wealth in the hands of select tycoons, and along the way, hollowed out the nation’s rural towns and local businesses.

Along with Mike McCloskey, readers will meet a secretive German family that took over the global coffee industry in less than a decade, relying on wealth traced back to the Nazis to gobble up countless independent roasters. They will discover how a small grain business transformed itself into an empire bigger than Koch Industries, with ample help from taxpayer dollars. And they will learn that in the food business, crime really does pay—especially when you can bribe and then double-cross the president of Brazil.

These, and the other stories in this book, are simply examples of the monopolies and ubiquitous corruption that today define American food. The tycoons profiled in these pages are hardly unique: many other companies have manipulated our lax laws and failed policies for their own benefit, to the

detriment of our neighborhoods, livelihoods, and our democracy itself. Barons paints a stark portrait of the consequences of corporate consolidation, but it also shows we can choose a different path. A fair, healthy, and prosperous food industry is possible—if we take back power from the barons who have robbed us of it.”

Austin Frerick is an expert on agricultural and antitrust policy. He worked at the Open Markets Institute, the U.S. Department of Treasury, and the Congressional Research Service before becoming a Fellow at Yale University. He is a 7th generation Iowan and 1st generation college graduate, with degrees from Grinnell College and the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Reviews:

“In this eye-opening debut study, Frerick, an agricultural policy fellow at Yale University, reveals the ill-gained stranglehold that a handful of companies have on America’s food economy...It’s a disquieting critique of private monopolization of public necessities.” –Publishers Weekly, starred
“Frerick’s prose throughout is both direct and masterfully controlled, with every point supported by extensive references and notes. This is no alarmist screed but rather a careful, systematic, and utterly damning demolition job—an exquisitely informed exposé. . . A genuinely revelatory look at mass food production in the United States.” –Kirkus Reviews, starred

Wow. This is one important book... If you want to know how corporations control the food supply, start here. Marion Nestle, Food Politics

[Frerick] dissects not only the food barons’ business practices, but also the disastrous impacts of these practices... The author, who frequently sounds as though he is fighting to control his personal rage at the people he’s writing about, backs up his statements with facts and figures. This is an angry and accusatory book, but also a fair and well-documented one. Booklist

After reading [Austin’s] book, I have come away with a completely different idea of agriculture that I cannot unsee. Bloomberg Odd Lots

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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!

NOV. 15: BAYOU PRESERVATION ASSN.'s Fall Pollinator Workshop has been temporarily postponed. info@bayoupreservation.org

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

TUES., NOV. 18: 'PROPAGATION: SEEDS or CUTTINGS' by **JORDAN CUNNINGHAM**, SFA GREENHOUSE MANAGER. 10am, St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Free. sugarlandgardenclub.org

THURS., NOV. 20: NATIVE SEED & PLANT SWAP by **NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS HOUSTON CHAPTER**, 6:45pm, Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, Memorial Park. npsot.org/houston

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/>

SAT., JAN. 31: BRANCHING OUT: AN ORCHARD GROWER'S SEMINAR by **WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-3pm, 811 14th St, Hempstead, Free. txmg.org/wallermg. Register: (opens Dec.15).

SAT., APR. 26, HOUSTON ROSE SOCIETY ROSE DEMONSTRATION & SPRING FLING, Memorial City Mall.

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!

A Legend Has Passed

John Ferguson



🌱 1951 - 2025 🌱

On October 31st, our beloved John Ferguson passed away and is now spreading the Organic gospel all around Heaven. His passing was quick and took us all by surprise. We surmise that God wanted more stimulating conversation around him.

John was (is) a magnificent human being, one of the finest God ever created. For John, it was always about being of service to humanity and to all of creation. John loved people, believed in the goodness of folks and cherished the environment.

John has built his career on helping people and all life that inhabits earth. His company, Nature's Way Resources, set the gold standard for improving our home, Earth, by providing the world's best Compost, Soil and Mulch that could be made. John was a dedicated scholar and relentless teacher about Human Health, Plant Health and Soil Health and how all are related. John believed in people and was devoted to improving the lives of all. His impact will be felt for generations to come.

His son, Ian Ferguson, is continuing Nature's Way Resources and is doing a magnificent job, making sure John's high standards are upheld.

John is missed dearly by the thousands of folks that he touched. John was instrumental in creating and strengthening The Texas Organic Community. One example from hundreds is that he was a co-founder of OHBA, which 23 years later is still the premier Organic education provider in all of America.

How to say goodbye to a Texas legend and someone that is irreplaceable?

John, we miss you deeply.

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 -- *Founder, Mentor, and Friend (1951–2025)*

John was a native Houstonian and had over 35 years of business experience. He passed

down [Nature's Way Resources](#), a composting company that specializes in high-quality compost, mulch, and soil mixes, to his son Ian Ferguson. He held an MS degree in Physics and Geology and was a licensed Soil Scientist in Texas.

John 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 its products. He was 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 strategy and 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

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