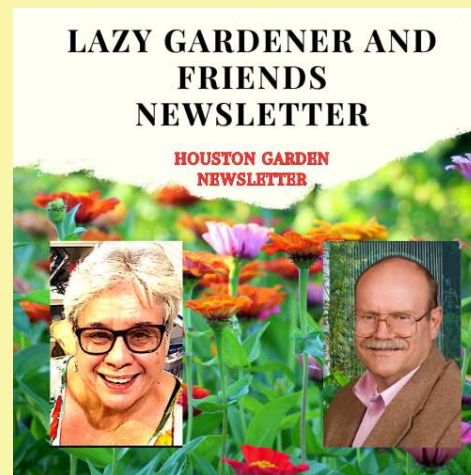


Nature's Way Resources is proud to bring you this free weekly newsletter. While we don't run ads, generous sponsors help support this project as a public service. Their names are listed below, please consider showing your appreciation by supporting their businesses!

Nature's Way Resources honors the contributions of our late founder, John Ferguson. "The Lazy Gardener" Brenda Beust Smith, and Shelby Cassano welcome your feedback and remain grateful to the many horticulturists who share their expertise.



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OK, GARDENERS, NO MORE' 'SLIPPER PINK' & 'DUSKY PURPLES' (IF YOU'RE INTO FOLLOWING TRENDS, THAT IS!)

By Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener

2026 GARDENING PREDICTIONS: Experts expect more interest in (so expect advice on!) organic gardening, vertical growing, plants that can and will survive climate change, and... lots of pink... but it's gotta look FADED! Although one national website does point to a growing interest in yellow flowers *"as long as they look dusty and (yes!) faded..."*



THE "Color of the Year 2026" (according to traditional selection by Garden Media Group is (ta! da!): **"Faded Petal."** (Pause for raised eyebrows.) As various "internet experts" explain: Instead of specific colors, this year we need to think: *"baby pink/blue, etc, pale, serene, wonderfully nostalgic, antiqued rose hues."* One source: homesandgardens.com/gardens/faded-petal-color-trend

ON THE OTHER HAND, if plants that not only survive and thrive in our challenging, ever-changing climate, maybe a better resource for us would be **Texas Superstar Plants?** These Texas gardens-tested winners are selected by plant experts from Texas A&M Agrilife, Texas Tech University,

county Agrilife Extension horticulturists, the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association and their member plant producers, and the Texas Department of Agriculture. You're not going to find any better recommendations (especially for ecological-protective choices) than [Texas Superstars®](#) for both indoor and outdoor **plants**, seeds & flower bulbs.

Our local independent nurseries are good resources for these Texas-selected/recommended plants. And it's a good idea to do an even broader search of the Texas SuperStar website (plants, tips, warnings, etc.). Might save you time, money, and energy in the long run. Be sure you see this assuring (R) somewhere in print.

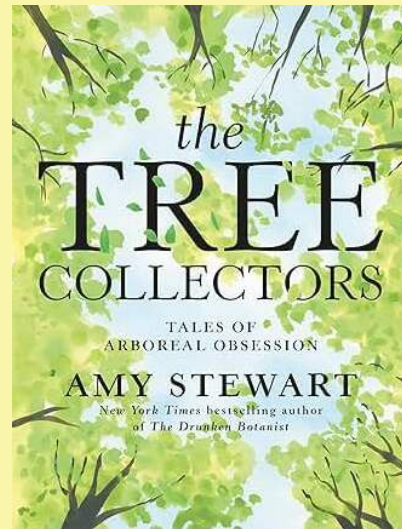
TEXAS SUPERSTAR® PLANTS

We are moving into our best Rose Pruning time, but if you don't do it at all, or don't do it correctly, you might be very sorry. Advice doesn't get any better than Baxter Williams' illustrated directions posted on Nature's Way Resources website [here](#).

* * *

WE GARDENERS ARE OFTEN accused of getting obsessive about this or that plant. (So WHAT!!!!). Here comes validation! On Wed., Feb. 11, Amy Stewart will present inside views of her delightful and educational "The Tree Collectors" book at our always-extraordinary (free) Nancy Stallworth Thomas Horticulture Lecture, 10am, Bagby Hall, St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 717 Sage Rd. As always, this Garden Club of Houston presentation is free. No reservations needed.

Book picture if can use -- any way to put a border around it?



* * *



HOUSTON ROSE



FREEZE POINTERS!

by KAREN GERLACH
Houston Rose Society
Consulting Rosarian
houstonrose.com

Roses in Houston do not need extensive freeze protection like our more northern states require. However, there are a few circumstances where some protective measures can be beneficial.

- Some rose varieties can be more sensitive at lower temperatures, such as hybrid tea roses, floribundas, and grandifloras, particularly grafted roses or new plantings. The tender graft unions can be damaged during hard freezes.
- Tougher roses for freezes include Earth-Kind roses, old garden roses such as China roses, tea roses, noisette roses, and shrub roses.
- Container roses do not have the benefit of ground warmth. These can be moved into the garage or against a warm wall.
- You can protect your roses by mulching heavily (3-4in), using frost cloths, protecting the graft by mounding mulch or soil, and ensuring your plants are watered well.
- Our climate does not require rose cones or heavy covering.
- Avoid pruning in the fall. This can stimulate new growth, which is more susceptible to freeze damage.
- The type of freeze matters. Roses and other plants tolerate slow, gradual temperatures much better as they alter their metabolism with the gradual temperature decrease. Fast, sudden decreases in temperature can be more destructive to plants, as these metabolic changes do not have an opportunity to occur.

EDITOR'S NOTE: You can pick up more rose-growing information at the upcoming **Houston Rose Society Meeting**, Sat., Jan 10, 2pm (in person and virtual). Site/virtual details: houstonrose.org.

* * *

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)*

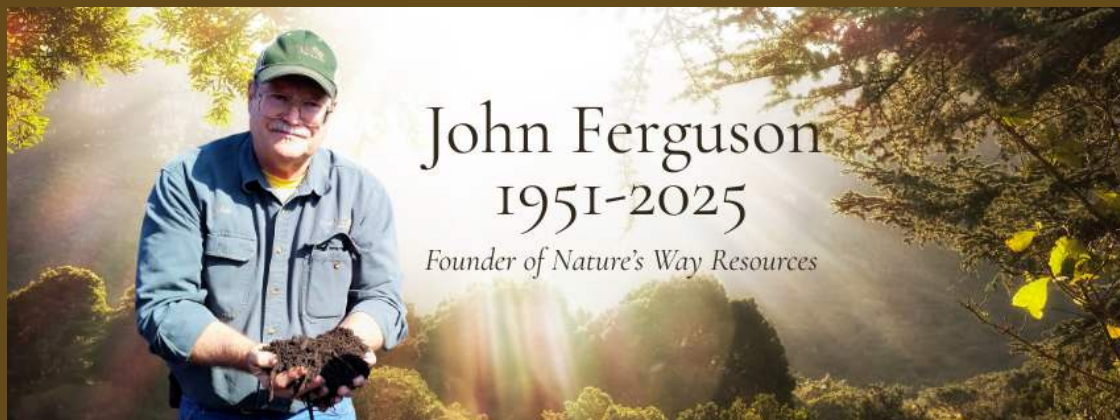
* * *

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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

Please take a moment to read a past article of John's from 2023. Sewage sludge agricultural products are more widespread than you might realize. It helps to understand what that means, the difference in producing them the right way and the cheap way, and the possible consequences of opting for cheaper options.

News of the dangers of sewage sludge continues to come out almost daily. The Boston Globe newspaper had an article recently on a facility that composted sewage sludge. The facility mixed biosolids compost into a product called “top-shelf loam” whom claimed to be an organic composting company. A farmer purchased this material to use on their farm. This contaminated their property so much they could not eat the vegetables from their garden or eat the eggs from their chickens.

Massachusetts state officials have already identified 218 properties that are contaminated from the applications of these products. Additionally, 83 community water systems have been identified with the toxic PFAS chemicals.

The full article can be found at:
www.bostonglobe.com

A few questions I occasionally get asked is:

1) “Can sewage sludge (bio-solids) be composted?”

The answer is Yes. However, composting of sewage sludge can be done but the factors involved are much more complex both from a scientific point of view as well as governmental regulations. The potential for foul odors is much higher, the cost is higher (extra government regulation), and the chance of very dangerous and toxic pollutants in the sludge and in the compost where they become more concentrated is extremely high.

However, with proper planning and site preparation some of the extra problems can be overcome. Several studies have shown that compost made with some sewage sludge (no industry or hospitals dumping into it) can be beneficial in very limited applications, **IF** properly done and used on disturbed sites (cleaning up toxic waste dumps, mine tailings, etc.).

Mankind, at the top of the food chain produces some of the richest manure if we eat a clean and healthy chemical free diet. As such it would theoretically make a very good compost.

To make even some of the human manure useful, it would require the material entering the sewage system is regulated at the source, preventing toxic contamination from occurring, **then** composting can be a solution and long-time frame composting methodology can ensure that some of these chemicals are broken down. This extra processing costs a lot more money hence companies and governments do not do it.

As we have discussed above, modern waste water treatment facilities, *in compliance* with current regulations, produce a sewage sludge that can legally be composted but is full of toxic and extremely dangerous substances from pharmaceuticals and pathogens to heavy metals.

2) “Do we have companies in this area that sell compost made from sewage sludge?” We have several companies that compost sewage sludge (often called biosolids to hide what it really is) and sell it in the Houston area under various names. In some areas it is also sold to other soil yards to use in their products. See #7 for more details.

3) "Will sewage sludge make my grass green?"

Yes, one application will green up your grass or even make hay grow faster. However, it starts the process of poisoning one's soil. Each application thereafter makes the issues worse. Sewage sludge (biosolid) compost often has a lot of salt in it and with each application it can build up in the soil.

Salt is not good for plants as this old advertisement illustrates:

The other thing that happens as salts build up in our soil is that roots can sense it and will turn away (not go deep into the soil) hence one has to water more often which then can lead to other issues.

When no salt is present the roots go down through the membrane and when dissolved salts are present the roots turn away.

So even though it may appear to offer short-term benefits, it creates many long-term problems.

4) "How will the combination of these toxic chemicals affect us?"

Most gardeners know about a toxicology term called "Lethal Dose" often referred to as LD. LD-50 means the chemical is lethal 50% of the time.

Pesticide manufactures often combine several chemicals that each have a higher LD number, however when combined the result is a LD that is much less than LD-50 hence it is far more toxic (it takes a lot less of the material to kill 50% of the test animals or people). With the thousands of different potential chemicals now in sewage sludge there is no way to predict what may occur as they combine.

Avoidance is the only way to protect one's self, family, and pets.

5) "Does composting sewage sludge make things worse?"

Often the case is yes. Using certain composting methodologies can biodegrade a few chemicals and reduce some pathogens, I would guess that 99% of composting facilities do not use them as it costs more and take much longer.

On the other hand, as the sewage sludge cake is being composted, water is evaporated, carbon escapes to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide and methane, nitrogen is lost as nitrous oxides, etc. The result is there is a large reduction in volume and the toxic material from heavy metals to PFAS becomes more concentrated in the compost.

A few of the brands confirmed to be made with sewage sludge can be found at:

www.sludgenews.org

6) Is sewage sludge used in other products. YES – Milorganite and Hou-Actinite are dried sewage sludge products that are commonly sold as fertilizers. A sample label is shown below.

According to one website: "A product similar to Milorganite is Hou-Actinite which is a granular, heat-dried biosolids product produced by the City of Houston, **HOU-ACTINITE™ Activated Sewage Sludge, 6-3-0 1.0 Fe**, Available in Fairway Granules and Greens Grade sizing.

“Hou-Actinite™ is a naturally nutrient rich slow release activated sewage sludge. **Hou-Actinite’s™** slow-release characteristics reduce the risk of burning and leaching from over watering.”

From a local retailer website: **Product Overview**

Hou-Actinite is a registered, Class A fertilizer with the Texas State Chemist. It is a recycled, slow-release fertilizer that is released by natural microbial action in the soil. Hou-Actinite is easy to apply and releases nitrogen slowly preventing ground water runoff and does not require immediate watering.

- Natural, slow-release nitrogen
- Adds organic matter
- Water insoluble nitrogen environmentally safe
- Virtually dust free
- Non-burning, if used as directed

The product descriptions make it seem great and do not tell the consumer they are buying toxic waste.

7) How can I tell if the soil company I purchase soil products from, uses sewage sludge in their products?

A person can go to the TCEQ website for solid waste authorizations and see what kind of permit they have. There are four types of authorization (permits) by TCEQ for composting:

1. i) Exempt – a facility can take grass, leaves, manures. Easy to obtain and very little regulation.
2. ii) Notification – the above plus food waste, dead animals, liquid wastes, etc. Additional permitting and vetting required.
3. iii) Registration – the above plus sewage sludge. Lots of additional engineering and facility requirements that are very expensive to do. Hence, companies do not spend the money for this authorization unless they compost sewage sludge.

Both TCEQ and EPA require additional record keeping as to how many tons of sludge they accept along with other data.

1. iv) Permit – all the above plus unsorted garbage straight from the curb. Extremely expensive and tedious. I have not heard of any facilities in Texas doing this.

For more information see Chapter 332 of the Health and Safety code which spells out the types of authorization available and the requirements. Additional requirements can be found in Chapter 328 on recycling and in Chapter 325 on solid waste regulations.

A warning sign may be companies that sell dyed mulch, as it is very bad for plants, often toxic, and causes environmental problems. These type companies would be more likely to use sewage sludge since they do not care about their customers of being a steward of the environment.

8) What can be done about the situation?

Many of us remember the large train load of sewage sludge that was shipped from New York that was sent to Texas a number of years back that sat on the tracks for a long time as we did not want it. Sewage sludge is a major disposal and handling issue.

There are several possible solutions to a horrible environmental problem:

Since mankind is at the top of the food chain our manure would make the highest quality compost. To make this feasible, companies should not be allowed to dump toxins into the sewer. They should handle their own problems and pay the associated costs. Taxpayers should not subsidize them in this manner.

Hospitals should not be allowed to dump their waste into public sewer systems. Their waste could easily be disposed of by incineration or other methods. There are several methods to reduce pathogens from super heating the sludge to ultraviolet light to kill pathogens. This should be a requirement of all waste treatment facilities.

Preventing the worst of the toxic material from entering the waste stream would eliminate many of the problems with sewage sludge is the first step.

With the most toxic chemicals and metals eliminated there are composting methodologies that will biodegrade many of the remaining chemicals. **Then** the compost produced could then be useful for many other applications like along highways (which already have a toxic exposure from automobiles, establishing vegetation along streams and bayous or rehabilitating electrical or pipeline easements or even treating old creosote plants or oil processing storage sites to improve soils and help with revegetation.

Other landscaping uses could be on turfgrass farms, reforestation projects, improve soil properties in detention basins so more storm water soaks in the soil to reducing flooding, etc.

If the biosolids are cleaned up, there are many applications where a one-time application could be beneficial hence no buildup of toxic material from repeated applications.

A cleaned-up sewage sludge could be used to produce biogas for fuel and the residuals could be processed for other applications. For example, the world is running out of easily mineable (cheap) phosphorous (P) to make fertilizers.

Without phosphorous our food supply will suffer and yields decline. Biosolids are a rich source of this needed nutrient to grow food and other plants.

A good use of taxpayer dollars that are now spent on advertising promoting toxic sewage sludge, would be to use the money to fund research on how to economically recover the phosphorous and other valuable nutrients.

Another short-term solution is to put it in salt domes. If we can store crude oil or radioactive waste in empty salt domes why not sewage sludge. I suspect in some areas of the country we could find abandoned mines that could be backfilled with sludge cake.

We have special sealed landfills for hazardous waste, why not have sealed landfills built to handle sewage sludge. Yes, it would cost more to the disposal companies but most likely save a fortune in health care costs not to mention quality of life.

The bottom line is that land application or composting of sewage sludge is very profitable for some companies and they have a vested interest in protecting the status quo.

The publisher Elsevier has a collection of research papers called "Elsevier Public Health Emergency Collection". In it, is a paper from the Journal of Environmental Management (2017) titled: "The Presence of contamination in sewage sludge – The current situation".

The toxins and dangers of sewage sludge (biosolids) continue to get worse every day and they are strongly linked to many human health problems as well as environmental disasters.

As the old proverb states: "Buyer Beware"

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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. JAN 10: WEDGE GRAFTING, by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**. 9-11am, AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM519), La Marque. Limited space. Free. Reg. txmg.org/galveston/events/

SAT. JAN 10: GROWING GREAT TOMATOES, by GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER. 1-3pm, AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM519), La Marque. Free. Register: txmg.org/galveston/

THURS., JAN.15: NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER, AUTHOR, BOTANIST JIM MCCORMAC, 10-11:30am, Museum of Fine Arts, Brown Auditorium, 1001 Bissonnet. Sadie Gwin Blackburn Seminar. Free.

SAT., JAN. 17 GARDEN PLANNING & SOIL PREP by **MASTER GARDENERS**. 9-10:30am, Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd, Rosenberg. 281-342-3034 [Grow Your Own 2026 - Fort Bend County Master Gardeners](#)

TUES., JAN. 20: BLOOMS, DOOM AND MURDER: A GARDEN OF DEADLY DELIGHTS by **MELODY LINDLEY**, 10am, St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Rd., Sugar Land. Free. [Sugar Land Garden Club](#).

TUES. JAN, 20: HYBRIDIZING DYCKIAS by **CHRIS NGUYEN**. 7pm, West Grey Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Grey. Free. Bromeliad Society Houston, bromeliadsocietyhouston.org

FRI, JAN. 23: GROWING A GREAT LAWN by **FBC MASTER GARDENERS**, 1-2:30pm online. [Landscape Success 2026 - Fort Bend County Master Gardeners](#)

SAT., JAN 24: GREAT ROSES TO KNOW AND GROW by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9-11am, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824

WED., JAN 28: SOME CONSEQUENCES OF ADAPTING TO DESERT LIFE by **PROF. JIM MAUSETH**, UT Austin. 7 pm, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Houston Cactus and Succulent Society. www.hcssstex.com

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., JAN 31: FRUIT AND NUT TREE SALE by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-noon, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

WED., FEB. 11: THE TREE COLLECTORS by **AMY STEWART**, 10am, Bagby Hall, St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 717 Sage Rd. Free. Nancy Stallworth Thomas Lecture. Garden Club of Houston.

SAT., FEB 14: 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., FEB 14: FRUIT AND CITRUS TREE SALE by **FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-noon, Barn H, FBC Fairgrounds, 4310 Hwy. 36 S. Rosenberg. 281-342-3034 [Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale - Fort Bend County Master Gardener](#)

SAT., FEB. 21: GROWING ROSES by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 10am–noon, 1411 West Main St, League City, \$29. College of the Mainland. 409-933-

8461; [Register](#)

WED. FEB 25: INTRODUCTION TO PLANT PHOTOGRAPHY by **IRWIN LIGHTSTONE**, 7pm, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Houston Cactus and Succulent Society. hcsstex.com

WED., FEB. 25: SUCCULENT TERRARIUMS by **JENNIFER HARDY**, 6pm–8pm, 1411 West Main St, League City, \$45. College of the Mainland. 409-933-8461; [Register](#)

SAT., FEB 28: ARBOR DAY CONROE by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 8am-noon, Conroe Founders Plaza, 205 Metcalf St., Conroe 936-539-7824

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.

SAT., MAR 14: ARBOR DAY WILLIS by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 8am-noon, HEB Willis, 12350 Interstate 45 N, Willis 936-539-7824

SAT., MAR 14: LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVES by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-11am, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

SAT., MAR. 14: 2026 SPRING PLANT SALE by **WALKER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 8am-noon, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Office, 102 Tam Rd., Huntsville. 936-435-2426. txmg.org/walker

SAT., MAR 21: SPRING PLANT SALE by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-noon, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

SAT., MAR. 28: SEED SNAILS by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 10am–noon, 1411 West Main St, League City, \$35. College of the Mainland. 409-933-8461; [Register](#)

SAT., APR. 18: HOW TO FERTILIZE FRUGALLY by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 10am–noon, Mainland City Centre, 10000 Emmett F Lowry, Texas City, \$29. College of the Mainland. 409-933-8461

SAT-SUN, MAY 9-10, GALVESTON BAY ORCHID SOCIETY SHOW & SALE, Sat., 9am-5pm. Sun. 10am-4pm. Webster Civic Center, 311 Pennsylvania Avenue Webster. Free. galvestonbayorchidsociety.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 every 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.



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