

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.

LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER



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When searching for native (only!) milkweed for coming Monarch butterflies, use only your local independent nurseries or online trustworthy sites like this [Native Plant Society of Texas](#) site.

PLANTING FOR BUTTERFLIES? INCREASING NUMBER OF MONARCHS ARE COMING!

By Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener

Latest news alerts are encouraging! More monarchs than in recent years are predicted to pass through Texas, probably around mid-March, on their annual spring migration to breeding grounds (northern U.S. & Canada), a journey of 3,000+ miles! ([Want to track them?](#))

What should we do (and NOT do) to help them along? That's easy. Plant TEXAS NATIVE milkweed -- but the right ones only! I can't say it any better than Molly Glentzer did in this Houston Chronicle article: "[Native Texas milkweed could help save the monarchs. Here's how to grow it.](#)"

Read Molly's article, then remove the "[tropical red/yellow/orange milkweed](#)" that I, and too many other gardeners, unknowingly have planted for decades. It has proven harmful (and worse) to monarchs. As a general rule, native milkweed species often feature pink or purple flowers, whereas non-native types can have orange or yellow blooms.

Where to learn exactly which milkweeds are best for monarchs? Start with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin. Click on wildflower.org/project/project-milkweed. On that page, you can click on and download: Texas Milkweed Identification Guide.

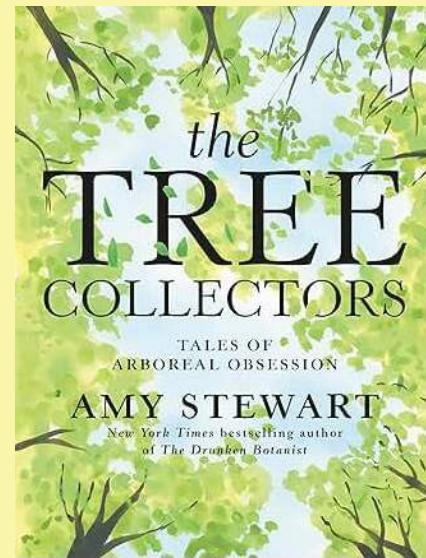
First, be sure to note exact areas where various types grow best. Varieties recommended for far-west or north Texas may or may not do well here! Try to stay as close to the Gulf Coast region as possible!

Isn't it sad that it's taken the recently publicized, potentially tragic, news about our monarchs to make many of us just now listen to folks who have been preaching above advice all along! To you folks, I say, Thanks! We do appreciate you hanging in there for so long.

If you already know what you're looking for, another place to start is the Texas Native Plant Society website. (Click on "About Chapters" for a list of Texas's 34 local chapters. These can hopefully lead you to trusted plant resources in your area or at least close by).

* * *

A UNIQUE WAY OF LOOKING AT SPECIALITY GARDENERS is in store for those attending "**TREE COLLECTORS**" by **AMY STEWART** at the free Nancy Stallworth Thomas Horticultural Lecture (Wed., Feb. 11, 10am, at St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 717 Sage Road, Bagby Hall. Doors open: 9:30am). Have to admit, "collecting trees" does sound a bit ... er ... challenging? Speaker Amy is a New York Times bestselling author ("Wicked Plants"), among many other Best Sellers and Garden Club of America medal winner -- to name just a few of many honors (*including her own poison plant garden in Eureka that was included in Popular Mechanics's list of the 18 Strangest Gardens in the World!*)



* * *



NEVER SAY NEVER . . . Pictured at left above is Ron Megow's incredible, very old azalea (photographed last spring). Center, she apparently bloomed her heart out because (center) last summer . . . well, she looked totally "dead." Fortunately, Ron didn't dig her up because look what's appearing on those "dead-dead" limbs now! Hope springs eternal, and sometimes works!

* * *

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!



- **GOOD NEWS FOR BUSY/LAZY GARDENERS:** Curbside pickup is now available in the Nature's Way Resources nursery, and we're offering plant preorders for special requests. Call in your order, pick it up when it works for you, or let us try to source the plants you're looking for on upcoming shipments. *Find inventory sheet [here](#).*

- **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)*

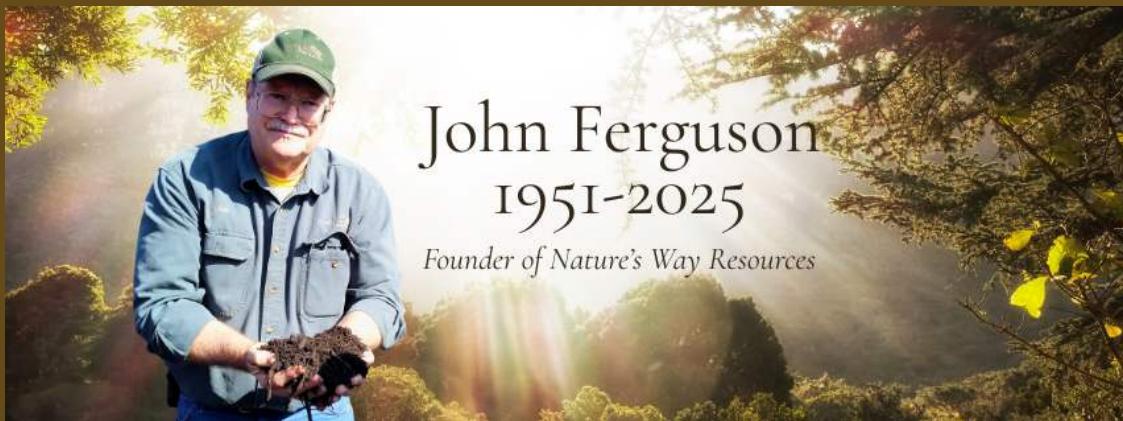
* * *

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

When I saw the recent news [report](#) from the Office of Ken Paxton, Attorney General of Texas, regarding an agreement with Crest Toothpaste, I knew immediately which article we would feature in John's Corner.

In a big win for our state and the health of our citizens, especially children, the Office of the Attorney General of Texas is addressing how toothpaste “serving sizes” are marketed. This directly correlates to the amount of fluoride being ingested from toothpastes marketed to children by major conglomerates such as Procter & Gamble, the owner of Crest. This action follows a [similar settlement](#) with the Colgate-Palmolive Company regarding the marketing and packaging of excessive amounts of fluoride toothpaste.

Notably, Colgate-Palmolive includes brands such as Tom's of Maine and hello, which market themselves as cleaner, more transparent alternatives. The language in the statements released suggests a commitment to taking healthier steps to protect children and families from exposure to harmful substances at excessive levels.

While the actual fluoride content in these products will not be changing, as they currently meet FDA regulations, the marketing visuals and imagery will now reflect appropriate amounts to be used. And let's be real, no one is weighing out their toothpaste before brushing their teeth.

With fluoride and other related substances already present in our municipal water systems, the last thing anyone needs, especially children, is excessive amounts being directly ingested through toothpaste. Fortunately, this is an area where education can make a real and immediate difference.

While John may not be here to weigh in himself, it felt important to include this update in a space he was deeply passionate about. The world we live in is capable of change, and we can work together to educate our friends and families to help move that change forward, one day at a time.

Consider this your sign to pay closer attention to how much toothpaste you're using, and how much your children are using as well.

Shelby Cassano
Marketing Director, Nature's Way Resources

Please take a moment to read a past article of John's regarding fluoride and related substances.

Subject: Fluoride Update #2

A customer wrote in this week about removing chlorine and other chemicals for a community garden. Hence today's topic.

Martha, There are three toxic ingredients found in municipal water in Texas that have the potential to harm plants and soils; chlorine, fluoride and chloramine.

Each has a different method of removal: chlorine – This chemical will escape to the air over night if water is allowed to just sit out in a barrel or something.

There are many products on the market to remove it quickly. These can be found at almost any aquarium supply house/pet store. Running the water through a zinc filter can remove the chlorine almost instantly.

Fluoride – This can be removed by allowing the water to sit for a few days or just stir in some form of powdered calcium (only takes a ounce per 100 gallons or even less). Lime (Calcium Oxide will work best, even though limestone will work, just slower).

Chloramine – liquid humic acid will work best and should only take 1-2 ounces per 100 gallons of water. I do not know how fast it will take but it should be fairly quick, just stir it in and let sit for a couple hours. If you use granular humates then is should at least sit over night and use 2-3 ounces per 100 gallons. There are special filters available to remove chloramine quickly. Once the water is treated it will store as long as you need as the chemicals have been removed or rendered inert.

There are several labs that can test water for these chemicals but probably not worth the effort. There are combination filters now available that remove all chemicals at once as water passes through them. The nursery "Sweet Organic Solutions" in Pearland may carry some or all of the required products. Ask for Donna Fay.

Regards, John

Since I wrote about the issues with fluoride a few weeks ago I have read over a dozen papers on the problems with fluoride for both gardeners and human health.

Fluoride has been found to be an enzyme poison that prevents enzymes from proper functioning. From the microbes in the soil to all our plants there are literally thousands of enzymes required for proper health and growth. The more we water our yard with fluoride treated water we greatly increase our chance of insect and disease problems and other complications that we do not even understand or even aware of.

From the website below I found a list of plants harmed by fluorine. <http://plantsaretheweirdestpeople.blogspot.com/2009/02/fluoride-what-it-is-and-how-its-spelled>.

- *Cordyline fruticosa* is sort of famous for developing burnt tips and margins from fluoride; this, combined with its susceptibility to spider mites, probably accounts for why it's not a more commonly grown indoor plant.
- *Chlorophytum comosum* will get tip burn from fluoride, sodium, or boron.
- The entire *Dracaena* clan, except possibly for *D. surculosa*, gets terrible tip burn when fluoride levels are high; this is a difficult problem to deal with, as *Dracaenas* are often sold as large, floor-sized specimens which are hard to drag to a water source to flush out.
- *Calathea* and *Maranta* spp. (e.g. *Calathea ornata*, *Maranta leuconeura erythroneura*) also develop tip and margin burn, especially on the oldest leaves, often with a yellowish halo at the edge of the burn.
- *Asparagus* spp. don't seem to be that picky about fluoride in water, but fluoride in the air (which sometimes happens following volcanic eruptions, or near incinerators) can cause sudden, massive leaf drop.
- The kentia palm, *Howea forsteriana*, is also sensitive to atmospheric fluoride, and is slightly sensitive to fluoride in the soil.
- *Chamaedorea* species (*elegans*, *metallica*, *seifrizii*, etc.) get tip burn, as will many other palms (*Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*, *Rhapis excelsa*).
- *Yucca guatemalensis* can experience fluoride toxicity, but it tends to be slow in developing and fairly easy to fix with a soil flush.
- *Aspidistra* spp. (*elatior*, *lurida*) and *Tradescantia* spp. (*zebrina*, *pallida*) are also somewhat, though not extremely, touchy about fluoride.

This list is from the Oregon State University website

SUMMARY of other papers on FLOURIDE:

One paper was published in the journal *Toxicology* by researchers from the University of Zaragoza in Spain. They found that at levels recommended by the WHO (World Health Organization) it caused calcification of arteries in the animal studies.

Another study by the Natural News Forensic Labs found that the sodium fluoride added to U.S. water supplies is contaminated with the toxic elements lead, tungsten and aluminum all that have been linked to health problems from Alzheimer's disease to behavior issues in children. The EPA requires testing of water for heavy metals however they test before the fluoride compounds are added to the water. In some of the samples they also found uranium and strontium.

A few years ago researchers at Tulane University found that teeth treated with a coco extract (from the same cacao bean as used to make chocolate) worked better and made teeth more resilient than fluoride. Another reason to eat quality chocolate?

Other studies have shown that fluoride will accumulate in the brain and thyroid gland. This leads to low thyroid function (due to fluoride toxicity) which can cause fatigue, apathy, weakness, tiredness, and a permanent lowering of IQ within a developing fetus. Natural News, May, 2013.

Research at both the Harvard School of Public Health and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai published in the medical journal “Lancet”, found that fluoride in public water systems contributes directly to mental and behavioral disorders in children. They found that fluoride obstructs proper brain development and can lead to autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia, ADHA and other health problems.

Another study published in the Journal Environmental Health Perspectives (July 2012) conducted by Harvard University found that children in high fluoride areas had significantly lower IQ's than those in low fluoride areas. Note: There are over 34 studies that have found the same pattern.

In 2006 the National Research Council (NRC) published a study showing that regular exposure to fluoride in water can lead to brittle bones, pre-clinical skeletal fluorosis, and arthritis.

Researchers at the University of Toronto have found that the fluorosilicates added to drinking water are industrial wastes and are not found in nature. They often contaminated with arsenic and radio-active particles that cause cancer.

The Fluoride Action Network (FAN), through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) investigation found that the government new as far back as 1962 that our black community was at far greater risk for dental fluorosis and they did nothing except cover it up. Reports found at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 2005 showed the same pattern. Additional information can be found at:

www.fluorideaction.net or www.fluoridealert.org

Many gardeners also like to cook and it has been found that chloramine will kill yeast (a species of fungus) when trying to bake bread using city water with chloramine in it. The water must be filtered in order for the bread to rise correctly. Similarly, if one is making compost tea the water must be filtered to remove these toxic chemicals if one wants good results. If the chemicals in the city water are killing those required microbes you have just made the tea somewhat ineffective defeating its purpose.

See other articles regarding fluoride here

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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!**

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.hcsstex.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

**FRI.-SUN., APR. 17-19: 2026 KINGWOOD GARDEN CLUB
GARDENSCAPES HOME & GARDEN TOUR & PLANT SALE.**
\$30. KingwoodGardenClub.org.

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.



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

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