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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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*"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now."
– Chinese Proverb*

Eastern Redbud



Buttonbush



Common persimmon



Chickasaw plum

pictured above, Eastern redbud, Buttonbush, Common persimmon, Chickasaw plum

THINKING ABOUT ADDING A TREE?

NOW'S THE BEST TIME

By Brenda Beust Smith | *The Lazy Gardener*

ARBOR DAY ISN'T UNTIL FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026! But that just shows how little we line up with much of the rest of the country! Our best tree planting time is NOW! That's why so many Greater Houston gardening groups are getting on the "Trees for Houston" bandwagon (many with TFH's help) by scheduling "Free Tree Give-aways" throughout our area.

The best news, these organization-sponsored giveaways are sharing trees particularly good for OUR whole Greater Houston area, but aren't publicized as much as they should be. Check out this list from *Fort Bend Master Gardeners* big "giveaway" lineup, Feb. 28, 9am until all-gone at [Fulshear Farmers Market](#) (9035 Bois d'Arc Lane, 77406, Fulshear).

Generally, giveaway trees are bare-root seedlings. Limit 3 per family. Other sale inventories (see below) may have different varieties and rules. Check their links if looking for something specific! Especially contact your county's [Master Gardener pages online](#).

- **Nuttall oak (*Quercus nuttallii*):** Native to Houston (up to zone 9a), well-suited to heat, humidity, and occasional cold snaps, drought-tolerant once established. Beautiful red-orange Fall color!
- **Loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*):** A Southeastern Texas native, thrives in hot, humid summers, mild winters (USDA zones 6-9), and variable weather. One of the fastest-growing southern pines can reach 60-100' rapidly, providing speedy shade, windbreaks, or privacy screens in larger yards or properties.
- **Common persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*):** Once established, highly drought-resistant, minimal watering/care, resistance to pests/diseases, low-effort urban or suburban landscapes. Medium-sized trees (40-60 feet), rounded canopy/good shade, attractive dark blocky bark, vibrant orange fall foliage, tolerates partial shade under larger trees.
- **Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*):** Native to eastern Texas, thrives in hot, humid summers, mild winters, and variable weather. Small, May-June sweet red or yellow plums (great for fresh eating, jellies, or wine); fragrant spring blooms, salt tolerance for coastal proximity
- **Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*):** Native to Gulf Coast region (zones 5-9), thrives in hot, humid summers, mild winters, and high rainfall, low-risk choice for sustainable landscaping. Once established, drought-tolerant in wetter sites, prefers consistent moisture; adapts to various soil types (acidic to alkaline, except dry), full sun to partial shade, minimal care.
- **Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*):** Vivid pink-purple spring flowers before leaves emerge, heart-shaped foliage turns yellow in fall, flat seed pods in winter, visual appeal in landscapes, gardens, or as understory trees. Nectar-rich flowers attract bees, butterflies, and other pollinators in early spring; seeds and foliage provide food and habitat for birds, insects, and wildlife.

- **Common persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*):** Once established, highly drought-resistant, minimal watering or care, natural resistance to pests/diseases, ideal for low-effort urban or suburban landscapes. These medium-sized trees (up to 40-60 feet) develop a rounded canopy for good shade in hot summers, with attractive dark blocky bark, vibrant orange fall foliage, and tolerance for partial shade under larger trees
- **Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*):** Native to USDA zones 5-9, thrives in Houston's hot, humid summers, mild winters, and variable weather. Small, sweet red or yellow plums in early summer (ripe around May-June), they're great for fresh eating, jellies, or wine; the fragrant spring blooms add visual appeal, and salt tolerance suits coastal proximity

These will be available (*while they last!*) at the **SAT., Feb.28** at the **FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS TREE GIVEAWAY** at the **FULSHEAR FARMERS' MARKET**, 9am-while supplies last. 9035 Bois d'Arc Lane, 77406, Fulshear. fulshearfarmersmarket.com

Other upcoming Tree Giveaways include (Trees are bare root seedlings. Limit 3 per family.):

- **FRI., FEB. 20: WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS TREE GIVEAWAY**, Trees are bare-root seedlings. Limit 3 per family. Drive-through only at Waller County Extension Office. 11 am-2pm. 846 6th St, Hempstead, 979-826 7651, txmg.org/wallermg wallermgardener@gmail.com
- **SAT., FEB. 28: TREE GIVEAWAY** by **FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-sellout, 9035 Bois d'Arc Lane, Fulshear. fulshearfarmersmarket.com



pictured, Loblolly pine

* * *

EYES UP! Official word is Monarchs have left their wintering home and should be flying through Texas this month. Most take a more central Texas route north, but there is also a coastal one that takes them right through Houston. More choose this latter route when returning in the fall, usually late Oct. through mid-Nov., some even choosing to stay rather than moving on to Mexico.

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

In continuity of last week's article, please take a moment to read a past article of John's regarding Native Mulch. Native Mulch is gaining wide popularity in the local market due to its obvious results compared to highly processed alternatives that have traditionally been used. It is important to note that while "Native Mulch" might be a current buzzword, they are not all made the same. To find high-quality mulch made by Nature's Way Resources, visit our facility in Conroe, TX, or our retailer map [here](#).

Subject: Native Mulches Part Two

This week we are going to continue to look at the best type of mulch called "Native Mulch".

Native Mulch (fresh ground) – This mulch comes directly out of the grinder. It does not have any processing or screening on it. It tends to be inexpensive and useful in special applications. As in all native mulches it is a mix of whatever species came into the mulch/composting recycling facility.

Double Ground Native – Often mulch companies will re-grind the native mulch to a finer texture which is commonly called "double ground". This may be available as "fresh ground" or aged. As the double ground native mulch is allowed to sit in large piles it begins to compost. Over the next few weeks it gradually becomes darker and after a few weeks it is a medium brown color with a nice fibrous texture that sets up well and resists washing out.

Due to the drought of 2011 and 2012 we have received very large amounts of dead tree material from the cleanup. As a result we have added double ground mulches both fresh and aged to our product line this year.

I personally like to test and use all the products we produce or sell, so I have first hand information on how they perform. So in January I used both the fresh ground and the aged double ground native on my own yard and this is what I have learned. Double ground is not composted hence it has a higher carbon to nitrogen ratio than our premium composted native mulch. To ensure there was

not a nitrogen tie-up issue I applied MicroLife 6-2-4 organic fertilizer first to the beds before putting the mulch down. I then applied 2-3" of mulch depending on the plant species and the amount of mulch left over from the previous year. Note: I did a small area with our composted native mulch side by side so I would have a comparison (see picture below).

A few months have passed and this is what I have learned. Pros: It does a very good job of keeping the soil cool and moist, it has decomposed rapidly into humus rich layer, the earthworms have multiplied and grown very fat in the mulch layer, all plants are doing great and growing like weeds (I am having to do a lot of pruning to keep them in check). Cons: Since the mulch is not composted (no heat to kill the weed seeds) I have had numerous trees sprout in the mulch (many oaks species, pecans, etc.) that I have had to pull out and there have been a few weeds also that would not be in the composted mulch. I have also had many species of beautiful mushrooms (fruiting spores of beneficial fungus) of various sizes shapes and colors that appeared after several rains this spring helping the mulch to break down and release the nutrients it contains.

The picture below shows the color difference between the aged double ground native mulch and the composted native mulch in an area that I will be reworking this summer.



If one is not in a hurry, fresh ground native mulch is one of the best ways to naturally break up heavy clay soils and suppress weeds. To suppress weeds, it is often applied 4-6 inches thick and sometimes rolled or watered down (weight). The mulch smothers the existing plants, essentially killing them. This mulch becomes very active biologically because the microbes are working, and they will use the nitrogen stored in the dead and dying weeds to help break down the mulch. The microbes will also break apart clay particles, creating a looser soil.

Different types of native mulch are also used for erosion control, soil improvement, garden paths, land reclamation, filtration of storm water runoff, and any other application where large volumes are required, and cost is an issue.

To learn more about mulch, read on by clicking below

Click 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!

FRI., FEB. 20: WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS TREE GIVEAWAY, 11am-2pm, Waller County Extension Office, 846 6th St, Hempstead, 979-826-7651, txmg.org/wallermg, wallermgardener@gmail.com

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: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS & ROOTS FOR CONROE TREE GIVEAWAY, 8am-1pm, Heritage Plaza, 205 Metcalf, Conroe. MCMGA.com

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

SAT., FEB. 28: TREE GIVEAWAY by **FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-sellout, 9035 Bois d'Arc Lane, Fulshear. fulshearfarmersmarket.com

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 7: PLANT PROPAGATION by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER**. 9-11am, AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. Free. Register: txmg.org/galveston/events/

SAT. MAR 7: AVOCADOS, 1-3pm, by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER**. AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. Free. Register: txmg.org/galveston/events/

SAT., MAR 7: GARDEN BASICS, 10 am, LSC-Montgomery; Maverick Conference Center, 3200 College Park Drive, Conroe. Montgomery County PVAMU Extension. Free. [Register](#)

SAT., MAR. 14: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS & HEB WILLIS TREE GIVEAWAY, Parking lot, 12350 I-45 N, Willis. MCMGA.com

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 GARDEN SALE, 9-11AM, Discovery Garden in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. galvestonmg.square.site

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. 21: CLEAR LAKE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY PLANT SPRING SALE, 8-10am, Environmental Institute Of Houston,.2700 Bay Area Blvd. npsot.org/chapters/clearlake/

SAT., MAR. 28: HPSOT PINES & PRAIRIES NATIVE PLANT SALE, 8:30am, 2701 Lone Star Parkway, Montgomery. Plant list week prior [Pines and Prairies - Native Plant Society of Texas](#)

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., MAR. 28: SPRING PLANT SALE by **SAN JACINTO COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-1pm, Coldspring Community Center, 101 E. Cedar Ave., Coldspring, . txmg.org/sjmg/

SAT., MAR. 28: GARDEN VILLAS GARDEN CLUB PLANT SALE, 9am-2pm, Garden Villas Park, 6720 S. Haywood Dr., Free

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

NATURE'S WAY
RESOURCES
an organically based service company





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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