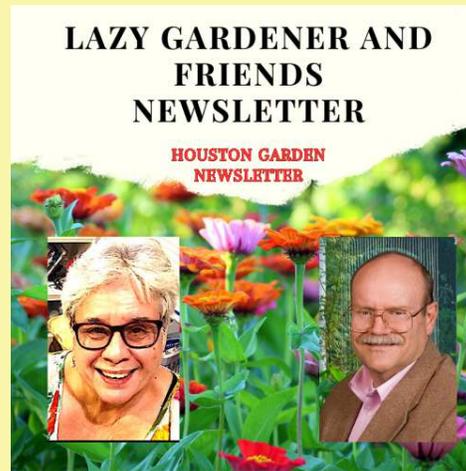


**Nature's Way Resources** is proud to bring you this free weekly newsletter. While we don't run ads, generous sponsors help support this project as a public service. Their names are listed below, please consider showing your appreciation by supporting their businesses!

**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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## What If Your Neighborhood Had Its Own Butterfly Forest?

*By Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener*

After 60+ years of writing the Lazy Gardener column (from the Houston Chronicle to wonderfully nature-oriented Nature's Way Resources), I never thought I could be surprised by a new gardening idea. Adaptations, sure. But not NEW. But it's happened, and hopefully this is just the beginning.

Did that headline take you a little "a'back"? Sure did me. Explanations below are from Raj Dharamshi, Founder, Urban Green Initiative ([info@urbangreeninitiative.org](mailto:info@urbangreeninitiative.org) | [urbangreeninitiative.org](http://urbangreeninitiative.org)). And thanks to Doris Heard, Garden Club of Houston (and "of America") and Jaime González, Executive Director, UH Institute of Ecological Resilience, for aiming Raj my way. Many major gardening-related folks are interested in this, so really appreciate being able to share! This may not be possible for everyone, but hope some of you will find it worth it and let Raj explain in his own words:

\* \* \*

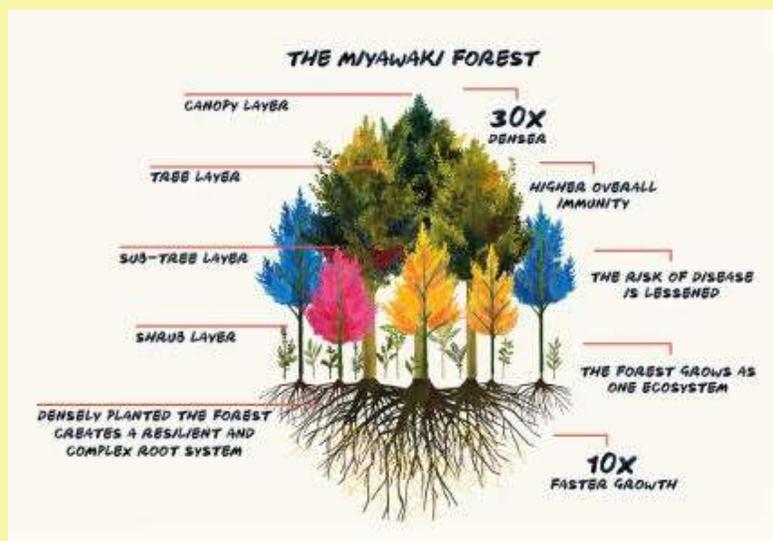


*Tiny Forest atop an old landfill in the city of Cambridge, NY Times, August 24, 2023*

Dear Fellow Houston Gardeners,

Every spring, I hear the same question from neighbors and nature enthusiasts: "Where have all the butterflies gone?" What if I told you that cities around the world have already found the answer and are bringing them back faster than expected, using land you likely walk past every day?

Look around Houston and you will see these orphaned land everywhere: mowed grass along the bayous, vacant corner lots, and forgotten medians. This is "dead space" waiting for a purpose. What if each of these patches became a dense, buzzing, bird-filled mini-forest? This is entirely possible through a method that is quietly transforming urban landscapes globally.



**Miyawaki Forest Illustration - SUGI Pocket Forest**

### **The Method**

Developed by Japanese botanist Dr. Akira Miyawaki, this approach focuses on how ancient forests function to rebuild them rapidly. The secret lies in planting a high density of diverse native species in layers within living soil. As these plants compete and support one another, the forest establishes in a fraction of the traditional time.

Growth is up to 10x faster than conventional planting, with the canopy typically filling in within two to three years. By year three, the forest becomes fully self-sustaining, requiring minimal irrigation, weeding, or maintenance.

### **What It Means for Houston**

Houston's subtropical climate and rich native palette—including Yaupon Holly, American Beautyberry, Possumhaw, Cedar Elm and more! —are perfect for Miyawaki forests. Our city needs the specific benefits these forests deliver: cooler neighborhoods in July, soil that absorbs stormwater, and vital corridors where Monarchs and Painted Buntings can thrive.



*Beirut's RiverLESS Forest | Beirut, Lebanon -- 5 year old SUGi Pocket Forest*

Through the Urban Green Initiative, we are working to plant Miyawaki forests across the Greater Houston area—in schoolyards, along bayous, on church grounds, and in underutilized vacant lots. We are looking for gardeners, HOAs, and community champions to help us get the next round of forests in the ground this fall.

To learn more about this method, check out [urbangreeninitiative.org](http://urbangreeninitiative.org) and/or reach out to [info@urbangreeninitiative.org](mailto:info@urbangreeninitiative.org) with questions, requests for speaking engagements, references, and more.

The butterflies are waiting. Let's give them somewhere to land.

With green intentions,

### **Raj Dharamshi**

Founder, Urban Green Initiative

[info@urbangreeninitiative.org](mailto:info@urbangreeninitiative.org) | [urbangreeninitiative.org](http://urbangreeninitiative.org) | 832.654.4813

\* \* \*

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)*

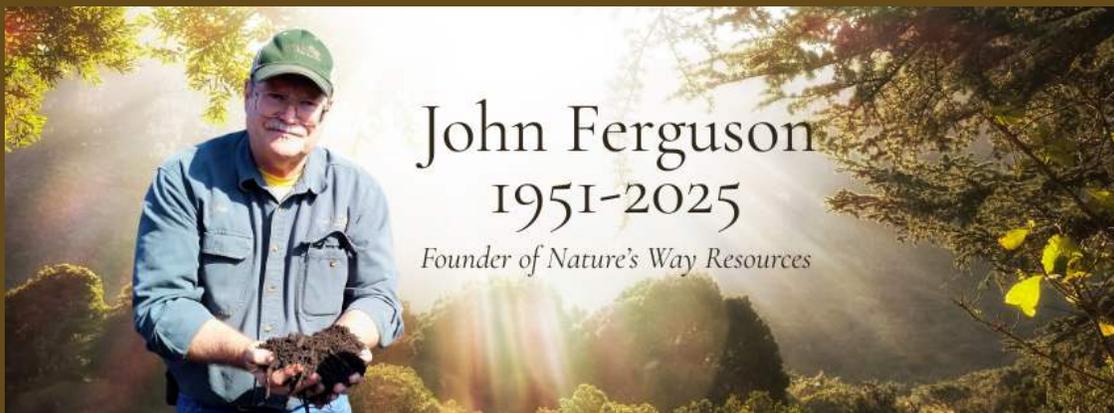
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*Brenda Beust Smith's column in the  
LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER  
is based on her 40+ years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener  
Email: [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)*



John's Corner

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*Continuing with last week's theme, we will be exploring what healthy soil is, how to build and maintain it, and more. Please read on to enjoy the writings and teachings of our late founder, John Ferguson.*

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## **Subject: What Is A Healthy Soil – Part 2**

This week, we are going to look at the first two components, organic matter and minerals, and the role they play in a healthy soil.

### **1) Organic matter – What do you think of when you hear the term organic matter?**

Humus, plant waste like leaves and twigs, animal waste like manure, dead bodies of animals or insects, and microorganisms?

Sometimes, people use the terms organic matter and humus interchangeably; however, not all organic matter is humus, but all humus is organic matter.

In general, humus is the mythical and elusive dark brown to almost black substance that doesn't dissolve in water easily but can hold over 15 times its weight in water. It will often be 30% each lignin, protein, and complex sugars. It will contain 3-5% nitrogen (N), 55-60% carbon (C), and has a C: N ratio of 10:1. It is a major component of good quality compost and helps give compost the dark chocolate brown to almost black color.

### **What are some of the major functions of humus in the soil?**

It is the source of food and energy supporting most soil dwelling life forms. Humus is continuously broken down into humic acid, fulmic acid and humins, vitamins, enzymes, and minerals. Two of the major functions performed by humus is holding nutrients till needed (prevents leaching) and holding water till needed. It also buffers pH and adds tilth to soils. However, the most important function may be regulating the availability of minerals in the correct proportions to each other and providing food for the beneficial microbes.

The amount of humus required for a healthy soil is determined by our plant choices. Many plants like azaleas, ferns, ivies, and blueberries will grow in pure organic matter with extremely high levels of humus. However, if we grow cactus, the soil should have very low levels of organic matter, especially humus. In this case, the high water holding capacity and nutrient levels in humus will lead to root rot and plant death.

As a general rule, plants that grow in shady, moist conditions require lots of organic matter and humus (up to 100%); plants that grow in the sun prefer

about 25% organic matter by volume, and the desert plants and many succulents only 1-2% humus.

The price point at your local nursery will tell you what you are buying. If you are paying \$6 or less per bag, it is probably fresh organic matter like sawdust and contains zero humus. This low-quality organic matter causes gardening problems from insects and disease, to nutrient tie-up and poor plant growth.

This is the reason so many people say they have a “brown thumb”; they use low-quality materials. To use the computer analogy, “garbage in = garbage out”. Translated to gardening, “cheap, low-quality soils = lots of problems and eventual death of plants”.

**- Coming Next Week: What Is A Healthy Soil – Part 2 (Continued)**

To learn more, read on by clicking below

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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](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com). Check published entry!

**NOTE FROM EDITOR: An overwhelming number of event notices are coming in. Those submitted in our exact never-changing format (word order, caps, punctuation, etc) will go in immediately. If we have to retype to format (we will!), they'll get in as soon as possible.**

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## March

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**SAT., MAR. 14: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS & HEB WILLIS TREE GIVEAWAY**, Parking lot, 12350 I-45 N, Willis. [MCMGA.com](http://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](http://mcmga.com)

**SAT., MAR 14: WARM SEASON VEGETABLES & HERBS** by FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9 a.m.-10:30 a.m. Bud O'Shieles Community Center 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, <https://fbmg.org/>

**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](http://txmg.org/walker)

**TUES., MAR. 17: 'SHADE PLANTS THAT GROW IN OUR AREA'** by SUMA MUDAN, Fort Bend Master Gardeners, 10am. 702 Burney Rd., Sugar Land, Free, [sugarlandgardenclub.org](http://sugarlandgardenclub.org) (<http://sugarlandgardenclub.org>).

**FRI.-SAT., MAR. 20-21: HOUSTON ARBORETUM SPRING PLANT SALE**, 9 am–2pm, 20 West Loop North (between Post Oak Boulevard & Woodway Dr.). [houstonarboretum.org](http://houstonarboretum.org).

**FRI-SAT, MARCH 20-21, MARCH MART PLANT SALE**, Fri., 8am-4pm, Sat., 8am-3pm, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd, Humble. Free. [friendsofmercer.org](http://friendsofmercer.org), 713-274-4166

**SAT. MAR 21: SPRING GARDEN SALE**, 9-11AM, Discovery Garden in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. [galvestonmg.square.site](http://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](http://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/](http://npsot.org/chapters/clearlake/)

**WED. MAR 25: GENERAL ADENIUM CARE**, by **EDDIE NOVAK** and **JENNIFER PESKY**, 7pm, Multi-Purpose Metropolitan Center, 1475 West Gray. Free. [Houston Cactus and Succulent Society. hcsstex.com](http://HoustonCactusandSucculentSociety.hcsstex.com)

**SAT., MAR. 28: NPSOT 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/](http://txmg.org/sjmg/)

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

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## April

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**WED., APR. 8: GROW YOUR BEST ROSES 2026** by **SUZANNE GILBERT**, Noon–2pm, Mercer Visitor’s Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. Register: [pct3.com/MBG](http://pct3.com/MBG)

**FRI., APR. 10: TOUR “NATIVE WILDFLOWERS”** by **HORTICULTURE STAFF**, 9–10am, Visitor’s Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. Register: [pct3.com/MBG](http://pct3.com/MBG)

**SAT. APR. 11: TEXAS SUPERSTAR® TRAIL & TOUR**, by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**. 9-noon, Discovery Garden in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. FREE. Register: [txmg.org/](http://txmg.org/)

**SAT., APR. 11: HERB FESTIVAL AT THE WYNNE HOME** by **HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA, TEXAS THYME UNIT**, 8am-1pm., 1428 Eleventh St., Huntsville. Free. 936-891-5024. [www.texasthymeunit.org](http://www.texasthymeunit.org)

**SAT., APR 11: LONE STAR DAYLILY SOCIETY PLANT SALE**, 9am-4pm; Pearland Lumber & Ace Hardware, 2027 N Main St., Pearland. [lonestardaylilyociety.org](http://lonestardaylilyociety.org), 281-331-0162.

**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., APR 18: SEED STARTING & PROPAGATION** by **FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9-10:30am. FBC Fairgrounds, 4310 Tx 36, Rosenberg. 281-342-3034, [fbmg.org/grow-your-own-2026/](http://fbmg.org/grow-your-own-2026/)

**SAT., APR 18: PRESENT PETALS AND PATHWAYS GARDEN TOUR** by **SJC Master Gardeners**, 10am-3pm. Coldspring. <https://txmg.org/sjmg>

**SAT., APRIL 18: OPEN GARDEN DAY** by MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9am-noon, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd. 936-539-7824, [mcmga.com](http://mcmga.com)

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

**FRI., APR 24: USING IRRIGATION WISELY** by FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 1-2:30pm Online. 281-342-3034. [fbmg.org/landscape-success-2026/](https://fbmg.org/landscape-success-2026/)

**TUES., APR. 28: COMPOSTING 101** by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 10:30-11:30am, Visitor's Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. Register: [pct3.com/MBG](http://pct3.com/MBG)

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## May

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**SAT., MAY 2: LONE STAR DAYLILY SOCIETY ANNUAL FLOWER SHOW AND PLANT SALE**, Sale: 8am-3pm; Show 1-3pm, Alvin Senior Citizens Building, 309 W Sealy, Alvin. Free. [lonestardaylilysociety.org](http://lonestardaylilysociety.org), 281-331-0162.

**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](http://galvestonbayorchidsociety.org)

**THURS., MAY 14: POLLINATORS TO ATTRACT BENEFICIALS** by MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 6:30- pm, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd. Contra 936-539-7824, [mcmga.com](http://mcmga.com)

**SAT., MAY 16: POLLINATORS & COMPANION PLANTS** by FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS, 9-10:30am, Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg. 281-342-3034. <https://fbmg.org/grow-your-own-2026/>

**FRI., MAY 22: CONTAINER GARDENING** by FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS. 1-2:30pm Online. 281-342-3034. [fbmg.org/landscape-success-2026/](https://fbmg.org/landscape-success-2026/)

See more

*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 . . .  
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Local vendors, live music, and expert gardening advice all in one place.

Featuring a perennial plant talk with Master Gardener Irene Pavlowski and a live meet & greet with Skip Richter. Shop plants, soils, and compost for the season ahead.



Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>  
2026, 9am - 3pm



Special Guest  
**SKIP RICHTER**  
1pm - 3pm



*Plant Talk: Perennials in the Landscape* with  
Master Gardener Irene Pavlowski 10am-11am

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact us  
at 936-273-1200 or send an e-mail to: [lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com](mailto: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 -- John Ferguson called immediately (the next morning!) to ask if she'd continue publishing it for his **Nature's Way Resources**. Familiar with John's international reputation as a soil/mulch expert, she jumped at the opportunity and has been writing weekly for NWR ever since! The name, she says, is STILL 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](mailto: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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