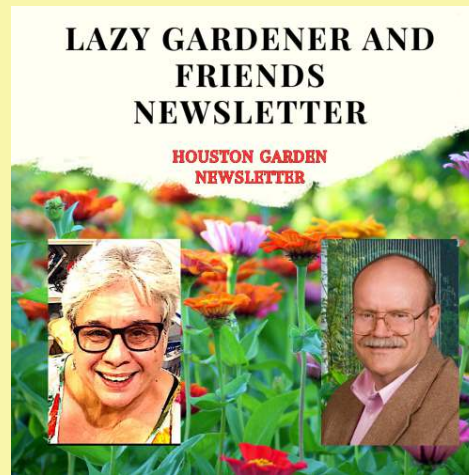


Nature's Way Resources is proud to bring you this free weekly newsletter. While we don't run ads, generous sponsors help support this project as a public service. Their names are listed below, please consider showing your appreciation by supporting their businesses!

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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APRIL 22 IS EARTH DAY TREES FOR HOUSTON

By Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener

EARTH DAY is Thurs, April 22. Founded in the U.S. in 1970, this designation led to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), although its future (*according to some folks*) is floating on thinner ice these days . . . in this country, that is. Over 190 countries celebrate Earth Day now. Any celebration plans? Suggestion: check out the multitude of Houston public gardens. No one link I can find lists them all, but <https://www.hereinhouston.org/ecosystemsandwildlife>

April is our biggest planting month, but there are some plants that shouldn't go in the ground now.

As you buy plants, remember our Greater Houston area actually is the primary route to the sea for at least 6 *different, very separate ecosystems*, each of which will, in some way, influence which plants do best there: Coastal Wetlands, Urban Ecosystem, Forest Ecosystems, Grasslands: Riparian (rivers and streams), and Suburban. Good idea to know your specific ecosystem.

For many plants, it won't matter; for some, it will be a possible cause when you can't understand why a particular plant won't work for you when it does for friends who live some distance away. Different soil, etc.

Not a big problem if you're just having fun. Major factor if you're spending LOTS of \$\$\$! Still, what we want most right now is what to plant THIS MONTH! For edibles, best place to start is the (now available!) [Urban Harvest 2026 Planting Guide!](#)

This month, you really should . . . (after this unfortunately not unusual late cold spell departs!). . .

- Make sure none of your plant watering (or as little as possible) runs off into sewers. Runoff is an unnecessary expense for you and VERY bad for our bayous & Galveston Bay.
- Plant caladiums in slightly acidic soil with good drainage. Plant new shrubs before it gets any hotter, and keep newly set-out plants well watered.
- Cut flowers to extend blooming seasons.
- Pinch tips from coleus and copper plants to make them bushier.

If the spirit moves . . .

- Consider ornamental grasses among your flowers. These add eye interest by providing varied leaf textures and shapes.
- Water, mow often to make St. Augustine fill in dead areas more quickly.
- Seed bare sunny areas with fast growers such as cosmos, tithonia, and other sunflowers.
- For larger caladium leaves, remove the largest “eye” or bud.
- Mulch tomatoes, peppers, eggplants. Newspaper under mulch slows weeds.
- To discourage snails, try crushed egg shells and/or seaweed at base of plants. (Better yet, get rid of plants eaten by snails/slugs.)
- Check with [YOUR County Extension Agent](#) about pecan grafting workshops this month. Better yet, first visit your [Master Gardener group's](#) demonstration garden on that site so you'll have questions to ask! Its goal is to find the most productive planting varieties for YOUR specific area. Be sure to look over the County Extension Agent's office collection of advice materials for your area.

- Don't panic over silky white webs on tree trunks. Bark lice — good bugs at work!
- Don't remove spent foliage from amaryllis, daffodils, irises, or lilies. Let it die naturally. Roll unsightly bits up and secure at bottom of plant if it bothers you.
- Don't overfertilize. Leaf spots, dark areas on older plants, may result.
- Don't overwater. Leaf drop can result. (Also is a sign of underwatering!)
- Don't plant larkspur, hollyhocks, stocks, delphiniums, or snapdragons now. It's too hot.

Planting to Help Cut Utility Costs: Plants can help keep the house cooler in summer and warmer in winter. Plant trees, large shrubs, or vines on lattice sheets to shade the west side in summer, and allow warming sun rays through in winter.

Use deciduous trees and shrubs that are thick in summer and shed leaves in winter. Use a native if you opt for a large shade tree. If you don't have room for a tree, try a reinforced lattice "wall" covered with a deciduous plant (you want the winter sun!)

Personal Note: Next to trees, I consider wildflowers the most awe-inspiring plants on Earth. They bloom under impossible conditions with no one to water or fertilize them. Over the decades, they've really been an influence on my marriage. Husband loved working with his dogs in the most remote wild areas and visiting old forts and other historic abandoned sites. Lots of

walking, especially if you're not an outdoors type! I told him back in 1965 when we said the "I do's " at the beginning of our still-strong marriage:

"Give me one wildflower every 30 yards, and I'll follow you anywhere!"

(Married 61 years this August!)

* * *



Clematis bigelovi

My favorite flower of Spring. First spotted her in 1967. growing wild on ditch-top when we moved to Aldine for Bill's first coaching job. Watched her expanding for several years, then dug up a few stalks which seemed happy up our carport pillar. When Harvey wiped house et al in 2017, she was still alive. So moved her to new home later that year. Here she is, still my delight (where she still blooms happily every Spring!)

* * *

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)*

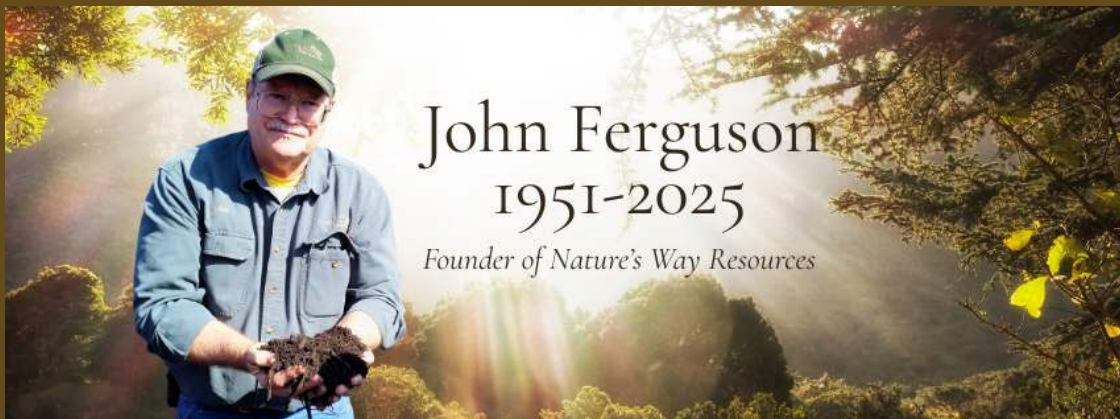
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*Brenda Beust Smith's column in the
LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER
is based on her 40+ years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener
Email: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com*



John's Corner

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

Last week, we dove into part 5 of What is a Healthy Soil? - Air & Water. This week, we are sharing part 6 of John's paper, What is a Healthy Soil? - Plant Choices. This particular section lends well to Brenda's column this week, funny how things work out. Dive into this past issue and pause for a moment to remember not only John Ferguson, but also our departed friend Randy Lemmon, mentioned below.

Subject: What Is A Healthy Soil – Part 6

Continuing our discussion of what is a healthy soil we are going to discuss item #5 below: Plant choices

1. Organic matter from almost fresh to totally decomposed in the form of humus (humins, humic, fulmic acids)
2. Minerals (nutrients, sand, silt, and clay)
3. Soil life (microbes and macrobes)
4. Air & water
5. Plant choices
6. Care for and do not destroy the health of the soil one has

Healthy soil is relative to the plant one is growing. For example a soil that is great for Louisiana Irises will kill a cactus. Conversely, a Louisiana Iris will die in soil that cactus and succulents grow well in.

5) Plant Choices – Planting the right plant in the correct place. This is the easiest objective to accomplish. There is a tremendous amount of information on plant choices.

One can start with the ***Lazy Gardener and Friends Houston Garden Newsletter***, as Brenda does a great job of telling folks about all sorts of plants and showing them examples.

Randy Lemmon of GardenLine fame (KTRH/740AM) also does a great job of giving folks information on correct plant choices.

Tip: The best information comes from books written by local authors for our climate and soils.

For example, a plant that may grow in full sun up North must have afternoon shade in Houston, and a national book will not tell you this, and your plant will die.

There are also regional differences. My wife and I have purchased a few acres of land near LaGrange to build our retirement home, and I want to fill the property with plants beneficial to wildlife, from butterflies to quail and wild turkeys.

A few weeks ago, I was researching the “Black Cherry” (*Prunus serotina*) as it is a great fruiting native and a host plant for butterflies.

I found that there are at least 5 different subspecies of this tree growing in Texas. The one from East Texas prefers sandy, slightly acidic soils, moist soils; it will die in the slightly alkaline clays that are much drier around La Grange. However, there is a variety that grows in the Hill Country around Austin that will work fine.

The message is to use local resources so one gets information for the area in which they live.

A couple great books for the Greater Houston area (they make excellent Christmas gifts for gardeners or even new homeowners) include:

A Garden Book for Houston and The Texas Gulf Coast, River Oaks Garden Club, 5th edition, 2013, edited by Lynn Herbert, ISBN 978-0-578-09149-6. For shrubs, flowers, groundcovers, and general home use the River Oaks Garden Club book is tremendous resource.

Year Round Vegetables, Fruits and Flowers for Metro Houston by Bob Randall, PhD., Retired Executive Director Urban Harvest. For those that wish to grow vegetables, fruits, and herbs this book is an excellent reference: A resource guide on how to grow plants in the Houston area organically and where to get the supplies you may need. It is sold at many area gardening centers. This is one of the very best resources for Houston and Gulf Coast.

The Texas A&M University through the agricultural extension services has recommended plant lists for every county in Texas, from fruit trees to flowers. Additionally, all the plant societies have plant information available. Local gardening clubs are another resource to learn more. There just is no excuse for putting a plant into the wrong soil at the wrong location as there is too much information easily available.

TIP: Beware of shopping at big box stores and large discount gardening chains for plants and supplies. Much of what they sell does not do well in our area. I have gone into these stores and found that half of the plant varieties they sell will not do well in our area and are almost guaranteed to die. For the best gardening success, shop only at local, privately owned nurseries.

- Coming Next Week: What Is A Healthy Soil – Part 7

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. 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.*

April

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

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/**

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

THURS., APR. 16: SEEDS OF TEXAS: PRACTICAL PROPAGATION by **JACOB MARTIN**, 5pm, Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Dr. Zoom [link](#). Passcode 450085)

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

TUES., APR. 21: 'Edible Weeds in Sugar Land' by **DR. MARK VORDERBRUGGEN**. 10am. 702 Burney Rd., Sugar Land, Free, sugarlandgardenclub.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/

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

May

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. lonestardaylilyociety.org, 281-331-0162.

SAT. MAY 9: PLUMERIA by **GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER**. AgriLife Extension Bldg., 1-3PM. Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St (FM519), La Marque. FREE. Register: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/>

SAT. MAY 9: GROWING TOMATOES: STRESS MANAGEMENT, 9-11AM, by **GCMG**. AgriLife Extension Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St (FM519), La Marque. FREE. Register: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/>

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

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

FRI.-SAT., MAY 15-16: HOUSTON CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY SPRING SALE, Fri. 9am-5pm, Sat. 9am-3pm, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. hcsstex.com/

SAT. MAY 16: NATIVE PLANTS & BENEFICIAL INSECTS, 9-11AM, by **GCMG**. Discovery Garden in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St (FM519), La Marque. FREE. Register: <https://txmg.org/galveston/events/>

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/

June

TUES. JUNE 9: GET THE DIRT, POT, PLUNGE OR PLANT by **PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA**. 6-8pm Cherie Flores Pavilion, Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. theplumeriasociety.org/

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 . . .
THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!
& please patronize our Newsletter & Calendar sponsors below!

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 -- 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)

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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