

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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By Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener

Don't you love it when flowers instantly POP to your eyes? Mine did at hibiscus above! And even more so when realized 1. It's in a hanging basket and 2. I not only knew the gardener, but we're related! Tip 'o trowel to Lisa Marie Allen-Quintero for sharing this delightful hibiscus (***from Joe's Country Store in Santa Fe, TX***)!

The Greater Houston area used to have a number of hibiscus groups. Now we have two: the long-time [Lone Star Hibiscus Society](#) and [Space City Hibiscus Facebook group](#). -- but both are very active and always happy to share hibiscus growing tips on these easy-to-grow garden delights -- especially for *Lazy Gardeners*!

Yvonne Estrada, Administrator of [Space City Hibiscus Facebook group](#) (currently seeking new members!), notes this garden variety hibiscus (pictured above) does well in heat ("...as long as you water them!"). Yvonne's left her garden varieties outside in winter, where they die back and revive in Spring.

Still, she adds, "Exotic Hibiscus are more particular and have to be brought inside (greenhouse/garage) once the temperatures drop below 40 degrees. Once it gets above 90 degrees, they appreciate a shade cloth covering or natural shade."

All hibiscus need well-draining pots and soil. "If you buy a pot with only one hole, you will need to make a few more, as they love water but don't like wet feet. To get the best out of a hibiscus plant, they need a high potassium fertilizer to produce lots of vibrant blooms.

- For those gardeners who have fallen in love with hibiscus but are looking for a little more excitement and challenge, drop by one of the Space City meetings. They welcome both new and experienced hibiscus lovers. At the June Space City meeting, Yvonne will be teaching an alternate method of rooting hibiscus cuttings. ([Space City Hibiscus Facebook group](#) for more information.)



Kissing Time (left), 'Cajun Masquerade' (right)

'Kissing Time,' left (top), and yellow 'Cajun Masquerade' are two delights in Yvonne's collection that might entice you to expand your collection to include these and other "exotics"! Check their Facebook Page for more details.

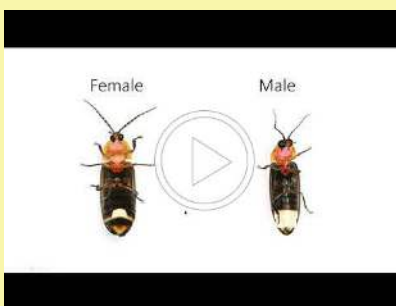
What's the difference between exotic and regular hibiscus (Lisa's at top is a 'regular' which shows how exciting they can be these days!) Yvonne warns "Exotics" need more attention/protection. Regular hibiscus are pretty hardy on their own (definitely lazy gardener plants!)

Houston's oldest group, [Lone Star Hibiscus Society](#), meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:30p.m., from March through October at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion at Hermann Park Garden Center. More info: martigreg@sbcglobal.net

* * *



FIREFLIES HERE? OR ANY AT ALL? BEN PFEIFFER of firefly.org sympathizes and -- after a lifetime of studying these winged delights -- his goal is to educate all about their steadily increasing disappearance from our world. Ben has spoken in the past in our area to garden clubs and other groups.



Although he has no upcoming talks here, Ben has a wealth of firefly data and helpful tips on his firefly.org website. One source on YouTube: [*Fireflies of Texas - A Texas Firefly Field Guide by Ben Pfeiffer*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...).

* * *

"THE ONLY NATIVE PLANTING APP MADE JUST FOR TEXAS" -- the free [Wild Thumb](https://www.wildthumbapp.com/) app — has been created by [Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation](https://www.texaswildlifefoundation.org/) in collaboration with [Native Plant Society of Texas](https://www.nativeplantsocietyof texas.org/) among others. *Wild Thumb* aims to take guesswork out of creating outdoor spaces that draw pollinators to your yard! *(The app is still being refined development, so do share any problems you have with the creators.)*

* * *

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?

Subscribe

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

Why Organic Mulches

by John Ferguson

This week I had a customer ask me why we recommend organic mulches over shredded tires or gravel. These have their place and will be discussed in future articles.

Why Organic Mulches:

Organic mulches offer the most benefits, often at lower cost, and improve the fertility and health of the soil.

A three inch layer of organic mulch can lower soil temperature about 25-30°F which reduces plant stress and water requirements. Bare soil can easily reach 100-135 °F which speeds evaporation and dries out the soil, stresses the plant resulting in wilting, causes insect and disease problems and in most plants eventual death.

The higher soil temperature reduces a plants roots ability to absorb moisture (even if it is there) and the higher temperature kills beneficial microbes that help feed, water and protect the plant's roots. In addition, soil nitrogen (N) decreases as soil temperatures increase. For every 100°C increase in soil temperature, soil nitrogen (N) will decrease 2-3 times.

Studies in Austin and San Antonio Texas during the 1990's found that lawns mulched with 1/2 inch of compost each year, saved \$50-\$200 per month on their water bill. See photo below.

Plants grown in organically enriched soils suffer far less disease and insect problems than plants grown with synthetic chemicals. Thus good organic mulch helps build up the soil, naturally increasing a plants pest and disease resistance.

Two studies from Ohio State University have confirmed that plants grown organically in organically enriched soil suffer far less disease and insect problems than those grown with synthetic chemicals. Therefore good organic mulch helps build up the soil, naturally increasing a plants pest and disease resistance.

USDA studies on several species of plants have found that mulched plants were often 3 times as large and produced 3 times the yield of un-mulched plants after several years.

In January of 2011 the yard on the right went organic using leaf mold compost as a mulch and the Microlife organic fertilizer. Both yards were under water restrictions during the severe drought. The photo was taken by T. Polk, owner of Mother Nature Landscapes, whom did the work.

If you would like to read the original article, please click below.

[Click Here](#)



JOIN US FOR A BEHIND
THE SCENES TOUR

AN INSIDE LOOK
THAT'S SURE TO
FACINATE

**SEE HOW IT'S MADE: SOIL, COMPOST
& MULCH GUIDED TOUR**

MAY 30TH 9AM-10AM

FREE
WEAR YOUR
WALKING
SHOES

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

101 SHERBROOK CIRCLE, CONROE, TX, 77385

If you're enjoying these deeper soil insights, there's another way to stay connected to what's happening on the ground at [Nature's Way Resources](#).

Soil Source is our ongoing update from NWR - sharing what's in stock, seasonal specials, upcoming events, and timely soil and planting tips based on what we're seeing in real time at the nursery.

It's not a separate philosophy from what we talk about here - it's the practical, "what's happening right now" layer that supports it.

No spam. No soliciting. Just real updates, soil insight, and what's happening at Nature's Way Resources.

Sign up anytime and stay in the loop.

[Sign-up](#)

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.*

May

SAT., MAY 23-30: USED GARDEN BOOK SALE, 8am-2pm, Nature's Way Resources, 101 Sherbrook Cir. Conroe. 936-273-1200.

<https://www.natureswayresources.com/garden-events/>

SAT., May 30: See How It's Made: Soil, Compost & Mulch Tour, 9AM-10AM, Nature's Way Resources, Conroe. 936-273-1200.

<https://www.natureswayresources.com/garden-events/>

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/

SAT. JUNE 20: Plumeria Society of America Sale. Bay Area Community Center, 5002 E NASA Parkway, Seabrook. Free Admission & Parking. 9 am - 1pm theplumeriasociety.org/

July

SAT. JULY 18 : Plumeria Society of America Sale. Bay Area Community Center , 5002 E NASA Parkway, Seabrook, TX, 77586. Free Admission & Parking. 9 am - 1pm 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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