

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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Louisiana Iris
'Little Miss'



Louisiana Iris
'Little Rock'



Louisiana Iris
'Longue Vue'



Louisiana Iris
'Melon Party'

***"Choose natives. Remove invasives.
Grow a healthier Houston"***

By Brenda Beust Smith | The Lazy Gardener

Wish I had come up with this great headline (above). But kudos to Garden Club of Houston (from whom I "stole" the one above) for this one, their great theme for this year's Oct. 8-10th GCA Bulb and Plant Mart!

Let's face reality. Many, if not most, gardeners -- either knowingly or innocently -- have Texas-identified invasives in our yards. Probably not deliberately. Good example: Chinese tallows, often planted for bright fall color. What folks don't realize is that these nasty Chinese tallow imports can spread poisons that kill plants growing nearby (including our native trees) to protect their developing Chinese tallow seeds.

How do you avoid these dangers? Shop local nurseries you trust, and our many local plant sales such as GCH's Bulb Mart (celebrating its 103rd year of existence)! Why? According to the Garden Club of Houston, tropical milkweed

may remain green through mild Gulf Coast winters, allowing spores of the monarch butterfly parasite OE (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*) to accumulate on plants." Native milkweed goes dormant in winter.

Do you know, this is the very first time I've ever read anything publicly written about WHY our local milkweed is ok when (what I now see called) "tropical" milkweed isn't -- with names to actually note the distinction! As GCA's materials explain:

"Native species such as green milkweed and aquatic milkweed occur in Southeast Texas and better reflect the region's natural plant communities."

Need a treat for your brain? Check [GCA website](#) for advance info and Photos (!) of the plants that will be for sale during the **Online Ordering Dates:** June 15 – September 28. In the meantime, get a head start by logging onto GCA's website gchouston.org/bulb-plant-mart/. Click on Bulb Mart for more info and gorgeous pictures! (Don't forget to scroll down; that's where the plants-to-buy (or order online) when the time comes.)

* * *

Potpourri

The 84th Bulb and Plant Mart will be held Oct. 8-10, 2026

Thursday, October 8 5 – 7 p.m.

Friday, October 9 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Saturday, October 10 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

The Church of St. John the Divine
2450 River Oaks Blvd Houston, TX 77019

- **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

This article has been condensed for clarity and ease of reading

Wilding or Regenerative Landscaping

By John Ferguson

We hear a lot about regenerative agriculture, habitat restoration, butterfly and bird gardening, and related ideas. At their core, these approaches are about restoring our connection with nature and understanding how that connection improves our lives.

I recently finished a very inspiring book about a farm in England and the remarkable process of restoring it to a more natural state.

Wilding – Returning Nature to Our Farm
by Isabella Tree, New York Review of Books, 2018

The book tells the story of Knepp Castle Estate, a 3,500-acre farm that had been cultivated for generations. After years of struggling to make the farm profitable, Charlie Burrell and Isabella Tree decided to take a completely different approach. In 2000, they began allowing the land to return to a more natural state, using free-roaming animals to mimic the actions of the large herbivores that once shaped the landscape.

The results were remarkable. Wildlife returned, including rare and threatened species such as turtle doves, peregrine falcons, and purple emperor butterflies. Nightingales returned as well.

The story was especially inspiring to me because I have been doing something similar, although on a much smaller scale, at my retirement property near La Grange.

Much of the property had been clear-cut for agriculture and farmed in cotton for decades. Eventually, the soil became so poor that even weeds had difficulty growing. Water wells and springs had gone dry, and most of the indigenous wildlife had disappeared.

Over the past eight years, I have watched the land slowly begin to heal. Native grasses and wildflowers are returning. Wildlife has followed, from quail and doves to foxes and bobcats. I have even found evidence of a porcupine. I only have a fraction of the land Isabella Tree had to work with, but her story reminded me of a lecture by Dr. Doug Tallamy. He explained that if we work together, restoring one lot or parcel of land at a time, those individual pieces can eventually become an enormous restoration effort.

Doug Tallamy explains how we can make this happen in our own yards in his book:

Nature's Best Hope – A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard

by Douglas W. Tallamy, Timber Press, 2019

ISBN-13: 978-1-60469-900-5

This book picks up where Tallamy's earlier book, *Bringing Nature Home*, leaves off. I consider both books must-reads for serious gardeners and nature lovers. *Nature's Best Hope* is more of a "how-to" book, explaining how our yards can become part of a larger ecological solution. By planting native species and creating habitat, even small properties can support bees, butterflies, birds, and other wildlife while reducing the need for water and other resources.

Tallamy calls this concept the "Homegrown National Park." The idea is simple: instead of thinking of conservation as something that only happens in large parks and preserves, we can make our own properties part of the solution. Another book that explains why this connection with nature is so important is:

Your Brain on Nature – The Science of Nature's Influence on Your Health, Happiness, and Vitality

by Eva M. Selhub, M.D., and Alan C. Logan, N.D.

Collins Publishing, 2012

ISBN: 978-1-44342-808-8

This book is for anyone who loves gardening or nature. Numerous scientific studies have shown that exposure to natural environments can benefit both physical and mental health. Natural settings tend to promote positive emotions, and simply viewing or walking in nature has been associated with increased physical and mental energy.

Research has also found benefits for children, including those dealing with attention and behavioral difficulties.

The authors explore how spending time in nature may reduce the risk of numerous health problems and improve mental well-being. They also examine the effects of our increasingly technology-filled lives and offer nature-based approaches for improving cognitive function, mental health, and physical health.

One statement from the book particularly caught my attention:

"Soil must no longer be confused with dirt. It is a living, breathing form of nature."

That is something every gardener should remember.

When we restore soil, plant native species, provide habitat, and allow nature to do more of the work, we are not simply making our yards prettier. We are rebuilding a living system. And we don't need 3,500 acres to do it. One yard, one garden, and one piece of land at a time, we can begin bringing nature home.

If you are interested in getting started, Doug Tallamy's first book is an excellent place to begin:

Bringing Nature Home – How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants
by Douglas W. Tallamy, Timber Press, 2014
ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-992-8

[See original article here](#)

[Click Here](#)

COARSE FUNGAL COMPOST

Summer sale

NOW \$30/YD USUALLY \$75/YD

- ✓ Improve existing garden beds
- ✓ Start new beds with a healthy foundation
- ✓ Apply as a rich organic mulch

5TH ANNUAL FALL GARDEN FESTIVAL

At Nature's Way Resources

September 19th 8AM-2PM

- ✓ Local Vendors
- ✓ Childrens Activities
- ✓ Sip&Shop
- ✓ Expert Garden Q&A
- ✓ Plant Giveaways!
- ✓ Exclusive Plant and Soil Sales

101 Sherbrook Circle,
Conroe, TX 77385
natureswayresources.com
Office: 936-273-1200

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.

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

Sign up anytime and stay in the loop.

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!

AUGUST

FRI., AUG. 21. FALL LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE, by **FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 1pm. Virtual (Zoom), Free. [Landscape Success 2026](#)

WED. AUG. 26: CACTUS AND SUCCULENTS TRIVIA NIGHT AND PLANT EXCHANGE, 7pm, Multi-purpose Metropolitan Center, 1475 W. Gray. Free, Houston Cactus and Succulent Society.hcsstex.com

SEPTEMBER

WED., SEP. 2: LEARN TO GROW PICKLES by **ERIKA RUTZ**, 10 – 11:30am, Visitor Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. pct3.com/MBG

SAT., SEP. 5: PLANT WALK & GARDEN TOUR - PLANTS THAT HAVE CHANGED THE WORLD by **ZOE MATRANGA**, 10-11am, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. pct3.com/MBG

FRI., SEP. 11: MERCER GARDEN TOUR by **MERCER STAFF**, 9-10am, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. pct3.com/MBG

SAT, SEPT 12: SEED HARVESTING by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-11am, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

WED., SEP. 16: LUNCH & LEARN – BANANAS UNPEELED by **CHRISTY JONES & KELSEY WILLIAMS**, 12-2pm, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. pct3.com/MBG

SAT., SEPT. 19: FALL GARDEN FESTIVAL by **NATURE'S WAY RESOURCES**, 8AM-2PM, 101 Sherbrook Cir., Conroe. 936-273-1200. <https://www.natureswayresources.com/garden-events>

WED. SEPT. 23: PARASITIC PLANTS THAT ATTACK CACTUS AND EUPHORBIAS by **PROF. JIM MAUSETH**, 7pm. Multi-purpose Metropolitan Center, 1475 W. Gray. Free, Houston Cactus and Succulent Society. hcsstex.com

SAT. SEPTEMBER 26: GARDEN WALK: ESCAPE INTO THE GARDEN by **LEAGUE CITY GARDEN CLUB**, **League City**, 10-4 pm, Tickets \$20, www.leaguecitygardenclub.org.

OCTOBER

SAT., OCT. 3: PLANT WALK & GARDEN TOUR – SPOOKY PLANTS by **ZOE MATRANGA**, 10-11am, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. pct3.com/MBG

FRI., OCT. 9: MERCER GARDEN TOUR by **MERCER STAFF**, 9-10am, Visitor Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Free. For more information: pct3.com/MBG

SAT, OCT 10: FALL PLANT SALE by **MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-noon, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

THURS.-SAT, OCT. 8-10: 84TH BULB AND PLANT MART by **GARDEN CLUB OF HOUSTON**, Thurs., 5-7pm, Thurs; Fri. 9am-4pm, Sat. 9am-1pm

SAT., OCT 24: The BUTTERFLY & POLLINATOR FESTIVAL by **WALKER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**, 9am-noon. Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, 102 TAM Road, Huntsville, 936-435-2426, [link](#)

WED. OCT. 28: GROWING CACTUS & SUCCULENTS FROM SEED by **JACOB MARTIN**, 7 PM, Multi-purpose Metropolitan Center, 1475 West Gray. Free, Houston Cactus and Succulent Society. hcsstex.com

NOVEMBER

WEB. NOV 18: CACTUS AND SUCCULENT PLANTS - CONSIDERATIONS by **DAVE THOMAS**, 7PM, Multi-purpose Metropolitan Center, 1475 W. Gray. Free, Houston Cactus and Succulent Society. hcsstex.com

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, Nature's Way Resources contributes John's past articles and new information 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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