

## Funny tips for "Older Gardeners" actually help all!

by Brenda Beust Smith (aka The Lazy Gardener)

<https://www.natureswayresources.com/gardening-tips-for-older-gardeners/>

*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. Address questions, suggestions, and your successes to [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)*

***"Do you know why the Indian Rain Dances always worked?"***

***Because the Indians would keep dancing until it rained."***

*~ Sherman Joseph Alexie Jr., a Spokane-Coeur d'Alene-Native American writer*



Between our horrible sporadic rains and even more horrible heat (!), August often becomes a good month for admiring what we have and thinking about the future while inside in the AC!

Now that I've reached my 8th decade of life, discovering it's really affecting my gardening. For example, my gardens do have weeds. Some bloom. They get to stay! The others I glower at but may or may not remove, depending on my energy level at that particular nanosecond.

Sharing this with fellow gardeners so you won't take offense if someone in, say, their 8th+ decade, is hesitant to agree when you ask if they need help.

Still, be extra thrilled if they say SURE! Chances are many of their plants have multiplied beyond control.

But thinning takes energy, stooping or worse, kneeling, to dig them out or snip off branches. Offer to do that yourself and you might gain lots of fabulous cuttings to try!

If so, a wonderful thank you would be to offer to dig/pull out anything they refer to as a "damn weed."

Another trick I started a very long time ago -- SO grateful I did -- deals with fear of falling in the garden, or anywhere in the yard. It's so easy to step on a loose spot and go down in the blink of an eye.

Decades ago, I interviewed an elderly -- or so I thought him at the time! -- gentleman at his garden. He had what I thought was a strange gait as we walked through various beds of bloomers.

I asked was he ok? Sure, he said. "Just counting." Turned out, in iffy places (as all gardens are), he was doing what HIS grandmother did: counting.

Through and in between plantings . . . 1,2, 3, step. 1, 2, 3, step. He did this, he said, to give his body -- and mind -- time to prepare for possible, unexpected hard-to-see changes in the ground that might be coming. Maybe a hidden hole filled with easily squashed leaves or a soil-covered branch or loose wire.

Shortly after that, I was tripped by a patch of leaf-covered wet soil. Nearly crashed to ground. Used in Chronicle article, this tip got surprisingly positive responses from readers. Made such an impression, I began doing it myself.

**ARE "GARDEN'S DEMANDS"** more than you can handle?

Even tho you may not qualify for needing "Horticulture therapy," many tips in this category actually lift workloads for all of us.

Even if you're not "a senior," it's never too soon to adopt safety techniques! I'd love to publish more tips to help us "mature" gardeners with challenges, such as...

- Think 'lightweight' on tools (great Birthday/Christmas gift idea?). Actually feel before you buy. Lighter-weight and longer-handled tools save energy and help avoid bending. Kneeling pads and benches are easier on older legs!
- Use a wheelbarrow? One with two wheels is easier to push than one-wheel ones.
- Think groundcovers for lawn areas that have to be mowed.
- Consider your own height, size, arm reach, ability to kneel, etc., when purchasing/planting new plants. One size does NOT always fit all!
- If you want to garden but can't get past some normal challenges, check out "horticulture therapy" resources for new & senior citizens! ([www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=horticulture+therapy+tips+for+seniors](http://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=horticulture+therapy+tips+for+seniors)).

Do you have any special precautions you take when gardening? Tips on what you did successfully to minimize gardening chores? Do share to [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com). Won't use without your permission!

And, most important for us this time of year, watch the weather! Take advantage of clouds before storms hit, make those yard shadows your gardening friend!

**I hope you:**

1. got rain this past weekend (*for longer than 3 minutes!*). AND ...
2. you watered your most precious plants **BEFORE** it rained on them.

**BEFORE? Why water before it rains?**

During intense heat/droughts, soil automatically develops hard, dry top-crusts. If you want rain to go straight to treasured plants' roots (and not to adjacent weed roots), water just at the base, where stalks/trunk meets soil, BEFORE rain starts to fall.

Gardeners of old (and Indians I'm sure) may not have understood why this helped their crops, but they knew it worked.

PS: I always run any soil-mention first by John Ferguson for confirmation! His response to an earlier post on this: "*Looks good, only do add that cheap, low quality mulches also form crusts or grow 'dog puke fungus' — both of which repel water.*"

**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!