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Top Ten Biggest Positive Changes -- Horticulturally Speaking for Houston in the past 20 Years

by Randy Lemmon

"GardenLine"

- Compost/Compost/Compost - Better Compost for so many uses, period!!! Compost as Top Dressing; Compost as Mulch... you name it. For me, it's probably the most significant change for the better, in the past 20 years.
- One of the biggest but worst changes ever: Increased use of Dyed Mulches, not only is it unhealthy for the soil and plants, it just doesn't look natural at all.
- Organic Fertilizers have gotten better -- and more advanced in that they are less smelly and cost effective and actually usable in a broadcast spreader
- Internet & Social Media - Gets more people involved in answering questions and quicker at finding answers, plus you can order everything from seeds to tools on line.
- Introduction of Organic/Natural Insect Controls - Hello Neem Oil, Spinosad and Plant Oils.
- Loss of Insecticides - Bye Bye Dursban, Diazinon and the like.
- More and more uses of Texas Native Plants. 30 years ago, it was oh so niche... now it's the basis of many a nursery and garden center in the state these days.
- More and more fruit trees being grown, and maybe even more importantly "sold" year round.
- Deep Root Feeding/Watering of Trees - the more drought-like months we endure, the more obvious the need. It's one of the most referenced tip sheets of GardenLine.



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- Less planting of worthless trash trees and short-lived trees (thankfully we don't see Arizona Ash anymore and less and less Silver Leaf Maple as examples.)

As the topic of the "10 Biggest Changes" came up on the radio show, my mind also started working on:

Things I'm shocked we haven't gotten better at in 20 years (specific to Greater Houston area)

- Still too much Crape Myrtle Massacre
- (See Randy's "The Annual Crape Myrtle Massacre")
- Still too much usage of Atrazine-based Weed & Feeds
- Can't believe Zoysia has not become THE grass of choice
- Can't believe landscapers are still horrible on new home construction landscapes
- Hard to believe no one has invented a weed killer for all weeds and yet safe for all grasses and bedding plants all at the same time (weed killers, are pretty much what they were from 2 decades ago) and that's just sad!
- Don't understand why people (and especially mowing services) still mow St. Augustine so low.