

Next Year Will Be Different - Resolutions by Gardeners

By Ann Brooking
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Why would anyone read an article about someone else's gardening new year's resolutions? If you are like me your "to do" list is already long and unending. And yet when one year ends and another begins, many of us reflect on how we could do things differently. Were we "successful" last year? Where were the problem areas? What didn't we do? What did we do that did or didn't work? These are the types of ponderings that drive us to make commitments to behavior in the coming year we may not otherwise make.

In this day and age, whether gardening resolutions are "sustainable" over time might be an important part of choosing them. I would like to suggest we set ourselves up for success rather than failure. At the same time, what we call failure could be regarded as success if we learn from it. I will embrace my failures and learn from them and strive towards goals with long-term focus and a sense of humor. It is my belief that we need as many simple pleasures to sustain us as we can muster!



Landscaper Marguerite Jacobs' resolution for the new year is to convert her large perennial bed to an island of trees and shrubs. **All photos by Ann Brooking / Skagit County Master Gardeners.**

Here are a couple of my "feel good" resolutions:

- Be present in the moment and enjoy my garden for what it is any day of the year.
- Be grateful that I have a garden where I commune with the plants and animals.
- Be grateful for eyes to see the dewdrops, ears to hear the birds, a nose to smell the fresh air and skin to touch the soil.

It is interesting how we observe our surroundings, and assess what needs to happen. Everyone does it differently; it is all about priorities. What is bugging us so much that we resolve to change it next year? We are moved to act when we notice something that is not quite right, is out of balance or does not mesh with our vision of how our yard ought to look.



Here are a few resolutions from our Master Gardeners:

- Kathy Wolfe: “I resolve to sharpen all of my tools, including shovels, prior to the start of the gardening season. It’s a job that never seems to get done or done well enough.”
- Diana Wisen: “I resolve to plant every plant I buy within one week of purchasing it.”
- Diane Creighton is going to add important gardening “To Dos” to her 2012 calendar so she remembers them before it is too late. She also will remember to allow the correct space for her new plantings to grow so they don’t have to be moved later.

Perhaps in reading this you will get a sense of camaraderie with your fellow local gardeners. Here are some of their resolution ideas:

- Joyce Gillingham aspires to plant more winter vegetables such as kale and fava beans.
- Sue Shellenberger would like to “rip it all out and start over” as, over time, she hasn’t had the time to keep up on yard work.
- Vicky Thulman: “If I don’t like something in my garden, I will move it or give it away.”

Part of maintaining a yard involves controlling invasive plants. For the past ten years I have kept a “winter resolution”: I pull all the Himalayan blackberries to keep the upper hand. Winter is the best time to do this because, with the bare branches of the surrounding deciduous shrubbery, I can easily spot the telltale fat leaf of the blackberry. Also, the ground is soft (when it isn’t frozen) so more of the roots come out with the plant when I pull on it. I gave up on the buttercup when it isn’t in a formal bed.

Horsetails are ancient, wily and persistent, so I half-heartedly peck away at them all year long. I have subdued the morning glory but know it is temporary and I must be vigilant in my search for sneaky intruders at every turn.



I realize the horsetail, blackberries, et al, will prevail over time - they will outlive me. Just the same, here is my gardening resolution this year – controlling these invasives thus giving me long-term benefits when I persist and dire consequences if I don't.

For me, gardening resolutions must be realistic and important enough to warrant commitment. I am certain there are those of you who disagree; you might say aim for the sky and strive to achieve the impossible. Either approach could yield results so go ahead and dream up your intentions for 2012.