Master Gardeners Share Their Gardening Resolutions
by Susan Franciskovich, UC Master Gardener

Conventional wisdom tells us that most New Year’s Resolutions don’t last beyond early spring. However, gardeners are less likely to break their gardening resolutions because gardens really begin to “come forth” in spring and beckon gardeners outside and into a partnership with growing green things of all kinds, through the year’s seasons. Readers might be inspired and informed by some of the following resolutions for 2014, shared by individual Master Gardeners.

Composting - Thea Fiskin: “I will try not to fill my green waste can. Instead, I will try to do more composting with my garden waste.” An excellent garden amendment, compost is easy to make and lightens the load at landfills. For an optimal compost pile, about 3 to 4 feet square, use equal volumes of green plant materials with equal volumes of brown plant materials. (Browns are dry materials, such as wood chips and dried leaves; greens are fresh, moist materials such as grass cuttings and fruit / vegetable scraps.) Add water to the pile, and turn after a few days to add oxygen. Turn the pile weekly for about 8 weeks and Voila!

Garden Tool Care - Marcia Goldstein: “When I prune my shrubs and trees, I will try to keep my disinfectant spray bottle with me, so I can disinfect my tools between plants. I use household bleach, diluted 1:9 with water.” Garden tools must be clean to avoid spreading contaminated soil or pathogens from infected plants. Wash treated tools and oil them before storing because bleach is corrosive.

New Varieties of Pomegranates - Jane Bodine: “I plan to plant a pomegranate tree and want to find one that has soft seeds so I can put them in a salad for color and taste. My favorite varieties are Vkusni, Sirinevyi, and Angel Red because I like the flavor and soft seeds.” Pomegranate (Punica granatum) is a wonderful small drought-tolerant and long-lived tree for Central Valley gardens.

Garden Journaling - Anne Skinner: “I plan to create a journal of gardening activities including successes, failures, times of planting and harvesting and specifics of plant varieties”. Gardeners can decide what purpose they want their gardening journals to fulfill and what format is most suitable. Gardeners should pay close attention to detail and be accurate and specific so that they can consult their notes for guidance. Proper plant names should be used; entries should be dated. Photos and measurements can be included.

Herb Gardening - Jeanmarie Stephenson: “I plan to grow a successful container kitchen herb garden using plants purchased from a nursery. My herb garden will feature basil, garlic, chives, dill, sage and marjoram. I have a small plot with limited full sun.” Generally, herbs are easy to grow. They prefer well-drained loamy soil. Herbs can be grouped in containers according to their light requirements (full sun or partial shade).
Backyard Re-Landscape - Carol Iskenderian: “We recently had our water-guzzling, chemical-requiring and high maintenance ‘money pit’ of a pool and spa removed. We will not add any new lawn but, instead, will concentrate on growing lower maintenance, drought-tolerant plants. A charming garden shed will be built in the middle of the garden and a large area will be devoted to vegetables and herbs.” Removing lawns is a popular trend and aligns itself perfectly with “Gardening Central Valley Style” which features drought- tolerant sustainable gardening.

Teaching and Helping in 2014 - Dennis Cohen: “While I like helping anyone with gardening questions, I plan to focus this year on assisting Baby Boomers and people nearing retirement to adopt gardening as a fulfilling and rewarding pastime in retirement. To achieve this, I plan to: 1) demystify the Green Thumb Theory; 2) reinforce and impart the fact that there is a wealth of assistance from trained people who are willing to coach beginners on an ongoing basis; and 3) direct people to free information available online, in library books, and, of course, from the Master Gardeners at our regular Farmer’s Market booths, as well as at our living labs, like the Ralph Moore Rose Garden.” Master Gardener information is available at: http://cetulare.ucdavis.edu click on Master Gardeners and Local Gardening Information.

AND to readers, as we begin this New Year, may all your gardening ventures be “Masterful”.

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