

January, 2021

Winter, a Glimpse into Paradise
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Every year at this time in the garden I'm reminded that my barren looking garden is my paradise. Gene Wilder's song, "Pure Imagination" from "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," plays on repeat in my head like a broken record, inspiring me and pushing my imagination to the limits as to what my garden can achieve in the New Year.

I finish bundling up by slipping on my favorite rain boots swirling with busy little bees, and I grab my pencil and notebook to head outside and walk about the garden. Tiny bursts of happiness jump out at me through the irises starting to poke out of the ground. It is here that I take stock of what my paradise looks like, ask myself some questions and spend the time to jot down my thoughts and dreams for the upcoming year.



With the feeling of damp soil beneath my feet I breathe in deeply and exhale all the expectations I held in from last year. I quietly whisper a new promise to both myself and my garden, a promise to hold no expectations for this coming year. I choose to enter this year with a renewed sense of hope and curiosity instead. With Mr. Wilder's words still in the background of my head, I'm encouraged to be free and curious, so I start by piecing together, in my notebook, my dream plant list that will:

- include flowers in my garden that fit in my desired color scheme, or will provide my favorite scents, or will look lovely inside my home as an arrangement.
- provide vegetables or fruits that I enjoy eating year-round.
- challenge me to grow something new and out of my element that can be enjoyed by me and the native species around me.
- add more winter interest to my garden for the following year – evergreens, hellebores, etc.

Any positive thing can quickly feel like a huge task if you let it, so don't. To combat the feeling of hope transforming to dread, split your dream list up into sections. I like to break mine up by season and plant section. This stage requires additional research to ensure that sow-by or plant-by dates aren't missed. It is in January when I start to choose and order my seeds through websites or catalogs, or by heading down to the local gardening store. If I can't find the seeds that I want, I make a note to pick up established plants at a reputable nursery instead.

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It's also important to start with small projects that will be easy for you. Make your project real by giving it a name; then split it up into small achievable goals. Tackle each goal until your project is complete. Don't forget to reward yourself for a job well done. We might not be able to munch on a flower teacup like Gene Wilder did, but we can surely enjoy a warm cup of tea or cocoa, or an icy glass of lemonade in the garden. Repeat these steps until you find yourself with nothing left but to enjoy your own imagination.

If your dream garden includes lots of delicious vegetables, join Master Gardener Zack Dowell on January 30, 2021 from 9:00 to 10:30 am, for an online class on spring and summer vegetables, including information about plant selection, planting times, site selection, soil preparation, seed planting techniques, and pest management. Please register in advance at <https://ucanr.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJIqcOGrrzooHtPU7M6PUys6x5TEm8gwhukN>.

Due to the pandemic, Master Gardener events will for the foreseeable future continue to be limited. We realize our public classes are valued by county residents and we are doing our best to provide virtual learning opportunities. You can find our new online class schedule at: http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698, and recorded classes on many gardening topics here: https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Public_Education_Classes/Handouts_-_Presentations/.

Due to the California stay-at-home order, the Sherwood Demonstration Garden will be closed until further notice. Check http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden for updates.

Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard remotely and can still answer your questions. Leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512, or use the "Ask a Master Gardener" option on our website: mgeldorado.ucanr.edu. We'll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news.