

Make These Gardening Resolutions For 2018

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, Feb. 2, 2018

Q: I was asked the other day if I was still carrying out my New Year's resolutions. My response was to ask "do gardening resolutions count?"

A: I know many of our Master Gardeners and myself make gardening resolutions every year and I would like to invite you to make your own gardening resolutions for this coming gardening year. As February begins, I say it is not too late to set some goals.

One of my gardening resolutions for this year was to create a more formal garden notebook, and use it. Here at the college we have a large organic garden and keeping records is important but is always a challenge. I included a map as part of my notebook. You might consider a sketch or a scaled template map of your yard that can be copied, and then use these copies to write your notes on. This way you can track new plantings, plants that die, when/where you prune or apply dormant spray, notice or treat for pests, etc. and relate this information to the correct place in the yard. This is a valuable tool to helping you to manage your garden space.

Another popular resolution may include a commitment to making a map of your vegetable garden and a plan for rotating crops in a three-year cycle. Crop rotation, even just from one raised bed to another, can help to both thwart insect pests and prevent depletion of specific nutrients within the soil. Another fun resolution could be to try growing and eating new veggies that you've never tried such as bitter melon, kohlrabi, or Redbor kale.

One resolution you may consider is to test your soil, especially if you have been having any problems with growing a garden or have problem spots in your yard. Call the Master Gardener office to find out how to collect your sample and where to have it analyzed. There is a fee to have the soil tested, but the knowledge gained about your soil can be very helpful. This information may save you money and work in the long run by allowing you to choose plants matched to your site, and to fertilize your garden more effectively.

Also, if you don't already have one, resolve to start a compost pile. Keeping a compost pile going is an ongoing resolution I try to keep every year. Even a simple stack in an out-of-the-way place will eventually decompose and give you compost. By composting you are using yard and kitchen waste to make a wonderful supply of life-giving soil amendment that is ready in three months to a year, depending on how much attention you give your pile.

Finally include a resolution to support our local nurseries or local plant sales. These places and venues have many regionally grown plants and staff knowledgeable about our local growing conditions. Avail yourself of their healthy plants, extensive variety and relevant advice.

Last, but not least, attend a workshop or gardening class: Wyntour Gardens, the McConnell Arboretum, Gold Leaf Nursery and Shasta Master Gardeners all put on workshops through the spring. These events not only teach new information about gardening but introduce you to a support network of other folks who enjoy gardening.

The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email mastergardener@shastacollege.edu. The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.