**Gardening Resolutions for 2013**

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Gardeners are well positioned to contribute to their community’s quality of life. Here are some New Year’s resolutions for you to consider if that is something you want to do.

These resolutions emphasize you giving more of yourself to you community, but you should also consider them in terms of how they meet your needs to escape boredom, improve your self-esteem, influence others and exercise more.

1. Resolve to assess your use of pesticides in 2013. Prepare a list of what you used in 2012 and why you used it. Using plantanswers.com and other information sources take the time to determine if there is a less toxic option that does the same job and consider using it in 2013. The goal of your research should be to reduce overall pesticide use while increasing pest control effectiveness. Call your local government information number for the location of your excess pesticide disposal location. In San Antonio, call 311.
2. Resolve to introduce at least one child to gardening. Peer-reviewed research and, just as important, your own experiences confirm that participation in gardening makes for a more satisfying life that, in turn, leads to better success in school and more contributions as a citizen.
3. Resolve to make your landscape and gardening more “green” by recycling leaves, pulled weeds and other organic waste. Creating a compost pile is an easy way to recycle, but you can also just mow leaves on the lawn and let them decompose there. If you bag up leaves and can’t use them yourself, find another gardener in the neighborhood to use them. They should not end up in the landfill.
4. Resolve to use the environmental and landscaping knowledge you have gained from gardening in a role such as serving on your neighborhood horticultural committee. There are other advisory groups such as the SAWS Community Conservation Committee where the knowledge would be useful. Even if you don’t participate as a regular member, watch for issues in zoning, drought restrictions, water rates and land use that would benefit from your knowledge.
5. Resolve to expand your gardening effort by trying a new field, such as vegetable gardening, with one of your goals to contribute excess production to older neighbors or the food bank. Water gardening requires a whole new set of knowledge. How about cut flower gardening or planning your landscape so you have 12 months of color?
6. Resolve to assess your gardening and landscape in terms of water use. The ultimate goal would be to convert to a full, low-water use xeriscape by reducing lawn grass in favor of groundcovers, perennials and hardscape, but the goal might just be to reduce overall water use by 20% through better timing of irrigation, use of drip irrigation and/or better system maintenance.
7. Resolve to increase the bird population in your yard and neighborhood by making additions and adjustments to your landscape that produce more nesting cover and food production. If you plan well, you can create a “wildscape” that is more attractive than, and just as neat as, surrounding manicured landscapes. There are lots of books and websites that will help you.
8. Resolve to provide more leadership to you community, learn more about gardening, meet new gardeners and have more fun gardening by joining the local chapter of the Master Gardeners and/or Gardening Volunteers of South Texas. Both organizations have continuing education, dig- in- the- dirt opportunities, environmental projects and youth gardening. Contact the Master Gardeners through your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office. In Bexar County, the number is 210-467-6575. The Gardening Volunteers of South Texas are available at 210-251-8101.
9. Resolve to explore other organizations for community involvement and gardening opportunities. Local garden clubs often have significant community projects. The Mitchell Lake Audubon Center and San Antonio Botanical Garden have volunteer teams involved around gardening.
10. Resolve to help an older, or handicapped, neighbor back into (or be introduced to) gardening by working with them to build a raised bed garden complete with drip irrigation that accommodates their physical limitations.