

Let's Talk Gardening

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The Country Gardener

Happy New Year, Gardeners

Only a couple of people commented on the poem last week...must be losing my touch. Oh well, at least none of my English teachers saw it. I was kinda sweating that one.

In all the gardening newsletters I get, almost all of them mention New Year's resolutions. Did you make any? Do you really plan to do those things? Was it the influences of others "making" you say things you're gonna regret later? Were you kinda under the influence???? I didn't make any because I know that I never get them finished. Why bother?

BUT, just in case you feel guilty and need some, here are some suggestions;

- You might wanna resolve to pull a few more weeds this year.
- You might wanna resolve to actually build a compost pile and maintain it all year.
- Maybe you'll resolve to stop raking leaves or picking them up with the lawn mower and leave them on the ground as you mow this year.
- Maybe you'll decide you're gonna try to go more organic this year and stop helping pollute the aquifer.
- You could resolve to try to feed the plants in your yard/house more often. If you use organic fertilizer, you can do it any time and use about as much as you want and not worry about burning stuff up.
- Maybe you'll resolve to put up at least one—or maybe another—hummingbird feeder and keep it clean and full of sugar-water this year.
- Why not resolve to really try to get those trees planted this year? You've been putting it off long enough.
- And what about those bushes you keep saying you're gonna replace. This would be a good year to get that done, too.
- Have you been putting off building that pond because you just can't seem to get started? This may be your year to "git 'er done, Bubba."

That's enough. Any two or three of these would make a great year...probably better than last year. I am gonna try to get those landscape timbers down this spring. Then I can get that mulch that's been sitting there for 7-8 months spread out. Whatever.

Since those freezes last week, just about everything that's gonna die back has. So...it's time to get out the ol' pruning shears and get on with it. If you have perennials like lantana, hibiscus, Angel's trumpet, purple fountain grass or others that look like they're dead, go ahead and cut the branches back to about 2-3 inches above the mulch. Put all the stuff you cut in the compost pile...it WILL decompose, I guarantee it.

There is still time to plant those tulip bulbs you've been storing in the frig the last 6-8 weeks. Plant them 4 times the depth of the biggest dimension on the bulb—in other words about 4-5 inches deep (pointy-side up) in soil enriched with lots of organic matter. You'll have some beautiful blooms in a couple of months, but remember they only bloom once in our area, so when they've done their thing, dig 'em up and put them in the compost pile. If you want some bulbs that will come back year after year, take a look at some daffodils. They're great, too.

Your roses need only a little attention now. You need to water them every 2-3 weeks if it doesn't rain. Dispose of any diseased leaves in the trash, not in the compost pile. Don't fertilize the roses until spring. I'll let you know when.

OK, that's enough to get you started. Just don't over-do it. Dress in layers if you go out in the morning. You can start peeling them off as you warm up. Enjoy the cool days.

Send your ideas, questions, or comments to gardener@gvtc.com