

Resolutions: the more the merrier

The new year usually prompts us to an evaluation of what we have done and how we may change some activities to be more effective in their use of time, money and energy. When I asked for suggestions from Master Gardeners they responded. Their good resolutions follow.

Carolyn Evans resolves to yank all weeds before they are 2 inches tall instead of two feet, to check for pests and diseases daily rather than yearly, to fertilize organically, to water when necessary and not three days past 'near death' and to find a solution to the invasion of wire grass in all my so-called flower beds.

I am in awe of Carolyn; she has surely covered all the bases. Once upon a time when wire grass threatened my flower beds, I 'edged' them periodically by plunging a sharp-bladed spade along the line. It worked to separate the sheep from the goats after a fashion.

Zach Loesch limits his resolutions to one, "I resolve to keep up with the weeding that needs to be done in my yard." Don't you think that is one of the basics of gardening right there? Mulch helps and some people have good luck with barrier fabrics of one kind or another, but it all comes back to pulling, one weed at a time. If you have trouble distinguishing between a valued plant and a weed, pull on it. If it resists, it is a weed; if it slides out easily it is a valued plant.

With her customary efficiency Noel Priseler has listed her resolutions in numerical order.

"My resolutions are not fancy – just what I would truly like to do this year. I have three gardening resolutions: (1) get my two granddaughters excited and involved in growing flowers and vegetables; (2) get rid of all the yellow nutsedge in my flower beds and (3) make the beds more maintenance free by planting perennials that require little pruning and deadheading."

By mentioning the yellow nutsedge, Noel reminds me that the one publication we really do need is an illustrated pamphlet of local Southeastern Virginia weeds and how to eliminate them!

Master Gardeners are fascinated by more than the plant-sightings on their property, as Felicity Ericson's study of birds indicates.

"This is the year I plan to identify and keep a record of my local sparrow sightings. Around the birdfeeder are White-throated, Chipping, and Song sparrows, but what I am after are the American Tree, Field, Grasshopper, Savannah, Vesper, White-crowned, Fox, and Swamp sparrows. A good start..."

Felicity, I am truly impressed. Sadly, all of those distinctive breeds would appear on my life-list as LBBs, little brown birds. I resolve to do better.

Along with his wishes for a Happy New Year, Lance Gardener suggests we actually use the garden tools and decorations purchased and not purchase more of what we already have. Amen to that! You all know the guilt that comes when you clean out the garage and find unused 'magic' solutions that were never tried. The problem Lance addresses is global and the cure may begin with each of us.

The next resolution is one I take to heart as I see from my window the pretty little holly that remains in its pot, unplanted because there was no room for it in exactly the right spot, alas. Beverly Runton-Moorhouse writes: "I will (I hope) refrain from purchasing 'good deal' plants and will research the 'Right plant for the right place' for my yard."

The last entry for this collection is not so much a resolution as a lament, "I'm giving up on grass." Grass requires too much attention for busy families so as the increasing shade of spreading tree canopies makes good grass nearly impossible, this gardener resolves to link the large and Japanese maples by adding small shrubs and mulch. But then, is there the inevitable weeding?