

Gardeners' Resolutions for 2023

It's that time of the year again when we look forward to establishing new year resolutions. Research shows that hundreds of thousands of people put exercising and healthy eating at the top of their list. What better way to meet both goals than by gardening? You can achieve both goals while, learning new things, going green, and just having a great time! Here are some inspiring ideas and ways to achieve your gardening resolutions and to get you started on your best gardening year ever.

1. **Plan Ahead** – Start right now to get your garden going and growing – document the things you want to accomplish in your garden and what resources you will need to accomplish those goals, whether they be financial, human, material or otherwise. It is important to first fully understand what you will need to succeed.
2. **Plant More** – Try mixing and matching plants like you have never done before. Make good use of the **Proven Winner's** for our hardiness zone. Consider adding more containers. Find plants that work well together while adding a relaxing and soothing environment. A great start is to research native plants that are sure to bring success the very first time around.
3. **Learn and Try Something New** – There's so much information available to keep all of us informed on America's number one hobby; gardening. There are videos, podcasts, articles, and free online learning. Step outside of your comfort zone and try seeds or bare root planting. Consider swapping plants and clippings with friends, neighbors, and other gardeners.
4. **Plant a Bat House** – The bat population is diminishing. A bat house not only provides home and shelter for them to roost and raise their young, but you will be paid in spades. This is because they eat up to 1,200 mosquitoes per hour and that puts a significant dent in the pest population. Also keep in mind that bat feces (guano) happen to be one of the best fertilizers around.
5. **Go Green** – Consider starting a compost pile. It is not as daunting as it may seem, and it will create a garden gold mine for your plants and the environment. Make certain not to let weeds get the upper hand. Manage them without harmful chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. Try using organic alternatives.
6. **Use the Farmers' Almanac** – The Farmers' Almanac has been published every year since 1818. It is an extremely reliable and accurate source that provides amazingly long-range weather predictions for both the U.S. and Canada. It also has articles, calendars, and a host of information on gardening and how to make healthy homemade recipes.

7. **Reduce, Recycle and Reuse** – These three words first came into our consciousness in the 1970's. There was some resistance and lack of knowledge in the beginning. However, today we are much more cognizant about our responsibility to the planet and we better understand how to contribute to its longevity. Our first and best option is to minimize single-use plastics. Consider taking your own shopping bags to the grocery store or reuse old plastic bags for multiple shopping trips. Collect and use popsicle and chopsticks for plant markers. Make a compost bin out of reclaimed pallets or screen windows. Scare birds away by hanging aluminum pie plates, silverware, wind chimes, or mylar balloon strips. The list is practically endless.

8. **Garden for Wildlife** – Plant an oak tree. There are native oaks for just about every state in the U.S. These trees form the hub of a native garden, providing habitat and food. In most counties oaks support more than 450 species of moths and butterflies. Create a bird bath but bear in mind that birds will not use a bath if the water is deeper than their legs. Pawpaws, persimmons, black cherries, and serviceberries support birds, caterpillars, and butterflies. And they supply delicious produce for you.

9. **Join a Garden Club** – Did you know there are specialty garden clubs? For example, the rose and herb society and garden clubs that focus on succulents and perennials. If you do not have a garden club in your area, start one. Reach out to Garden Clubs of America or National Garden Clubs for more information. Get involved!

10. **Have fun in the Garden** – Try not to allow the physical and regimented aspects of gardening prevent you from getting outside on a regular basis and getting your hands dirty. Work with kids to plant something fun like sunflowers while watching, measuring, and cataloging their growth. Plan to eat what you grow and consider cutting your gift-giving budget for the year by growing gifts rather than purchasing them. It is also fun to plant an Italian garden for pasta meals, fresh green salads, and other edibles.

The new year serves as a fresh start with new opportunities both in life as well as your garden. To improve your chances of success, this year take all your new year's garden resolutions and divide them into quarterly, monthly, weekly, and daily goals. Good luck and great gardening to you in the coming year!