I think of a resolution as a promise to myself to improve something. As gardeners we “resolve” to rake the leaves, prune the shrubs, weed the beds. But a new year calls for something more substantial than that everyday stuff. So I polled a bunch of gardeners about their resolutions for 2010 and here is what they had to say.

Never go into your garden without pulling a weed. Always look a gift plant in the mouth. Eat more fruits and vegetables. Grow lots of vegetables and share with unsuspecting friends. Plant a row for the hungry. Turn some acreage into a wildflower meadow. Collect and save seeds. Don’t keep pruning an overgrown plant; take it out and get a smaller plant. Buy good plants to begin with; they are worth the extra money. Plant right away instead of letting your plants sit around in nursery pots for too long. Sharpen your tools, especially the shovel and trowel. Visit more cool botanical gardens around the country.

Many resolutions were earth friendly. Remove invasive exotics from the yard. Recycle the things that grow in your yard. Make more compost. Apply more free mulch from the landfill on Apalachee Parkway. Have your soil tested. Improve the health and biology of your garden soil. Clear out the English and Algerian ivy a little each week till it is gone. Learn the native shrubs that grow in your yard. If grass won’t grow in a spot because it is too shady, take out the grass; don’t trim the trees. Plan open spaces.
Some resolutions were of a more organizational nature. A common theme was to have a “plan” instead of buying plants on impulse and finding room for them afterwards. Another popular theme was to keep a calendar of what gardening projects to do each month. Then there was the keeping of a journal into which the gardener would record what had been done in the garden. One person planned to design and build an easily accessible tool shed. Another resolved to put up a mailbox in the back yard. She said it would “add decoration and be useful” to store gloves, small hand tools and paper and pencil for making lists. She would put up the red flag to remind her when she had a "to do" on her list.

“This year I will drink more beer while I garden,” said one person. Now maybe you don’t like beer, but whatever it is you enjoy drinking, you can do it in your garden. I recently heard a landscape designer talk about how overwhelmed she was by all the work she needed to do in her own yard. You know what she did? She drew up a design for her yard and made a plan for implementing her design. That was years ago and although she feels better about her yard (she has a plan!!) nothing has changed. Planning is good and often necessary. But sometimes it is better to go out in your yard, wander about, drink beer and notice things. Then do them right then.

One gardener said his resolution was to share plants and seeds and to exchange gardening experiences with other gardeners. Let’s face it, gardening is no fun if you can’t share your triumphs and seek comfort (and laughter) for your failures. I resolve to have more parties in my garden, so that I can share with other gardeners while we are drinking beer (wine, coke, tea). Happy New Year!

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