

News Article

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New Year Resolutions for Homeowners

I've always shied away from New Year resolutions, primarily because I know there is a high probability that they will be broken, only to become a distant memory by week number two. However, I thought I'd offer a few ideas, let's call them "goals", for the average homeowner in 2018 when it comes to yard, garden and landscape.

Goal #1: Resolve to evaluate your landscape in 2018. What works, and what doesn't work? What is more trouble than it is worth? How can I better control weeds and pests? Am I doing anything to harm pollinators, and can I do anything to protect or enhance pollinators? What landscape plants need more attention? What trees, shrubs, perennials or annuals would enhance my landscape? How can I improve my lawn or garden? Should I remove plants that are deemed invasive and replace them with plants that are native to Indiana?

Goal #2: Resolve to get your soil tested. Before planting landscape plants or garden vegetables, it's always a good idea to get your soil tested to know what you have to work with. You'll learn what your soil pH is (the acidity or alkalinity of the soil). Most garden and landscape plants need a pH range of about 6.0 to 7.0. Blindly adding lime (because you have heard it's a good idea) may actually be making your situation worse. Note also that wood ash added to a garden can be okay in moderate quantities, but excessive wood ash incorporated into garden soil will raise your pH over time – possibly to a level that limits nutrient availability to garden plants, resulting in poor performance of those plants. Soil test results will also reveal basic fertility levels in the soil, including phosphorus and potassium levels. Find a list of certified soil testing laboratories at:

https://ag.purdue.edu/agry/extension/Pages/soil_testing.aspx.

Goal #3: Resolve to do research from reputable sources. The advantage of the Internet is that you can find almost anything. The disadvantage of the Internet is that not everything you find is reliable, research-based or factual. For example, "home remedies" may seem clever, but often they are ineffective, inconsistent or even harmful. Start your yard, garden and landscape searches from land-grant university sources, including Purdue University, and from neighboring state institutions. One way to accomplish this is to add "edu" in the search box next to the subject you are searching for. If you abhor the Internet, we still take phone calls in the local Purdue Extension office, at 260-244-7615. We can help you separate fact from fiction in a vast sea of information.

If you would like to stop and talk person-to-person about a landscape issue, have a pest identified, or about another related issue, the local Purdue Extension office is a great place to start. You are welcome to stop by our office Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. at 115 South Line Street in Columbia City.

I could probably go on, but three goals are probably enough for now. Resolutions are tough to keep, anyway.

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