

News From Your County Agent
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Happy New Year everyone and thank you for reading my first weekly news article of 2018. A new year and a new fresh start is how many of us see the first few days of the New Year. Many of us make resolutions to make changes in our lives and some succeed and unfortunately most of us will start off good but by the end of the first couple of months we are back to how we ended the previous year. Good luck to all of you in keeping your New Year resolutions.

Stockshow Will Kick Off Next Week

The 2018 Zavala County Junior fair will be held next week at the ZAE showgrounds in Crystal City. The dates for the show are Thursday January 11 thru Saturday January 13, 2018. The stockshow will get underway with the annual free cowboy breakfast Thursday morning January 11th from 6:00 a.m.- 8:00 a.m. at the showgrounds. All animals will be in place in the barn by 3:00 p.m. The opening ceremonies for the 2018 show will start at 3:30 also on Thursday.

Friday January 12th will get started with the 4-H clover kids checking in rabbits at 9:30 a.m. and showing at 10:00 a.m. The judging of market goats, lambs, hogs and steers will begin at 1:00 p.m. and the selection of the grand champion and reserve grand champion lamb, goat, steer and hog of the 2018 junior livestock show will be held at 6:00 p.m. The show will conclude with the sale of lambs, goats, steers and hogs on Saturday January 13th beginning at 1:00 p.m. Please make plans to come out and support these 4-H exhibitors during the show. For more information please contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Tip of the Week: New Year's Resolutions for Gardeners

The human mind is fascinated with endings and beginnings. For us gardeners, our landscapes often are part of the whole introspection and resolution process as one year ends and another begins. The new year is a gift of promise and possibilities. So here are 10 gardening resolutions for 2018.

1. Resolve to plant at least one native plant. Natives, be they flowers, shrubs or trees, are adapted to your particular soil and climate. They are easy to grow without benefit of pesticides or fertilizer, and they require little supplemental water. Native plants also provide critical habitat for birds and beneficial insect that have co-evolved in the same area.
2. Promise to plant at least one flower for the bees. As their numbers are dropping rapidly due to pesticides, climate change, parasites and other factors. Bee-friendly plants include bee balm, crocus, salvia, zinnia, allium, poppy, cosmos, sedum and countless others. Bees also appreciate herbs like rosemary, chives, thyme, lavender, borage. If possible, provide plants that bloom in spring, summer and fall.
3. Resolve to Leave grass clipping on your lawn and keep them out of the landfill. As they deteriorate, leaves improve the soil and provide nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium without expensive chemical fertilizers. Think of the time you'll save by eliminating raking and bagging. If

you have extra leaves, add a few to your compost bin.

4. Promise to not let weeds get out of hand before taking efforts to control them. Most of us would benefit from making this resolution. Dealing with weeds is an unavoidable part of landscape upkeep. But yards and gardens with regular weed maintenance tend to have less severe weed problems.

5. Resolve to Get the soil tested. Getting your soil tested will help you make the best gardening decisions. Test results can indicate what fertilizers are needed. And knowing the soil pH can help with plant selection. Contact the Zavala County Extension office for a soil testing form and soil collection bags. It's simple to do.

6. Grow something you can eat this year. Gardening did not start off with beautiful ornamental plants. The first gardens were utilitarian and provided food and medicines. There is still a special satisfaction that comes from producing food for your family from the garden. But don't jump in blind; learn what you need to know about successfully growing your favorite vegetables and herbs. It needn't be complicated. A single tomato growing in a 5-gallon container on a porch, patio or balcony can provide the same satisfaction as a large vegetable garden. And for those vegetable gardeners who would not dream of planting something unless they can eat it, here's a resolution for you: If you only grow vegetables, try planting a few flowers this year to nourish your soul.

7. Promise to correct some of those landscape problems and mistakes you've been living with all these years. Remove shrubs that are too large and require constant pruning and replace them with something smaller. Create an outdoor living area that fits your family's needs rather than accepting what was there when you bought the house. Have shade trees pruned to raise their canopies and allow more light into the yard.

8. Resolve to start a compost pile. Nothing beats biologically active homemade compost when doing bed preparation or putting together potting mixes. Composting is not complicated; it can involve nothing more than piling up grass clippings, leaves and other landscape waste in an out-of-the-way area and allowing it to naturally decay. Don't forget to harvest it and use it as needed.

9. Resolve to Show a child the wonders of gardening. This year, take your son, daughter, grandchild, niece or nephew and show them your gardens, flowers and vegetables. How many of you remember a grandparent or parent showing you how to garden when you were young? How much do you treasure that memory? Pass it on.

10. And finally promise to spend more time simply sitting and enjoying the garden. Sometimes, I will simply meander through my landscape, touching leaves, smelling flowers and appreciating what I have created. This year, I resolve to relax and to remember that my garden does not always have to look like a magazine cover. Good luck with all of your new year's resolutions and I hope you are able to keep them all at least until the end of the new year. Have a Great week and a super New Year. M.V.

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