Friday’s Feature
By
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December 28, 2009

2009 New Year resolutions to improve your landscape

This is the time of year when we look towards the future for personal improvement and goal setting. The backyard gardener should be no different and the New Year is a great time to make some resolutions that will benefit the landscape.

Resolve to put as little as possible into the local landfill by committing to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Composting is both an easy way to reduce the amount of waste you send to the landfill and a cheap way to get nutrients for your garden. There are many compost methods, from a small worm composting unit to large outdoor bins—something for everyone.

You can use almost any organic material for composting including yard waste such as grass clippings, leaves, flowers, twigs, chopped brush, old vegetable plants and straw. Don’t, however, compost diseased plants, weeds with seeds or invasive weeds like torpedo grass. You can also compost kitchen scraps like vegetable peelings and coffee grounds.

For more information on composting, visit the UF IFAS Solutions for Your Life website at http://www.solutionsforyourlife.com.

Resolve to recycle your live-cut Christmas tree. Live-cut Christmas trees don’t have to go out with the trash; instead, they can take on a second life after the holidays when used as habitat for wildlife.

Christmas trees can be recycled by placing them in lakes or other water bodies as fish habitats, creating reefs for hiding or nesting. Be sure, however, to check with local environmental agencies before placing trees under water.

Christmas trees can be stacked to create a shelter for small mammals and birds. They eventually will decompose and add needed nutrients to the soil.
Good sense should be used when transforming a Christmas tree into a wildlife habitat. Trees should not simply be tossed outdoors or into a public area. Receive permission from property owners before discarding the tree on private or public land or in ponds.

Before disposing of a live-cut Christmas tree, remember to remove all trimmings including tinsel, garland, lights and ornaments.

Resolve to reuse items to create a fun and imaginative landscape. If you have a whimsical or crafty side, you may consider converting household objects into functional landscape components.

For example, an old box spring can easily be turned into a trellis for vining plants. Dress up a coat rack with ivy or a hanging birdhouse. Serve up tired flatware as a new tinkling wind chime by a window or on a porch. Old tires can be painted with a decorative pattern or a solid color and made into fun planters filled with bright flowers. A little paint and a few snips of the scissors can transform mini blinds left over from a home makeover into handy plant labels.

The sky’s the limit when it comes to recycling in the landscape, so let your imagination go!

The last resolution to ponder for 2009 is to contact your local Extension Office when you have a landscape problem. The University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service is a free service that provides information backed by research. Call us with your plant questions.

Theresa Friday is the Residential Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. The use of trade names, if used in this article, is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product name(s) and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.

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