

## **'Resolutions' or 'One Day at a Time'?**

It occurred to me as I started to type this that I haven't made New Year's Resolutions in years, maybe even decades. It may have something to do with age or even this era of uncertainty. Now I plan for the month rather casually, for the week with some precision and for today with a great effort and with gratitude for the day.

Some of you may be addicted to solving those cipher puzzles in which case you may have an answer to the problem raised recently by the quotation of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. that has persisted in my head like a jingle. "I really wonder what gives us the right to wreck this poor planet of ours."

We may list the seven deadly sins for a clue but it may be simple ignorance, combined with the very human tendency of looking no further ahead than next week. Part of our indifference to the future of our planet is that we lack faith in the accumulative power of individuals acting in unison. For an infusion of faith, just look around our own communities and see the great good done by so many small and local 'good guy groups'.

**NEW GREEN TRENDS:** Whether the desire to preserve the planet or to cut costs is the prime motive doesn't matter so let's celebrate the changes people are making to greet a new and greener year. I picked up the January issue of Better Homes and Gardens magazine to check out "36 All-season tips for Gardeners" on the cover and immediately noticed the magazine was lighter, slightly smaller, on paper with less heft. True color doesn't have the same impact as it does on heavier, glossy paper but we can live with that. Incidentally the two tips given for winter are: "Prune trees and shrubs while they are dormant in mid-winter" and "Cut back on feeding houseplants during winter."

Another trend you notice everywhere is eat and drink less! This is not specifically about diet or health but about global warming and our individual carbon footprint. No one is suggesting a penitential fast certainly but a comprehensive Cornell University study found that we could cut our 'food' footprint, our food energy use in half by simply eating less and cutting back on meat and junk food. This effort involves trying to eat food grown closer to home.

We know we require about 2000-2500 calories a day for health not the average 3747 daily intake Americans are accustomed to. Just cutting one meat meal a week is the equivalent of taking 5 million cars off the road. Diet soda for example may have only one calorie but it costs 2100 calories to make the drink and the can.

Planting a tree is always a vote of confidence for the future. What we plant this year may not benefit us for 20 years. The women of Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement in Africa have been planting trees since 1977, about 30 million so far. It was women who were assigned the chore of gathering fire wood for cooking so it was

appropriate that women focused on the solution to the longer and longer daily trek to gather wood.

That tree planting was surely done for the future as no seedling would offer spare wood any time soon. What we need to focus on in thinking about problem farms or forests or just the way we live our lives is not next year or the one after but the kind of place our grandchildren inhabit.

LAWNS REDUX: One must admit that we Americans love winners, which may explain the explosion in awards given for this and that. Horticultural awards are included in this dispersion of merit. Way back in 2001 a Green Thumb Award was given to 'Legacy' buffalo grass. You may have noticed that buffalo grass is the new sliced bread: another cultivar, 'Prestige' has been developed for the South and Southeast. Just looking at pictures of it, it is as attractive as Kentucky blue grass and were you to substitute buffalo grass for blue grass you would minimize water use. The figure given for the savings on a quarter-acre is 243,000 gallons in just one year. Good grief, do people actually water their lawns that assiduously?

'Prestige' which is heat and humidity tolerant, was developed at the Univ. of Nebraska. It has fine soft blades and a good green color. Had I a lawn to replace, what might convince me is the fact that it needs mowing monthly rather than weekly. For more details refer to the gardening articles section of [www.highcountrygardens.com](http://www.highcountrygardens.com).