

New Year's Resolution: Plant a Garden

Christmas is just around the corner. After that, New Year's Day. A day for making new year's resolutions. It seems every year the popular resolutions are to exercise more, eat healthier and improve one's overall well-being. Of course, one could just resolve to plant a garden.

We all know about the healthful benefits of growing our own food. Eating ripened vegetables harvested right from the garden packs a greater nutritional punch than items trucked hundreds or thousands of miles to reach the store shelf. Plus, many studies have reported that families with vegetable gardens just eat more vegetables. Often times, they not only eat more vegetables but try a more varied selection of them. This is true for children as well. It seems even a finicky eater will sample his or her own garden creation.



Then there are the physical benefits of gardening. Gardening improves balance, range of motion and builds physical endurance. It also provides strength training. One gallon of water weighs roughly eight pounds. So, when you are carrying that large watering can to thirsty plants throughout the garden, keep telling yourself that you are lowering your risk of osteoporosis.



One thing we may not think much about is the restorative benefits of gardening. It has long been understood that environment influences one's emotional well-being and that having greenery around helps us relax. Research shows that interacting with plants can reduce stress and there is growing evidence from studies done in hospitals that just viewing gardens or greenery can greatly aid with a patient's recovery.

Plants restorative benefits have triggered the creation of healing or relaxation gardens at hospitals, nursing homes and senior centers.

Schools have also found benefits from incorporating gardening into their curriculum. Gardening helps students build self-esteem and teaches patience. Actually, gardening teaches all of us about patience. Having a garden offers numerous rewards though we must wait for many of them.



So, for a New Year's resolution, add gardening to the list. If you don't have a space of your own, share a garden with a friend or join a community garden. A New Year's resolution to exercise more and eat healthier has never been so easy to keep.

Contact your local county Extension office with your gardening questions. We are happy to help!

Happy Holidays!