GARDENING RESOLUTIONS FOR 2009

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We all need to 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 any landscape. Let's look at some tips, techniques and strategies that will make your horticultural experience in Southwest Florida the best in 2009.

Your first resolution should be to water properly. As we continue to face the need to conserve water in 2009, it is crucial to follow local watering restrictions and implement common-sense watering practices in your landscapes.

Design and maintain a yard that thrives predominantly on rainfall once plants are established.

Water your lawn and other plants only when they show signs of stress. (Comply with any existing watering restrictions in your community).

Calibrate your sprinkler(s) to apply 1/2 to 3/4 inch of water per application.

Use a drip or micro-spray irrigation system to more efficiently water plant and flower beds.

In 2009, let’s fertilize our lawns properly. Remember that our Charlotte County Fertilizer Ordinance is in effect. Reduce the possibility of non-point source pollution (Continued on page 2)
and still have a beautiful and healthy lawn by using a fertilizer that has at least a 50% slow-release nitrogen source and no or low phosphorus - for instance a 15-0-15 or its equivalent is a good selection. Make sure to properly calibrate your spreader, calculate the proper amount of fertilizer to be applied, and using a deflector shield, keep three feet away from any water body or wet land.

Feed your palms correctly. Nutritional deficiencies not only produce unthrifty looking plants, but may also lead to the eventual death of the palm. Color and leaf condition will tell the story of your palm's health. Light leaf color may mean the need for nitrogen. Yellowing or orange spots may indicate a need for potassium. A lack of manganese will cause "frizzletop" where the leaves are withered and appear scorchd. A recommended palm fertilizer is a slow-release 8-2-12-4Mg plus micronutrients.

The last resolution that I would like you to ponder for 2009 is to positively identify a pest before taking action. The first step in controlling any pest is to properly identify it. If you take action before you really know what the problem is you are wasting your time and money. We must also determine if there are sufficient pests to warrant a treatment and then choose the least toxic option first. Our office can help you identify insects, plant diseases and other disorders so that you make the right management decisions.

Are you ready for 2009? Let the Charlotte County Extension Service help you with all of your horticultural educational needs.

Resources:

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