



2009 Gardener's Resolutions from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

January 2009 "In the Garden" from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum
Podcast and web video at arboretum.unl.edu

1. I'll relax and be a little more nutty. I'll plant more nut- and fruit-producing plants in my yard that have long seasonal interest and are great for birds and wildlife.
2. No more donuts—donut-like mulch rings around plantings, that is. I'll use 2-3" of organic mulch to maintain soil moisture, reduce weed competition, improve soil fertility and reduce mower and weed trimmer damage. I'll extend mulch to dripline of trees and group plants in "mulch islands" with similar needs, making them easier to maintain and mow around.
3. I'll burn some calories by taking a weekly walkabout through the garden to pull weeds, deadhead spent flowers and monitor plant condition (a single weed can mature in a few weeks, often scattering hundreds of seeds for next year's crop).
4. I'll start a new romance—with a deserving new tree. I'll check out good regional plant recommendations from ReTree Nebraska, the GreatPlants program and other resources with plant information specifically for the region.
5. I'll remember the grass isn't always greener on the other side, and resist the desire for a perfectly green, weed-free turf. Turf is expensive, time-consuming and the efforts to achieve it can cause significant problems in the rest of the landscape, so I'll use turf species that require less maintenance, watering, fertilization and disease-prevention.
6. I won't fall for the first pretty face I see in the nursery this spring. Annuals are often at their peak in May and June, but many longer-lived plants with long tap roots, such as grasses, prairie plants and some tree seedlings, don't do as well in small pots. I'll think beyond early summer for plants that are at their peak at the end of a hot, dry summer and plants with interesting fall foliage, seedheads and textures.
7. I'll be green—emphasizing a diversity of plants that can survive on natural precipitation and existing soil. When possible, I'll return plant residues to the soil. And I'll keep in mind that only a very small percentage of garden insects are pests and use pesticides only when necessary.
8. I'll wear my firs proudly—Canaan, concolor, Fraser, Korean and Nikko fir for eastern Nebraska and concolor for western parts of the state.
9. I'll work from the ground up... since healthy gardens start with healthy soil. I'll add topsoil or compost if my soils, like most Nebraska soils, are heavy in clay, alkaline or low in organic matter.
10. I'll teach my kids about the birds and the bees, and attract them to our yard with a diversity of perennials, shrubs and trees that will encourage wildlife and pollinators like birds, butterflies and insects. I'll leave un-mowed areas for play and imagination and leave children spots of their own to dig, plant, build and play, include native plants and plants with interesting scents, textures, colors and smells.