**Lumpkin County Extension Service**

26 Johnson Street, Suite A, Dahlonega, GA 30533 (706)864-2275

PRESS RELEASE 1-7-07

Greg Sheppard - County Extension Agent

**New Year’s Resolutions**

Well, Christmas is behind us and a new year looms on the horizon. It is traditional

this time of year to do two things. First, we all have to eat black eyed peas and hog jowls

on New Years for good luck. Then, we all will begin to make New Year’s resolutions.

Many of us will resolve to eat less and exercise more. I don’t know about you, but my

track record is not too good on that one! This year, I propose that we make some

resolutions that will prevent a lot of problems in the garden during the upcoming year.

Thankfully, most of these garden resolutions are easier to keep than the personal

resolutions I usually make.

**1**. **I will plan my landscape and work from this plan.** Many landscapes develop over

time based upon plants we are given or buy on impulse at the nursery. The end result can

be a hodge- podge of plants with no unity of design. Your landscape can look like an

airplane loaded with nursery stock exploded overhead and random plants fell all over

your yard. Take the time to develop a landscape plan for your property. Then, you can

add plants as your time and budget allows. Best of all, you can take a shopping list to the

nursery with you instead of relying on whatever grabs your attention that day.

**2. I will water plants in the early morning.** Nothing seems more natural to us than to

water our plants in the “cool of the evening.” What works best for humans, however,

does not necessarily work best for our plants. Afternoon watering wets foliage which

does not have an opportunity to dry before nightfall. This extended period of wetness

favors the development of all sorts of fungal diseases in the garden. Morning irrigation

applies water when the garden is already covered in dew. Water is best applied through

soaker hoses or other methods that don’t wet plant foliage. Plants don’t need an evening

shower or a Saturday night bath. They need adequate moisture for their roots–that’s all.

**3. I will read and follow the instructions on all chemical labels to the letter.** The

labels of garden chemicals contain a wealth of information. The label lists the amount of

the product to apply and gives information on how to protect yourself and the

environment while using the material. Don’t fall into the trap of thinking “if a little bit is

good, then a lot is better!” Increasing the dosage of garden chemicals beyond the labeled

rate can result in pesticide residues remaining on harvested vegetables. Higher than

recommended rates can cause damage to desirable plants.

**4. I will not try to use fertilizer as a “cure all” for garden problems.** Another natural

human response to a plant problem is to reach for the fertilizer bag. If a plant looks bad

then surely it must need more fertilizer! Take the time to look carefully at poorly

performing plants to determine the cause of their problems. Insects, diseases, and

environmental conditions are just as often the cause of problems as is low fertility. If you

aren’t sure what is causing the problem, then contact the Extension office. We will be

glad to assist you. Many plant problems can be diagnosed over the telephone or by

bringing a sample of an affected branch to the office. Home trouble shooting visits can be

scheduled if necessary.

**5. I will limit the high maintenance areas of my landscape.** Fruit trees must be pruned

and sprayed. Seasonal color beds must be weeded and maintained. If you don’t have the

time or interest in gardening, limit the amount of high maintenance plants in your

landscape. A simple landscape that is well maintained looks better than an elaborate

landscape that has gone wild!

Of course, there are many other resolutions that could be included in this list.

Make a few of your own and stick to them this year. You will find that you enjoy

gardening better than ever.