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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

GARDEN RECORDKEEPING

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A good starting point for the New Year is to resolve to keep good garden records. While maintaining a journal seems tedious to gardeners who prefer “hands in the dirt” activities, it is a useful tool. Our memories are not always reliable, and having the ability to consult notes from previous experiences can help avoid repeating mistakes. A simple loose leaf notebook is sufficient, including calendar pages and paper for notes.

Information for this record can include:

Daily high and low temperatures. Over several years one can get a good idea of when the first and last frosts occur in the specific garden area.

A garden sketch showing where each crop is planted. This helps in planning rotation of crops, which is essential for a healthy, sustainable garden.

Dates of planting each crop, and the individual varieties of each vegetable or flower. One can compare yields, disease resistance, and tolerance of weather conditions by keeping these records. It is helpful to note the dates of direct seeding in the garden, and whether repeated plantings were necessary. Dates of setting out previously started plants should also be noted, and whether weather protection was needed.

Costs of planting vs. value of crops harvested. This information is helpful for selecting what items are most valuable to grow on an ongoing basis. Simply write down each garden expense, such as seeds, fertilizers, other treatments, materials used for supports or cold protection, then estimate the per pound value of daily harvests.

In addition, one might add notes detailing new garden techniques or ideas for future plantings.

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For those who start plants indoors, provide the dates of these plantings. Dates of erecting covers over hoop houses can help with planning in years to come. Records of fertilizer applications and other soil amendments and notes as to the effectiveness of these additions provide good data for future reference.

The most important thing to do, however, is to simply start keeping records and to maintain the discipline to make this activity a habit. The rewards are well worth the effort.

For more information, visit the UI Extension Bonner County website at <http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/bonner>.

Ann Warwick has been a University of Idaho Master Gardener in Bonner County since 1996.

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