

Tale from the Garden!

New Year's Day was traditionally a time for gift-giving. Romans celebrated with offerings to their god Janus for the sake of good fortune & friends and neighbours exchanged gifts of figs and honey in the hopes of making a positive start to the new year. That's where the New Year's plant tradition comes from.

Now, New Year's gift-giving isn't what it used to be. However, there's still an emphasis on making a positive start (that's where all those New Year's resolutions come from!). Why not pay homage to an ancient tradition by presenting a friend or neighbour with a holiday houseplant?

A New Year's plant is a living symbol of good tidings and fresh beginnings. On a practical note, it offers a welcome burst of colour when the outdoor landscape in much of the country is desolate and dreary. Whoever is on the receiving end of your gift plant will likely appreciate having something alive to care for. So, what makes a good New Year's plant?

A New Year's plant isn't any one species of plant. It should be something that stands apart from the ordinary. A common houseplant won't do. Instead, consider a lucky bamboo, a florist's azalea, a succulent or a rare houseplant. The lucky bamboo is a symbol of good fortune, the azalea is a pretty evergreen full of vivid colour when in bloom, and succulents are easy going (and easy on the eyes, too!).

Lucky bamboo is a popular house plant, and it's easy to see why. It looks good, is very low maintenance and is said to bring good luck to its owner.



While the plant looks like a bamboo, it actually isn't one – it's a member of the *Dracaena* family and is called *Dracaena sandersoniana*. Also known as Chinese water bamboo, the ribbon plant and friendship bamboo, it's native to Africa, although your plant is more likely to have come from Taiwan or China, where specialist growers braid and twist the stalks into attractive shapes.

Lucky bamboo is a relatively easy plant to care for and will thrive in a light-filled home. It grows best in bright light. While it can tolerate lower light levels, it won't grow very much without a lot of bright light so rotate your plant often so that the light reaches the entire plant evenly. Most lucky bamboo arrangements feature the bamboo stalks growing in a decorative pot of water or planted in pebbles. Make sure that the water is always completely covering the roots. Add a bit of water as needed; depending on the temperature, this may be between two and seven days. Completely change the water every two to three months or more frequently if you find the water giving off a foul odour. Tap water is fine to use unless your tap water is hard water (containing a lot of minerals). If so, use distilled or purified water.

Lucky bamboos are believed to bring good fortune. According to the ancient Chinese art of Feng shui, the more stalks a lucky bamboo has, the more wealth and prosperity you will receive. The best places in your home for a lucky bamboo are a spot facing east (to attract good health) or south-east (to attract wealth).

According to Chinese traditions, the significance of lucky bamboo is tied to how many stalks you have. There are different meanings associated with various lucky bamboo arrangements. For example:

Two stalks represent love.

Three stalks represent Fu (happiness), Lu (wealth), and Soh (long life).

Five stalks represent the areas of life that impact wealth.

Six stalks represent good luck and wealth.

Seven stalks represent good health.

Eight stalks represent growth.

Nine stalks represent great luck.

Ten stalks represent perfection.

Twenty-one stalks represent a powerful blessing.

You'll never find a traditional lucky bamboo arrangement with four stalks. In Chinese culture, the word for "four" is close to the word for "death," so a gift of four bamboo stalks would be considered very rude, as if you had wished the receiver bad luck!

So what would you wish for as the New Year dawns? Three stalks? Seven stalks? Nine stalks? We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future.

I've just closed my calendar for 2021 & every page was marked up with the things I did over the past year. This calendar is of no use to me now - except to help me to remember what I did last year. Now I'm going to start my new calendar for the year 2022. This calendar is all ready for me to start planning for next year, with every page clean & empty. Whenever I make an appointment or have something important to remember, I will mark it on this calendar. Pretty soon, my new calendar will start to look a lot like the old calendar as I make plans for the future.

There is nothing wrong in planning for the future, but we need to remember that no matter what our plans may be, we can't know for sure what is in the future. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 8 v7, "Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come?" We can put appointments on this calendar from now to next December, but the only day that we can be sure of is today!

Some people become worried and frightened because they can't be sure of the future, but we don't need to worry, because even though we don't know what the future holds, we know who holds the future. That's why Jesus came to us at Christmas – God's gift to show us the way. The future is in God's hands, so we can rest easy in the plans that He has made for us. We can't be sure of tomorrow, but we have today, so we need to try to live it the way God planned it! So what is the secret to ensuring a happy and prosperous New Year?

Paul wrote to the Church of God in Corinth, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2 v2

At the beginning of a new year, it is traditional that we make resolutions. Resolutions are promises concerning things that we will try to accomplish in the year to come. Usually, they have to do with losing weight or something such as that. A wise man once made a list of resolutions that I want to share with you today. I believe that they are resolutions that will help to ensure that we will have a happy and prosperous New Year.

In the New Year, be sure to **LIE, CHEAT, DRINK, SWEAR and STEAL** more than you did last year.

LIE back and relax just a little more this new year. Let a little more life happen to you without so much worry.

CHEAT failure. Don't be afraid to try something new because you think you may fail. It is through failure that we learn the most valuable lessons.

DRINK from the fountain of knowledge. Many people around you have already been down roads you are about to travel. Learn from mistakes they have made. Take what they have learned and use it.

SWEAR to do your best. All the time, in every situation. That is all anybody will ever ask.

And finally **STEAL** a little time for God. Everyday take a little more time to develop your relationship with God.

So, if you lie, cheat, drink, swear and steal just a little more in the next year, you will have a profitable and enjoyable year ahead! God bless you in the new year!