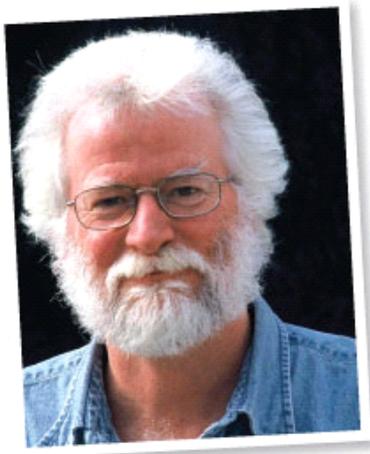


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Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot? Sometimes

John Friel



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I don't, as a rule, make New Year's resolutions, but this year I'm breaking that rule. And probably the resolutions as well, but not immediately, I hope. In 2017, I intend to:

- Garden more and buy more houseplants and cut flowers. I've gotten lazy about actually getting down and dirty, about nurturing, about putting my money where my meal ticket is.
- Stop threatening to boycott firms whose ads mangle the language. Looking at you, Blue Cross. I'd prefer to live fearlessLY, thank you. And you, Apple: "Think Different?" You know better. But I'm not giving up my Mac.

Lousy grammar is so widespread, I'll be eternally apoplectic and non-productive if I don't stop proofreading menus, billboards, e-ads and TV ads. Henceforth, I'll just roll my eyes and carry on. However, I won't eat at a restaurant advertising "Chicken barely soup." No telling what else they're getting wrong in there. It's not just me: Research shows that messed-up messages sow doubt in consumers' minds.

- Eschew clothing that boldly proclaims the name of its manufacturer. C'mon, North Face. I really like some of your products, but I'm not a race car driver and you're not my sponsor. Knock it off or I'll buy knockoffs.

When did this trend start? Why do we put up with it? I'll wear branded stuff if it's free. Gotta wear something, I'm not disgruntled enough to sunburn my scalp or get arrested for indecent exposure.

As a marketing type, I tip my branded cap to the anonymous marketer (probably a snobwear clothier, like Gucci) who first persuaded us that it's cool to be somebody's walking billboard—and pay them for the privilege! Bravo chutzpah! But I'm opting out. Exception: I'll still purchase logowear from non-profits I support, like the Perennial Plant Association.

- Delve more deeply into plant nomenclature. Latin and Greek scientific names aren't just tongue-twisters to memorize. Some are descriptions, others hint at a plant's use or provenance, many honor botanists and at least one, siegesbeckia, is pure 18th century snark.
- Wean myself of a guilty pleasure: advice columns. They're often unintentionally hilarious and (rarely) instructive, but their chief appeal is that they reassure those of us who don't ask strangers how to live our lives that we're less dysfunctional than those who do. Otherwise, in print or online they're a total waste of time and time isn't plentiful.
- Get better organized, at work and home. I'm a clutterer, comfortable in chaos. The important stuff is all logically sorted and stored; I can always find plant images I filed away five years ago or an article written even farther back. Well, almost always.

But unimportant stuff gradually accumulates at the edges until I'm working in a cramped center. A comprehensive New-Year's cleaning is in order, for more elbow room. If your workspace, kitchen and car are always immaculate, kudos. I envy you, but at the same time it sounds a little dull. Unlike the rest of us, you'll never know the glee of a periodic major paper-shredding, trash-can-filling purge.

- Be kinder to Millennials, a.k.a. Gen Y, whom I've dissed in This Space in the past. They now outnumber us Boomers and many have finally found work, bought homes and even become gardeners, just a bit behind schedule for mostly valid reasons, some attributable to us Boomers. They're entering and supporting the green industries. So I hereby extend an olive branch and a welcome to all but the ones who want MY jobs.

But that brings me to my final resolution:

- I will indulge in fewer rants, especially self-serving-sounding rants. Happy New Year! **GP**

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