



Holiday Gifts for Gardeners

By Dawn Pettinelli, UConn Home & Garden Education Center

Looking for a last-minute gift for that gardener in your life? The first thing that comes to my mind are plants. Perhaps you could select a festive, fresh table centerpiece of greens and flowers. Creative sorts may choose to purchase some seasonal blooms and make up an arrangement using a decorative container and greens from your yard.

There are lots of traditional holiday plants to choose from like poinsettias, Christmas cacti, cyclamen and amaryllis. Some interesting non-traditional plants include ever popular succulents for gardeners with sunny windows. Various species of aloe, crassula and echeveria are popping up all over the place, even in big box stores. Peace lilies have lovely glossy, dark green foliage and intriguing white flowers. Crotons can be found with leaves of red, green and gold. Air plants (tillandsias) require bright light but little care and are at home in hanging globes or as accents placed just about anywhere. They do need to be watered about once a week by soaking them for 20 minutes.



A few books caught my eye at the local book shop. I definitely want to read 'Around the World in 80 Trees' by Jonathan Drori. He writes about trees from all sorts of places and how their lives touch ours in many practical and peculiar ways. Bird loving gardeners might enjoy 'The Wren: A Biography' by Stephen Moss who takes and in depth look at a wren's life. For those contemplating designing or redesigning their landscapes, perhaps Julie Moir Messervy's book entitled 'New Landscaping Ideas That Work' might be just the inspiration needed to turn a yard into an inviting and livable landscape.

Smith & Hawkins used to sell the best woman's gardening pants. Since they are no longer in business, I have been looking for a viable alternative. Two possibilities are the Original Gardening Trouser from www.gardenista.com and overalls from www.rosieworkwear.com. Mostly I look for pants with padded knees or removable kneepads, lots of pockets and a holster for my pruners. I like that you can zip off the pant legs on the overalls in hot weather.

Along the same lines, older gardeners might appreciate those garden kneelers that double as a bench. As a friend told me, you know you're getting old when it takes you longer to get up than to kneel down. The handles on the kneelers should make rising easier, at least on flat ground.

Gardeners need sharp tools and it really is not hard to sharpen pruners and loppers. There are a number of gadgets on the market that are for sharpening a variety of garden tools. Look for ones that can sharpen the tools your gardening friend most often uses or when in doubt select sharpeners that are made for more than one type of tool.

Many of my older garden beds need to be refurbished because of plants growing too large and taking up more room than the original design allows. A friend lent me a 'Root Assassin Shovel' and boy did it make digging through a tangled mess of roots easier. You can find them in a standard 48-inch length and also a smaller version for those hard to get into spots.

Waterproof garden shoes or boots would be another gift idea. Although I have not tried them the Muckster low boots from www.muckbootcompany.com look tough and they can be hosed off.

A soil thermometer is a useful gift for those who like to plant seeds directly into the garden. The seeds of certain vegetables and flowers will not germinate until the soil reaches a specific temperature.

Speaking of seeds, consider gift certificates to New England seed companies like Baker's Creek, Johnny's Select Seeds, Vermont Bean Seed or Pinetree Seed Company. Gift certificates to local nurseries or garden centers would also be appreciated as would gift subscriptions to Connecticut based magazines like the Connecticut Gardener and Fine Gardening.

Hopefully, some of these suggestions will help you finish your holiday shopping in a timely manner. Happy Holidays to all from the UConn Home & Garden Education Center!