These Are a Few of My Favorite Things  
By Dr. Matthew Lisy, UConn Adjunct Faculty

Pumpkins have been harvested and are starting to turn up as decorations on porches and patios. It’s time to think about preparing both for winter and the upcoming chain of holidays. I thought this would be a good time to talk about my collection of garden haulers, and possibly make a recommendation for anyone looking to buy a gift for a loved one who gardens. While none of the items are particularly cheap, selecting the right one for the job is important.

The first up for review is a lawn tractor tow-behind cart. Overall, this is a great option as the machine does the work, but you need to own a lawn tractor to use one. Unfortunately, people have a tendency to overload the cart beyond what the lawn tractor can handle and sometimes the machine ends up needing costly repairs. Many of these carts will dump, saving the owner the labor of unloading.

The next item in my shed is the steel garden wagon. It is meant to haul an incredible amount of weight (varies by manufacturer), may have a dump feature, and generally has a reversible handle to connect to a lawn tractor. Although quite sturdy, these are not easy to pull. If connected to a tractor, they do not really haul enough for my liking and have a tendency to tip over. Due to the discomfort of pulling these, I wish I saved my money. A smaller child’s wagon, however, can be somewhat useful and is not nearly as heavy. A garage sale version may be the answer!

Next is the landscape carry barrel. These come with a handle on one side. Although they look superficially like a big garbage can, they can hold an enormous amount of debris. They are not meant to be filled up with solids, but rather used in yard clean up situations. Landscape barrels are ideal for light fluffy leaves or branches from pruning. You can use the one handle to drag it across the grass, but should avoid lifting it to save your back! I use mine for collecting the scraps from pruning my grape vines in the late winter.

The wheelbarrows are the oldest items on the list. When I bought my first one, I found a 10 cubic foot poly version. I went cheap and bought it at a discount store, filled it with gravel and was unable to lift it up! Since then I bent the metal support bars and broke the basin when I “gently” placed some rocks in it. The two-wheel design added to the stability but still takes some strength to use. Like all wheelbarrows, there is the risk of tipping over and losing your load. Most gardeners would prefer the smaller metal version. This is great for moving rocks or small loads, and does not strain the user too much.

The final item in my list I did not buy. It looks like a cheap wheelbarrow knock-off and I did not see the point. How wrong I was! This large-wheeled garden cart was left by the previous property owners. It is so nice to use and operates similarly to a wheelbarrow but with many advantages. They can haul an incredible amount of
weight and due to the large wheels and full handle wrapping around the front, they balance nicely and take little strength to use. I now employ this cart for almost all my garden work and cannot be happier with it. A quick search on the internet for “garden cart” finds many versions, weight limits, and prices, so buyer beware.

A good garden takes some time and maintenance, but the work can be made easier with the proper tools and equipment. If you are struggling to find a gift for a gardener (or are a gardener and are making your own list), try a large wheeled garden cart. They will make life a lot easier and your garden will never look better, as it is now not as hard to maintain! As an added bonus, you are less likely to strain yourself using one of these.

For your gardening questions, feel free to contact us, toll-free, at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center at (877) 486-6271, visit our website or contact your local Cooperative Extension center.

The author’s collection of garden haulers, each having its own advantages and disadvantages.