Last Minute Gifts for Gardeners
By Dawn Pettinelli, UConn Home & Garden Education Center

Lucky are those with gardeners on their last-minute gift lists. There is a plethora of choices to be had both locally and online. Before gardening friends and family members reach for those garden catalogs, which are already being stuffed into mailboxes, they may be looking for a garden themed book or two to read. ‘Emily Dickinson’s Gardening Life’ by renowned historian Marta McDowell connects much of Dickinson’s life to her gardens and her poems. Pictures and illustrations take us back to her time. Enthusiasts can visit the Emily Dickinson museum in Amherst, MA.

Cyclamen image by Dawn Pettinelli.

Never one to turn down a glass of fine wine or learn about how it is made, ‘The Drunken Botanist’ by Amy Stewart sounds like a good read to me about plants making up our libations. For aspiring vegetable gardeners, two of my favorite books are Mel Bartholomew’s All New Square Foot Gardening’ and the ‘Vegetable Gardener’s Bible’ by Edward C. Smith.

You can support Connecticut based magazines by giving a gift subscription to ‘Connecticut Gardener’ or Fine Gardening. Both cover locally applicable gardening topics from experts far and near.

Garden gloves are always a welcome and practical choice as devoted gardeners often wear out at least a pair each season. Top choices for me are mud gloves, for using in wet soils. The inside section and fingertips are coated with waterproof materials, and fox gloves. Foxgloves are thin, comfortable but tough enough to last sometimes two seasons, and they fit close enough for those more delicate garden chores, like thinning carrots. A new trend this year are claw gloves. Not having tried them, I am not sure of their usefulness but feel free to share your comments about them with me.
Bypass pruners are always useful and the forged aluminum ones from Corona will not rust and can cut branches up to three-quarters of an inch in diameter. This company also has a fold up pruning saw with a steel blade that can cut through stems up to six inches in diameter. I find my gardening knife quite useful. One side is serrated while the other is a straight blade. It works well for severing roots when planting as well as dispensing of invasive earthworms.

Keep your pruners, garden knives and other implements sharp with a double-sided, pocket-sized sharpening stone. It comes with a leather case and is handy have in your gardening bucket or vest when working out in the yard.

Gardening pants with kneepads work great much of the time but sometimes more of a cushion is needed when spending long periods down on hands and knees. I was so excited to find a large oval kneeling pad a few years ago at a botanic garden in Scotland. Come to find out that they are available on this continent as well. Mine is still in good shape after three years. Detachable kneepads made by Burgeon and Bell are also offered on the same website and said to be comfortable, quick-drying and “offer the last word in comfort”.

If still undecided, gift certificates to local garden centers make great gifts and so are plants. Whether you bring a seasonal arrangement, holiday plants such as poinsettias or amaryllis or trendy succulents, alluring airplants or other popular houseplants, you are sure to have a hit on your hands. Now, if only shopping for the rest of the people on your list were as easy!

Happy Holidays to all from the UConn Home & Garden Education Center. Please feel free to contact us with any gardening or plant-related questions at (877) 486-6271, visit our web site or contact your local Cooperative Extension Center.