



UConn Home & Garden Education Center

Holiday Gifts for Gardeners

By Dawn Pettinelli, UConn Home & Garden Education Center



Photo by Dawn Pettinelli

Let the holiday shopping begin! Compared to many family members and friends, buying a gift for the gardener in your life is a breeze. Lots of great possibilities and there's always the option of a gift certificate to their favorite local garden center. These are just some of my personal suggestions.

With long, dark days settling in, reading is a great winter sport. I'm partial to whodunnits and might curl up with *The Garden Party* by Marty Wingate or *The Garden Club Murder* by Amy Patricia Meade. For non-fiction readers, especially those longing for greater self-sustainability, perhaps *Small-Scale Homesteading* by Michelle Bruhn and Stephanie Thurow might be an informative resource when just starting out. With all the calls we get about vegetable problems, two books by Susan Mulvihill; *The Vegetable Garden Pest Handbook* and *The Vegetable Garden Problem Solver* offer up lots of great photographs and least toxic controls for a myriad of insects, diseases and other pest problems. Of course, you can also call us at the Center for assistance.

Gardening magazines still offer excellent articles, advice and inspiration. A subscription to the *Connecticut Gardener* should be in every CT gardener's mailbox or inbox. *Fine Gardening* is also CT based and fills our head with amazing plant information and truly inspiring gardens. I'll also admit to a subscription to both *Horticulture* and *The American Gardener*.

Working in the garden often brings me to my knees and when that up close and personal, I find there are 2 tools always in my bucket. First is a Cobra head weeder, crafted in Wisconsin last I looked. This curved-headed tool can be used for weeding, thinning, making seed rows, digging

in little seedlings and whatever other use you can come up with; a multi-tasking tool that is long-lasting and affordable. My deluxe soil knife features a smooth, sharp side and a serrated side with inch measurements, useful when planting. I find it does a nice job dispatching both annoying roots and jumping worms. When deployed on the ground, those larger, oval-shaped kneelers are tough and functional.

In my most recent issue of *The American Gardener*, there is a Craftsman 54-inch wood-handle action hoe that I would like to try so I can weed standing up. It works with a manual push-pull action but might be just the thing us older gardeners need.

While I have 2 different types of pruners that are great for stems from about a half to one inch in diameter, I can use help on the opposite extremes. Last year my sister got me a hand-held mini-chainsaw and it is wonderful for removing 1 to 3 inch or so stems or branches. It's really made pruning much easier. On the other end of the spectrum, a pair of horticultural scissors with long blades treated to resist rust would be great for harvesting or deadheading cut flowers as well as indoor houseplant grooming.

For years, I have placed picked vegetables, whether peppers, carrots or chard into those attractive wicker baskets. Recently, I was given one of those garden trugs made out of recycled plastic that had holes on the bottom so I could gather up my harvest and then hose the soil off in the same container. There are several trugs on the market including those made of wood and wire mesh. They do make cleaning your vegetables a lot easier than doing it at the kitchen sink.

Gardeners go through gloves and despite what the ads say, if a pair lasts me a season, I'm lucky. They are always needed and appreciated, and you can't go wrong gifting these to a gardener. For those with a lot of roses, consider purchasing a pair of rose gauntlets so their arms won't get all scratched up when pruning.

Indoor gardeners might appreciate watering cans with long spouts that dispense water slowly, attractive cache pots, houseplant fertilizers, cork plant coasters or misters. Bird lovers may enjoy feeders, bird baths, bird houses or seed and suet for their fine-feathered friends.

There are many types of garden ornaments to present to your plant loving friends and family. Plus, tis the season for holiday plants – poinsettias, holiday cacti, amaryllis, frosty ferns are just a few of the selections that your gardener recipient might enjoy. With all these choices, the gardener on your gift list is sure to be pleased.

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 at www.homegarden.cahn.uconn.edu or contact your local Cooperative Extension center.