

Gifts for Gardeners

By Kathy Wolfe
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Fun and practical gifts for any gardener's needs

Ready or not, jingle bells are in the air signaling Christmas time is just around the corner. Do you have friends or family with a gardening interest for whom you will be buying a present? There are many fun and practical gifts to meet any gardener's needs including gloves, books, clippers, tools and more. All of these are great, but if you look closely at the specific type of gardening your gift recipient enjoys most, this year's gift may become truly special.

Many gardeners enjoy surrounding their home with plants both inside and out. An indoor gardener may appreciate holiday plants such as poinsettia, Christmas cactus, ornamental peppers and begonias, as well as bulbs that can be forced into bloom like amaryllis, paperwhite narcissus or hyacinths.

Perhaps a terrarium, dish garden or Wardian case would spark a new hobby. You may want to give an orchid or special orchid pot, soil and fertilizer. Whenever choosing indoor plants, be aware of the light available in your friend's home and choose plants accordingly. Include a good book on houseplant care with your purchase along with a nice watering can and plant fertilizer formulated for that use.

For outside pots, winter flowering hellebores can brighten spirits. Or try buying a large pot and layering spring bulbs: tulips near the bottom, daffodils in the middle and crocus in the top layer. This gift will keep on giving for months and many of the bulbs can later be transplanted into the yard.

If your recipient is a vegetable enthusiast or plant propagator, you are in luck. There are endless possibilities! Start with a gardening book featuring a specialty such as vegetable gardening, propagation or flower arranging. Ask a trusted nurseryman or master gardener for recommendations.

A gardening apron, seed packets, knee pads, a big ball of twine made from natural fiber for composting, fertilizer, plant tags or copper markers would be ideas to combine in a garden tote or gathering basket.

A rain gauge, rain barrel or rain wand is especially useful in preparation for our dry summer months. How about a weather station featuring minimum and maximum temperatures, humidity, rainfall, wind speed and directional indicators?

A Japanese hori hori knife is good for sawing roots, cutting weeds, digging holes and many other chores. Heat mats and grow lights are useful gifts for those starting plants.



A trio of colorful minipots filled with low-care succulents can make a long-lasting, meaningful gift. *Photo by Trish Varrelman / WSU Skagit County Master Gardeners.*

A composter or tumbler would help this gardener make his or her own mulch. Speaking of which, you could buy mulch and help with the spreading in the spring. Muscle power is one of the greatest gifts for any gardener.

Thinking big? How about a cold frame, mini-hoop house or potting bench? Maybe even a greenhouse if you have building skills or deep pockets.

Perhaps you are dealing with an orchardist or fruit enthusiast. Extendable pruners/saws come in handy here, as do an orchard ladder and long-armed harvester with a basket on the end, or a sharp grafting knife.

A food dehydrator may work well as a gift. There are many books on growing all varieties of fruits and that give ideas on where plants can be placed in the yard in a pleasing way. Many nurseries offer classes throughout the year and you may want to attend these with your friend and treat them to lunch afterwards.

The Western Washington Fruit Research Foundation offers events open to the public periodically throughout the year which would be interesting for you both to attend. See their website for more information (<http://nwfruit.org/>). Private grafting or consulting sessions can be arranged with professionals coming to your friend's home. Call the Skagit County Extension office for references, (360) 428-4270.

Does working with ornamentals appeal most to your gift recipient? Vintage pots and garden ornaments and botanical stepping stones can make fun gifts to search out as well as to give. A long-handled weeder, pruners with a built-in carabineer to attach to belt loops, a canvas tote for

garden tools, pitchforks with various number of tines for different uses (6-tined being most versatile), professional soaker hoses, or rose pruning gloves made of leather would all be appreciated.

Self-watering pots and a pot lifter system for moving large containers might be a great idea. A big garden cart with large diameter tires and wooden sides is just the ticket for transporting bulky materials. A gardening journal, flower arranging clippers, gardening hat, hand therapy lotion, nail brushes and garden soap (purchased or made by you) are other ideas to mix and match into a gift package.

There are countless books with photos of innovative gardens, climate zone maps and how-to start to finish information.

Attend the Skagit Master Gardener's Know and Grow workshops (they are free!) that occur monthly during much of the year and you will both come away filled with new knowledge. Check our website for details, <http://ext100.wsu.edu/skagit/mg/>

When all else fails, a gift certificate to a favorite nursery, a membership at a local botanical garden or arboretum, a subscription to a garden magazine or tickets for the two of you to attend the Northwest Flower and Garden show in February would be a wonderful treat.

Maybe the best gift of all would be to purchase and set up a garden hammock for resting weary bones and giving the gardener an opportunity to stop and contemplate the beauty he or she has created by their own hard work. Happy holidays!



Left: Forcing paperwhites indoors. **Above Right:** Paperwhites in bloom.
Above Left: Winter hellebore. *Photos by Trish Varrelman / WSU Skagit County Master Gardeners.*

RESOURCES:

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