

Christmas is for Gardening

By Julie Silva

Gardeners are loyal to their favorite “florescent, lavender-scented whatcha-call-it” used for planting the “dumafitchit.” In other words, if you have a gardener on your Christmas buying list you have it made. Gardeners usually discover what works best, or their favorite product, or will go to the ends of the earth to find the whatcha-call-it that great grandpa used. With a little detective work and observation you can make quick work of a special Christmas gift list.

Tools are a great gift, but come in quite different types:

Let’s use shovels as an example. The head of a shovel can be for a specific job or all purpose. An irrigation shovel head is broader, able to shovel dirt quicker to fill a collapsing levee. A trenching shovel has a long skinny head for digging deeper to bury pipe. Then the handles! Handles may be fiberglass, wood, or metal. The handles have a different feel that may change with the weather. Plus you really cannot live with just one shovel. (With just one shovel you will spend endless steps and time searching for the last place you left it. Not just once but over and over again.)

The right tool makes a difficult task into an easy task. A basic Christmas tool list for a gardener would include an all-purpose round point shovel, a garden rake, a bow rake, a leaf rake, a trowel, pruners, an oscillating hoe (like a hula hoe), loppers, dibble, and weeder. Each one of these has variations just like the shovel. Check out what your gardener is currently using and do an internet search for the same brand. If your gardener grows plants in large black nursery pots, they can be heavy and hard to move. The best and easiest way to move those pots is with a hay hook. Just put the hook under the pot lip and slide the pot across the ground. No more heavy lifting!

Gardeners are easily spotted by their attire. Sturdy shoes, layered up in the winter, covered up in the summer for protection from the sun, a hat to save the nose from burning, and that consistent pair of gloves hanging out of the back pocket. Gloves are an interesting accessory. They range from leather, cotton and nitrile, to above-the-elbow rubber rose pruning gloves, and thermal gloves. Gloves will do more than just protect you from thorns. The nitrile gloves will keep your hands dry, cool in the summer and warm in the winter, and they will protect you from plant liquids that could be sticky or burning. Nitrile gloves will keep the dirt from wedging under your nails and embedding into your skin. They can be tossed in the washer and hung to dry. The nitrile gloves now have a thinner rubber palm base that feels like no glove at all.

There are so many gardening books you could fill a sleigh. Gardening books start with the basics like the Sunset Western Garden Book with a complete description of planting zones and plants. The California Master Gardener Handbook provides plant information and instructions for all plant needs. There is a plant book for everything from apples to water. Gardening books provide year round information and entertainment, especially during the rainy season when your

gardener is suffering from cabin fever. If you can only buy one garden book this gift-giving season, get the California Master Gardener Handbook (<http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/Details.aspx?itemNo=3382>) while there are many, many books on plants don't forget the books on landscape design, shed or green house building, and pond building. By the way, did you know that the Tuolumne Master Gardeners have a book that they wrote and published titled, "Sharing the Knowledge"? This book can be purchased at the Mountain Bookshop at the junction and also at the UCCE office located at 52 North Washington Street in Sonora.

Gardening supplies will be a hit. Who would not want a load of premium compost delivered to their driveway? Raised beds constructed from redwood will delight a gardener. A roll of high quality weed barrier will make a gardener jump for joy; less weeding is a true gift! Solar lights will make the garden safer to travel at night. Name one person with a vegetable garden that does not want the best of deer fencing. Any gardener would just love that gift.

Gifts for gardeners are easy. To do the work a gardener needs knowledge, the right tools, protective clothing, and supplies. Gardening is a passion. You absolutely cannot go wrong with gifting to a person's love and passion.

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