



## Master Gardener Newspaper Articles

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### "These Are a Few of My Favorite Things..."

by Marcia Goldstein, UC Master Gardener

Enough of "girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes" as the song goes. We're talking gardening here! The winter we look forward to in the Central Valley and its foothills is fairly temperate and brings us our rainy season. Did I say RAIN? That is at the top of my list of favorite things for the winter but one totally out of my control. Our Mediterranean climate should bring us precipitation during this season, but when and how much is beyond even the weather professionals. Last week's rain certainly helped freshen the air by washing the dust off the leaves, but I want more.

So let's look at other favorite things for gardeners at this time of year; some you may want to use as gift suggestions for family members or friends who are gardeners. Or perhaps you would like to add them to your own list of favorites.

Good Gloves. Gardeners never have enough of these. My favorites have rubber or latex on the palms and fingertips, but lots of gardeners wear soft leather. Get the sturdiest you can find; they are worth it. Even so, if you are like me you will wear through the fingertips eventually. I find my fingers sticking out of my right hand glove, but luckily a friend of mine wears through her left hand fingertips and so yes, we swap out our good hand to each other (funny, but it works!).

All Purpose Gardening Tool. Every gardener probably swears by a different one of these. Mine is a long-handled shovel with a small blade. It is light weight enough so I don't get tired out when using it and with a small enough scoop so I can shovel between plants.

Showy Winter Plants. Some of my favorite things in the winter are those plants that "show off" during this season.

Toyon (*HETEROMELES arbutifolia*) produces its bright red berries just when we need them for holiday decorating. This shrub or small tree is a California native that has shiny evergreen leaves that are lovely all year long. Toyon's resemblance to European holly gave Hollywood its name.



Toyon in winter



Redtwig dogwood in winter

Bloodtwig Dogwood and Redtwig Dogwood. (*CORNUS sanguinea* and *C. sericea*) Both of these have showy red fall foliage, but after the leaves drop you can enjoy the dark red twigs and branches all winter. It is best to plant dogwoods in a moister area of your garden with a northern exposure or an area with afternoon shade.

Camellias (*CAMELLIA japonica* and *C. sasanqua*). When most of our other flowering plants are sitting out the cold weather, camellias may be loaded with blooms. The *C. japonica* varieties have the best fall and winter blossoms and deep glossy leaves. These shrubs are so easy to grow if they receive afternoon shade in the summer. If the one you pick says "mid-season" on its label, it will bloom in the Central Valley and foothills in the January to March period. *C. sasanqua* varieties have slightly smaller leaves and bloom a little earlier, but they tolerate a little more heat and sun. The variety 'Yuletide' is in bloom now. There are such outstanding solid and variegated flowering varieties to choose from that it is best to make your selections in the nurseries when you can see the blooms in person. You are sure to find at least one that will become one of your favorite winter things.



'Yuletide' camellias

Seed Catalogues. And then there are those days when it is too cold or wet to garden. Then one of my favorite things is to stay indoors and pour over seed catalogues. The pictures really help me figure out what I want and get me excited about planting next spring. Most companies will send you seed catalogues for free. Sit by the fire, have a hot chocolate, and dream of spring!

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