

Christmas Presents for Gardeners

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

As we head into the holiday season we find ourselves up to our ears in shopping. We're rushing here and rushing there trying to get all those people checked off our shopping list. It's enough to make you pull your hair out some years. Now, if by chance you happen to have a gardener, and I mean a SERIOUS gardener on your list, well, I'll just offer my condolences right now.

Let me say up front that I fall into that category of a serious gardener. Time doesn't always allow me to garden to the level that I would like, but I do take it very seriously. I read some of those high end gardening magazines, and I follow the latest trends. I wait anxiously for the annual announcement of the All-American vegetable varieties. I even grow some different kinds of plants and push the envelope trying new and different species and cultivars. So the following column is not meant to poke fun at any gardener, or their ever tolerant family. But serious gardeners are very tough to buy a present for. In fact, you may often be better off buying them a non garden present!

If you want your gardener family member to get exactly what they want you have two options. First, ask them for a very detailed list (more on that in a moment), or second, give them a gift card. I know, people feel that gift cards are so horribly impersonal, but for that really particular gardener, it may be the safest way to go!

What you do not want to do, is go out and try to buy some cute little electronic gadget. Gardeners are gardeners because they like to get their hands dirty. Many of us enjoy gardening because it temporarily frees us from those electronic gadgets. About the furthest that I would push the electronic gadgets is a thermometer that keeps track of the high and low temperatures. You may be tempted to buy an electronic rain gauge, but many gardeners would rather have a nice big rain gauge that measures from one one hundredth of an inch up to ten inches. If they've asked for an electronic rain gauge, but didn't tell you which one, give me a call. There's some good ones out there and there's some really poor ones!

If you were fortunate to get a detailed list from your gardener, follow it to the letter. If tools are on the list, get exactly what they asked for. If they've asked for a hand forged garden spade with an ash split D handle, then for gosh sakes don't get them a nurseryman's spade with a strapped handle. The difference may not seem like much to you, but for that gardener, they are night and day! If they want a Felco model F2 bypass hand pruner, that's what you need to get them. It doesn't matter that you think the F7 hand pruner with the ergonomic handle makes more sense, get them the F2. When it comes to tools, price generally is an indicator of quality, so be prepared!

Books and magazine subscriptions are an option, but again, this can be a potential mine field. Unless they have specifically told you a magazine that they'd like or a particular book or a favorite author, you may wind up giving them a gift that they'll never read. If they have a favorite nursery or supply house, seriously consider a gift certificate.

Gardening is like any hobby. Those that are really in to it have very specific wants and desires. Those of us on the outside of that hobby aren't probably going to "get it", but that's okay. Ask your gardener for a wish list. If you get one, follow it to the letter. If you don't get one, give them a gift card!