

CHRISTMAS IS COMING

There are always a few people one finds that are nearly impossible to buy gifts for. Gardeners are not among them. One of the easiest gifts is a gift certificate from their favorite nursery. Yes, they are all closed now but a note that a gift certificate is coming as soon as the place opens will do the trick. But, you say, I want to get a more personal gift. Here are a few tried and true suggestions.

A Smart Pot. This is a bag made of lightweight black fabric. It is a foot tall and 3 feet wide. It will hold 6 square feet of soil and gives you just over 7 square feet of growing space. It is sold for about \$30.00. It's perfect if your gardener has had problems with gophers and moles. At the end of the season, simply dump out the soil and fold it up for re-use next year.

If you are looking for a planter with a bit more substance, one that could sit on a deck, there is the EarthBox garden kit. This is perfect for beginning gardeners as it comes with fertilizer, dolomite to mix with your soilless mix, a mulch cover and instructions. The self-watering reservoir holds 3 gallons of water and automatically gives your plants the proper amount of fertilizer and water. This is more expensive, about \$85.00. The EarthBox is made of UV stabilized plastic that won't fade or become brittle. It has casters on its legs and is reusable. It's 11 inches tall, 14 wide and 29 long. It holds 2 cubic feet of soil. It would work well for a tomato, eggplant pepper or cucumber. You could probably plant one melon or one squash in it.

The experienced gardener would probably appreciate a soil analyzer. One is described as a 4-way analyzer. This little beauty measures light, moisture, soil PH and soil fertility. The directions include PH range, requirements for over 350 plants and easy to follow guidelines for soil correction based on USDA standards. The light level measures the light level where the plant is located. Moisture is measured at root level. This must run on fairy dust as no batteries are required. It does have a one-year warranty, however. The best part is that it's only \$18.00. All these are found in the Jung seed catalog.

Tools are always welcome, especially if the ones your gardener is using are junk. All gardeners need a good stainless steel hand trowel, and a trenching shovel. The long narrow blade is perfect for digging out deep rooted plants. Add a potato fork. This can dig up bulbs, loosen soil, or pry up plants. They need a garden rake and a leaf rake. If possible, tools should have fiberglass handles. That way, if they do forget and leave the tool out in the rain, they won't get splinters from the handle next time they use it. fiberglass handles are usually bright colored, so they are easier to find than the wood handled types. If they grow roses, there are special gloves with a long sleeve that protects the arm from thorns. A good fitting leather glove helps prevent blisters. Short waterproof boots are easier to clean dirt and mud off than shoes are. If your gardener starts their own plants, get them a heat tape. The type for starting seeds has a thermostat that prevents the heat from getting too hot and cooking the roots of their new babies. Or, you can go all out and get your favorite gardener a greenhouse. For a commercial one, prices range from \$3000,00 to atmospheric. Ouch!

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