

Gifts That Will Delight Gardeners

By Susan Camp

Chances are, by the time you read this column, you will be exhausted from cooking and washing dishes and ready to relax with a cup of tea and some gardening catalogs. If you are like me, you haven't begun your holiday shopping yet, so a quiet break after the hustle and bustle of Thanksgiving dinner is a good time to select practical or whimsical gifts for your gardening friends and family members.

Be forewarned, though: Prices are up, and many online companies have a sneaky way of offering a discount, then making up the difference in shipping charges. Shop wisely, and always buy the best quality items you can afford, especially gardening tools, which should last for years with proper cleaning and sharpening.

My top pick for 2025 is a gift I have already given myself, a pair of goatskin pruning gloves that will protect my hands and arms when I am pruning roses and other prickly plants. The incredibly reasonable price for these gloves is less than \$25.00. I saw cotton and imitation leather pruning gloves on another site for more than \$40.00, so even with postage, I saved money by purchasing the goatskin pair, which should serve me well through many seasons of rose pruning.

Another gift that rose gardeners, but almost no one else, will appreciate is a 32-ounce bottle of concentrated fish emulsion for under \$20.00. One bottle will make 8 gallons of fish fertilizer when diluted with water. Just don't open the bottle in the house.

A more pleasant-smelling gift is a 6.7-ounce bar of exfoliating gardening soap with a pink grapefruit scent. Ground walnut shells in the soap will help scrub away the grime, and your gardener can smooth their hands with Vitamin E and Aloe vera grapefruit-scented hand crème in a 2.5-ounce tube. Both items are around \$10.00 each.

Wax-dipped amaryllis (actually *Hippeastrum*) bulbs for less than \$35.00 apiece are a treat for those who like to watch the bulbs sprout into gorgeous red or white flowers in winter but don't want to spend time caring for them. The waxed bulbs are self-contained and need no watering.

A handwoven coir door mat with a holiday design provides a cheerful entryway to welcome family and guests. Each mat is \$40.00. A coco-fiber boot scraper for less than \$15.00 is another thoughtful gift. I guess. I'm not sure who actually needs this item, but it isn't too expensive.

Go easy on the garden art. Not everyone appreciates a chubby ceramic frog or a meditating rabbit, but a set of three steel fiddlehead (fern) stakes at 14 ½, 19, and 25 inches would be a tasteful addition to the garden at less than \$20.00 for the set.

The reader on your gift list might appreciate "The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees" (2022) by Douglas W. Tallamy, ecologist and author of "Bringing

Nature Home” (2009) and “Nature’s Best Hope” (2020). All three books are available for under \$20.00 each, depending on the purchase source.

“The Hummingbird Handbook: Everything You Wanted to Know about These Fascinating Birds” (2021) by John Shewey contains gorgeous color photographs and practical knowledge about encouraging the jewel-colored birds to visit the garden. This comprehensive guide costs less than \$15.00.

My favorite garden tool, the hand-forged steel Ho-Mi, or Korean hand plow, is now \$24.95 on the same website where I purchased one in 2018 for \$18.00. It is still worth the increased cost. The Ho-Mi can chop, weed, dig holes and trenches, and perform just about any other chore that requires a hand tool. Your gardener can hone the blade with a hand sharpener (under \$20).

A set of 25 zinc or copper plant markers mounted on galvanized steel frames come in various sizes, priced at under \$25.00, but considerably higher than the \$16.00 price tag in 2022.

Enjoy shopping for your gardener friends and family members, but don’t forget to drop some hints for yourself!