

## Shop for the Gardener on Your List

By Susan Camp

On Saturday, Jim and I went to one of the local big box stores to pick up a few household items. It is likely I won't repeat that mistake anytime soon. Halloween is hardly over, and Thanksgiving is a week-and-a-half away, but the crowd obviously was shopping for Christmas. Everyone was busily filling their carts with decorations and gift items, and I haven't even begun to think about the holidays. It is time for me to start.

Since 2017, I have written a gift suggestion column for the gardeners among your friends and family members, so here are some gift ideas for 2024. Most of the items listed can be purchased online from small or privately owned companies. I haven't noticed an appreciable increase in prices over last year. I look for gifts in the \$10 to \$40 range. All prices I have listed are approximate.

One of the first items I came across is one I wouldn't mind receiving: a black PVC-coated polyester container with three compartments for hauling tools, plants, muddy boots, and other items in the cargo area of a vehicle. The container folds flat when not in use and opens to 41 inches in length. The price is \$29.95.

Two other practical gifts are a solid steel hose hanger with a baked plastic coating that attaches to an outside wall and neatly hold 150 feet of hose for \$18.25 and a portable, collapsible, 10-liter plastic bucket for \$19.95.

A green plastic colander trug with holes at one end is the perfect item to hold and rinse vegetables, fruit, or flowers outside before you take them into the house. The price is \$16.75.

The houseplant grower on your list will chuckle at a cute crushed stone and poly resin critter to hang on the side of a pot. My favorite is the hedgehog, but the menagerie includes a tortoise, a gecko, and a frog at \$15.95 apiece.

Just as cute, but a little pricier, are pot feet made of the same crushed stone and poly resin as the critters above. For \$34.95, you can purchase a set of three hedgehogs, chickens, ducks, cats or other animals to keep heavy pots from marring a floor or deck.

A set of three green, powder-coated steel scrolled trellises will enhance the attractiveness of a houseplant. The 12-inch set costs \$15.95; the 18-inch set is \$17.95; and the 24-inch set goes for \$24.95.

Natural river stone stepping stones with water-resistant PVC backing will provide an accent for a small bed or garden path that needs something to set it off. A set of three 14-inch diameter stepping stones costs \$40.

Jim and I are considering purchasing a 13-foot string of tiny, battery-operated mushroom stake lights. The 20 mushroom caps glow softly from warm white LED bulbs. A single string of mushroom lights costs \$24.99, or two strings for \$19.99 each.

Two-handled polyethylene trugs in bright blue, red, purple, or green are great for hauling vegetables from the garden, holding beach or camping gear, or even brining the Thanksgiving turkey. A 6.8-gallon capacity trug costs \$15.95, and the 10-gallon trug is \$18.95.

Some fun stocking stuffer items include a plastic wine glass holder for \$9.95 that clips onto outdoor chair arms or deck railings and an aluminum tick key for \$7.95 to safely remove the nasty things from your body before they become too attached to you.

My favorite stocking stuffer is a can of 328 feet of natural jute twine with a handy cutting blade on the lid so you don't need to search for a knife or scissors. The price is \$6.50, and a refill spool of jute is \$3.95. You will never have to untangle twine again.

Shop from local retailers or other small businesses when you can. Farmers and holiday markets and bazaars often carry unique gardening items and lawn décor, many of which are handcrafted. Don't forget to drop a hint or two for yourself!