

OUT IN THE GARDEN

Great Christmas gifts for the gardener

BY KAROLYN FOURNIER

Is there a garden guru on your Christmas list this year? It's easy to pick up paper-whites or amaryllis bulbs at the grocery store, but if you really want to make an impression on your beloved botanist, here's a few of my favourite gift suggestions.

• **A pair of good quality gardening gloves:** I've learned the hard way that you get what you pay for. Don't settle for the dollar store variety or inexpensive, ill-fitting cloth gloves. Gloves are used to protect your hands from cuts, scrapes, moisture & blisters. They should fit properly like a second skin. I've never been a glove-wearing gardener, but at a trade show in Chicago last year I found an amazing pair designed and created by a group of gardeners. The original "Pallina" goatskin gloves are available in short or long styles, in sizes from small to extra large and are so comfortable you barely notice you're wearing them. Glove prices start at \$30 US – and you don't have to leave the house to shop, they're avail-

able online. The company has added new garden wear to their product line, well worth checking out at www.thepallina.com.

• **Horticultural Society Membership:** Garden Societies have been around for hundreds of years and need help staying around for a few hundred more. Memberships are as inexpensive as \$10 annually and benefits include informative newsletters, monthly meetings with guest 'expert' speakers, garden tours, and networking with other gardeners. Societies usually maintain local gardens and produce garden shows and competitions. Many garden centres and greenhouses offer a discount to card carrying horticulture club members. For a list of local societies in your neighbourhood, visit www.gardenontario.org or contact your town hall for a contact phone number.

• **Garden Centre Gift Cards:** Gift cards no longer have expiry dates and you can be assured the recipient will be delighted to have an excuse to spend some coin at their favourite plant store. Pair that with the Horticultural Soci-

ety Membership card and remind them of their discount. Attach the card(s) to a Christmas cactus or a bulb planter if you'd like a tangible gift.

• **Gardening Magazine Subscription:** Sign them up for an annual subscription and wrap a copy of the magazine with the gift card attached. The gift can be opened and enjoyed until their first issue arrives in the mail. A few reputable gardening mags I like

having around are Canadian Gardening (www.canadiangardening.com), Ontario Gardener (www.localgardener.net) and the American publication Fine Gardening (www.finegardening.com). Annual subscriptions range in price from \$19.95 to \$29.95 and can be sent anywhere in North America.

• **Gardening Books:** Bookstore shelves are bursting with books, but a few 'must haves' in my collection are published by the Hole

family in St. Albert, Alberta. Lois Hole's "Perennial Favourites" and Jim & Lois Hole's "Q & A" series are a great buy and are mostly Canadian content. My current favourite reference book is "A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants" by DK Books, usually available at a discounted price online at Indigo books.

Karolyn Fournier works at Colour Paradise Greenhouses.



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