



Garden

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Planting some ideas about gifts for your favorite gardener

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As the holidays draw near, it's time to start thinking about gifts for the gardeners in your life. Among the many possibilities worth considering are gloves, tools, planters, pest repellents, organic growing media and, of course, plants. To help get you started, here is a list of some recommended products.

Gloves

West County's Work and Landscape gloves, which are made with a fabric woven from recycled plastic bottles, win my vote for ingenuity. Each pair removes the equivalent of one 8-ounce water bottle from landfills, and their use of yarn from recycled materials results in a 75-percent energy savings over new materials. The fabric is softer and more flexible than polyester spandex, and the protection is better than most other synthetic gloves I've used. Cost: \$20 to \$28. Call 1-800-475-0567, www.westcountygardener.com.

Tools

Union Jack Stable & Garden offers a pitchfork made from polypropylene that is more practical for most garden tasks than the typical steel version. Manufactured by Harold Moore Ltd. in Great Britain, this tool won't rust or rot, and it is safe — it will bounce back if run over with a truck but won't puncture tires. It has become one of my staples for carrying weeds and brush — especially thorny materials — to the compost bin, and it's perfect for turning compost, scooping debris, mulch and wood chips. Cost: \$54.95. Call 1-800-672-8119, www.unionjackstable.com.

Planters

Lechuza's planters offer an innovative spin on water conservation by including a reservoir in the base of the container. These shatterproof planters can be used indoors or out, are frost-proof, and come in a variety of sizes. The larger models feature a drainage plug. We had great success this summer growing culinary thyme outdoors in a self-watering windowsill planter.

Now it can come inside for the winter. Cost: \$29.95. Call 1-877-532-4892, www.lechuza.com.

Another planter to consider is a raised bed, which offers easy access to plants. The ingenious raised beds made by Naturalyards can be assembled in about 10 minutes on any level surface, be it a patio, a driveway or a backyard. The finished Lawson falsecypress lumber comes ready to assemble, requires no adjustments before use, and is rot- and pest-resistant. We built one earlier this year and found that the

pieces fit together perfectly.

It allowed ample space to accommodate our vegetable garden, which we were able to cultivate in full sun in our driveway. Cost: \$90 to \$995. Call 1-541-488-0838, www.naturalyards.com.

Pest repellents

We prefer repellents that are fully biodegradable, safe for the environment but still effective at fending off troublemakers.

Deer Stopper by Messina Wildlife works for up to a month, even in rain. It exudes a pleasant aroma — made of rosemary oil, mint oil and putrescent whole egg solids and it's approved for organic gardening. www.messinawildlife.com.

Growth Media

Organic Mechanics Container Blend Potting Soil was developed as a growth medium that uses only organic, renewable or byproduct materials. No peat bogs have been disturbed to make this material and no nutrients that can pollute rivers and streams have been added.

Call 1-610-692-7404, www.organicmechanicsoil.com.

Bonnie Plants has taken biodegradable peat pots to another level by developing four- and five-inch models that biodegrade when planted. This new container has provided ease of planting for vegetables and herbs without creating extra plastic to recycle or throw away. These pots bode well for addressing the scourge of plastic containers. www.bonnieplants.com.

Plants

Ball Horticultural Company asked us to test several new annuals, including the Zahara zinnia yellow, which is disease-tolerant, heat-loving and drought tolerant in full sun. We squeezed them into about five hours of sunlight and they are still producing blooms. Mint mocha coleus was also an eye-catcher with lacy, colorful foliage and deeply lobed leaves, grown in partial shade. www.ballhort.com.

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