

Eight Holiday Gifts For Your Favorite Gardener

By Marsha Goldberg, Fairfax Master Gardener

If you have a family member or friend who is an avid gardener, you're lucky. Gardeners tend to be generous sorts, and they probably share their flowers and produce with you, offer tips on caring for your yard, and give you divisions or cuttings from their own plants.

Gardeners give, but when it's time to choose a gift for your favorite gardener — such as in the upcoming holiday season — what should you give? Here are eight ideas that master gardeners recommend:

1. Garden (hori-hori) knife

This tool is one of the most useful in a gardener's arsenal but one that many gardeners have yet to discover. The knife has a blade that is about seven inches and slightly curved, sharp on one side and usually serrated on the other. The blade is sometimes marked in inches, which can be convenient when digging in the garden. A garden knife is the go-to tool for many tasks, such as removing stubborn weeds, making holes for bulbs, digging up small plants, and dividing perennials. A genuine hori-hori knife, which originated in Japan and has a wooden handle, can cost \$20 to \$40, but you can also get less expensive knives with plastic handles that work just as well.



hori hori knife

photo: Swathmore,edu

2. Garden gloves

Gloves get wet, get lost, and develop holes, so even if your gardener already has a few pairs, another will likely be a welcome sight. Prices vary widely, depending on material, with gloves for every budget. The most economical are made of cotton; however, the most popular ones have been dipped in nitrile, a latex-type material that offers additional protection without bulk, making them useful for pulling even fine weeds. You can find cotton or nitrile gloves for as little as \$7 at hardware stores or online. (Confession: For years, I have been using two pairs of cotton gloves that I bought at the dollar store!)

Lambskin or deerskin gloves are pricier but offer more protection, as well as flexibility for working comfortably. You can get short gloves for as little as \$10, depending on the quality, or get top of the line gloves for about \$45 which are elbow-length and made of animal skin that provide maximum protection when dealing with thorny shrubs such as roses.

2. Pruners

Pruners are essential for gardeners, and as with gloves, a gardener likes having multiples. Pruners come in a wide range of prices, but don't skimp here. The cheaper ones will probably lose their edge and alignment within a short time, making them more likely to damage plants and shrubs. If you feel you can't afford high-quality pruners, choose a different gift.

4. Tool belts and tool sheaths

These holders fasten around the waist or hook to a belt and are great for keeping tools handy, reducing loss and saving multiple trips to the tool shed. Professional gardeners often add a leather sheath to their belt to hold a pruner and knife. The sheaths cost about \$20 but can be inconvenient because the gardener has to wear a belt to use a sheath. An alternative is a pocketed apron or tool holder that ties around the waist or one made specifically for gardening, available online for around \$20. When choosing

these, make sure the pockets fasten or are tight enough to keep tools secure when gardeners bend over—which happens often!

5. Garden hoes

While weeding can be very zen and meditative, it can also be a time-consuming task that gardeners would rather do without. Weeding hoes make the job easier. With an edge that is often razor-sharp, a weeding hoe lets the gardener skim the soil's surface, cutting off the tops of weeds. Because leaves are a weed's food source, repeatedly cutting off leaves will eventually kill the weed. The hoe can save the gardener many hours of kneeling or bending. A good-quality, long-handled hoe to use while standing will likely run \$30 to \$40; but for as little as \$15, you can purchase a short-handled hoe for use while sitting on a garden bench or kneeling. Again, buy the best-quality hoe that you can afford—one with a dull blade or uncomfortable handle will be frustrating to use.



A hoe with a sharp blade can slice the tops off weeds

6. Garden kneelers and garden benches

Gardeners spend a lot of time on their knees, pulling weeds and planting bulbs and perennials. A garden kneeler — about \$10 at a garden-supply store—is a soft foam pad that can relieve pressure on the knees and make yard jobs easier.

As an alternative, garden benches or seats are useful for gardeners who have difficulty kneeling or doing so for an extended period of time. These have two purposes: Flipped one way, they serve as sturdy kneeling pads with handles for standing; when flipped the other, a gardener can sit to dig, weed or rest. Another related option is a garden seat with storage and wheels, which a gardener can move easily. You can find these in the \$25 - \$40 range.



Garden bench & kneeling pad

photo: popscreen.com

7. Garden tubs, trugs or bags

All variations on the same idea, a gardener can carry these containers into the garden to collect weeds and other debris, before emptying the contents in the compost pile. Tubs are made of hard-sided plastic; trugs have flexible plastic sides; and bags are usually made from reinforced plastic with soft sides. Sizes and weights vary to meet the needs of most gardeners and budgets.

8. Garden Stamp

One of our Master Gardeners suggested that we include this unique tool, which he says is the most useful gardening gift that he ever received. While a bit pricey (about \$30), it could be the perfect gift for a gardening friend who uses the method called Square Foot Gardening or who likes to have his plants in neat rows. The stamp makes small round holes in the soil that are perfectly spaced, saving the time it would take to measure the placement of seeds. It also makes weeding easier as it helps distinguish the uniformly placed plants from the weeds growing in between. Find out where to order this tool online at www.gardenstamp.com.



Garden Stamp

photo: www.gardenstamp.com