

Holiday Gifts for the Gardener

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There are lots of neat Holiday gifts for gardeners.

The easiest and most practical gift for your gardener is a gift certificate from her or his favorite nursery. You have full control over the cost, and it complements the gardeners overall plan and schedule best. The gardener also gets to spend some quality time perusing the nursery to select the plants, tools, books, or other items that best meet his or her needs.

Speaking of books, gardening books always make a good gift. Select a book that will meet his/her current interests or will help them venture into new areas. To join in the new interest in butterfly gardening consider "Butterfly Gardening for the South" by Geyata Ajilvsgi and/or "Butterflies of North America" by Brock and Kaufman. If your gardener also likes birds in the landscape consider the book "Attracting Birds to Southern Gardens" by Pope, Odenwald and Fryling. Among more of my favorites are: Bill Welch's "Perennial Garden Color," "Native Texas Plants" by Sally and Andy Wasowski, "The Vegetable Book" by Sam Cotner, and "Home Landscaping Texas" by Greg Grant and Roger Holmes. "Drip Gardening" by Tom Harris and Ron Csehil is a great gift for the gardener that wants to put in a drip irrigation system or better manage the system they have. Find it on the website "the hill country gardener. The books are available at most bookstores and on Amazon. The prices vary according to the source

A new product that caught my eye on the San Antonio market is the horizontal- cut half whiskey barrel. The regular half whiskey barrel is great for growing citrus such as Mexican lime and Meyer lemons. It also is an attractive way to grow tomatoes, blueberries, and Bright Lights Swiss chard, plants that have a relatively large central stem and benefit by plenty of soil depth for a root system. The horizontal- cut half whiskey barrel has more soil surface and less depth making it possible to plant more medium size plants such as cyclamen, primula, strawberries, leaf lettuce, carrots, and alyssum.

Another attraction of the horizontal-cut half whiskey barrel is that it is reinforced to greater degree than the old-fashioned whiskey barrel. I expect them to have more than double the life of the traditional half whiskey barrel. They are also mounted on an attractive base and the drainage holes are in place. It is anew product for the container gardener that is on sale for about \$90.

For an unusual gift pay the training fee for your gardener to be considered for one of the County Master Gardener training classes that is scheduled to begin in 2018. Making application does not guarantee acceptance because they select the trainees that are most likely to use this exceptional training to teach other gardeners as a Master Gardener volunteer. The training fee is \$220 for the 14-week course (4 hours/week) in Bexar County (210 631 0400). Other Chapters to consider are in Guadalupe (830-379-1972), Comal (830 620 3440), and Gonzales Counties (830 672 8531). I am especially excited about the new Chapter in Wilson (830 593 7357), Karnes (830 780 3906), and Atascosa (830 569 8797) Counties. The training begins in April 2018. The fee is \$175. Visit the respective County website of the Texas A&M AgriLife Master Gardeners for more information.

This gift is especially suitable for the newly or soon to be retired individual looking for an activity that will be fun, important to the community and increase her/his gardening skills.

Related to a Master Gardener membership would be participation in the Gardening Volunteers of South Texas. This gift could be unique because your gardener would not have to attend a 14-week training class. You could link your participation with the recipient of your gift. Participation in the GVST offers the similar opportunities for fun, for increasing gardening skills, and to contribute to worthwhile projects as the Master Gardeners, but participation is more flexible. The most valuable part of the gift would be your commitment to participate together.

Learn about the GVST at their website or as part of the Holiday Gift take your Gardener receiving the gift with you to the 3rd Monday meeting at Noon at the SA Garden Center.