**Weekly Express-News Article**

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**New and Old Books for Gardeners**

There are lots of ways to become a better gardener. Faithfully reading this column is one, and tuning into “Gardening South Texas” on “KLUP” radio every Saturday and Sunday from noon until 2:00 P.M., also works. Another good way is to build up your gardening library. If you are a gardener and would be pleased to receive gardening books as a holiday gift this year, leave this article with the books you want circled in a place where your chief gift provider will find it.

The newest book on the market that is especially pertinent to San Antonio area gardeners is “Heirloom Gardening in the South: Yesterday’s Plants for Today’s Gardens” by William Welch and Greg Grant. Both Dr. Welch and Mr. Grant are accomplished authors and horticulturists. Greg used to be the Extension Agent for Horticulture here in Bexar County. The book is well written and the photos are great. The two authors take advantage of their access to gardens in our area and across the South, and their knowledge of the history of gardens and plant material to offer advice in a chatty, anecdotal style that is both informative and a good read. The book retails for $29.95 and is available at bookstores and on the internet.

For a basic text, Neil Sperry’s “Complete Guide to Texas Gardening” is the best. It covers all the areas of gardening and has a good listing of plants to use in your gardens and landscape. The photos of plants and other illustrations are attractive and useful. “Complete Guide to Texas Gardening” is readily available in area bookstores, retail nurseries, and Amazon where it retails from $25 to $40.

“Home Landscaping Texas” by Greg Grant and Roger Holmes is an excellent choice for San Antonians that have a new home to landscape or want to improve their landscape. The book features landscapes designed by San Antonio architect, John Troy. The best feature of “Home Landscaping Texas” is that it is organized by landscaping issue. Identify a special area in your landscape and the book probably has a chapter dedicated to it, complete with graphics. “An Eye Catching Corner,” “Shady Hideaway,” “No Mow Slope,” “A Green Screen,” and “Splash Out” are just a few of the topics. “Home Landscaping Texas” retails for $19.95.

The classic landscape book for native plant buffs is “Native Texas Plants” by Andy and Sally Wasowski. The best feature of the book is the extensive list of native plants with a photo and text on each one. The text emphasizes the features of the plant that makes it useful in the landscape and how to use it to best advantage. “Native Texas Plants” is available on Amazon for $25.74 and copies are relatively common in the used bookstores. Present this book as a present and it will be treasured, even if it has been used.

The “Southern Living Garden Book” and the “Sunset Western Garden Book” are two good reference books for area gardeners. They are especially useful to look up plants that are not “everyday common” in area landscapes and nurseries. We hear about plants used in other parts of the South and in California that we may want to consider in our own San Antonio landscapes. “Southern Living Garden Book” has write-ups on all the Southern plants and “Sunset Western Garden Book” covers the California and desert plants. The description in both books does a good job of listing all the varieties and selections of a particular species. Both make good gifts for the experienced gardener.

Scott Ogden, area horticulturist, has two books he has authored, which would make good gifts for an area gardener that wants to expand his or her gardening scope. Scott’s books are very specific about plants that respond to some of our more difficult gardening conditions. The books also mention plant varieties that can be difficult to find. The books are pleasurable to gardeners that like to organize unique gardens or are eccentric in their outlook. Watch for “Gardening Success with Difficult Soils” and “Garden Bulbs for the South” in area bookstores. They can also be found on the internet book sale sites.

“Perennial Garden Color” by William Welch does an excellent job of covering most of the perennial options we have for central and South Texas gardens. He covers old fashioned roses in considerable detail but my favorite parts of the book are the accounts on spring bulbs and iris. There are a surprising number of daffodils that can be naturalized in our landscapes and iris could be used to a much greater extent.

Gardeners with a special interest in attracting birds to the landscape need a copy of “Attracting Birds to Southern Gardens” by Thomas Pope, Neil Odenwald, and Charles Fryling, Jr. There are lots of good books from the North on attracting birds but this book is superior for Southern gardeners. They do an especially good job of covering hummingbirds.

Tom Harris and Ron Csehil, local Master Gardeners have produced another book that should be in every area gardener’s library, especially if they have ever complained about water bills or the limitations of water restrictions. The book “Drip-Line Gardening” is a how to guide for drip irrigation. It describes in words and photos and diagrams how to build and use this efficient technology. The book also covers gardening on raised beds to the extent that it also could be described as a how-to guide for gardening in raised beds. Find “Drip-Line Gardening” on the website “[www.thehillcountrygardener.com](http://www.thehillcountrygardener.com).” The book sells for $38 including sales tax, shipping, and handling.

Other books that make good gifts for San Antonio gardeners are “Texas Trees: A Friendly Guide” by Patti Leslie and Paul Cox, “Growing Fruits and Nuts in the South” and “The Southern Kitchen Garden” by William Adams and Thomas Leroy, “The Vegetable Book” by Dr. Sam Cotner, “The Texas Bug Book” by Malcolm Beck and Howard Garrett, “Attracting Butterflies to Southern Gardens” by Geyata Ajilvsgi, “Outwitting Deer” by Bill Adler, and “Roses in the Southern Garden” by G. Michael Shoup.