**Primetime**

**By Calvin R. Finch, PhD, SAWS Director, and Horticulturist**

Thursday, December 22, 2011

**Gifts for Gardeners**

Looking for ideas for gifts for the gardeners on your holiday list?

The easiest present to buy is a gift certificate from your gardener’s favorite neighborhood nursery. You can determine exactly how much you want to spend and there are advantages for the gardener as well. They have the fun of picking out what they want. Nothing is more fun to a gardener than wandering around a nursery perusing the merchandise.

If it is a plant that the gardener needs they can select the one that fits the landscape plan and only purchase it when they have the time to plant it.

Gift certificates work well at horticultural supply stores as well. The recipient can use the certificate to purchase mulch, compost, landscape soil, and other accessories. The material can be picked up in the gardener’s truck or the store will deliver the bulk material to the landscape. Among the firms to purchase this gift are Keller Material, Fertile Garden Supply, Garden Ville, and New Earth.

Aeration and top dressing is important to lawn health in our area. A homeowner can do the job themselves but there are at least two firms that will do the job for you or the recipient of the gift. Contact True Green Chem Lawn at “[www.trugreen.com](http://www.trugreen.com)” or Real Green Lawns at “[www.realgreenlawns.com](http://www.realgreenlawns.com)”. This service is a thoughtful and unusual gift.

Does your gardener feed the birds? If he or she does or would if the squirrels could be controlled, consider buying them an “Absolute” brand steel bird feeder with weight sensitive perch. The squirrels can’t chew through it and the feed hopper closes to anything heavier than a cardinal if that is the way you set the weight sensitive perch. They work very well. Absolute steel feeders sell at $29.95 and up.

If you gardener appreciates the value of birds in the landscape but doesn’t need a squirrel proof bird feeder your might want to consider a purple martin house complete with telescoping pole. It is a more expensive gift ranging from $100 to over $200.

There are a number of memberships that your gardener may appreciate. A membership to the Botanical Garden or the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center will allow access to those facilities and support their programs. Both facilities offer training and volunteer opportunities. The membership gift may be especially significant for retired gardeners looking for a way to link their hobby to volunteer service. Both organizations offer docent training and volunteer service opportunities. Buy the membership as the gift and mention the volunteer opportunities in the card.

There are other great volunteer service opportunities in gardening as well. You could provide a scholarship to the Master Gardeners or the Master Naturalists. The training is relatively expensive at $220 respectively, but worth every dollar of the cost. They have more applicants than slots and a commitment is required so your scholarship is not automatic access to the training but it would be a wonderful gift.

Books also make good gifts for gardeners during the Holidays.