**Primetime**

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**Gardening Books as Holiday Gifts**

There are a large number of books that will make great gifts for San Antonio area gardeners. Here are some of my favorites:

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.

The “San Antonio Landscape Care Guide” is short at 60 pages long and cost approximately $8, but it is a great supplement to “Complete Guide to Texas Gardening” because it is specific to San Antonio Gardening. The “Landscape Care Guide” is organized by season and features gardening for wildlife, 12 months of color, lawn care, and maximizing plant performance with a minimal use of water. The “Landscape Care Guide” does not cover as many plant options as the “Complete Guide to Texas Gardening,” but it covers those plants that are easiest to grow. You can find “Landscape Care Guide” at neighborhood nurseries like Rainbow Gardens, Milbergers, Antique Rose Emporium, Fertile Garden Supply, and the Garden Gate Gift Shop at the Botanical Gardens. It is also available at the San Antonio Botanical Garden.

“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.

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, 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.

Bill Welch and Greg Grant have a new book out in 2011. It is titled Heirloom Gardening in the South: Yesterday’s Plants for Today’s Gardens” and sells for $29.95. It has excellent photos, is well written and the information is top notch. Dr. Welch is a long time professor of ornamental horticulture at Texas A & M. Greg Grant now works for Stephen F. Austin University, but he used to be the Extension Agent for Horticultural here in San Antonio. Both are good writers and recognized as leaders in the field.

Bill Welch has several good books to consider. “Perennial Garden Color” is another of my favorites. It covers the topic of old fashioned roses very well and also is the best source of information on naturalizing bulbs and utilizing irises in addition to covering all the other perennials.

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.

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.