Christmas Presents for Gardeners

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It is relatively easy to select Christmas presents for gardeners. Here are a few ideas to consider.

For the gardener that appreciates the birds that will visit a well-planted landscape, make bird observation easier by giving a bird feeder as a gift. Make the present special by obtaining one of the steel feeders with weight sensitive perches so your gardener can reduce consumption of the seeds by squirrels and white-winged doves. Accessorize the present with a bag of sunflower seed and a suet feeder with several blocks of suet. The suet will bring in the insect eaters for observation. Another special feature of this gift is that it can be carried to the gardener’s home and assembled by you and your family. Imagine the pleasure that your elderly parents would experience if you and their grandchildren help them set up the feeder for action. Your closest bird specialty or comprehensive feed store will have all the parts for about $130.

Building a raised bed garden for someone is another gift that encourages participation by the gift providers. Obtain 4- 2by 8s of treated wood and 1 cubic yard of commercial garden mix to build a 4x8 ft. bed. For a gardener that has trouble bending over make the bed three 8 inch boards high. The increased depth will require about 3 cubic yards of soil and the addition of 4- 2ft pieces of 2by 4 for corner pieces. Contact your favorite horticultural supply store to purchase the supplies. I estimate the costs to be about $250. Add a resource book like Sam Cotner’s “The Vegetable Book” or Greg Grant’s “Texas Fruit and Vegetable Gardening” for another $25.

If your gardener has a large raised bed garden consider one of the light weight tillers for his/her Christmas present. Mantis for years was the leading manufacturer of such tillers but now many firms produce reliable machines. My favorite new version is the Stihl. They are sturdy, portable and always seem to start. Look for this present to cost about $300.

One of the most practical presents for a gardener is a gift certificate. It can be for as much or as little as you wish. Much of the fun associated with a gift certificate purchased from a well-stocked garden nursery is going shopping after Christmas to spend the present. The gardener can select hand tools, gloves, bird baths, decorative containers, and, of course, plants. When it comes to plants it is best if the gardener can pick the plants that meet his/her plan when they have time to do the planting. Plants delivered at inconvenient times can be a burden rather than a joy.

For the newly retired gardener or for someone who needs to be more involved in retirement, there is a very special present to consider. Contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office in your county (210-631-0400 in Bexar County) and explore providing a scholarship to Master Gardener Training. It requires a commitment by the gardener and they need to compete for one of the coveted training slots but investing the $250 and 50 hours of volunteer commitment per year will reward the gardener with increased garden knowledge, new friends with like interests, and make them a major contributor to important issues such as water conservation and youth education.

If the Master Gardeners option does not work, consider the Gardening Volunteers of South Texas. The training and volunteer requirement is less formalized but the experience can be just as valuable. Instead of paying for a scholarship for your gardener to join GVST, get them to agree to participate with you. The fun and involvement is a great present to them and for yourself! Check the website, [www.gardengvolunteers.org](http://www.gardengvolunteers.org).