

IN THE GARDEN

WITH MR. GREENJEANS

by Randy Arnowitz

Gifts for Your Favorite Gardener

Christmas always ends up costing me a lot more money than I've budgeted for. This is because for every gift I buy for someone else, I buy one or two for myself. I can't help it. Or, even worse, sometimes I'll come home from shopping with a truckload of cool gifts and then can't bear to part with any of them. So, I have to go back out again and buy more stuff. Being the gardening enthusiast that I am, this is especially problematic if I do my Christmas shopping at the nursery or orchid greenhouse.

But this year, I've got a plan. I'm going to do all my Christmas shopping at stores that don't sell anything that I want. It's the perfect solution. I just hope my friends and family appreciate fishing tackle, candle-making kits and bagpipe lessons.

Seriously, if you have someone on your list who loves to garden and you have enough self control to shop for them, almost anything you'd find at a nursery or the gardening section of a home center would be appreciated by a garden hobbyist.

Everyday gardening items like rakes, shovels, trowels, hoses, plastic trash cans or shoebox-size bins for storing fertilizer, watering cans (plastic, metal, copper) and bags of organic fertilizer or amendments are a few gift ideas to consider when you find yourself out shopping.

Smaller items like that green nursery tape or twist tie, seeds, hose repair kits, hose washers, bulbs, plastic labels, small sprinklers and plastic or brass hose nozzles can easily fill up a stocking.

If you want to make a bigger impression or merely demonstrate your garden and gift-giving savvy here are a few more ideas.

Orchids

With proper care many gift orchids will continue to bloom through the holiday season and possibly up until Valentine's Day when your sweetie will present you with another one. With love, luck and light there's a good chance you can even bring it into bloom again in your home or garden. Moth orchids (phalaenopsis), miltonias, dendrobiums, some cattleyas and lady slippers (paphiopedilums) do best if kept indoors in a brightly lit room during the winter. Oncidiums, zygotetulum and cymbidiums on the other hand will hold their blooms longer if kept outside or on a cool porch. My favorites – cool-



Brightly colored laelias are easy to care for and make a great gift



Randy – Mr. Greenjeans – resides in a potting shed with 200 orchids and his golden retriever "Peaches." He enthusiastically welcomes your gardening questions; address them to greenjeansmr@verizon.net.

growing laelias – can be fastened to the trunk of a tree out in the garden where they will eventually cling to the bark with spidery new roots and happily and effortlessly bloom again once established. Cal-Orchid and the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate in Goleta have lots to choose from, as do the orchid greenhouses down in Carpinteria.

Decollate Snails



Nothing says "I love you" like a bag of snails

Nothing says, "I love you" like a bag of snails. This year, surprise someone on your list with some *Rumina decollata* snails. I'm not talking about the kind of snails that you tastefully dip in garlic butter, I'm talking about predatory decollate snails. When introduced into your garden these spiral-shelled, mucusy mollusks will hunt down and take out those ravenous brown garden snails (*Helix aspera*) that devour everything in your garden *except* your

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weeds. These slimy guys cost around \$20 for 100 of them – enough to patrol 1000 square feet of garden. Island Seed and Feed in Goleta can order you up some (not recommended as a stocking stuffer).

Toad Houses

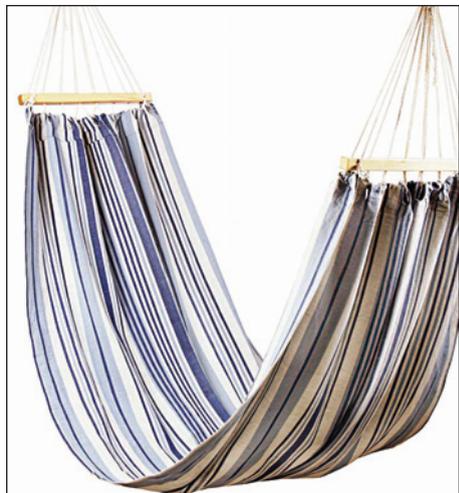


Get your favorite toad a toad house for the holidays

Yes, this is a real thing. If your hard-to-shop-for gardening loved one already has an ant farm, bat house, worm bin and mason bee log, consider a toad house. These little garden shelters provide toads (or frogs) with a safe, cool environment away from kid traffic, dogs and lawn mowers. Google “toad house” for a reputable toad house dealer near you. Butterfly & Nature Gift Store online claims to have, “The largest toad house selection on the internet.” Who knew, right? It used to be that sea monkeys would do the trick.

Hammocks

What better way is there to relax in the garden than to gently sway off to sleep in a hammock? After a tough day of weeding, watering and planting there’s nothing quite like it. Imagine the look on your loved one’s face when he or she sees one of these



Hammocks are a great addition to any garden

babies hanging out there between the oaks on Christmas morning. Styles, quality and prices vary. Home centers as well as online is a good place to look. Make sure to get one for someone that shares.

Hedgehog Boot Brush



A hedgehog boot brush is a practical but not very romantic holiday gift

Available in slightly different shapes and sizes, you keep one of these on your front or back porch to wipe your muddy feet on before entering the house. I’m sure you’ve seen them. They’re shaped like a hedgehog and the spiny part of the animal is the brush. Clever, useful and practical, but like a blender, it isn’t the most romantic gift. Probably not the best thing to get your wife or girlfriend; it’s more of an in-laws’ thing.

Kid Stuff



Kids will enjoy getting out in the garden with their own tools (these found at www.waycooltools.com)

Looking for an alternative to video games and monster toys that turn into monster trucks that turn back into...? Bring your kids back to (the) earth and show them how much fun it is to *really* get dirty. Many nurseries (and online) sell kid-sized hand trowels, cultivators and weeders as well as rakes and shovels.

Remember books? Tecolote Book Shop in the Upper Village and Chaucer’s Bookstore in Loreto Plaza both carry gardening books for kids. Great stocking stuffers!

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