

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER



November 12, 2022

## Finding the Right Gift

Finding the right gift for family and friends is nerve-racking. Even though they don't want this process to be stressful, it is nice to find something they would enjoy. Taking time to find the desired gift helps to stay on budget instead of grabbing something at the last minute at a higher price.

Books with plant themes make great gifts for adults and children. Dr. Winston Dunwell, University of Kentucky Extension Professor for Nursery Crops, has reviewed many types of gardening books from commercial applications to home use. Some of the books are industry standards and perfect for the avid gardener. Dr. Dunwell's comments can be found at <https://nursery-crop-extension.ca.uky.edu/content/ornamental-and-environmental-horticulture-books>.

A printable source of science-based information is available through free publications from the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service and can be found at any County Extension office or online at <https://daviess.ca.uky.edu/horticulture>. Topics covered include

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composting, trees, flowers, fruits, vegetables, turfgrass, and more. Organizing the printed material in a binder keeps the information in place.

Growing vegetables in raised beds continues to make producing vegetables in your garden more accessible. Kits are available to purchase or make your own. Four feet wide is the maximum suggested width of the bed. The best length of the bed depends on the available space, money, and time. A frame to support the soil may be constructed of untreated wood, stone, concrete block, brick, or recycled plastic boards. Soil may also be mounded without a rigid structure. Woods naturally resistant to decay include cedar, redwood, and black locust. Even beds tall enough to avoid bending over can be made or are available already made. Gift certificates to purchase media to fill the bed and for seeds or transplants complete this project. Information about the planting media for the plants to grow in the bed is available at <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/ID/ID248/ID248.pdf>.

Supplies specifically for growing transplants are useful gifts. These may include light stand, light bulbs, heat mat, seed starting media, seedling containers, trays to catch water, plastic dome to hold in moisture, and timer for the lights to manage the appropriate day lengths needed by the seedlings. More information about growing transplants can be found within the publication on growing vegetables in Kentucky located at <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id128/id128.pdf>.

Even though a person must wait to plant them, a collection of vegetable, herb, and flower seeds helps him or her look forward to the next growing season. Zinnias, sunflowers, and marigolds are easy to grow and can be sown directly into the garden. Vegetables, such as

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spinach, lettuce, peas, beets, beans, and cucumbers, are also easy to grow directly sown into the garden. Tomato, pepper, eggplant, cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower need to be seeded indoors and transplanted out in the garden at the appropriate time.

Gardening gloves to use while working in the garden together are useful for the entire family. A pair of rubberized gloves is best when working with muddy jobs. Two pairs of cotton gloves are also handy so that one pair is always ready while the other may be in the laundry.

To complete other gardening tasks, pruners and pruning saws are used to maintain shrubs and trees. The bypass type of pruning tool has a scissors cutting action that cleanly cuts the stem without crushing it. Pruning saws are designed to cut on the pull stroke. The blades are narrow to fit into tight spaces and still make clean cuts.

Hand pruners are used to cut stems up to three-quarters inch in diameter. Two-handed lopping shears cut branches up to 1 to 1.5 inches in diameter. Pruning saws are recommended for removing branches over 1 inch in diameter. Following these guidelines help to make the tools last longer and results in good, clean cuts which are better for the plant.

Garden and spading forks are useful tools to turn over garden soil. Garden forks have four tines that are thick and rectangular or square. They are used to break up heavy soil that has not been disturbed. The spading fork has four flat tines that may have diamond or triangular backs. They are used to turn loose soil. Other uses for both tools include turning over compost and digging root crops.

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A battery-operated timer for irrigation lines or soaker hoses saves water by keeping it from running all night when someone forgets to turn the water off. It is also handy when on vacation for a few days.

Making a compost bin would be another gift idea. Composting yard waste turns it into a good amendment to improve the condition of the soil. Compost bins can be very elaborate and made out of wood, or very simple and made out of wire. Ideas for making compost bins and how to compost are available free through the Cooperative Extension Service Office or at the website <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/ho/ho75/ho75.pdf>.

My favorite gifts include holiday plants such as poinsettia, Christmas cactus, and amaryllis which brighten the days during winter. Even succulents are popular. These plants are available locally. More information on their care can be found at <http://www.uky.edu/hort/sites/www.uky.edu/hort/files/documents/christmasflowers.pdf>. Before purchasing plants, check to see if the receiver has a plant allergy.

For more gardening gift ideas, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or [annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu](mailto:annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu).

## **Annette's Tip:**

A gift certificate purchased now from a local garden center or nursery can be used in the spring for suggested items such as a wide-brim garden hat, decorative pots, a fountain, or bird feeders. The recipient could use it for his or her favorite plants too.

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