

Gifts for the Gardener

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Need an original or unique gift idea? Here are some gift suggestions for the gardener in the family or someone who just appreciates the outdoors.

Holiday plants are always a welcome gift to any home. They add color and holiday accents to interior surroundings. The traditional red poinsettias are popular, as are the newer flower colors of pink, blue, white and yellow. Other possibilities are Christmas cactus, red gloxinia and kalanchoe.

The outdoor gardener might like to receive a certain tool to make the job of spring gardening easier. Soil working tools like rakes, hoes and spades may be difficult to wrap and still be a surprise, but they are always welcome. Pruning tools, like hand shears and small saws, are easier to wrap and may be needed later this winter.

Do not overlook the possibility of a gardening magazine or plant book as a gift. Many larger book stores have well stocked sections on these and related topics. Garden centers and nurseries offer a variety of titles on individual plants as well as cultural practices. Someone with a new home might like a book on plant selection and landscaping, while people with a well established garden and landscape might better use information on maintenance and pruning practices.

Children love to garden and be outside too. Child size tools and gloves are available for them to use. Other items to consider are children's gardening books, flower press, garden box, worm composting bin, stepping stone kit and seeds of their favorite vegetables or flowers to plant in a garden just for them.

If you have a non-gardening friend or relative you want to introduce to gardening, consider a total package with plant, container and growing media, along with a book on plant care. Gardening kits are available too. A unique gift would be a Bonsai rock garden or a culinary herb garden kit.

There are many gift ideas for people who like to spend their time at the many state parks in the area. To make their adventure more enjoyable consider giving them a 2010 state park car pass to get into the park, a compass and identification books on wild flowers, birds, insects, butterflies, trees, tracks or mammals. Other useful items would include binoculars to look for things far away, pocket magnifier to see small things close up, sports or explorer's watch, water bottle for refreshment, disposable camera, hiking boots, sun screen and insect repellent.

Gifts for people who appreciate the outdoors in their own back yard might like bird feeders with birdseed or a compost bin. Water features have also become very popular. Consider giving a water garden kit with a fountain. Other gifts might be a bird bath, bird or bat house, butterfly raise/release kit, outdoor thermometer, rain gauge, wild flower or native grass seed.

Some people may just wish to sit back, relax and enjoy the outdoors. Gifts for them may include a porch swing, garden bench, hammock and a subscription to NEBRASKAland magazine.



Poinsettias



Christmas cactus



Gloxinia



Kalanchoe

Center for Grassland Studies Fall Seminar Series

The 15th annual fall seminar series offered by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Center for Grassland Studies will feature faculty and guest lecturers. The seminars are free and open to the public. They are held most Mondays during the fall semester, 3–4 p.m., at the Nebraska East Union on East Campus — see kiosks for location.

- Oct. 26 **"Seed Production of Native Grasses"**
Dave Stock, Owner, Stock Seed Farms
- Nov. 9 **"Nebraska Invasive Species Project: Monitoring, Mapping, Risk and Management"**
Karie Decker, Coordinator, Invasive Species Project at the Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit based at UNL
- Nov. 16 **"Differential Responses of Western Chinch Bugs to Neonicotinyl Insecticides"**
Mitchell Stamm, Graduate Student, Department of Entomology, UNL
- Nov. 23 **"Role of Peroxidase in the Defense Response of Buffalograss to the Western Chinch Bug"**
Anh Hoang, Graduate Student, Department of Entomology, UNL
- Nov. 30 **"Functional and Demographic Tradeoffs Among Tree Species"**
Sabrina Russo, Assistant Professor, School of Biological Sciences, UNL
- Dec. 7 **"Eastern Red Cedar: Ecophysiology and Ramifications of Its Invasion on Ecosystem Processes in Nebraska"**
Tala Awada, Associate Professor, School of Natural Resources, UNL

The schedule is subject to revision. Any changes will be noted on the Fall 2009 seminar listing at <http://www.grassland.unl.edu>

Garden Guide

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH
By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

Inspect trees and shrubs for bagworm capsules. Remove and destroy them to reduce next year's pest population.

Start reviewing your garden notes to help with next year's plans.

Check fruits, vegetables, corms and tubers that you have in storage. Sort out any that show signs of rot and dispose of them.

Clean power tools of all plant material and dirt. Replace worn spark plugs, oil all necessary parts and sharpen blades. Store all tools in their proper place indoors, never outdoors where they will rust over the winter.

Be sure not to store apples or pears with vegetables. The fruits give off ethylene gas which speeds up the breakdown of vegetables and will cause them to develop off-flavors.

African violets do well when potted in small pots. A good general rule is to use a pot one-third the diameter of the plant. Encourage African violets to bloom by giving them plenty of light. They can be in a south window during dark winter months. They bloom beautifully under fluorescent lights.

Clean and fix all hand tools. Repaint handles or identification marks that have faded over the summer. Sharpen all blades and remove any rust.

After the ground freezes, mulch small fruit plants such as strawberries. One inch of straw or leaves is ideal for strawberries.

Remove all mummified fruit from fruit trees and rake up and destroy those on the ground. Also, rake and dispose of apple and cherry leaves. Good sanitation practices reduce reinfestation of insects and diseases the following season.

Order seed catalogs now for garden planning in January. For variety, consider companies that specialize in old and rare varieties or wild flowers.

Bring out the bird feeders and stock them with bird seed for the birds. Remember to provide fresh water for them too.

Place Christmas trees away from fireplaces, radiators, heat vents and anything else that could dry the needles. Keep your Christmas tree well watered from the time it is brought home until it is discarded.

Minimize traffic on a frozen lawn to reduce winter damage.

House plants with large leaves and smooth foliage such as philodendrons, dracaena and rubber plant, benefit if their leaves are washed with a damp cloth to remove dust.

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