

Plant lovers' corner

Holiday gift ideas for the plant lover

With the holidays coming up, everyone is looking for gift ideas. For the plant lover on your list, the possibilities are practically endless.

Indoors, the window gardener might appreciate shelves to hang in a window, or a long-spouted watering can. Or how about an unusual pot for displaying a favorite plant?

A light gardener might welcome some fluorescent bulbs or an automatic timer. And a bonsai grower might be thrilled to get shallow Japanese bonsai pots, or a watering can with a very narrow spout.

Novel and unusual containers make perfect gifts for people who enjoy flower arranging. You can often find such containers in antique shops or at garage sales. Also consider needlepoint holders, blocks of oasis foam, or flower-cutting shears. And, the dried-flower enthusiast can always use silica gel.

For a personal touch, you might want to give young plants that you've started from your own favorites. Or try making macrame hangers. All you need is a simple instruction book and some string.

A more ambitious undertaking would be to put together a dish garden for some houseplant lover on your list. All it takes is a number of small plants—most of them fairly inexpensive. And a suitable container. The use of one that has a dull or matt glaze and is very simple in design, so that it won't compete with the plants you put in it, is suggested. If there is no drain hole in the container, place a layer of gravel and charcoal in the bottom before adding soil and the plants. Be sure to pick materials that have compatible moisture requirements so that when the "garden" is watered they're all happy.

If you want to give a plant, you might also consider giving an amaryllis bulb. These often come in special gift packs, potted up and ready to water. The amaryllis is an excellent investment despite its initial cost. With proper care, the same bulb can be made to bloom annually for 30 years or more.

An older, housebound person on your list might enjoy receiving a bowl of paper white narcissus that have been forced. These bulbs come along rapidly and produce fragrant white flowers that can be very welcome to someone fretting over the drabness of winter.

If a gardening friend has a mania for one particular type of plant, it should be kept in mind that almost every plant favorite has a national society. A gift membership will provide a regular magazine as well as other benefits. Along the same line, most gardeners have an area of special interest, whether it's vegetables, lawns, ornamental trees, or houseplants. A book or magazine subscription on this favorite subject is another gift idea that should appeal.

If you're having trouble thinking of presents to give, also consider practical things a person could use in the garden. For instance, a set of permanent labels and an all-weather marking pen might be well appreciated. Or a garden diary could make a pleasing gift.

Tools make excellent gifts, too, even if they do represent work. A garden trowel, hand weeder, or mini-hoe are possibilities. Or, if you're looking for something bigger, how about giving a wheel barrow, roto-tiller, lawn mower, power sprayer, feeder or fertilizer, spreader. Pruning tools such as hand shears, loppers, hedge clippers or

pruning saws can also make good gifts. With tools, just remember that cheap ones in many cases are not worth the money spent on them because they won't stand up to hard use.

Once you start thinking about all the practical needs of the plant lover on your list, you may be surprised about how many other gift ideas you can dream up. In fact, your worst problem could be just making a choice.

Living Christmas trees take care

Each year many people buy evergreens that are planted in tubs to be used as indoor Christmas trees. After Christmas the plants are set in the yard and used as part of the landscape. In order to help the plant survive this unnatural treatment, some special care is needed, advises James J. McKeehen, Delaware County Extension agricultural agent. First of all, it is important to keep the plants well watered in the home so that the needles will not dry and drop. This is often difficult to do and it is strongly urged that a water-proof container of some sort be placed between the tree and the floor.

The sooner living Christmas trees are planted in their permanent location, the better are their chances of survival. One problem in planting trees at this season is that the soil is apt to be caked and wet and it is very difficult to pack the soil around the roots. Naturally, the tree must be well watered just as in Summer and Fall planting. If the soil is frozen and the planting cannot be done immediately the tree can be placed in a sheltered location on the surface and a mulching material of some sort packed around and over the root ball. Planting can be done later when the ground is workable. In any event, the tree should be in a location where it will not be subjected to strong winds and if it must be planted in an unsheltered area, some protective screen should be used.

Crop evaluation winners named

HAMBURG — The annual Berks County FFA crop evaluation contests were held recently at Hamburg High School. Winners of the contest were as follows:

Ken Sanner won first place in the alfalfa hay, clover hay, grass hay, haylage, and wheat classes placing second in oats. Other winners were Steve Angstadt, Kutztown, second in alfalfa and first in oats; Harvey Bitler, Twin Valley, second in wheat.

Corn yield, winners included: first, George Sattazahn, Tulpehocken FFA 185.49; second, Harvey Bitler, Twin Valley 178.5; third, Martin Moyer, Tulpehocken 164.68; fourth,

Daryl Kunkle, Kutztown 163; fifth, Lowell Stutzman, Kutztown 155.61; sixth, David Reigel, Kutztown 154.3; seventh, Tom Kirk, Twin Valley 147.5; eighth, Ken Sanner, Kutztown 140.2; ninth, Howard Griest, Twin Valley 140.15; and tenth, Mike Heiter - Kutztown 139.5.

In the Corn Quality Contest, winners were: first, Harvey Bitler; second, David Dietrich, Kutztown; third, George Sattazahn; fourth, Michael Strause, Hamburg; fifth, Howard Griest; sixth, David Reigel; seventh, Martin Moyer; eighth, Daryl Kunkle; ninth, Chris Bear, Kutztown; and tenth, Lowell Stutzman.

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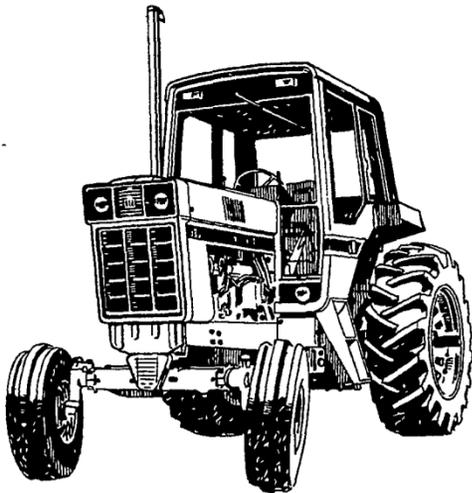
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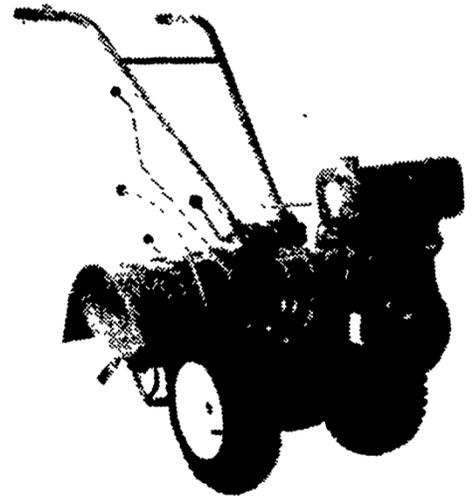
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