

Hoe, hoe, hoe! Gifts for gardeners



By Katharine Fletcher

What to buy for the gardener in your life – or, let’s not fool ourselves – yourself? Read on for free ideas, garden getaways... and books, tools and more!

Feel-good, totally free gifts

Don’t have a garden but want to keep your hands in the soil? Become a volunteer at a local garden. Help eradicate invasive species which are destroying wildlife habitat and killing native species. Learn about roses, iris, peonies and other species before you buy and plant your own. Work side by side with other volunteers in the only walled garden in eastern Canada.

Right here in Ottawa we are blessed with many gardens we can help to nurture. Here are three absolutely splendid gardens which need your help:

Fletcher Wildlife Garden – operated by the Ottawa Field Naturalist Club, this garden depends on volunteers. Go to: www.ofnc.ca/fletcher.php

Friends of the Farm – the Central Experimental Farm has many gardens and all are run on volunteer help. Interested in roses, iris, lilacs, peonies... and other glories of the garden? Investigate becoming a volunteer and note, students are welcome: www.friendsofthefarm.ca/volunteer.htm

Friends of Maplelawn: help to protect this 19th Century walled garden on Richmond Road, located beside the Keg. For information: www.maplelawn.ca/

Garden getaway

Be creative with gifts and give your time. Why not take a pal on a garden getaway? Drive, for instance, to Gerber’s Nursery at Golden Lake. It’s a gorgeous day trip and in December their four greenhouses resemble a tropical hideaway... they’re warm and full of incredible flowers. (This is an outstanding nursery which “you

must" visit! For information: gerbersnursery@gmail.com;
www.gerbersnursery.com; 613-625-2304.

Gardeners' books

The Plant Propagator's Bible, by Miranda Smith (\$26.95, Rodale Books)
Available from Lee Valley Tools

This book really is a bible – it contains clear instructions plus photos and diagrams covering the intricacies of starting new plants by seed, cuttings or grafts.

I particularly appreciate the clear illustrations which demonstrate how to do such things as different types of layering: tip, mound, serpentine and others. And at the end of each step-by-step set of drawings and captions, there's a box entitled "What can go wrong" – which is rather helpful if you're like me...

The Pruner's Bible, by Steve Bradley (\$31.95, Rodale Books) Available from Lee Valley Tools.

With help from author Bradley and his clearly written and illustrated book, my husband Eric is now quite adept at pruning our crabapple tree. And although we've not quite mastered our wisteria and clematis plants' wild growth, we're ever-hopeful...

Where to prune to create an effect is the issue. Again, the combination of text and clear illustrations sorted by species makes this book's information accessible to us all.

Gardening magazines

Canadian Gardening: subscription information: secure.canadiangardening.com

Sure we can Google or bookmark websites until we drop. However, curling up with a colourful magazine and a cup of tea soothes the spirits, whether we're beside a wood stove in winter, or outside on the patio come summer. And why not support the Canadian magazine industry – and encourage a monthly break where you're encouraging someone you love to chill out and take a few hours for themselves?

Canadian Gardening's a great choice because it promotes garden ideas, trends, challenges with our country and its hardiness zones as backdrop.

Fine Gardening Magazine: subscription information: www.finegardening.com/

Another excellent magazine – though not Canadian – *Fine Gardening* offers mouth-watering images of plants and gardens, plus it covers expert tips on everything from timesaving tips through to planting advice.

Hands down: gloves

I love to garden. I absolutely hate getting soil under my fingernails and into my knuckles and skin. So I am a glove enthusiast.

Many styles, functions at Lee Valley's website: www.leevalley.com

Here you'll find a good assortment of gloves in just about any length you can imagine. Protective Pruning gloves extend from fingertips to just below the shoulder and are made from sturdy waterproof Nitrile which thorns don't penetrate.

My top choice for basic gardening come summertime (or propagating plants inside...) is the fabulous lightweight Nitrile gripper gloves. And then there are those gorgeous, supple French pigskin gloves in scarlet or periwinkle blue...

Katharine and Eric Fletcher live at Spiritwood where they enjoy their low-impact vegetable and perennial gardens. Find their regional guide books at Ottawa-area bookshops.

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