Unusual Gifts for the Gardening Enthusiast in Your Life

By Joanne Brown, Frederick County Master Gardener, Special to News Post

My wife is an avid gardener. I'd love to get her a special yet practical gift this year. Any suggestions?

Gift-giving time is nigh -- our nights are longer, our jackets are warmer, and our gardens are enjoying a well-deserved rest of their own.

Gardeners love tools, and books, and magazines, and mini-greenhouses, and seeds, and bulbs -- all of which make great gifts.

We have a lot of older gardening tools. Several are just worn out. Do you have any recommendations for replacements?

A gardener can never have enough tools, especially superior quality tools. For a great selection of tools field-tested and used regularly by professional market farmers and serious gardeners here and in the United Kingdom, check out Johnny's Selected Seeds of Winslow, Maine.

They sell a fabulous high carbon steel hand hoe for weeding and cultivating for only $12.55 along with a complete line of long handled hoes, cultivators, trowels, digging forks, knives, and any other garden tool worth shed space.

Already in print for the 2007 season, Johnny's free seed and product catalog alone will be enjoyed over the winter months by your gardener. Reach employee owned and operated Johnnys by phone 1-877-Johnnys (1-877-564-6697) or on the web at www.Johnnyseeds.com. Currently they are offering a discount on gift certificates.

My wife gets restless in the winter from lack of gardening! Any suggestions?

Greenhouses make great gifts! If you have the room, a full-size greenhouse --tall enough to stand in, with shelving for lots of plants -- may be the right choice for you. But don't fret if you are limited in space -- several mini-greenhouses are available, as well, and will keep the gardener in your life happily busy all winter -- from growing orchids to overwintering tender perennials!

One major source to check out is Growers Supply, a division of Farmtek, a leading manufacturer of fabric structures and greenhouses. They also publish free catalogs. Ask for their Master Catalog and you will have over 30,000 agricultural, horticultural, and landscaping items to peruse. Phone 1-800-476-9715 or www.GrowersSupply.com

And when you can't garden because it's cold outside, there's nothing better than curling up with a cup of tea and reading a book about gardening!

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My wife always looks through the gardening books when we go to the bookstore. Which would you recommend as keepers?

Three excellent gardening books may arouse her reading interest. The first, *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden* by Tracy DiSabato-Aust, does not offer suggestions about what to plant where. Instead, it explains how to care for what is already in your garden -- how to care for it very, very well. Its A-Z encyclopedia of plant care includes discussions of each perennial's needs -- from deadheading and pruning to sunlight and soil drainage. With entries from *Acanthus spinosus* to *Viola odorata*, every gardening enthusiast will find something of value in this helpful book.

A second book idea is *Noah's Garden: Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Back Yards*, by Sara Stein. In this very readable book, Stein details her conversion from a high-style conventional gardener trying to do everything right to an ecologically-informed nature lover. She explains why (and how) we need to transcend many of our older gardening concepts and help our own back yards become places of plenty again -- plenty of wild berries, songbirds, and native plants.

The third recommended book is an academic look at the ordering and naming of flora, from the 3rd century BCE to the publication of Linnaeus's *Species plantarum* in 1753. *The Naming of Names: The Search for Order in the World of Plants*, by Anna Pavord, will engage the interest of everyone interested in the history of plants--a history which includes far more intrigue and danger than you might think!

Any other ideas?

Two last-minute ideas come to mind: a 12-month subscription to a gardening magazine, such as *Horticulture*.

And, last but not least, for the gardener who has everything -- including aches and pains from all of that kneeling, digging and deadheading -- perhaps a gift certificate for a one-hour massage, where those aches and pains can be gently rubbed away and replaced with oooohs and aaaahs.

Happy Giving and Receiving!

For more information about horticulture or the Master Gardener Program in Frederick County, call the Frederick County Office of the Maryland Cooperative Extension, 301- 600-1596, or visit http://www.frederick.umd.edu/. Our mission is to educate Maryland residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes and communities.