

This Month in the Garden

by Peggy Koppmann

December begins the “chill out” season for gardeners, both inside and out. Just like our houseplants, we may need to “go dormant” for a little while to rest, relax, and restore before the change in the calendar and the arrival of seed catalogs. But before all that comes, the holiday gift giving, (and receiving,) season will be upon us. Perhaps you’ll find some ideas here whether you are the gift-giver or the recipient. Either way, it’s “Happy Holidays” to all our Master Gardeners and friends.

Archimedes in the Garden – An object will float when the weight of the water displaced equals the weight of the object. So, an Archimedes rain gauge with a floating measurement tube will rise to show the amount of rainfall accumulated. Gardeners always like to know how much rainfall has occurred to judge their watering needs. Look for a rain gauge that is easy to read from inside, so you don’t have to go out in the rain to check on the amount of rainfall.

Paleontology in the Garden - Buffalo is known for the inclusion of garden art as part of our landscape decor. Holiday gift choices could include wind spinners, garden stakes, specialty lighting, or wind chimes. But for real im-pact, we recommend a dinosaur! Several vendors feature both a Stegosaurus or Velociraptor sculpture that will bring a Jurassic Park feel to your yard. With any luck they’ll scare off the deer?!? Try uncommongoods.com or windandweather.com for some ideas.

Japan in the Garden – The essential tool in any garden is the Japanese Hori Hori knife. If you don’t have one, you need to put this on your list for Santa. Part knife, part trowel, part weeder, it can be used for planting, weeding, cutting, sawing, slicing, or transplanting in the garden. Look for stainless steel, full tang blades, and a wooden handle. It should have a sharp flat edge for cutting and a serrated edge for sawing, with measurement markings on the blade. Check out <https://www.hgtv.com/shopping/product-reviews/best-hori-hori-weeding-knives> for more information.

Bookworms in the Garden – Looking to add to your collection of gardening resources? Take a look at this random selection of titles for your wishlist: *Through the Seasons* by Mike Adamovic, a photographic journey through the native plants of the northeast US; *Sweet Pea School* by Marryn Mathis, the self-named Sweet Pea Queen; *The Food Forward Garden: A Manual on How to Have Your Beautiful Yard – And Eat It Too* by chef Tyler Florence; *Teaming With Microbes* by Jeff Lowenfels and Wayne Lewis, an exploration of the relationship between plants and soil microorganisms; *The Nature of Oaks* by Doug Tallamy for a deep dive into this keystone species; *The*

Well-Gardened Mind by Sue Stuart-Smith with its insights into the impact of gardening on our persona. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society has an excellent list if you looking for additional titles: <https://phsonline.org/for-gardeners/gardeners-blog/13-gardening-and-nature-books>

Techies in the Garden – Here are a few totally cool, (or is the new term ‘dope’?) items to entice your favorite garden techie: A smart bird box that can stream live HD video from inside the birdbox to your phone or tablet; the Gardenia Smart System, an automated sprinkler system connected via Wi-Fi and controlled from your phone with a feature that can sense when your soil is too dry and water automatically; a lightweight cordless mini chainsaw to add to your pruning prowess; the Reencle home composter that can handle kitchen scraps and grass clippings to produce compost. and a robotic lawn mower or (could this be true?!) – a robotic weeder - that is solar-powered, weatherproof, and can be “taught” to identify weeds vs wanted plants by their height. Of course, the latter two come with a steep price tag but hey, Santa, we’ve been so good.....

Buffalo(s) in the Garden – Buffalo has become a garden destination! There are nurseries, garden centers, and plant shops all around our region with lots of shopping and gift-giving options. Consider a gift certificate to Urban Gardens, Lockwoods, or Lavocats. Sign your giftee up for a class at the Botanical Gardens, or Baddings Bros. Nursery. Look for specialty succulents at Mischlers. Order Super Soil from Buffalo Worm Works or compost from Farmer Pirates compost; Take out a subscription to Buffalo-NiagaraGardening.com or Upstate Gardeners Journal. Gift a membership for the Buffalo Botanical Gardens, the WNY Hosta Society or Daylily Society, or donate to the WNY Land Conservancy. It’s all local and it’s part of the way WNY gardeners support one another.

And then.....Keep bird feeders stocked; use branches from Christmas trees to shelter tender plants; start a pot of paperwhites; add mulch around roses after the ground freezes; organize your seed starting supplies and get ready for the eagerly awaited seed catalogs; save translucent gallon jugs for winter sowing; watch your houseplants and move them in or out of sunnier spots as needed; watch for snow load on vulnerable shrubs and trees – brush snow off with a broom; use natural materials for holiday decorations; buy a real tree and support a WNY grower; and..... have a joyous holiday season.



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