

Garden Gifts for Peace, Serenity and Beauty

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It's that time again! Thanksgiving is here and Christmas won't be far behind. Before you get in a frantic tizzy, trying to find those perfect gifts, relax just a minute. Consider gifts for the garden, gifts that will enhance the peace, serenity and beauty in our daily lives.

For garden gifts, consider shrubs to be used for greenery for Christmas decorating and floral arrangements year-round. My favorites are hollies, Leyland cypress, junipers, pyracantha, sasanqua, pittosporum (both green and variegated), podocarpus, aucuba, holly fern, and boxwood. Every garden should have these plants just for cutting.

Also, consider indoor plants for the gardener. Norfolk Island Pine, weeping fig, bamboo palm, Chinese evergreens, Victoria bird's-nest fern and philodendrons are among the most versatile and easiest to grow. Plus, they are nature's air filters, cleansing the air we breathe indoors.

Another gift idea would be flowering trees. Trees that will add form, flower, autumn color, and shade include dogwood, crape myrtle, Japanese magnolia, Little Gem' magnolia, ginkgo, maples, and Bradford pear. There's a tree for every garden and every season.

Flowering shrubs also make good gifts. Camellias, sasanquas, azaleas (especially the new Encore' azaleas which bloom off and on all year), roses, Indian hawthorn, and many more flowering shrubs make great gifts.

Fragrant plants will remind the gardener of the gift-giver for years to come. Some good fragrant plants include tea olive, gardenias, Confederate jasmine, banana shrub, some ginger, and many herbs. These add that final touch to make the garden complete. Each is unique; each supplies its own signature fragrance in its own season. Each adds to our pleasure. Each can help to calm frayed nerves and slow a hectic life. What a gift!

Gifts to attract birds and wildlife to the garden include plants, feeders, and birdbaths or water gardens. Or, consider giving plants to attract hummingbirds and butterflies to the garden. These can add so much pleasure in even the smallest garden or patio area.

There are so many other choices. Give a plant for a garden accent, plants for screening a view, or plants for the foundation planting. Consider the needs of the gardener on your list, and no doubt you will find many possible gifts.

And don't forget that gardens include more than plants. Garden statuary and furniture enhance the feeling of a garden. Stepping stones lead and direct and invite us to experience the garden. A bench provides a place to rest and enjoy, inviting us to slow down, to be still. Religious statues of St Francis or angels reflect each individual's commitment to his or her faith. Animal statuary...

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frogs, turtles, rabbits, squirrels... restates our appreciation and respect for all of God's wonderful creation.

There are so many choices. But if you still don't know what to get, perhaps the best answer is a gift certificate. This allows the recipient to choose exactly what he prefers. Plus, it allows him to take it at his convenience, whenever it is best for planting or placing it in his garden. Whatever you choose, it is true that flowers and gardens bring peace, serenity, and beauty into our lives. As the poet said 700 years ago, "they feed thy soul". What better gift can we give?

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