

# The Grapevine

## Gifts for Gardeners

Christmas is just around the corner; if you have been procrastinating buying presents, I'm guilty of waiting till the last minute, you might be looking for some gift ideas for the plant lover in your family. Sometimes it feels impossible to find the long-term gardener in your life a gift they don't already have. The good news is there are many tools and accessories on the market. Almost all of these are being used by Master Gardeners in our area. If you are looking for some cool ideas, check out these options. Hopefully, one of these will work for that hard-to-shop person in your life.

- This first one is for the women. I found these overalls or coveralls at the International Master Gardener Conference and fell in love. I know several of our Master Gardeners will also agree that they are fabulous. These coveralls were designed to be durable, breathable, and have zip-off legs for those hot Kansas summers. They come in a variety of different colors and a pattern. The cool thing is these will slide over your clothing and shoes without having to take anything off. These coveralls are online at Rosie's Work Wear or similar pairs at Duluth Trading Company.
- The second idea will help to help reduce the effort needed to maintain plants in your landscape. The ratcheting loppers or pruners allow you to make a cut in a series of small steps, reducing the amount of pressure needed to make the cut and making the process easier on your hands. This can help you avoid hand fatigue and injury, allowing you to prune longer or complete tasks if you have arthritis. There are hundreds of ratcheting loppers or pruners on the market, make sure you buy one that is sturdy and well-built so they last. Check out your local hardware or garden center for these items.



- The third idea came from a Master Gardener. They showed me their "Right Size" garden hoe during a project earlier this year, and I had the opportunity to learn more about the company this summer. These tools are handmade from recycled agricultural disk blades in central Kansas. They use the disk blades, not just because it is environmentally friendly, but also because it is the best-tempered steel for the job. I liked the "Dainty but Tough" hoe because of its small size and the ability to use it as a triangle hoe when you turn it on its side (see photo to the left). The company, Rogue Pro Hoe Manufacturing, has quite 60 different tools to fit the needs of your gardener.

- The final gift idea is inspired by the Garden Hour on Seed Saving earlier this year. Seed-saving kits, such as this one, help to make the seed-saving process easier. The envelopes, seed tins, and date/variety labels in this compact kit will keep your seeds organized—so hollyhocks don't sprout where you thought you'd planted marigolds. The included seed-saving directions and chart get you started, so that season after season you'll be able to replicate your favorite heirlooms, share seeds with others, and save on your annual seed budget. This kit comes from Uncommon Goods but there are other options available online.



Whether you are looking for gift ideas for the gardener in your life or looking for a new tool to help in your garden, I hope that one of these ideas will help you this season. If you are stumped for gift ideas consider buying an Amaryllis bulb, a gift card to a local greenhouse, a houseplant in a Kokedama, or offer them a "coupon" book to come help them in the garden this coming year. Happy Growing!!!

## Confused Flour Beetle

A common household insect pest was brought into our office for identification last week. The confused flour beetle and the closely related red flour beetle are native to Africa or the Indo-Australian regions of the world but have a worldwide distribution. These insects originate from infested grain or dry, stored food products, particularly cereal products such as flour, cake mix, cornmeal, crackers, and dry pet food. Other frequently infested items are chocolate, nuts, and seeds (such as birdseed). Both adults and small, off-white larvae can be in infested food items. The adult beetles often wander away from the infested material and will be found inside cupboards or anywhere in the house.

Control of any stored food pest requires locating and eliminating infested items. The insects may be in unopened boxes or containers. Infested items should be thrown away or could be salvaged by freezing for one week or heating in a 140-degree oven for 15 minutes. Be sure to empty and thoroughly vacuum all shelves to remove any adult beetles. Insecticide sprays are not recommended for controlling insects in stored food cupboards. Washing shelves with detergent, bleach, ammonia or disinfectants will not affect insect pests. As a precaution against reinfestation, you may want to store susceptible foods in sealable glass, metal, or heavy plastic containers or in the refrigerator or freezer until you know the infestation is gone.



## Which Holiday Cactus do I have?

Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*), Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*), and Easter cactus (*Schlumbergera gaertneri*) are popular houseplants, often given as gifts during the holiday season. They are grown for their beautiful, exotic flowers. These three cacti are found in the high-altitude, tropical rainforests of South America where they grow on trees and rocks. These three plants are often mistaken for one another, in part because greenhouses often mislabel them. Let's start from the left.

The Thanksgiving cactus is the most commonly sold

holiday cactus in the United States. They are sold under the name "Christmas cactus" however, they are two different species. Thanksgiving cacti have hooks or points on the stem (I think of them as the spurs on a turkey) that distinguish them from the other two types of holiday cacti. This holiday cactus is the most common because the flowers come in a wide range of colors, it is easier to get them to bloom and finally, their growth habit makes it easier to ship them. In the middle is the true old-fashioned Christmas cactus. This cactus variety has scalloped edges rather than points and typically blooms from early December to January. Christmas cactus have fewer bloom colors and tend to have a drooping growth habit rather than the upright habit of a Thanksgiving cactus. The Easter cactus is the last one and, until recently, was the least common. This cactus has stem edges that are scalloped, much like the Christmas cactus, but the blooms are star-shaped rather than tubular.

No matter which holiday cacti you have the care is very similar. All of these cacti prefer bright, indirect light. Too much sun can result in the leaves turning yellow. These plants are native to a damp, tropical location and require more water than a traditional cactus. Lightly fertilize the plants every other week after they quit blooming in the spring till mid-fall. Unlike many cacti, holiday cacti are heavier feeders and need more nutrients. Blooming will normally cease in late winter to early spring.

## Video of the week: Choosing the Best Poinsettia

If you're planning on purchasing poinsettias to decorate for the holidays, and you want them to look their best for Christmas, you'll need to inspect the plant for maturity. This segment explains the difference between a mature and an immature poinsettia. Watch the video here: <https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/choosing-the-best-poinsettia>

## Reminders-

- Plan out next year's vegetable garden so that crops are rotated
- Be sure lawn irrigation lines are drained
- Plant spring flowering bulbs
- Plant garlic



## Homemade Bird Feeders

### Ingredients

- 2 cups birdseed (any type)
- cookie cutters
- 1 packet of unflavored gelatin
- 2 tablespoons cold water
- 1/3 cup boiling water
- string
- skewer
- non-stick cooking spray

### Directions:

1. Spray your cookie cutters with non-stick spray to make the cookies easier to pop out.
2. Empty 1 package of unflavored gelatin into a bowl with 2 tablespoons of cold water. Let this sit for 1 minute. Add 1/3 cup of boiling water to the gelatin, stirring for a few minutes or until the gelatin is dissolved. This is the binder that keeps seeds together.
3. Next add 2 cups of bird seed to the gelatin and mix thoroughly.
4. On a tray or sheet of wax paper, lay out your cookie cutters. Fill the cookie cutters with the mixture and press into shape firmly. Make a small hole in each cookie with the skewer for the string.
5. Place in the refrigerator for a few hours to allow the seed mixture to set. Carefully pop the cookies out of their molds and thread a string through the hole.



## Upcoming Events

- *December 1<sup>st</sup> at 11 am- Winter Feeding of Birds*  
Feeding the birds is a popular activity with over 59 million people in the United States feeding birds for well over 100 years. Join us for this class to learn some tips about what food to feed, ways to attract more birds to your home, and some troubleshooting tips on why you aren't having birds at your feeders. This program is free at the Douglass Senior Center, 124 W 4th St, Douglass, KS 67039.
- *December 6<sup>th</sup> at Noon- Beekeeping Basics: How to Start Your Own Colony*  
Beekeeping is both popular and important for many reasons. Whether it's to produce your own local honey, supplement pollination of nearby plants, promote conservation, or even personal entertainment, there are many reasons to become a beekeeper. Join Ryan Engel, Golden Prairie District Horticulture Extension Agent, as he covers the equipment you will need, how to source your bees, and what it takes to establish a new colony. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/>
- *December 7<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm- Winter Feeding of Birds*  
Feeding the birds is a popular activity with over 59 million people in the United States feeding birds for well over 100 years. Join us for this class to learn some tips about what food to feed, ways to attract more birds to your home, and some troubleshooting tips on why you aren't having birds at your feeders. This program is free at the Bradford Memorial Library, 611 S Washington St. El Dorado, KS.
- *January 3<sup>rd</sup> at Noon- Floral Design*  
Join Kansas State University Floral Design Instructor Irina Sheshukova as she talks about Floral Design. More information will be available soon. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/>
- *January 24<sup>th</sup>- Starting a New Landscape or Garden*  
Buying a home can be overwhelming and that is without factoring in that you now have a yard to care for. While we can't help with the house maintenance we can help you figure out what to do outside of the house. This class is designed to help you figure out the basics of lawn and landscape care, determine what plants are currently growing around your home and how to maintain them or create a whole new landscape. This program is free at the Butler County Community/4-H Building, 206 N Griffith St. El Dorado, KS (behind the Health Department).

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To view previous issues, visit our website: [https://www.butler.k-state.edu/horticulture/2023\\_grapevine/untitled.html](https://www.butler.k-state.edu/horticulture/2023_grapevine/untitled.html)

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