



December Gardening Gift Ideas and Tips

This month our guest contributor to Chris' Corner is Horticulturist Jason Reeves from the UT Gardens in Jackson, TN.

Jason writes:

Are you looking for a Christmas gift for a gardener? How about a King of Spades 18" Dura Rake or Diamond Point Spade with foot pad. At the UT Gardens in Jackson we are now using many of the W. W. Manufacturing King of Spade tools made in New Jersey. Once you use their products, you will not want any other. They are costly, but well worth it. To find a retailer near you go to <http://www.wwmfg.com/> or order online at <http://www.kingofspadesonline.com/>.

Another tool that would make a great gift and I wouldn't garden without it, is the Harper Hand Truck. This dolly is great for moving heavy pots and bags of soil, mulch or other supplies. Whether you purchase the Harper brand or some other, make sure the tires are inflatable, which will allow for rolling on soft surfaces like the lawn.

Be sure to check out sale racks at local garden centers for bulbs that have been reduced in price. If they feel firm and are not moldy, they should still be good. Plant them as soon as possible. There is still time for them to get the winter chilling they need.

The idea of a living Christmas tree that can be planted outdoors after the holidays often sounds appealing, but without proper selection and care, this can be a disappointing experience. First, you should carefully select one that is suited to your part of the state. While white pine, spruce and fir will work in the cooler parts of Tennessee, they should be avoided in the warmer areas. Virginia pine, Eastern red cedar, Japanese cedar and Arizona cypress are good choices for all parts of Tennessee. Hemlock and Leyland cypress should be avoided due to numerous problems with insects and disease once in the landscape. Any living tree brought indoors should not remain inside longer than five days. One option is to go ahead and put the lights on the tree and enjoy it outside before time to bring it indoors. Be sure to keep it well watered but not standing in water. Once Christmas is over, move it outdoors and plant.

Cyclamen, kalanchoe, poinsettia, paperwhites, amaryllis, Christmas cactus, English ivy and rosemary topiaries offer weeks of added color and interest to the home during the holidays. Most perform best in bright, indirect light away from drafts, but rosemary would appreciate as much light as possible. The cyclamen, kalanchoe and poinsettias are often best added to the compost pile once they begin to decline. Keep your paperwhites from flopping over by adding alcohol. For more information, check out this link:

<http://blogs.cornell.edu/hort/2009/11/10/pickling-your-paperwhites/>.

Deck your halls and walls with things found in your garden. Gather fresh-cut greenery from your landscape. When pruning, cut back to a branch so as not to leave a stub. When cutting conifers, don't go beyond the innermost needles. If you do, it may not regenerate from that point again. To extend the life of fresh-cut greenery, soak it in a bucket of water overnight to hydrate the leaves and stems before using and or spray with the product like Wilt Proof. Wilt Proof forms a waxy coating that slows desiccation.

I would like to thank Jason for those wonderful Christmas gardening gift ideas. I would like to wish you and yours a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Until next year, happy gardening!



Christopher Cooper

Jason Reeve is a UT Gardens research horticulturist and curator. For more information on gardening gift ideas and tips you can contact Jason at 731-425-4765 or by e-mail at jreeves@tennessee.edu.