

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER



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Useful Gardening Gift Ideas  
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The holidays are quickly approaching. What are some useful and fun gardening related gift ideas?

At the beginning of a task, a good pair of gardening gloves protects the hands. Even child-sized gloves are available so they can join in the fun. A pair of rubberized gloves work best for muddy jobs. In addition, two pairs of cotton gloves are handy so that one pair is always ready while the other pair is in the laundry.

Small hand tools like pruners and pruning saws are used to maintain shrubs and trees. The bypass type of pruning tool has a scissors cutting action that cleanly cuts the stem without crushing it. Pruning saws are designed to cut on the pull stroke. The blades are narrow to fit into tight spaces and make clean cuts.

Hand pruners cut stems up to three-quarters inch in diameter. In comparison, two-handed lopping shears cut branches up to 1 to 1.5 inches in diameter. Pruning saws are recommended for removing branches over 1 inch in diameter. Following these guidelines help to make the tools last longer and result in good, clean cuts, which are better for the plant.

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Garden and spading forks are useful tools to turn over garden soil. Garden forks have four tines that are thick and rectangular or square. They are used to break up heavy soil that has not been disturbed. The spading fork has four flat tines that may have diamond or triangular backs. They are used to turn loose soil. Other uses for both tools include turning over compost and digging root crops.

Wheelbarrows and carts make gardening work easier to transport unwanted plant material, branches, mulch, bags of potting soil, and other items needed in the garden. Select one suited to the person's physical abilities and needs. One that is too big or heavy is not useful.

Supplies specifically for growing transplants to prepare for the growing season are useful gifts. These may include light stands, light bulbs, a heat mat, seed starting media, seedling containers, trays to catch water, a plastic dome to hold in moisture, and a timer for the lights to manage the appropriate day lengths needed by the seedlings. For more information on growing transplants, refer to the publication "Growing Vegetables in Kentucky," available at <https://publications.mgcafe.uky.edu/files/ID128.pdf>.

After growing the transplants, they could be transplanted into a raised bed, which fits into small spaces or near the home. Kits are available to purchase, or consider making one. Four feet wide is the widest suggested width of the bed. The length of the bed depends on the available space, money, and time. A frame to hold the soil may be constructed of untreated wood, stone, or brick. Woods naturally resistant to decay and good to use include cedar, redwood, and black locust. Information about building a raised bed and the planting media to place in the bed are available at <https://publications.mgcafe.uky.edu/files/ID248.pdf>.

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Tall, self-contained raised beds, already fabricated, are available, allowing a person to avoid bending over. Some come with a type of clear cover to trap heat to start an early crop or to protect the crop from a late-season frost. Provide gift certificates to purchase media to fill the bed. These beds are great for growing lettuce, spinach, herbs, or pepper plants, as examples.

A battery-operated timer for irrigation lines or soaker hoses saves water by keeping it from running all night when someone forgets to turn the water off. It is also handy when on vacation for a few days.

Making a compost bin would be another gift idea. Composting yard waste turns it into a good amendment to improve the condition of the soil. Compost bins can be very elaborate and made from untreated wood or very simple and made out of wire. Ideas for making compost bins and how to compost are available free through the Cooperative Extension Service Office or at the website <https://publications.mgcafe.uky.edu/sites/publications.ca.uky.edu/files/ho75.pdf>.

Even though a person must wait to plant them, a collection of vegetable, herb, and flower seeds helps a person look forward to the next growing season. Zinnias, sunflowers, cosmos, and marigolds are easy to grow and can be sown directly into the garden. Vegetables, such as spinach, lettuce, peas, beets, beans, and cucumbers, are also easy to grow directly sown into the garden. Tomato, pepper, eggplant, cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower need to be seeded indoors and transplanted out in the garden at the appropriate time.

While looking forward to the next growing season, free, science-based information is available through publications from the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service at the Daviess County office or another county office. In addition, these publications are found at <https://daviess.mgcafe.uky.edu/horticulture> and may be printed. Topics covered include

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growing fruits and vegetables, maintaining trees and shrubs, turfgrass, and much more.

Organizing the printed material in a binder would make a great gift.

Don't forget about holiday plants such as poinsettia, Christmas cactus, and amaryllis, which brighten gloomy winter days. Even succulents and houseplants make great gifts. These plants are available locally. Before purchasing them, especially a poinsettia, check to see if the receiver has a plant allergy.

For more gardening gift ideas, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or [annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu](mailto:annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu).

## **Annette's Tip:**

A gift certificate from a local garden center or nursery can be used in the spring for suggested items such as a wide-brim garden hat, decorative pot, or plants.

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