

Are you like ten percent of the U.S. population who supposedly suffers from triskaidekaphobia? If so, thank your lucky stars that yesterday was not Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> or you might be diagnosed as being paraskevidekatriaphobic. Interestingly, both of these phobias are associated with fearing the number 13. I hope neither of these phobias are your problem, and here's why. We only have 13 more days until the day before Christmas Eve. Time to get shopping. If a gardener is on your gift list — I offer these suggestions.

Gardeners enjoy plants. Giving a potted plant is a gift that usually lasts from year to year. Some plants continue to bloom throughout the new year, while others may need a period of rest before they re-bloom. It's always a good idea to ask the salesclerk for plant-care information when you make your purchase.

There are a number of seasonal plants from which to choose. Poinsettia is undoubtedly the most popular; however, many others are just as appropriate for the holiday season. Christmas cactus, amaryllis, begonias, cyclamen, and azaleas offer attractive blossoms on compact plants.

Keep in mind, it is winter. During cold weather, even the healthiest plant, if briefly exposed to cold and wind during delivery, can be easily damaged. Make certain the plant you purchase has a protective wrap before carrying it outdoors. Transport the plant as quickly as possible from the store to your car, and if the temperature is below freezing, preheat your car.

Indoor gardeners would appreciate a lighting system for their houseplants. Good lighting is essential for plants to thrive during dark winter months.

Gardening tools are frequently found on most gardeners' wish lists. Small hand tools - pruning shears, trowels and cultivators —are good selections. For planting bulbs, a bulb drill bit makes an excellent choice. For larger pruning jobs, consider a loping shears or a handheld pruning saw. How about a sturdy new rake, hoe or spade? Many electric or gas powered gardening tools are available. Whether purchasing hand or powered gardening tools, I encourage buying quality.

Watering cans are another great gardening gift. Every gardener needs a watering can, and a uniquely styled one will not only be functional but will very likely be proudly displayed.

Gardeners need gloves to protect their hands during raking and heavy digging; however, keep in mind, other than those two tasks, most gardeners don't wear gloves. Gloves make pulling weeds and planting small seedlings cumbersome and difficult. As a result, many gardeners have alligator hands and grimy fingernails. With this in mind, how about considering a good hand cleaner, lotion, or a quality manicure set?

Garden journals are a great way to keep track of what's going on in the garden. It's something gardeners rarely buy for themselves, but most would love to have. Recording plans and garden activities is a great way to keep track of gardening accomplishments and an ideal way to note failures for future reference. Most importantly, a garden journal should have adequate space for recording daily observations and timely activities such as fertilizing, watering and pest control.

A rain gauge makes an inexpensive, useful gift. What about an indoor/outdoor thermometer? Gardeners are always fretting about frost. Consider the digital type with a maximum/minimum memory read out. Whether it be winter or summer, this type of thermometer keeps track of temperature extremes.

Try a sundial, a birdbath, sprinkler or a fountain. How about a music chime? Birdhouses can fit any budget. Gardeners love works of art. Most gardeners would appreciate beautiful vases, ornamental ceramic pots or garden sculpture.

If you're still undecided, try a gift certificate from a gardener's favorite seed company or local garden store. Give a membership to a botanical garden or a subscription to a quality garden magazine.

Now that I've given you all these great ideas and with only 13 more days until the day before Christmas Eve, I say, "Forget about triskaidekaphobia or paraskevidekatriaphobia. Go shopping!"