Looking for some gift ideas for the holidays? Be sure to include gardening gifts in your shopping cart.

Yard art, gardening tools, seeds and plans are great gardening gifts. Plant shelves, storage bins, unusual stepping stones and ornamental containers are also favorites.

Gardening for wildlife is very popular. Consider giving a plant that provides food for birds or butterflies. The University of Florida has a new book on Landscaping for Florida's Wildlife. The book includes information on natural ecosystems that you can re-create in your yard. It outlines steps to create backyard habitat and has extensive plant lists to help you make good choices to get the right plants in the right place. Limited number of copies are available from our Osceola County Extension/University of Florida office at (321) 697-3000 or place credit card orders at 1-800-226-1764.

Youth and adults enjoy watching butterflies emerge from cocoons. Select gift plants that provide nectar to attract adult butterflies or larval food plants that caterpillars need to chew on to complete their life cycle and form cocoons. Our office has sample planting plans and lists of recommended plants. A new Florida Butterfly Gardening book from the University of Florida would be perfect for hobby gardeners who enjoy butterfly watching in the landscape or on walks in the woods.

Gardeners are often interested in the variety of critters that call their yard home. The University has a number of colored flash card sets to help you recognize insects, both pest and preferred. Two new sets show adult butterflies and their immature caterpillar forms. There is one on lawn pests, insects on citrus and landscape insects. They are perfect stocking stuffers or a great accompaniment to a gift plant.

Plant Fun is a craft and game book by Dr. Kathleen Ruppert from the University of Florida. It includes dozens of activities to keep big and little folks busy during the holiday break. Activities are suitable for church camp, after school programs, rainy days and senior activity programs. It is a bargain for $6.00.

If you have teachers and other educators as friends, you may want to take advantage of a special membership enrollment promotion effective until December 20. The National Gardening Association is now including the annual Seeds for Kids Program as a special benefit for new members.

The special NGA Educational Membership package includes a subscription to NGA's Growing Ideas Newsletter, a NGA canvas tote bag perfect for carrying books or garden veggies, an informative book about tomatoes and a great book on gardening tips.

The order also includes 25 packets of flower and vegetable seeds packed for 2000. The assortment includes 15 different varieties plus ten tomato seed packets.

NGA's Book of Tomatoes is a 28-page guidebook with tips on growing America's most popular vegetable, from seed to fruit.

The membership costs 19.95 including shipping and you can order online, by credit card or by mail. They also take school purchase orders. What a deal!

To order on the web, go to http://store.yahoo.com/nationalgardening/edmeme.html.

Place credit card orders by calling 800-538-7476, or fax your order (with credit card information) to National Gardening Association at 802-864-6889. If you're calling after regular hours, press extension 143 to leave a voice mail message with your name, telephone number, shipping address, and the best time to return your call.
To order by mail, please include a brief note with your shipping address, mailing address, telephone number, and a check for $19.95 per package payable to National Gardening Association. Be sure to postmark your order by December 20 with payment to: National Gardening Association, 1100 Dorset Street, South Burlington, VT 05403.

School purchase orders may be faxed to the order department at 802-864-6889 or mailed.

Call today to take advantage of this great opportunity to support youth gardening and receive some great seeds and materials!

Having gardening problems? Want to know what grows here? Need to know how to prepare for freezing weather? Email digital photos for diagnosis to epabon5@ufl.edu Master Gardener volunteers work in the Plant Clinic on Mondays to Fridays from 10 am to 2 pm. The Osceola County Extension Office is located at 1921 Kissimmee Valley Lane between Kissimmee and St. Cloud, next to the rodeo grounds. Call (321) 697-3000 for directions.

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