

The Tool Shed



By Mary Mason and Pat Davis, URI Master Gardeners

Planta and the Winter Chores

(read to the rhythm of "Twas the Night Before Christmas")

It's almost deep winter and time to give in
Garden remnants all tucked in the composting bin
I cut the perennials and put them to bed
The tools to gather and place in the shed
Gift season approaches, so also the snow
I've given much thought and I want you to know
This gardener is dreaming of plants, bulbs, and tools
The last worth much more than the greatest of jewels
Oh dibber and weeder and mulcher and rake
I want mattock and edger and pruner and trake
I'll use them to garden...dig, plant, till, and toil
I promise I'll clean them...wash, sharpen then oil
The books and the boots and hoses and totes
Are too much to ask for but I always have hopes
Now go to the Center and check out the list
Our sponsors and vendors are there to assist

'Tis indeed the season to ask for that pruner, rake or EZ Digger. If you really want particular tools it would behoove you to provide your Santa with the tool's name, manufacturer, and where it is available. Local garden centers, hardware stores and home stores often carry gardening items for just this reason. A nice garden center road trip, of course with lunch included, would be a great way to ensure Santa can easily locate your heart's desires. It might just ensure you do not get moose slippers and a new potato peeler under the tree.

There are just a few points to keep in mind when tool shopping that might make it easier. Try out what fits for you with both hand tools and long handled tools. Compare weight, height, and handle fit before you put them on your list. It may require visiting several stores before you find what works well for you but it will be worth the effort. Remember to keep long handle tool length at about shoulder level and short handle tools at waist height. Look for a hardened forged metal head with hickory or ash wood or fiberglass handles. Hand tools should have handles fat enough to fit your hand comfortably. Perhaps a nice pair of pruners from Bahco or Felco, a Farmer's Knife, or an EZ-Digger would make your holiday bright. Mud or grip gloves or even a new pair of Muck boots could be just the jingle you need for the sleigh ride. If Santa is a stay-at-home shopper, there are several websites including www.amleo.com and www.leevalley.com that have a wide assortment of tools and accessories.

Another gift idea involves a wonderful tradition from the coast and islands of Maine – building Fairy Houses in the garden. This whimsical adventure involves building an all natural habitats to entice a fairy to move into your garden. Tracy Kane has captured this tradition in books for kids of all ages. Her latest book, *Fairy Houses...Everywhere*, is a collection of over 100 photographs of Maine Fairy Houses. Check out the web site at www.fairyhouses.com for more information.

Happy Holidays. Hoe, Hoe, Hoe