

### Last minute Gift Ideas

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Okay frantic shoppers, you are about out of time for shopping. Or maybe you're waiting for the after Christmas sales to pick up some bargains for next year. Either way, that gardener is quite often a tough one to buy gifts for. So let me start with the safest gift of all times for a gardener - a gift card! You see, gardening is a very individual specific past time. Everything has to be just right for a gardener. Never ever buy a tool for a gardener UNLESS they have given you an incredibly specific hint. Don't just go out and buy a pair of hand pruners. Some gardeners want bypass prunes, some want anvil types. Unless your gardener has said that they want Felco #2 Classic Model Pruners, right handed, you just don't want to go down that road. And certainly don't buy some low priced garden tool on the clearance table. You find it rusting in some out of the way location because they just won't use it! If they do leave you a very specific tool hint, realize that it will probably be pricey. But speaking from experience, that the \$45 you spend on those Felco #2s (which is a real hand pruner by the way - I have a pair) is going to be money well spent as they will last a lifetime! Books seem safe, but most gardeners I know have dozens of books. Again, unless they give you a title and an author, don't waste time buying a book. You may think it's a great book and all of a sudden you find it hidden deeply in a stack of romance novels on next spring's garage sale. So save time, save frustration and just buy that gardener a gift card or garden center gift certificate! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Why Snow is good for plants

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We had snow last week. Not a lot but a couple of inches certainly made it look Christmasy for a while! For the most part, at least for our adapted plants, it is generally accepted that snow is good and that is a correct assumption. People used to rave on about all the nitrogen that was in snow that was beneficial to the plants. Well, many years of studies at K-State, where every snowfall was collected and then analyzed for nitrogen content pretty well put that myth out to pasture. Even in heavy snowfall years, there just isn't that much nitrogen in snow. Just a few pounds per acre per year - not enough to make any difference. Prior to the clean air act, snow and rain both used to contain quite a bit of sulfur - hence acid rain. Around here the rain and snow wasn't so acidic that it caused a problem, but it did supply a lot of sulfur to crops and plants. We haven't seen too many sulfur deficiencies in lawns and gardens yet but we are starting to see it in crops. No, the real benefit from snow comes from insulation and water. It's sometimes hard to believe, but snow is an excellent insulator. You get under a few inches of snow and temperatures will rarely be below 25 degrees, even if it's 10 below air temperature. That insulation from cold and desiccating winds is very very valuable to helping plants, especially tender or marginal plants survive the winter. But the biggest benefit from snow is the moisture that it contains. On average a foot of snow contains an inch of water. And usually, when snow melts, it does so slowly enough that most of it soaks in slowly instead of running off!

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## Do Not Open That Catalog!!!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It used to be January before it happened, but now I'm seeing more and more of it occurring in December. I'm talking about the arrival of the spring garden seed catalogs. Those things are dangerous and should be buried under a stack of old newspapers until well into the last week of January. You need to remember that catalogs are designed for one thing and one thing only - to sell product! The people that put those catalogs together are marketing geniuses. They know how to grab your attention and fuel the passion for purchase. Before you ever open a catalog in the middle of winter, or even the first of winter, you need to develop a plan. So over the next couple of weeks, when you grow weary of the family and the holiday happenings, pour a cup of fresh coffee, sit down with your notepad and start outlining your year's gardening. Draw some sketches of where you will have open space to plant. If landscaping needs to be removed and renovated, outline what will be removed and start making a list of possible replacement plants. Don't over plant. Pay attention to mature size of plants and allow adequate spacing. Outline your flower beds and determine how much space you have and how many bedding plants you will need to properly fill it. Map out your garden and figure out how much you want to plant and then how much space you need to accommodate that. If it's going to take your yard and half your neighbors, it's time to scale back. Once you get all these things figured out and a list made, then open, and only then should you open a catalog.

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