

Books are always a perfect gift for gardeners. Read on for a few suggestions.

My most expensive book find is “Eden On Their Minds: American Gardeners with Bold Visions” by writer, photographer Starr Okenga (\$60 Clarkson Potter). Every few years Okenga treats us to a new book with delightful words to accompany the tantalizing images from her camera. Each page is festooned with abundantly colorful photos; accompanying plant lists and how-to directions galore. Bainbridge Island gardener extraordinaire Linda Cochran is featured in this not-to-miss book. Okenga’s book “Earth on Her Hands: the American Woman in her Garden” featuring Lemolo resident Jocelyn Horder is an equally desirable gift (\$55 Clarkston Potter).

“The Garden: a Year at Home Farm” by Dan Pearson (\$29.95 Time-Life Books) reminds me of our year and a half in England from 1992-1993. How-to-garden shows proliferated during primetime TV viewing on Friday night. Dan Pearson’s book chronicles a year of BBC programming taking the viewers through each week of gardening at Home Farm, 70 miles north of London. Photography by Nicola Browne aptly captures every nuance of the gardens designed by Pearson. This is a great book to savor during the often dreary days from December through April.

“Stones are the bones of heaven and earth,” proclaims the back jacket of “Stones in the Garden” by Gordon Hayward (\$39.95 Norton). Buy yourself this book, peruse it, make some plans and then venture out to Northwest Rock Products in Kingston (360-297-2401) to pick out some stone for your own garden. Inside the book you’ll find information about building the simplest of stone projects up to major undertakings. It’s a definite gift to tempt any would-be-designer. It’s also just plain good to have for dreaming.

Two extremely gorgeous, yet practical, books are “Forcing, etc” by Katherine Whiteside with photos by Richard Felber (\$24.95 Smith & Hawken) and “Making More Plants: the Science, Art, and Joy of Propagation” by Ken Druse (\$45 Clarkston Potter). Every page of each book is blooming with glorious photos and great information and instructions. “Forcing” is just that – how to make plants bloom at unusual times of the year. It’s perfect for winter reading. “Making More Plants” is a complete how-to-propagate book. It’s hard to choose which book if you can have only one. Luckily for me I own both. My sister gave me one as a gift and I bought myself the other. Either book would make a great holiday present for someone special.

If you or your friends have ever argued about the names of plants or the pronunciations and origins of those tricky botanical monikers maybe you should give them a copy of “Dictionary of Plant Names” by Allen J. Coombes (\$12.95 Timber Press) or “Gardener’s Latin” a Lexicon by Bill Neal (\$14.95 Algonquin). Either book is affordable and useful. The Timber Press publication is strictly a dictionary but the Lexicon also includes quaint drawings and plant lore along with the pronunciations and definitions.

Last but not least why not try some cookbooks for gift giving to your favorite gardener. My pick for this year is an oldie but quite good. It’s “Herbal Sweets” by Ruth Bass (\$9.95 Storey). Storey has a whole series of Fresh from the Garden cookbooks. Other titles include: “Herbal Salads,” “Herbal Soups” and “Herbal Breads.” In “Herbal Sweets” the Lemon Cheesecake recipe includes calendula petals as an ingredient; Maple Sage Apple Cake sounds very tasty; and Lemon Thyme Sorbet and Lavender Ice Cream will tempt everyone. Storey books never disappoint.

If your loved one’s shelves are overflowing with books don’t forget gift certificates to our many local nurseries. During the hectic days leading up to the holidays take time to treat yourself and your friends to a visit to your favorite nurseries. My gardening buddy Ann Lovejoy and her group of merry helpers at Bainbridge Gardens have cooked up wonderful projects and events through the month of December. Take the whole family to one of

the Festival of Lights Displays on December 8, 15 and 22 (Saturdays) beginning with carol singing at 4-6 p.m. Call the nursery at 206-842-5888 for details. Donations are encouraged to benefit Helpline House.

It's not too early to start thinking about the Northwest Flower and Garden Show in Seattle. The Convention Center has expanded and the show will be twice as big this year. Tickets to the event are available now and would make a great gift. Call 800-229-6311 or visit www.gardenshow.com.

Contact Peg with comments or questions at gardenmentor@yahoo.com or write her in care of this newspaper.