

GIFTS FOR GARDENERS

BY ANDREA BELLAMY



My sister once had a thing for seahorses. She thought they were cute, and tended to gravitate toward seahorse-themed decor, apparel, and tattoos. Big mistake. (Actually, she says she doesn't mind the tattoo, but given its placement, she probably doesn't have to look at it that often.) No, the real issue was that once everyone got wind of her seahorse appreciation, seahorses were all she ever got. Seahorse jewellery. A seahorse resin sculpture. Icky dried actual seahorses. Seahorses for birthdays and just-because-I-saw-it-at-a-garage-sale-and-knew-you'd-love-it days. After a few years of this, she wished she'd never see another seahorse as long as she lived. Unfortunately, she'd tattooed one on her butt.

As a gardener, I have received my share of garden-related gifts from well-meaning givers, and I'm here to help you avoid giving the gardener on your list the equivalent of a seahorse wall hanging (no one really needs a plaque with a witty reference to weeds, or "whimsical" garden statues).

There are certain things every gardener appreciates. You can't go wrong with a gift certificate from their local independent nursery, an offer to spend an afternoon helping with pulling weeds or moving soil, or a gift certificate for a massage (best scheduled after

said day of soil moving). But if you prefer to give something you can present in a pretty package, you'll be pleased to note that there are some lovely Vancouver folks making some lovely things.

World Reclaimed is a fun little side project from Vancouver landscape-design group Aloe Designs. Co-owner Owen Black handcrafts unique mason bee houses and bird feeders from deck, fencing, and other landscaping project offcuts, and from old-growth wood foraged from salvage yards and garage sales. Responsible consumption and the re-use ethic make these a feel-good gift; the fact that each one is unique (bird feeders made with leftovers from an ipe-wood deck construction project, for example, become part of a numbered series) makes them extra special. Available at **Walrus** (3408 Cambie St, Vancouver) and worldreclaimed.com

Local company **By Nature Design** carries some truly unique products, including the Wallflower, an indoor "living frame" that utilizes green wall technology on a miniature scale; and Modulo-Green vertical garden panels, a European green wall system that's perfect for growing edibles and other plants in small spaces. See bynaturedesign.ca for where-to-buy information.



For the gourmet gardener, you'll want to check out **Mushboo**, an indoor mushroom-growing kit. Handmade in Vancouver using raw bamboo poles, the ready-to-sprout kits produce up to two harvests of oyster mushrooms per "cartridge" (locally sourced food waste inoculated with mushroom spawn). Used cartridges make a great soil amendment. Available at the **Homesteader's Emporium** (649 East Hastings, Vancouver), **Garden Works** (6250 Lougheed Hwy, Burnaby), **Home Hardware** (1575 Commercial Drive, Vancouver), and mushboo.com



I also love the idea of giving the eternal (and clutter-free) gift of learning. Homesteader's Emporium offers an array of workshops and classes ranging from seed starting to seed saving (see homesteadersemporium.ca for schedules). **Victory Gardens**, which teaches many of the workshops, also offers coaching sessions for green thumbs. An hour and a half spent in your garden with one of their enthusiastic growers, combined with Victory Gardens' seed and starter pack, would get anyone off to a great start. See victorygardensvancouver.ca

*Andrea Bellamy is the author of **Sugar Snaps and Strawberries: Simple Solutions for Creating Your Own Small-Space Edible Garden**, and the gardener behind **HeavyPetal.ca**. She enjoys receiving divisions from meaningful plants in her mother's garden, pruning help, and shares in garden harvests.*