

## Features

5/1/2018

### Wrap It Up

*Diana Stoll*



It's not surprising houseplants are back in a big way. Who doesn't want an air purifier, a health and memory booster, and a mood lifter camouflaged in beautiful, living home décor?

The great news for garden centers is the love of growing often starts with one plant—indoors or out—so promote the idea of houseplants as the trendy gift. For example, an e-newsletter titled “What Trendy Gift Givers are Giving” can share your best-selling houseplants, explaining why they make impressive gifts.

Consider the reasons we give gifts and make houseplants the perfect ones for those occasions. Houseplants can be ideal gifts for new homeowners. Offer plants of all sizes so there are plants suitable for every room in the house. And a houseplant given as a housewarming gift must have a beautiful pot. Display an assortment of colors and styles with plants.

Be sure folks understand that, as beautiful and beneficial as houseplants are, some are toxic to pets or people if they're ingested. A garden center doesn't want to be the source of a gift that causes pets or toddlers to end up in an emergency room. Find ways to convey which plants are safe—an extra label inserted into pots, a special display with signage or warning labels on toxic plants.

I guarantee teachers will appreciate a houseplant more than another coffee mug! Put a sign saying, “Teachers Love to Grow More than Minds” above a display of plants. Insert small cards into pots that say, “Thanks for helping me grow this year” and leave room for a student to sign his name. Offer decorative pots that grower pots drop in. The gift is easy, pretty and meaningful.

For the gift-giver on her way to a party, suggest a houseplant instead of a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates. Sure, wine tastes great and chocolate even better, but once it's consumed, what do you have? A houseplant reminds the hostess of the giver's thoughtfulness long after the party is over.

There are birthstones, birth-month flowers and even birth-month birds. (It's a real thing—mine is a Wilson's Warbler.) Display 12 different houseplants, one for each month and create a story about each one:

**February—Philodendron:** Like the heart-shaped leaves of a philodendron, people born in February have big hearts. They're romantic and easy-going.

**July—ZZ Plant:** Just like a ZZ plant, people born in July are dependable. They're good friends and never stop

reaching for their dreams.

The ideas are endless. Think of the fun you could have with the goldfish plant—a gift you'll never have to flush. Recommend a peace lily for a husband who's in the doghouse or a prayer plant for a religious occasion.

Seize opportunities for add-on sales. Examples include carrying a selection of bows for all occasions to insert into pots and displaying greeting cards to save shoppers a trip to another store. Pots in trendy colors and saucers should be nearby along with products to foster success—fertilizers, misters and watering cans. Offer books about decorating the home with houseplants.

Independent garden centers are expected to have knowledgeable staff. Be sure salespeople are able to help gift givers choose wisely. Go a step further than plant labels and create care sheets for each type of houseplant complete with the garden center's name, logo, website and contact information.

Once houseplant recipients have success growing indoors, they may visit the garden center for more houseplants or for help gardening outside, beginning a lifelong journey down the garden path and at your garden center. **GP**

---

*Diana Stoll worked for 20 years in a garden center, 12 of which were as a manager. She's now a freelance writer who writes a weekly gardening column for the Chicago Daily Herald and for a variety of other garden and news publications. Read her blog at [www.gardenwithdiana.com](http://www.gardenwithdiana.com) and email her at [diana@gardenwithdiana.com](mailto:diana@gardenwithdiana.com).*