

**December 2021 Gardener's Corner**  
By Cate White, SJ County Master Gardener

**Books and Other Gifts for Gardeners**

As a Master Gardener, I've had the pleasure of being a member of our book club for the past several years. We've read many interesting books, and I thought I'd share a few with you in case you are searching for gift suggestions. Below is a list along with a brief summary of some my favorites. The first book is a general gardening book that was not one of our book club selections, while the others are written by naturalists, scientists and farmers about various aspects of plant life and living with nature.

The Sunset Western Garden Book---If you are looking for a gardening book for gardeners of all types, get this book. It has been published by the editors of Sunset Magazine specifically for gardeners on the west coast since the mid 1950's, with new editions every few years. There are chapters on various gardening topics as well as an extensive list of plants giving their growth habits, cultural requirements and where they grow best. This is my gardening bible, and I have several additions. I believe every gardener in California should own a copy. While the newest edition lists the latest plants available, older additions have plenty of valuable information, and can be bought used.

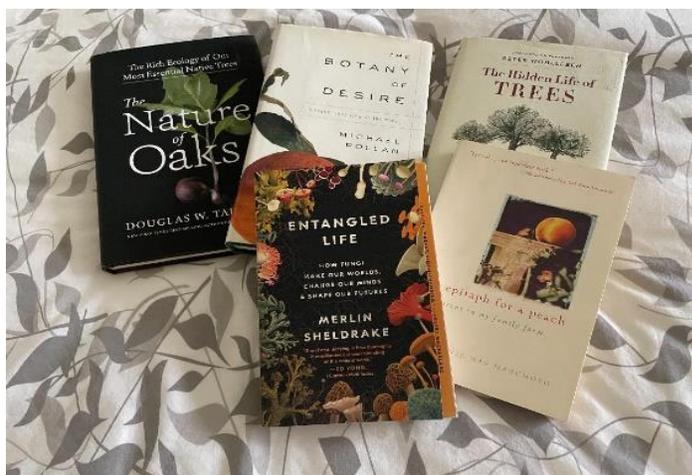


Photo by Cate White

The Hidden Life of Trees, by Peter Wohlleben---written by a European forester, this book describes the way trees communicate and nurture each other in a forest environment. He has some very interesting insights into how trees survive and flourish, and how we as humans can support them.

The Nature of Oaks, by Douglas W. Tallamy---this professor of entomology and wildlife ecology, has written a book full of fascinating information about how oak trees grow, along with wonderful descriptions of the numerous forms of life that depend on them to survive. Included are detailed accounts of the life cycle of various birds and insects along with beautiful pictures. Oaks support more life than almost any other tree, and Tallamy enthusiastically encourages us to grow them.

The Botany of Desire, by Michael Pollan---using the examples of the apple, the tulip, the marijuana plant and the potato, Pollan advances the idea that each of these plants has appealed to people in some way, causing them to develop it and propagate it around the world, thereby benefitting both the plants and the cultivators. Well written and researched, this book offers a unique plant centered view of the world.

Epitaph for a Peach and The Wisdom of the Last Farmer, both by David Mas Masumoto--these books are lyrical meditations on life on a family farm in the foothills of Fresno County. The first explores the trials of growing organic peaches, while the second centers on passing the farm on to the next generation. Masumoto writes with great sensitivity sharing his love for the land and his way of life.

Entangled Life, by Merlin Sheldrake---biologist Sheldrake takes us into the mysterious and little-known world of fungi. Each page is a revelation. He shows us that fungi are fascinating and present everywhere and makes it clear that without them life as we know it would not exist. This is a book that's hard to put down!

Lastly, two other suggestions for gardening gifts. Depending on the gardener's interests, you might consider gift memberships to either the Herb Society of America, or the California Native Plant Society. Both organizations can be found online.

**Wishing you Happy Holidays and happy gardening!**

### **December Garden Checklist**

- Reduce irrigation according to temperature and rain, being sure to water plants under eaves that don't get rainfall. Remember not to water within 48 hours of significant rainfall.
- Continue controlling for ants and snails.
- Clean up leaves and garden debris.
- Wait until January to prune roses.
- Spray fungicide on peach and nectarine trees to prevent peach leaf curl
- Plant pre-chilled tulip and hyacinth bulbs outside now.
- Purchase cyclamen, violas and primroses for winter color in pots or flowerbeds.
- Cover frost sensitive plants before sunset to keep in ground warmth. Avoid letting covers touch plant foliage; place them over stakes surrounding your plant. Remove the covers on sunny days. Keep ground around frost sensitive plants moist.