

Christmahanakwanzika Gift Edition



*News and commentary for the nursery & landscape market*

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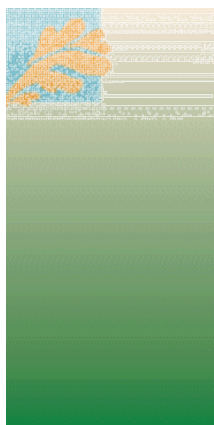
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# Nursery & LANDSCAPE INSIDER

News and Commentary for the landscape and nursery market

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Lesche Digging Tool  
"No Fear Gardening"  
Stihl MSA 160 C-B  
Tekonsha Prodigy P3  
Casita  
Wildflower Mixes  
Notes from the Edge of Sanity



## Prologue ...

When it comes to the *Nursery & Landscape Insider* Christmahanakwanzika gift edition, I try to mention gifts for a range of budgets. But, ultimately, these are gifts that I wish someone would get me or that I've bought myself (unfortunately, I get no kickback from these recommendations). So, without further delay, I present to you the 2021 Christmahanakwanzika gift edition for the horticulturist in your life. You've got a month to get off your tush, so snap to it, kiddos.

## A Trowel/Sod Cutter With Attitude

For those who don't know Lesche Tools, I highly recommend you check them out. With a line of quality products that are made in 'merica, it's one of my go-to brands for holiday gift ideas.





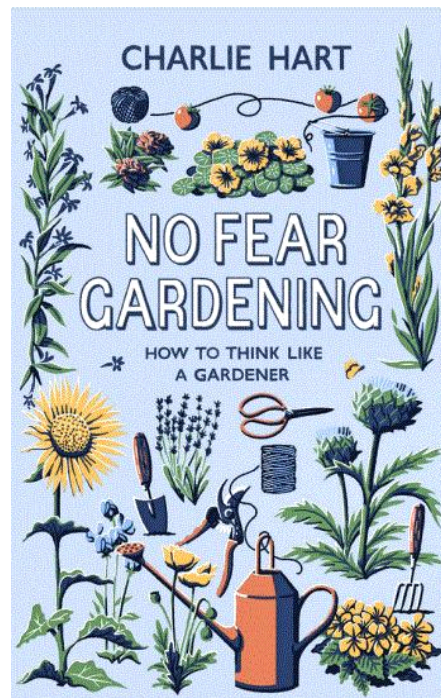
Specifically, I'm fond of tools that I can't break, like their digging tool. The Lesche Digging Tool with Sheath has an overall length of 12 in. with a 7-inch long, curved blade that's welded at a right angle to the handle. What's even cooler is that one edge is deeply serrated and sharp (I sharpen it regularly) to cut roots, vines and attacking opossums. The grip is large and the hand guard keeps the knife from burying itself in the soil. The belt loop holster lets you keep it at the ready. And the tough alloy steel blade is specially heat-treated for strength.

I looked it up on [Amazon](#) and it's \$44.50, but you can find it at multiple retailers.



## "No Fear Gardening"

It's always good to have a book on the gift list because, contrary to popular belief, some people still read things on paper. I know—shocking!



"No Fear Gardening" is a book that I found to be perfectly suited as a gift from the experienced gardener to the novice. It's well written and flows well without making the fatal flaw of seeming pretentious. It covers the importance of things that experienced horticulturists take for granted, but that cause paralysis by analysis for new gardeners, like pruning without guilt.

Overall, a solid read and excellent gift!





## Stihl MSA 160 C-B

Until very recently, I admit I wasn't really sold on battery-powered chainsaws. Why? I wish I could pinpoint a reason, but I can't beyond being under-impressed three to four years ago when I got to use a few demo models from several companies. At the time, battery life was still pretty poor and design was clunky with comparatively "cheap" materials compared to two-cycle options. But, oh, how times have changed.



Quite frankly, most of the big commercial-grade manufacturers today have at least one battery-powered option that could legitimately be relied upon by a landscape crew, horticulturist and/or avid gardener. Of those, my personal choice is **Stihl's MSA 160 C-B coupled with a 300S battery and AL 300 Charger**, which runs about \$650 (and is 100% made in the U.S.). This combo will get you a run time of 60 minutes with a 60-minute charge-up time (enough for a power nap or lunch).

What really sold me on Stihl, however, is the Quick Chain Adjuster, which is easier and quicker (in my opinion) to operate compared to other brands. I'm also a fan of the weight balance (front to rear) of this model and, quite frankly, the weight itself at a little over 9 pounds.



## Tekonsha Prodigy P3 Trailer Brake Controller

Call me silly, but sometimes the simplest things I find to be completely amazing. Such is the case with many of the newer trailer brake controllers on the market these days. Not only are these newer trailer brake controllers inexpensive, but they offer extremely easy installation (especially if you have a tow

package installed), and have a lot of preset settings and safety features that essentially make this a plug-and-play option. That's especially nice for newer contractors upgrading existing truck(s).



In my case, I recently needed a new trailer brake controller to my 4Runner and went down a rabbit hole that included contacting a lot of friends in the landscape contracting world to see what they used and a few engineer friends to see what they thought. After a lot of thought, I went with the **Prodigy P3**, as it was easy to install on my 2016 4Runner (took me 45 minutes), has a good display, provides auto detection of problems, and has several presets based upon the size and weight of the trailer being towed.

Just note that in many cases you'll need to order a separate wire harness specific to your vehicle type. So don't forget that minor detail.

## Casita

Now why would I need a new trailer brake controller?

OK, now some of you are going to shake your head at me or call me silly, but my idea of a good time is getting into the backwoods and going plant hunting. Not your average plant hunting, but some legit off road 4-wheelin' adventures. However, I'm not a huge fan of tent camping, as I did my time on the Appalachian Trail. Judge me all you want, but I like a bed, fridge, hot food and heat/air conditioning.

In my case, I searched for a few years to find a travel trailer that was lightweight enough to be yanked down the road at 70 mph and nimble/narrow enough to get down logging roads if needed. My requirements were simple: I needed a fridge for adult beverages and cuttings (and maybe bait when fishing), a bed to sleep on, a place to wash up, heat and A/C, and a place to cook a meal. It also had to be as lightweight as possible.





Oddly enough, I stumbled across a [Casita](#) a few years ago while on the left coast and set out to save up enough dimes to get one. Eventually, I was able to do so and purchased one, picking it up just before Thanksgiving from the one and only place you can get one new (in Rice, Texas). Being a fiberglass exterior that weighs in at 3,500 pounds, with a weight distribution hitch, it rides like a dream at 70-ish mph. Also, with a high-lift axil it'll cruise on down rough and rutted terrain. I'm stoked about my first seed collection trip this coming weekend! I'm also looking forward to a cross-country trip to the 2022 Spring Trials ...

Just beware, this product is made by a small family-owned company that believes in quality over quantity. As a result, there's an 18-month wait once you order one. Minor details ... it'll fly by.

## Wildflower Seed Mixtures

Hey, what's not to love about wildflower seed mixtures? The problem, frequently, is that these seed mixtures are a "one-size-fits-all" product and that generally spells some level of disappointment when one or more species fails to perform. But in the increasingly specialized world of native seed companies, products are becoming more targeted to region and/or microclimate (e.g. wet areas or shade).



In steps [American Meadows](#), which now has a mess o' options on the wildflower mix front. In fact, I counted about 50 different options, ranging from Monarch butterfly-specific to mixes for recently burnt areas. Well played, American Meadows.

But fear not—many other companies like [Eden Brothers](#) and [Pennington](#) are getting into the game.

## Our Wacky Wonderful World—Notes from the Edge of Sanity

Now what's the best gift you can give this holiday season, other than the 2021 Toyota 4Runner TRD Pro (you can pick the color)? Well, when it comes to being charitable and hort-centric, I can't think of a better way than donating a little time or treasure to [your local public garden](#) or municipal/state/federal park.

When it comes to public gardens, the American Public Gardens Association is a great place to start. Most public gardens allow you to donate to specific programs or gardens (e.g. children's garden), as well as volunteer if you don't have deep pockets.

So consider a gift that fosters a new generation of garden enthusiasts. And have a Merry Christmahanakwanzika!

Live authentic,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Chappell'.

[Matthew Chappell](#)  
Editor-at-Large  
Nursery & Landscape Insider

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