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- timely gardening advice
- advance notice of sales
- updates on each of our stores
- special event notification

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www.behnkes.com

Behnke Nurseries — Full Speed Ahead!

The Story of Behnke Nurseries

— by Roland Behnke

In the late 1940s, after nearly two decades of hard work and hard times, business began to grow steadily, and the Behnke family would soon enjoy the fruits of prosperity.

Early in 1951, Albert and Rose returned to Germany to visit family and friends. Always on the lookout for new plants and ideas, Albert used the opportunity to tour nurseries in Holland and Denmark. As a result of the contacts he made on this trip, Behnke Nurseries soon offered a tremendous selection of Dutch bulbs, many of which were featured in display gardens at the White House.

The Behnkes suffered a dramatic setback just when everything was going so well. Late in 1951, Albert Behnke was diagnosed with colon cancer and barely survived the necessary colostomy operation. Most of the nursery staff was discharged and everything was put on hold during his slow, painful recovery. At that time, it was almost unheard of for anyone to live more than a few years after a colostomy. However, Albert Behnke, with his characteristically fierce determination, carried on. As he used to say, "Ve Vikings are tough and ve don't give up."

The year 1953 was an eventful one for the Behnke family business. Albert had beaten his cancer and was once again expanding the business — buying the lots he had previously rented and putting up more greenhouses for the plants. The older children were leaving the family home to pursue their own careers, and new staff was being hired to manage the growing business. The first General Manager, Carl Nordeen, contributed greatly to the expansion and was an important part of the growing Behnke Nurseries. In 1955, he left to start his own landscaping business.

A new manager, Ira DeGourse, continued the expansion of new facilities and product lines. Ira had worked as a teenager at Behnke's in the mid-1930's and, during his 25 years (1955-1980) at Behnke's

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Albert Behnke and Ira DeGourse
circa 1970



The "Big Annual House" was built in the 50s to satisfy the growing demand for colorful annuals during the prosperous post war period.



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Editor-in-Chief:

Sonja Behnke Festerling

Managing Editor:

Judith Conway

Layout/Design/Illustration:

Lori Hicks

Contributing Writers:

Roland Behnke

James Dronenburg

Larry Hurley

Helmut Jaehnigen

Melodie Likel

Steven Mott

Gene Sumi

Chris Upton

Beltville Garden Center

11300 Baltimore Ave. (U.S.1)

Beltville, MD 20705

(Two miles north of
Exit 25, Capital Beltway)

301-937-1100

Florist: 301-937-4032

Largo Garden Center

700 Watkins Park Drive

Largo, MD 20774

(Between Central Avenue
and Route 202)

301-249-2492

Potomac Garden Center

9545 River Road

Potomac, MD 20854

(Two miles north of the
Capital Beltway on River Road)

301-983-9200

Florist 301-983-4400

Holiday Shopping Hours

Nov. 1-22: Open Daily 9AM-6PM
CLOSED THANKSGIVING DAY

November 24 - December 23
Monday - Saturday: 8AM to 8PM;
Sunday: 9AM - 8PM

Christmas Eve (Dec. 24) 9am to
5pm

Christmas Day (Dec. 25) Closed
Dec. 26-30: Open Daily 9AM-6PM

New Year's Eve (Dec. 31) 9am-5pm
New Year's Day (Jan. 1) Closed
(CALL: HOURS SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Behnke History, continued from Page 1

Rose Behnke answers the phone in the business office in 1963.

he was responsible for many innovations important to the success of the business. In 1956 Leo Bicknese, a Dutch horticulturist, was hired as Head Grower. Leo's expertise helped to establish Behnke's as the place to purchase the finest quality annual bedding plants and poinsettias.

The late '50s and '60s brought a number of changes to the horticulture industry, most of which were due to the availability of cheap oil. For instance, roses were shipped from California and potted directly into tar paper pots and, in later years, into plastic pots. Petroleum became the quintessential ingredient necessary for the efficient heating of greenhouses, and the manufacture of plastic plant labels, plastic pots, plastic poly film for greenhouses, pesticides, asphalt paving, etc. As the price of oil went up, so did the price of the materials used to bring a plant to market.

Each summer, Albert and Rose would tour different areas of their beloved United States, investigating nurseries and garden centers. On their trips around the country, they collected unusual plant specimens and interesting rocks. When they built their new home in Burtonsville in 1965, important features included a large hearth composed of these rocks collected from all over the country, and a six-acre Arboretum displaying the many plants they had collected. The old family home at the Nursery, first built in 1930, was demolished to make room for the present day Garden Shop.

On one of their trips to the west coast, Albert and Rose visited the Ecke Poinsettia Ranch and made arrangements to have cuttings shipped by air to the Nursery in late spring. The growing and marketing of Behnke Signature Poinsettias has become a singular success for Behnke Nurseries. To this day our poinsettia crop is second to none, and they help to provide the revenue that allows Behnke Nurseries to remain open throughout the winter.

Albert retired from active involvement in the Nursery in 1965, but still retained a strong presence in its everyday operations and in planning for the future. In 1976 Roland Behnke returned to work at the Nursery after retiring from the United States Air Force. When Ira retired in 1980, Roland became President of Behnke Nurseries and Alfred Millard assumed the title and responsibilities of General Manager. Alfred had begun his career at Behnke's at the early age of thirteen, and held positions of



Behnke History, continued from Page 2

increasing responsibility over the years — Assistant Grower under Leo, and Assistant Manager under Ira. Alfred is now the Chief Operating Officer of Retail and Vice President.

During the '80s business was booming and expansions and renovations continued. A large central checkout area was constructed at Beltsville, to help handle the increased business of the thriving Nursery. The property just north of the Nursery, which had been the Dawn Rose nightclub, was acquired, and the building renovated for a Florist Shop and lecture hall. New parking lots, shade houses and retail areas were constructed at Beltsville as well, and larger, modern greenhouses were built for the display and sale of all types and sizes of tropical plants for the increasingly popular houseplant business.

Growth and expansion continued with the purchase of a second nursery location in 1979 in Largo, Maryland. Eighty acres of land were purchased for production space to grow plants that would be up to the Behnke Nurseries' standards, and plans were made to construct a large retail garden center. Soon the Largo site had four acres of greenhouses and 20 acres of fields that were producing Behnke-grown plants to stock the Beltsville store, as well as the small "wayside stand" at Largo. Over the years, the Largo stand has expanded to offer a full selection of quality Behnke-grown plants on a year-round basis.

The 1990s were a time of transition for the Behnke family, and for the Nursery as well. In 1992, Albert Behnke passed away, and Rose followed in 1997. Recognizing that the gardens at the



Sonja stands, with an armful of flowers at her parents Burtonsville home.

Burtonsville home were filled with many unique specimens, the family donated plants to parks and arboretums throughout the area before the property was sold to a local religious group.

In 1995, Roland Behnke retired, and Sonja Behnke Festerling became President. Her son, John Peter Thompson, assumed the responsibilities of Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer. Mark Behnke, Roland's son, was appointed Vice-President of Information Technology, and Treasurer. Under their leadership, the Nursery had continued to grow and expand, adding a third location in 1998 to serve our growing customer base when the former Potomac Nursery on River Road was acquired. Extensive repairs and renovations were completed to bring the six-acre facility up to the Behnke standard. The new Behnke Nurseries at Potomac is now in full operation, allowing Behnke's to better meet the everyday gardening needs of our Montgomery County and Virginia customers.

Standing on the threshold of a new millennium, Behnke Nurseries is celebrating over 70 years of providing the Washington-Baltimore area with the finest quality plants and enjoys an impeccable international reputation. None of this could have been possible without the dream of Albert and Rose, the hard work of so many devoted family members and employees, and the discerning taste of our loyal and valued customers. ❧



Albert and Rose in the greenhouse at Beltsville, circa 1970.

Drivers Wanted

Behnke Nurseries is looking for drivers and assistants to help with the delivery of holiday products. Flexible schedules, up to 40 hours per week, from Thanksgiving to Christmas Eve day. Please call Charlie at 301-249-1700.



Welcome the Holidays w

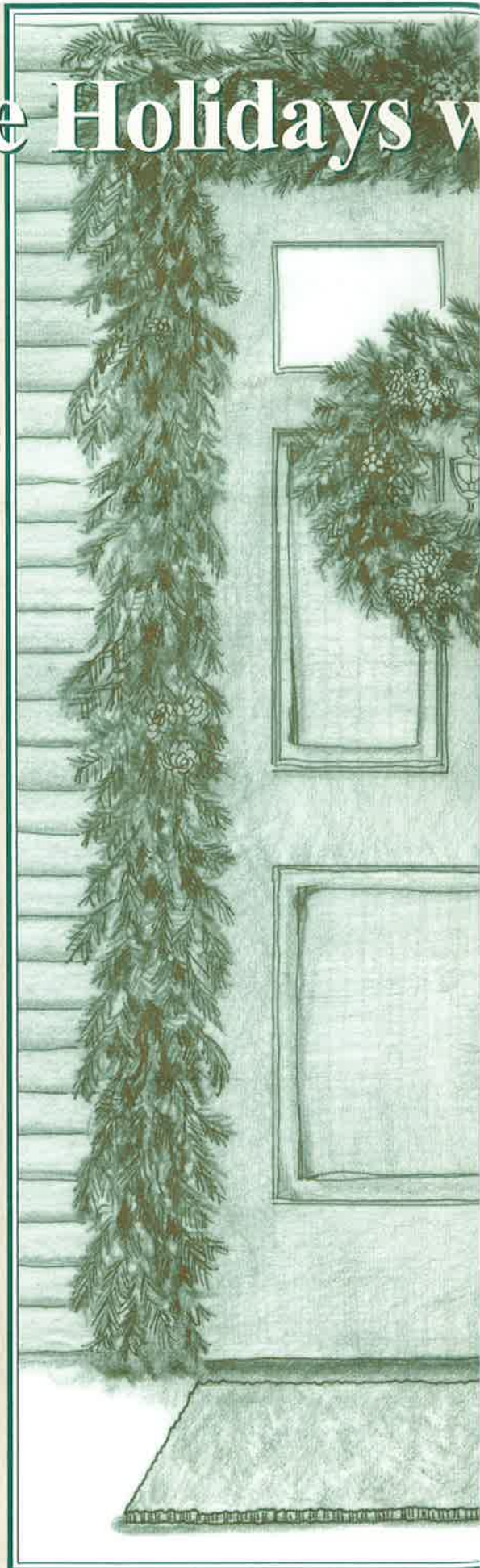
The holidays are approaching, filling us with joyous, good spirits. We look forward to lavish meals and visits with family and friends. Greens redolent of the north woods scent our homes and create a festive air. Let fragrant fresh evergreens grace your doorways and windows, with door swags and wreaths designed to compliment your holiday decor. Add an impressive full-length garland for maximum effect. You can learn to make your own, nature-inspired wreaths and swags in our Holiday Workshops at the Beltsville store this holiday season. See page 6 for a detailed schedule of workshops and free demonstrations.

“Brighten a kitchen table or windowsill with a diminutive poinsettia wreathed by a garland of ivy. Take one along as a thoughtful, holiday hostess gift.”

For your porch or patio, consider a planting of evergreens in an outdoor container, or make an arrangement of fresh-cut holiday greens in an urn or ceramic pot. Use a dwarf Alberta spruce for height, and add other dwarf evergreens to provide color and textural contrasts. (Attend our free demonstration, *Evergreens in Outdoor Containers*, see page 6.)

Here are some of our designers' favorite ideas for quick and easy holiday decorating indoors! These natural and colorful creations will bring the beauty and fragrance of nature into your home to delight all of your senses:

- As an alternative to a Christmas tree, or as an additional living tree for a bright, cool room, decorate a Norfolk Island Pine with lights and seasonal finery. These unusual trees make long-lasting houseplants.
- Dress up rosemary or ivy topiaries with tiny gold and silver bows or a garland of bright ribbon. These make an absolutely charming hostess gift for the dedicated cook or gardener.
- Arrange a grouping of three Christmas cacti in a basket or container that will fit on your windowsill. These easy-to-care-for plants will bloom for weeks with just a little watering.
- Nestle a stately budded amaryllis into a rustic basket or a golden cachepot for a lovely decoration for the dining table or mantle. Add fluffy Spanish moss and perhaps a ribbon for a one-of-a-kind look that couldn't be easier. Or group several plants on a low table for a dramatic effect.





With Natural Decorations

- Decorate the mantle with two or three long-lasting arrangements of holiday greenery in favorite vases. Add some candles, then weave several long lengths of beautiful ribbon in and out around the vases and candles for a display that will complement your décor.
- Brighten the kitchen table or windowsill with a diminutive poinsettia wreathed by a garland of ivy. Take one along as a thoughtful, holiday hostess gift.
- For the cook up to the elbows in scrumptious holiday cooking, the dining table can be quickly dressed up with three small candle ring wreath arrangements. Set each wreath on a dinner-sized plate and place a fat pillar candle in the center of each wreath. The plate will catch any wax drops.
- Tuck short lengths of greenery and berries atop corner or china cupboards and behind picture frames to add a festive feeling and lovely woodsy fragrance. These fresh greens will generally last about two weeks indoors.
- Set a large, elegant poinsettia in a favorite cachepot and place it on a console table behind the sofa or in front of a large mirror to double the color impact.
- Brighten a large foyer or stair landing with a grouping of various sizes of poinsettias for an impressive show. The range of colors has expanded far beyond the traditional red and white of the past. This year try the softly speckled 'Monet' or the dramatic 'Pink Peppermint'.
- For another quick centerpiece, fill an elegant silver or clear glass bowl with glass ornaments and tuck short tips of boxwood in between the balls.
- For a country look, fill a wooden or copper bowl or a rustic basket with polished apples and sprigs of holly.
- Bedeck the kitchen with a boxwood garland decorated with slices of dried oranges, and pomegranates and wrapped with a garland of cranberries.
- Any wreath can be laid flat to surround an arrangement of candles, a favorite holiday decoration — or even a plate of homemade cookies.
- For a dramatic impact for a special holiday event, arrange fresh greenery in your favorite container and add stems of fragrant white lilies or deep red roses. Beautiful arrangements can be made in anything from an elegant tall glass vase simply filled with water to a gleaming brass bowl using florist foam to secure the stems.

Our talented designers will have our stores stocked with displays of naturally decorated items for the holidays. And be sure to turn the page for our list of holiday workshops and free demonstrations. There are plenty of ideas each holiday season at Behnke's. We look forward to seeing you soon! ❧

—Melodie Likel, Perennial Plant Specialist





Holiday Events in Beltsville



WORKSHOP*: HERBAL SOAPS

TUITION: \$30

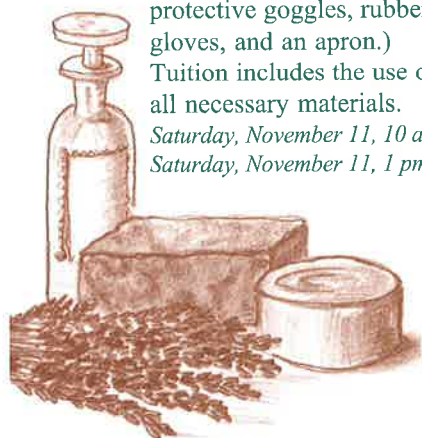
with Leslie Plant

Discover the pleasure of making old-fashioned soaps from vegetable oils and fragrant herbs. You'll create and take home your own soaps, which are perfect to keep for yourself or give as gifts. (Please bring protective goggles, rubber gloves, and an apron.)

Tuition includes the use of all necessary materials.

Saturday, November 11, 10 am

Saturday, November 11, 1 pm



WORKSHOP*: HARVEST WREATH

TUITION: \$25

Behnke staff

Learn to make beautiful harvest wreaths from freshly picked branches, berries, seed pods and other natural materials. Tuition includes the use of all necessary tools and materials to create your own natural wreath to welcome the holiday season and your holiday guests. (Please bring pruners and garden gloves.)

Saturday, November 18, 10 am

Saturday, November 18, 1 pm

WORKSHOP*: WREATHS FROM NATURE

TUITION: \$25

with Randy Best

Learn to create a unique wreath using unusual evergreens, berries, and other natural textures from the landscape. Randy will demonstrate design techniques and help you create your own one-of-a-kind wreath. (Please bring pruners and garden gloves.)

Saturday, December 2, 10 am

Saturday, December 9, 10 am

WORKSHOP*: HOLIDAY SWAGS

TUITION: \$25

with Randy Best

Try a new holiday look with a decorated door swag. Randy will demonstrate the basic technique and give design advice. Then you'll make your own one-of-a-kind swag with Randy's guidance and a variety of beautiful natural materials. (Please bring pruners and garden gloves.)

Saturday, December 2, 1 pm

Saturday, December 9, 1 pm

FREE DEMONSTRATION:

WOODTURNERS

The Chesapeake Woodturners will demonstrate their unique art for our guests again this year. These talented artisans will demonstrate a wide variety of woodturning techniques and will offer their artistically sculpted creations for sale. All pieces are made from Maryland timber which has been felled by nature.

Saturday & Sunday, December 2 & 3

10 am to 5 pm

Saturday & Sunday, December 9 & 10

10 am to 5 pm

FREE DEMONSTRATION:

EVERGREENS IN

OUTDOOR CONTAINERS

with Chris Upton

Watch as our designer transforms an empty outdoor container into a decorative holiday display. Using cut evergreens, colorful berries and seasonal materials, it's easy to create a long-lasting, festive outdoor arrangement.

Saturday, Dec. 2, 1 pm

Saturday, Dec. 9, 1 pm



FREE DEMONSTRATION:

KISSING BALLS

Behnke staff

Learn to make these old-fashioned holiday decorations, and they will quickly become part of your family's tradition. Kissing balls are charming reminders of a Christmas past — made with mistletoe and fresh

greens, they make a fabulous decoration or a welcome gift.

Sunday, December 3, 1 pm and 2 pm

Sunday, December 10, 1 pm and 2 pm



FREE DEMONSTRATION

TREE TOPPER BOW

Behnke staff

Learn to make these fabulous two-ribbon bows that will grace the top of your holiday tree, giving you colorful streamers to weave in and around the branches.

Sunday, December 3, 1:30 pm

Sunday, December 10, 1:30 pm

**All workshops require advance registration. Participation is limited, so please reserve early to avoid disappointment. To register please call 301-937-1100.*



Meet: Melodie Likel



Melodie wears many and varied hats in the course of a Behnke year.

January finds her putting the finishing touches on the Gardening Seminar Series. In mid-April she moves to our Potomac store as a perennial specialist and tomato expert. As the busy spring season winds down, she moves back to Beltsville to start the researching of topics and scheduling of speakers for the next year's seminar series. Then she looks forward to the search for local growers of the best vine-ripened tomatoes for the August **Tomato Taste Off**. Evaluating the results of the Taste Off as well as new varieties from her garden, Melodie recommends the tomatoes to be grown by Behnkes for the next spring. Her autumn task is writing the descriptive and cultural information signs for the hundreds of new plants Behnkes will offer in the coming year. She also writes newsletter articles, helps to organize holiday workshops and gives demonstrations of holiday decorating projects. Whew!

Melodie joined Behnke's Perennial Department in 1991, after 23 years as a biological researcher. In 1997 she moved into her present position as horticultural researcher with a twist. An avid cook since taking French cooking courses in the 1980s, Melodie and her husband Charlie keep numerous gardens overflowing with perennials, a gourmet vegetable plot with lots of tomatoes, and a troupe of cats to keep the voles out of the perennial beds. ☺

Behnke Signature Poinsettias

— Judith Conway, Advertising Department

It isn't the distinctive brown paper cover, printed with the Behnke name, that makes a Behnke Signature Poinsettia. It's the serious poinsettia growers at our Largo Greenhouses who grow the most perfect poinsettias available anywhere. Years ago, before we decided to put the Behnke Nurseries' name on a poinsettia, we had to decide if we were willing to provide the extra special care it would take to grow the finest poinsettia available.

- Were we willing to hand-tie each plant, with double-knots and double-loops, to the carefully slanted stakes in each pot? 42,000 poinsettias? If not, the plants couldn't support the heavy blooming bracts.
- Were we willing to space the pots farther apart on the greenhouse benches, using up precious footage, so that the plants could develop the full, green leaves we wanted?
- Were we willing to absorb the cost of expertly controlling the photoperiodic environment in order to produce the freshest plants possible all through the holiday season? We had to develop an entire light system with over 500 lights so that we could delay the coloring of the plants, and produce the longest-lasting, most brilliant color possible all season long.
- Were we willing to invest the extra time to actually count the number of leaves on each stem so that we could pinch with precision? This was the only way we could be sure to get a full, perfectly-shaped plant with overlapping leaves.
- Were we willing to pay more for larger pots and, consequently, more potting soil, in order for our Behnke Signature Poinsettia to be in pleasing proportion to its pot?
- Were we willing to take the extra time to wrap each plant just prior to delivery or as they were purchased, not wrap them all ahead of time to save on labor as others do? We were, because we know that, if wrapped too long, poinsettia leaves break off and gasses build up and damage the leaves and flowers.

With over 30 varieties of poinsettias to care for, these considerations had to be carefully deliberated. We did deliberate, and we easily decided that our goal was to make Behnke Signature Poinsettias stand as the benchmark against which all other poinsettias could be measured — and that goal was worth any expense. ☺



A Behnke Signature Poinsettia—second to none!

Poinsettias On Parade!

Don't miss this once-a-year opportunity to see our fabulous greenhouse brimming with nearly 50,000 poinsettias in peak color. Bring a camera and take a holiday photo of your family. Enjoy light refreshments with our compliments, as well as our warmest wishes for your holiday season. For more information, please call 301-249-2492.

**Sunday, November 26, 2000, 12 noon to 4 pm • In our Largo Greenhouses
700 Watkins Park Drive, Largo, Maryland**



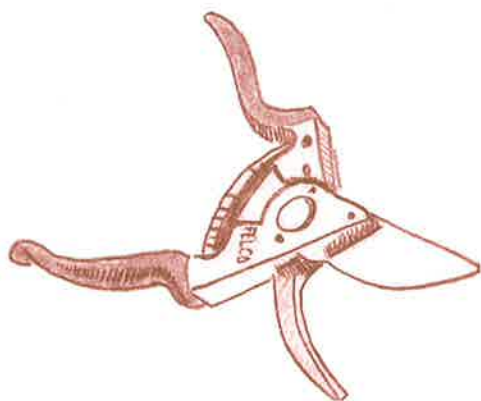
Wish List for the Gardener

— by Steven Mott, Sales Specialist, Seasonal Plants

Again this holiday season, we asked a favorite gardener to dream on paper about which holiday gifts he'd love to find his name on this year. Steven Mott, a talented professional who interned at Longwood Gardens before coming to Behnke's, has some wonderful ideas. Steven lists a few things he would never want to be without, as well as some new items that may be destined to become gardening classics, or at the very least, delight the gardener on your list.

Things I could never be without:

A must need for any and all gardeners is a pair of **Felco #7 Pruning Shears** with the revolving handle for easy and comfortable pruning. A pair of Felcos will last even the most active gardener a lifetime.



A **Metal Watering Can** is a gardening classic. With a brass rose for delicate waterings of seedlings and young plants, it is something that should always be close at hand.

Things I'd really like to have:

With an **Electronic Water Timer**, I'd be able to spend the weekend at the beach without worrying about if the rain is watering the plants back home.

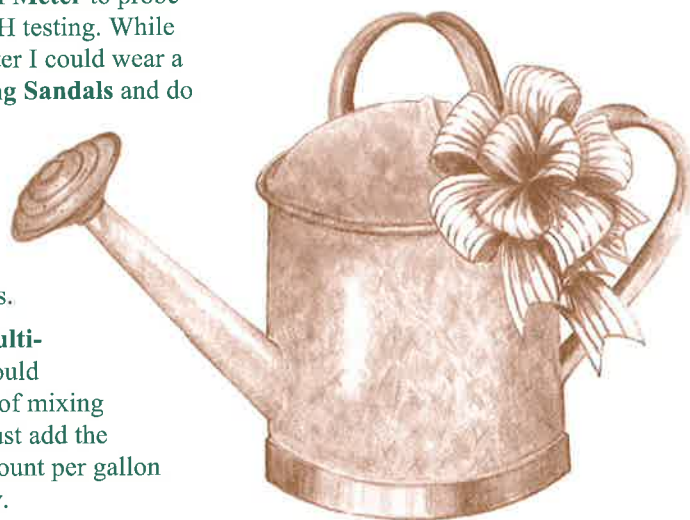
I could use a new **Soil pH Meter** to probe the garden soil for easy pH testing. While I'm using the soil pH meter I could wear a new pair of **Turf Aerating Sandals** and do two jobs at once.

A **Great Horned Owl Scarecrow** with the new wind-powered rotating head will keep watch over the blackberry plants.

Ortho Dial 'N Spray Multi-use hose end sprayer would eliminate the messy task of mixing garden care chemicals. Just add the chemical and dial the amount per gallon and you're ready to spray.

A new **Circle Hoe** has classic looks and is very effective for weeding between the veggies in the garden. While I'm in the vegetable garden I could cover the lettuce plants with a new set of **Plastic Victorian Cloches** on those cold nights.

If you're still undecided about a suitable gift for the gardener on your list, consider a **Behnke Gift Certificate** — you can even purchase one online at Behnke's website: www.behnkes.com! Happy Holidays! 



A **Dramm Water Wand** will save your back. The wand allows you to water those difficult-to-reach hanging baskets and those plants deep in the flower border.

Gardena Quick Connect Watering Nozzles enable quick changes for hose end devices.



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