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REAL ESTATE

Books to keep or give as gifts this holiday season

For personal reference or gift giving, we offer these new home and garden, real estate and architectural titles for this month's new book roundup:



Jill Sell

Gardening books with glorious photography are always a treat, especially in the winter for those who must limit their fiddling to indoor plants. **Houseplant Handbook: Basic Growing Techniques and a Directory of 300 Everyday Houseplants** by David Squire (Fox Chapel Publishing) is a good guide to the plants consumers buy at garden centers, home improvement and grocery stores.

Nothing too exotic here, just helpful, straightforward, easy to read descriptions and instructions for growing the plants. The book, however, did increase my lust for a goldfish plant (*Columnnea x banksia*). I've always wanted one of those evergreen hybrids with orange-red flowers that appear fish are swimming all over it.

Success with Succulents: Choosing, Growing and Caring for Cactuses and Other Succulents by John Bagnasco and Bob Reidmuller (Cool Springs Press) is another good reference. There are two kinds of people in the world. The first can grow agave, aloe and plants that look like burro's tails, living rocks and roadkill (honest, there is a plant with that name that looks like it got hit by a car) with no problem. These people are always giving away "baby plants."

The second kind of succulent grower kills a cactus 10 minutes after he/she brings it home. I won't tell you what kind I am or I will lose my credibility as a garden writer. But I need this book.

Container Gardening Complete: Creative Projects for Growing Vegetables and Flowers in Small Spaces by Jessica Walliser (Cool Springs Press) contains several imaginative ideas. Many use repurposed or inexpensive items. Turn a rusty wheelbarrow (you already have the drainage holes) into The Good Bug Wheelbarrow Garden. Fill with soil, add herbs or marigolds and you have an instant whimsical garden.

Or make a Gutter Garden by attaching any length of aluminum gutter to a wall or fence with brackets. Go for little plants that don't need a lot of soil -- spicy globe Dwarf basil or dwarf ivy. The book contains good directions as well as plant care tips.

The Seiberling Legacy, is the most recent softcover book in the Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens series about the co-founder of Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co and his family's Akron estate. With great vintage photos and fascinating details, one chapter tells the story of Akron's Goodyear Heights neighborhood. In 1912, F.A. Seiberling wanted Goodyear to develop affordable and comfortable housing for its increasing number of factory workers, but the company refused.

Seiberling bought property himself and developed 400 home lots. No down payment was needed and employees could have semi-monthly mortgage payments deducted from paychecks. When the Great Depression hit, mortgage payments were cut in half to allow workers to keep their homes. The book is available at Stan Hywet's gift shop.

Looking at Luxury Design for Living by Steve Huyton (Schiffer Publishing) is like looking through a catalog of things you probably won't ever own. But that's ok. How many of us really need the Oculus, a yacht that looks like the head (jaws and eye sockets) of a gigantic ocean mammal? Think of the docking costs. The yacht has a second level owner's suite that that can be reached by a central spiral staircase or elevator tube.

But in this space, we focus on homes and the book does not disappoint. Every inch of the Oak Beach House set on a hill in Australia opens to terraces overlooking the Coral Sea or protected, surrounding rainforest.



This high-end home in Atlanta, Ga., features a courtyard with a three-story staircase that leads to the upper floors. Photo Credit: *Luxury Design for Living*; Schiffer Publishing

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