

A Potpourri of Useful Products

by Rita Pelczar

AS WE put the final touches on another gardening season, I'd like to share a few of the products that made my gardens successful this year, plus one that will help me extend the season into the winter months.

Over the summer, I became acquainted with two new products from Good Dirt (www.good-dirt.com). I used **Good Dirt® Potting Soil Mix** to pot up some newly rooted cuttings of perennials



and shrubs. This mix has a light, fluffy texture and is easy to moisten without getting soggy. It is made from a blend of sustainably harvested peat moss, organic plant food, plant probiotics, and BogBits™—a recycled by-product from the North American peat bogs that adds great porosity. For in-ground plantings, **Good Dirt® Soil Conditioner** is a slightly coarser combination of the same materials that provides both improved drainage and water retention for newly planted trees, shrubs, vegetables, and flowers. It's a great amendment for my heavy North Carolina clay soil.

A good watering can is a garden essential, and the **French Blue Watering Can** from Gardener's Supply Company (www.gardeners.com) has become my



favorite. It's made of lightweight polyethylene and has a three-gallon capacity. The long, curved handle allows for a balanced, two-handed grip while you aim the flow, and its stainless steel rose is detachable for easy cleaning.

Newly sown grass seed needs even moisture to germinate and establish roots. Re-seeding bare patches in the lawn can be a chore, and keeping them watered can be equally tedious. **Seed Aide CoverGrow™** (www.profileproducts.com) is a nifty product that reduces the frequency



of watering. It's a granular mulch composed of wood fiber and cellulose fiber that is applied over a seeded area. Thoroughly moistened, the granules soak up water, expanding significantly in size. They shade the germinating seeds and gradually release water right where you

need it. This mulch can be applied by hand, or broadcast with a spreader for larger areas.

A pair of garden forks from Corona (www.coronatools.com) came in very handy this year for digging root crops, transplanting and dividing perennials, and spreading mulch. The **Four Tine**



Digging Fork is a workhorse, with sturdy 10-inch long, flattened, tempered steel tines and a 29-inch D-grip handle. It makes short work of digging potatoes or sweet potatoes and is ideal for prizing perennials out of the ground for transplanting. It's also handy for dividing clumps of perennial roots and incorporating organic matter into the soil before replanting.

The **10 Tine Ensilage Fork** is well suited for lifting and spreading organic mulch over your beds. Its business end is constructed of tempered, welded steel; the thin, rounded tines slide easily into a pile of mulch, lifting a good size scoop with each thrust. The 30-inch D-grip handle is made of ash wood.



Heated Birdbath

As winter approaches, my **Heated Birdbath** from Songbird Essentials (www.songbirdessentials.com), which I covered in the November/December 2015 issue of this magazine and is a favorite with my winter bird visitors, has been reconnected to an exterior electrical outlet. Because the attached cord is fairly short, an exterior extension cord is necessary, and to protect this connection from moisture, the **Heavy Duty Cord Protection** from Twist and



Seal® (www.twistandseal.com) is just the ticket. Useful for this or any other outdoor device that requires electricity, the sturdy, hinged plastic case prevents moisture from reaching the plugs. It comes with a five-year replacement warranty.

If you have a cold frame, you know that once the weather cools you have to regularly open the frame during daylight hours to prevent temperatures from rising and cooking everything inside, then remembering to close the lid at night to avoid frost damage. The **Univent Automatic Vent Opener** from Agriculture Solutions (www.agriculturesolutions.com) allows you

forget about these chores—and it doesn't need electricity. A substance inside the device expands and contracts depending on the temperature, causing it to move. It can lift lids up to 15 pounds and be adjusted to open when temperatures reach between 55 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Easy to install, it opens to a maximum of 18 inches and



Univent Automatic Vent Opener

is equipped with a quick-release mounting bracket that allows for easy access to your crops. With luck, you can have fresh salads all winter long!

Rita Pelczar is a contributing editor for The American Gardener.



NICE DIGS!

The OXO Good Grips Trowel is constructed of high-grade 420 stainless steel for strength and durability. It features a soft, non-slip handle with a gel insert that flexes to provide cushioning when digging into tough and compacted soil. Easy-to-read markings provide clear and convenient depth measurement and serrated edges tear through tough soil and weeds.



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