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Garden Gadgets Galore

BY BLAIR DALTON

Summer is almost here. That means sunshine, balmy days and, of course, yard work. Whether you are a fanatical gardener or more inclined to recline and enjoy, the latest crop of garden gadgets has something for everyone.

If your green thumb is looking slightly jaundiced (like mine), try Brookstone's PlantSmart.

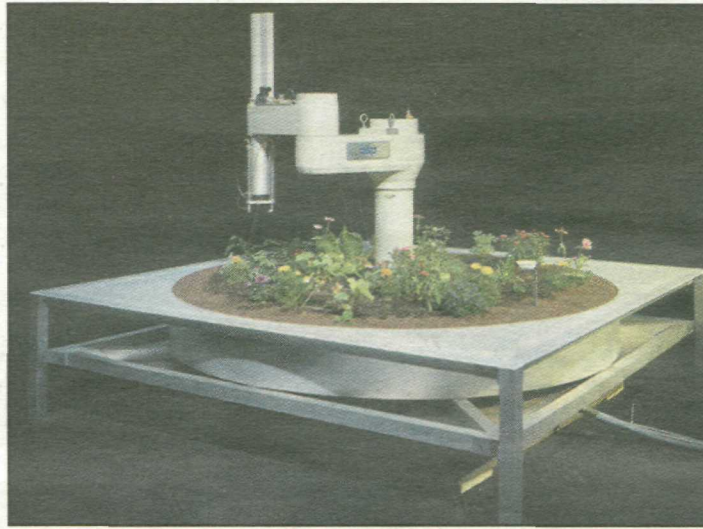
This nifty multitasking sensor probe works for indoor and outdoor plants. The \$30 device displays the pH, light and moisture levels and compares them to an easy-to-read chart. If your prize petunias are ailing, PlantSmart will pinpoint the problem. Then at least you will not feel quite so guilty.

For those who like brandishing power tools, the Black & Decker EdgeHog (\$90) is a great combination landscape edger and trencher. It is light and easy to use but wields a heavy-duty buzz with a two and one-quarter horsepower engine. The EdgeHog will happily chomp into all those overgrown weeds and encroaching grass you have been neglecting all winter. It also is a whiz at working out pent up aggression.

If a new deck, or repairing the old one, is on your project list for this summer, Black & Decker has introduced another multipurpose tool you will not want to be without. The Firestorm Cordless Multi Tool (approx. \$120) is truly the Swiss Army Knife of power tools. Its three interchangeable heads combine all the versatility of B&D's Firestorm drills and drivers, easy-clamp jigsaw and Mouse sander. Ergonomically designed for comfort of use, the Multi Tool does just about everything except chop and dice vegetables. Black & Decker is vying for the leadership in cordless, rechargeable tools and appliances, and this latest addition to its line is sure to be a winner.

But if all that manual labor is wearing you out, you can lie on your new deck and enjoy Plow and Hearth's solar panel and fountain kit (\$129.95).

Just attach it to any fountain - no electrical outlet required. The 12-volt solar panel provides enough power to keep the water bubbling and slosh-



The Telegarden

ing. The compact unit fits comfortably into almost any space, even a small corner of an apartment balcony. The Plow and Hearth kit comes with four fountain heads for a spray up to 4 feet. Attach it to a spouting statue and your dolphin or flamingo will go right on spitting as long as the sun is shining.

If you are just not sure what to do with your garden, try some high-tech help. The Sierra Complete LandDesigner 3D Design Collection 6.0 is loaded with good ideas. This CD lets you view different garden plans in advance, without having to lift a shovel. Try out different plants and even watch them change along with the seasons. With the selection of included tools you can compare deck designs, garden layouts and build pathways or ornamental ponds from various materials. The mystical garden plan would be nice while meditating next to your fountain or scan in a photo of your own yard and have fun moving trees and shrubs around the easy way. The Sierra Complete LandDesigner (\$69.95) also has a customized desktop calendar to remind you when to do what in the garden.

But if the whole gardening scene is just too much for you, or you are not into grubby, try cyber-gardening. Yes, folks, you really can go online to www.usc.edu/dept/garden and try the Telegarden. With the telerobotic installation, Internet users can tend a garden remotely, watering and caring for the plants by means of a robotic arm.

Now that sounds like my idea of gardening.