

North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden History – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

The idea for a community garden was born in 1991. Linda Pittman, who then worked for IVGID (WasteNot), managed to convince Waste Not and Sierra Nevada College to join her, Margaret Solomon and Dick Post (UNR Cooperative extension) in the venture. A first official meeting of trustees was held in mid 1992. The first draft of the MOU was done in early 1993 and an application was submitted to TRPA in 1993.

The official groundbreaking of the garden (at its original location on College Drive and McDonald) was held on May 18, 1994. Then followed several years of planning, building, pouring cement and finally planting mostly native plants. Most materials were donated as well as a lot of the labor. The Garden also received monetary donations. The board of trustees also grew during these 4 years and included several members of the UNR Cooperative Extension Master Gardener group (two are still officers of the board).

On June 20th of 1998 the garden had its Grand Opening, celebrated with food, flowers and music. It was a well attended event and the garden attracted many volunteers; many are still active in the garden.

Over the next couple of years it became clear that the Garden would have to relocate as the Sierra Nevada College moved their campus to the Lake property (Highway 28 and Country Club Drive). During this time the Garden established itself as a valuable educational facility for the community. Regular free classes were held from June through August every year, many of which were hands-on style classes.

In 2002 a new location for the garden was established at the College's Lake Campus. In the fall of 2002 most of the plant material was moved from the Mountain Campus to the Lake Campus. Some of the hardscape was moved as well (mainly raised beds). It was a joint effort by a lot of Friends of the Garden.

In 2003 the rest of the garden was moved, including the gazebo and the shed. Over the next growing seasons the new garden was established and many new demonstrations were constructed. BMP certification classes were held in 2004 and the slope stabilization demonstrations were the lasting result in the garden.

In 2005 regular Green Thumb Thursday (free) classes resumed in the garden. Over the next couple of years the garden established closer educational ties with SNC and UC Davis, especially after the opening of the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences building. There is also more involvement in community events (Red, White and Tahoe Blue notably).

Several projects are planned for the 2009 season. A new path will be put in using donated plantable « bricks » creating what is often referred to as a « driveable lawn ». The garden will use mostly groundcover herbs (thyme among others) to fill in the spaces between the bricks. Another large project for 2009 will be establishing an Artist's and Butterfly

garden with a carefully selected mix of Sierra Wildflowers with a winding path through the meadow to enable up-close study of flowers. As always we are also planning free classes (Green Thumb Thursdays) throughout the summer.

The board of trustees look forward to the Garden continuing to be an important part of the North Lake Tahoe communities and being able to foster environmentally responsible gardening practices in the area.