



The North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden is an educational community garden which promotes lake-friendly landscaping to help preserve our unique and fragile alpine environment

President's Message

Greetings to all. As summer progresses, the garden thrives and so do the classes! We are very excited about the response to our classes and have had the largest attendances ever.

We have some new volunteers, one of whom has been doing PR for us. We think this has been responsible for much of the increase in class size. Thank you, Millie.

We also have two new helpers in the garden, Jackie and Margaret Ann. I know that with extra help, we will improve the look of the garden. Please join us at one of our Tuesday or Thursday 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. work times. There is always ongoing work to do and new plants to add. We are doing a small experiment with asparagus, behind the grass demonstration. It will be interesting to see if growing asparagus is viable in this area. Please go to demogarden.org for more information. You can sign up to become a member or a volunteer or see photos of the garden. Please check out the website and then visit the garden in person on the campus of Sierra Nevada College. Plant and other information is available in the gazebo. Hope to see you!!

Margaret Solomon



Mimi Komito's Container Class

Seed Harvesting

by Janet Steinmann

Wildflowers have spent all summer developing seeds and will soon disperse them. Just as with the souls in the parable of Matthew 13, some seeds will be eaten by Steller Jays, some will fall on rocky, decomposed granite soil and soon wither from lack of nourishment, and some will germinate and be choked out by invasive spotted Knapweed. But some seeds will fortunately land in protected pockets of decent soil to emerge in Spring as beautiful new plants. And now is the time of year to start gathering seeds and creating nurturing environments for them to grow in our gardens, although I'm not at all sure how this step fits into Matthew's parable.

Here are some of the easiest wildflower seeds to gather and plant:

- ▶ Seeds in popping pods: Lupine and California poppies produce large pods that start to form late summer. At first, the pods are greenish and the seeds inside unripe and slightly juicy. You know they are ready to *pop* when the pods turn tan or dark. Put a paper bag over the plant section or stems with pods, cut the stems, turn the bag upside down and seal or tie it. They will pop open when ready and you will have a bag of seeds, with pods to identify them, if needed. Remove the pods, petals, and debris that may contain some moisture so that seeds don't get moldy. Large, hard seeds such as Lupine can use a soaking between wet paper towels before planting to help germination.
- ▶ Seeds in smaller, shakeable pods: Penstemon, Columbine, and others with smaller seed pods may not pop so dramatically and will often have pods with very different re-seeding schedules on the same stem. Cut stem sections with dry tan pods (Columbine pods look kind of like hard little flowers) and again, turn upside down while in a paper bag. Even if they've already opened, the pods can be shaken a bit and more tiny seed will show up in your bag.
- ▶ Seeds formed on center cone or disc: Black-eyed Susans (Rudbekia), red and gold blanket flower (Gaillardia), and coneflower (Echinacea) form seeds in their centers. When flowers have bloomed and petals are completely dry, you will be able to easily scrape the seeds into your bag. Coneflower seeds are sharp so I often load them into the bag and mush them until seeds come loose. Again, remove the fleshy center, petals and stems from the seeds.
- ▶ Seeds floating on parachutes: Think Dandelions as the large, undesirable example of this seed dispersal method. Tall lavender and blue Asters are a much more popular autumn flower and their blossoms are replaced by tiny seeds that are attached to minute pieces of fluff, as the plant hopes to catch a breeze or brush against a bird. As you cut these flower heads, it's important to keep them dry if you're saving them for a while. You can even cut off the fluff if desired but it shouldn't be necessary.
- ▶ A note on collecting seeds while hiking or from wild sources: This can raise environmental issues and may even be illegal, so best to harvest from your own or friends' existing plants. If you do find seeds in the wild, take a few only from a very large group of plants so the "community" can still flourish. Even in your own garden, always leave some seedheads to sow themselves since they tend to have a better sense of timing than we do. And, don't forget to bequeath some to the birds!



Late Summer Tips by Janet Steinmann

Weather is usually sunny and mild through September but many flowering plants are finished for the year. Here are a few tips to keep your landscape looking beautiful even before autumn color makes a display:

For longer lasting and more attractive blooms, cut or pinch off spent blossoms from annuals, perennials and shrubs throughout the summer. At season's end, it's a good idea to leave some seedheads for the birds to enjoy and also to collect seeds for your garden next year. (See Article on Seed Harvesting)

Bright, bold late season perennials such as Gaillardia (Indian Blanket flower), Redbeekia (Black-eyed Susans), Asters, Sedum and many varieties of ornamental grasses still look great and will have time to settle in before frost. At this time of year, make sure nursery plants aren't overly root-bound. If roots are just a bit tightly packed, gently separate them with a weeding tool before planting.

Bearded irises are finished blooming and can benefit from a division every three years or so. Each rhizome will flower only once but then this "mother" root can provide nourishment for its attached "daughter" segments, so plant a few together. The most common problems with irises are planting too deeply and not enough sun.

Begin harvesting Thyme, Oregano, Sage and other herbs while the leaves are still palatable. If you want dried herbs for winter, hang a small bunch upside down in the pantry or anywhere in our very dry climate.



How to Enjoy Herbs fresh from your own Garden in Tahoe! by Mimi Komito

Even though the growing season in Tahoe is one of the shortest in the West, herbs grow really well here. Many herbs are surprisingly hardy and are perennial in Tahoe.

Raised beds or large pots are my favorite way to grow herbs. Woody herbs (Thyme, Sage and Oregano) are also great in rock gardens and on slopes. Most herbs require little care and not a lot of water. They're happy with sunshine and the occasional pruning- snip often and use for cooking and salads.

The main thing to remember when planting herbs in pots (or raised beds) is to plant varieties with similar needs together. In general most of the perennial herbs are drought tolerant and should go together - note that mints should always be planted alone, preferable in a large pot. Mints have a habit of getting very invasive and can take over a raised bed completely within a couple of years. Oregano should not be allowed to go to seed - it spreads!

Whether you plant in a raised bed or pots, or a combination of both, use a good garden soil mixed with well rotted compost (a 60-40 mix is good). Drip irrigation works well for herbs and keeps the weeds to a minimum. Plant woody perennial herbs together - they generally require less water. Plant edible annuals (Nasturtium and Viola) and annual herbs together - they look great in a pot. I like to plant Basil in a medium pot that I can take inside in the fall and keep alive in a bright window for another month or so. Rosemary is technically a perennial but does not survive the freezing winters in Tahoe. I have overwintered it in a garage or crawlspace with a monthly light watering. The same can be done with French Tarragon.

Perennial Herbs

Catmint
Chives
Lemon Balm (short lived)
Lovage (use on salads, tastes like celery)
Mint (spearmint and chocolate mint)
Oregano (use the flowers on salads)
Rosemary (overwinter inside)
Sage (common variety is the most reliable)
Tarragon (overwinter inside)
Thyme

Annual Herbs

Basil
Borage (use the flowers on salads)
Cilantro
Dill (plant with tomatoes, enhances their flavor)
Marjoram (use the same as Oregano, also in salads)
Mint (ginger mint and pineapple mint, great in salsa)
Parsley (flat leaf has the best flavor)



Basil



Oregano



Dill

**Orchid Care for
some of the most popular orchids**
by Millie Szerman

Orchid Care: Phalaenopsis



Phalaenopsis (fah-lay-NOP-sis)

Phalaenopsis, commonly referred to as the "Moth Orchid," are considered one of the easiest orchids to grow in the home. The long lasting flowers bloom in perfection for up to three months. While the flowering season may vary, the plant can bloom more than once during the year. Phalaenopsis have become one of the most popular varieties of orchids due to their easy care and delicately poised vibrant floral formations.

Temperature: Day 70°-90° F, Night 60°-70° F

Water: Every 1-2 weeks. Keep evenly moist. Avoid wet foliage at night. Do not allow roots to sit in standing water.

Light: Moderate indirect light. No direct sun

Fertilizer: 1-2 times a month, less in winter, never fertilize a dry plant

Humidity: Phalaenopsis enjoy moist air 55-75% humidity is ideal. Humidity can be increased by placing plant over a tray of water with some pebbles or rocks etc. to raise the pot above the water.

Repotting: Plants should be repotted every other year. Since Phalaenopsis grow upwards, they can be repotted into the same sized pot. Sphagnum moss works well with the base of the bottom leaf at the surface of the medium. Water sparingly until new roots are established. One advantage of using sphagnum moss is that you can wrap a bit more moss around the old root ball and place it into another pot. Do not place in a draft, near a heater or dehumidifier.

Orchid Care: Dendrobium – Phalaenopsis Type



Dendrobium- Phalaenopsis Type (den-droh-bee-um)

Most Dendrobium orchids are called "Phalaenopsis type" because their flowers resemble those of the Phalaenopsis. Phalaenopsis type are evergreen, while other varieties of Dendrobium shed their leaves in the fall and winter. Dendrobiums are also commonly used as cut flowers because of their sturdy stems and distinctive coloring.

Temperature: Day 70°-90° F, Night 60°-65° F

Water: Allow to dry slightly between waterings

Light: Bright indirect light

Fertilizer: Twice a month, less in winter

Repotting: Repot once every two years in spring after blooming or when new growth starts. Medium grade fir bark works well in 4" pots and larger.

Orchid Care: Miltonia



Miltonia (mil-TOH-nee-ah)

Temperature: Columbian Miltonia (Miltoniopsis) like house temperatures of nights from 58° – 68°F and days from 70° – 80°F. Brazilian Miltonia (spectabilis, warszewiczii, Anne Warne, and clowesii) prefer warmer temperatures of 60° – 65°F night and 70° – 80°F days.

Water: During overcast days, water carefully and do not allow water to stand in the leaves or soft rot may occur. Always water in the morning so foliage is not moist at night. Keep roots damp but never over water. Crinkled leaves are a sign of insufficient water. Water thoroughly from the top of the pot, allowing water to flow freely through the pot and away from the plant. Never use artificially softened water. Never allow the bottom of the pot to stand in water.

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Orchid Care

(continued from page 3)

Orchid Care: Miltonia - continued

Light: Grow near or in a window avoiding the direct hot rays of the midday sun. From 1,500 to 4,000 foot candles of light is preferred. Always adjust plants gradually to higher light intensities.

Fertilizer: Fertilize approximately twice per month when new growth is developing. Once per month at half strength all other times.

HUMIDITY: Miltonia enjoy moist air, requiring a minimum of 40-50% humidity in the immediate vicinity of the plant. Humidity should be increased with higher temperatures. The ideal humidity is 55-75% with as much ventilation or air movement as possible without cold drafts. Humidity can be increased around the plant by placing the pot on an inverted saucer in a baking pan filled with pebbles, rock chips, etc. and water. Keep water level below top of pebbles so that plant will not have wet feet

Repotting: Plant in bark allowing room in pot for about 2 new growths. Do not over-pot. Repot every 2 years directly after spring blooming. The plant may be divided at the time of repotting if it is large enough to allow divisions of 3-5 bulbs. Large showy plants can be grown by simply moving the plant to a larger pot. In pots larger than 6 diameter, use very shallow pots.

Orchid Care: Cymbidium



Cymbidium (sym-BID-ee-um)

There are two basic types of Cymbidiums: standard and miniature. Generally, the miniatures bear smaller, but more, flowers than the standards and bloom somewhat earlier. Most miniatures bloom from November through March, while standards bloom from late December through May. Cymbidiums are basically cool-growing orchids, and best grown outdoors or in cool greenhouses.

Temperature: Cymbidiums will tolerate considerable summer heat as long as they get cool, mild night temperatures between 45°-60°F. Cold weather, even down to 28°F for a few hours each night, will not damage an acclimatized plant, but once the plant spikes or flowers, it should be protected from temperatures below 35°F. Plants should always be kept free of frost.

Water: Cymbidiums should not be allowed to go dry, but should not be over watered either. Water once a week making adjustments for warmer or cooler weather.

Light: Plants should receive morning or afternoon sun, yet should be protected from the hot midday sun. A light green leaf with just a hint of yellow indicates the maximum amount of sun the plant can take, and a dark green leaf indicates not enough sun.

Fertilizer: Twice a month, less in winter.

Repotting: Repot every 2-3 years from February to June with a well draining potting medium. Fine bark is suitable in mild summer climates, while a finer potting medium works well in warmer summer areas.

Orchid Care: Cattleya



Cattleya (KAT-lee-ah)

Cattleyas have earned the reputation as the "Queen of Orchids" and are known to the public as the ultimate floral corsage. While some naturally occurring cattleya species are offered by growers, the most popular plants are man-made hybrids.

Temperature: Day 70°-85° F, Night 55°-65° F

Water: Cattleyas grow best when their potting medium becomes dry between waterings. These plants are epiphytes in nature (i.e. growing on top of trees) and are used to drying out between the rains.

Light: Cattleyas and their relatives enjoy full sun in the morning, but will require shading from about 11 am – 3 pm; less shading will be necessary in the late afternoon. Their leaves should be a light green color. Darker green leaves indicate too little sun.

Fertilizer: Fertilize twice a month, less in winter

Repotting: Cattleyas can be repotted almost all year around. Plants recover faster if repotted as the new shoots are emerging or immediately after the blooms fade. A coarse medium, such as medium grade fir bark, or coarse grade fir bark will work well. Repot every 2-3 years.

Growing Your Own Food by Mimi Komito

When I moved to Lake Tahoe in 1992, someone told me “you can’t grow tomatoes in Tahoe.” Not one to pass up a challenge, I started experimenting with different methods to grow tomatoes and a large variety of other vegetables.

Since my first, moderately successful experiments, I have had success in growing veggies by focusing on four basics: good soil, season extenders, even watering and good planning.

Good soil is simply a mix of topsoil and a well-aged compost. The compost loosens the soil and feeds the plants as well as adds micro-organisms to the soil to create a healthy environment for the roots of the plants. Healthy roots make for a healthy plant with higher production. I like to use organic mixes for my vegetable beds since I will ingest the product. One of the reasons we like to grow some of our own produce is so we know there are no chemicals used. Remember to dig in some new compost every spring (remove some of the soil from previous year if necessary). Veggies are heavy feeders and need that extra boost.

One of the most overlooked season extenders is a raised bed. It can be a mound of soil held back with large rocks, half barrels (don’t forget the drainage holes in the bottom) or other wide and deep containers, or “fancier” beds made with 2” x 12” redwood or cedar lumber. I have used all of the above, and they all have the same benefit of warming up the soil earlier in the spring than the surrounding ground. In general, a raised bed should be no wider than 4 feet across. The length can be whatever your space allows. I find 4’ x 8’ beds to be manageable. I have also found that spending the time building a raised bed with 2” x 12” lumber saves time in the long run. Together with a PVC hoop system (see below), you will have a vegetable bed that will last a long time.

The other season extender is clear plastic sheeting (medium duty) which should be used in conjunction with the raised bed. This will create a mini green-house for each bed. (See figure below) The *green-house* needs to be vented for air circulation and to allow pollinators access. The easiest way to do this is to open the ends up each day and later when the weather warms up, leaving the top open at all times but keeping the sides covered to protect new sprouts from being eaten.

The frame for the plastic is simple. Drive 12” lengths of 1” PVC into the soil in each corner of the bed and two more down each long side, evenly spaced. Use 4 - 12’ lengths of ½” PVC for the frame. Insert each end of the length into the 1” PVC in the soil crosswise to form hoops. Screw the 8’ length to the top of the hoops.

Now you’re ready to cover with plastic. Drape the plastic over the PVC hoop and secure along the top of the raised bed with a staple gun. Do not staple the ends. Remember, you need to be able to open up for air circulation when the days are warm. I usually leave enough plastic to gather and secure with a tie-wrap. When the nighttime temperatures have stabilized above 45 - 50 degrees, which can be as late as the end of June, I trim the plastic at the ends of the bed and staple to the lumber. I then cut the plastic along the top of the hoops and peel it back to the sides to form a plastic fence around the bed. This serves two purposes: it keeps most critters out of the bed (birds don’t fly in since it’s too narrow a space for their comfort) and it keeps an even temperature inside the bed area. The soil will soak up the sun during the day and then radiate warmth around the plants at night. This is especially important for tomatoes since they will not set fruit unless day and night temperatures are fairly even.

I have had success in growing veggies by focusing on four basics: good soil, season extenders, even watering and good planning.

Consistent watering is best accomplished with some form of automated watering system. Before I had a professional irrigation system with valves and a programmable clock, I hooked up a soaker hose to a garden hose. The garden hose was connected to a hose bib with a programmable hose bib timer. It’s a fairly simple and efficient system with fewer moving parts and lower investment. I strongly advise against relying on hand watering. If you happen to go away during a hot spell and the neighbor’s kid forgets to water, it could be the end of that season’s crop. You guessed it! I’ve been there before.

Planning ahead is essential to ensure a good crop. Buying seeds from catalogues allows you greater variety and ample time to order and get your seeds early. Most seeds can be saved for the following year if you don’t use all of them at once. I recommend buying seeds for all root crops (carrot, beets and radishes) since they dislike being transplanted. Parsley should also be grown from seed. It has a very long tap root which doesn’t take well to transplanting. Tomatoes and peppers (both hot and sweet) can be grown from seeds, but require an early start indoors with bright grow lights so you have sturdy plants to transplant to the raised bed. Most other veggies can be direct sown in the raised bed since the hoop cover will act as a greenhouse and allow you to sow the seeds very early. I have had seeds in the ground as early as the first week of April, but more commonly late April.

When choosing seeds or plants, look for the variety with the least days to harvest. With seeds, you also have to factor in the 5-15 days it takes for the seed to germinate and the plant to have its first true leaves. Days to harvest gets added to that timeframe.

The veggies I’ve had success with are: Tomatoes (no beefsteak varieties, please), banana peppers (both hot and sweet), zucchini, cucumbers (tiny Persian variety is great), broccoli rabe, asparagus, Japanese eggplant, rhubarb, beans, snap peas, carrots, beets, radishes, potatoes and all types of lettuce and other greens. Mixed in with the veggies, I have always planted herbs and flowers. Many herbs are perennial in Tahoe: for instance, Thyme, Oregano, French Tarragon, most Mint (caution: restrict root growth), Chives and Rosemary (mulch heavily in winter) to name some. For flowers, I mostly grow Marigold, Calendula, Nasturtium, Johnny Jump-ups and Sweet Alyssum. Both herbs and flowers serve two purposes: they attract pollinators and they do a pretty good job at repelling pests.

If planning ahead wasn’t in the cards this year, take heart. Most of our local nurseries have a large variety of veggies in pots which can be transplanted as late as early summer. Remember that radishes, lettuce and other greens mature quickly and can be grown from seed throughout the summer (succession planting).

Now, sit back, relax and watch the bumblebees and other pollinators do their job. With a little help from Mother Nature, you should be able to enjoy your own veggies by early August, if not before. Easy as pie! Now that’s a whole other article for another time!



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