



AN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY GARDEN AT SIERRA NEVADA COLLEGE

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

Thyme in the Garden

by Jan Steinmann

MAY – AUGUST: FUN SUMMER WORK DAYS. We'll be planting new native plants; installing a new water-efficient irrigation system; creating the turf demonstration; seeding the wildflower meadow; and planning the Defensible Space demonstration. Project Mana will be planting raised beds with vegetables and herbs. Join us for activities that interest you by contacting Margaret at (775) 831-8437 (marg@775.net) or Jan (janetsteinmann@gmail.com).

MAY – JUNE: WATERWISE IRRIGATION. Learn about irrigation techniques that judge the amount of moisture in the air before "deciding" how long to water. You can join in the installation or just watch and learn.

JULY – AUGUST: FREE GREEN THUMB THURSDAY CLASSES will return to the Garden from 5:30-6:30 pm every Thursday, July 3–August 2. See the enclosed class list for topics and schedule. Contact Gretchen Huie (775-586-1610 ext. 26) for more information.

JULY 1: LIVING GREEN IN TAHOE. North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden will offer tours, information, and refreshments as part of the Incline Village Red, White and Tahoe Blue 4th of July celebration.

JULY 18 – AAUW WINE AND CHEESE TOUR.

AUGUST 16 – END OF SUMMER GARDEN PARTY, 3:00 – 5:00pm. Wine and cheese, music, honoring Friends of the Garden, but welcoming all.

ANY TIME: JOIN FRIENDS OF THE GARDEN: Learn about donation and naming opportunities as we plant specially donated trees, and add benches, exhibits, and personalized stepping stones.

STROLL THE GARDEN. This summer enjoy a walk in the garden and have a picnic in the gazebo.

Check www.demogarden.org, or your local newspaper for more information.

From the President's Plot

by Mimi Komito

IT MUST BE SPRING!

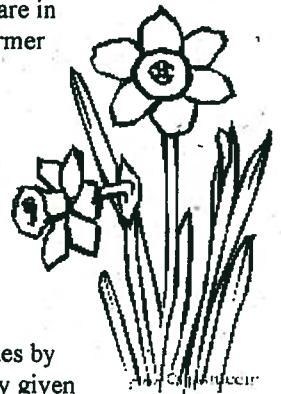
I used to think it was spring when I saw the first Robin Redbreast cocking his head listening for bugs in the grass. But I've learned that saucy fellow is sometimes a little premature and often snow flurries follow his arrival. Now I wait to hear the Grosbeaks, which are whistling in the trees around my pond—a sure sign Spring is here. The demo garden daffodils are in full bloom and the trees in bud are just waiting for warmer nights to leaf out.

Spring is always an exciting season in the Demonstration Garden. This year we're very much looking forward to seeing the new turf demonstration grasses planted last Fall and early this Spring by John Coburn and Eric Winford with seed donations from Comstock Seeds and the Villager Nursery. The turf beds will be filled with a variety of grasses especially suited for the Tahoe basin. We should see the first blades by the end of May. This demonstration is especially timely given the new guidelines from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District emphasizing the use of grasses and other irrigated groundcovers to create defensible space in our yards. We'll work with the Fire Safe Council to create a defensible space demonstration using the garden shed as a mock structure around which we'll plant additional groundcovers.

As always, we'll offer a variety of free classes in the garden this summer, but for the first time, we're offering the possibility to sign up for the classes on our web page (www.demogarden.org). This year we'll participate in the Second Annual Red, White, and Tahoe Blue 4th of July celebration in Incline Village, possibly with a defensible space demonstration "burn" in the parking lot (weather permitting). We'll also host a garden party in August for our Friends of the Garden (FOG) to which the whole community is invited. We'll post details on our web site and in the local newspapers.

One of the first events in the garden will be a hands-on class on water-wise irrigation. Whether or not you enjoy getting your hands and feet wet, I hope you'll join me in learning about "smart" watering of our gardens.

See you on the garden path . . .



Whose Garden Is It, Anyway?

by Ronda Tycer

Gone are the good ole days when gardening was simply a shared activity among Mother Nature, Old Man Weather, and me. I recall when these silent partners were the only authorities who dictated what, where, and when I planted my garden. But today in the Tahoe Basin, literally dozens of agencies have a hand in my garden without getting a single smudge of dirt under their fingernails. Every inch of my yard is under the official scrutiny of federal, state, and local officials who legislate land use. Someone somewhere has jurisdiction over how I prepare my soil, what seeds I plant, how I fertilize or water my plants, whether I trim plants and by how much—even whether I let plants live or die. Looking down from the sky it's a wonder the birds can see my yard through the blurry bureaucracy that regulates it.

After living at Tahoe for a few decades, I'm now conversant with most of the land-use and environmental agencies, but I'm still puzzled about what to do or who to call for prevailing rules and regulations. What is the jurisdiction of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, or the Nevada Tahoe Conservation District, or the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District, or the Fire Safe Council? Assuming that I'm not the only seasoned Tahoe gardener puzzled by this question, I set about to determine who controls my garden. I learned that several agencies have redundant oversight of various aspects of single-homeowner residential land use in the Tahoe Basin.

The agency with the furthest reach through my garden fence is the bi-state (CA/NV) Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, which through its Best Management Practices program makes me a steward of Tahoe's natural forest with the higher purpose of preserving the natural beauty of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Although the TRPA's mission statement says: "The TRPA cooperatively leads the effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe region now and in the future," the emphasis of the agency is clearly on enhancing the unique natural environment for the future.

As described on the TRPA website (www.trpa.org), Best Management Practices (BMPs) are "methods to help developed properties function more like natural, undisturbed forest and meadowland." BMPs help our yards mimic natural conditions found in the wild, and prevent sediment and nutrients from entering Lake Tahoe by filtering runoff water through the soil. The BMPs pertaining to our yards include "vegetating and mulching bare, disturbed soils; infiltrating stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces; paving dirt driveways and roads; and stabilizing or retaining steep slopes and loose soils."

Working with the TRPA to implement BMPs in my yard is the Nevada Tahoe Conservation District (www.ntcd.org). The NTCD's mission statement is: "To promote the conservation and improvement of the Lake Tahoe Basin's natural resources by providing leadership, education, and technical assistance to all basin users." In essence, this non-regulatory, locally-led agency provides free and confidential consultations to resident landowners by inspecting our yards and creating "whole parcel" conservation plans. Because the NTCD is "non-regulatory" it doesn't report the results of its site evaluation to any other agency, and thereby makes the assessment "confidential." The NTCD inspectors will look at the following (as quoted from their website):

- Storm Water Best Management Practices –reducing runoff and erosion and complying with the BMP retrofit ordinance. This program corrects pollution from storm water runoff, eroding soils, and impaired stream environment zones.
- Water and Fertilizer Management –planning irrigation to reduce water costs and increase vegetation health.
- Native Vegetation and Invasive Weeds – assessing use of native plants and eliminating invasive weeds; assessing lawn management and alternative turfs.
- Defensible Space and Wildland Fires – providing information to protect homes from fires including defensible space integration with conservation practices.
- Additional Services – providing recommendations for living with Tahoe wildlife; providing information on enhancing wildlife habitats on landowners' properties.

If I want to ensure my yard is in compliance with TRPA's Best Management Practices, I should call the NTCD and ask for a free BMP Single Family Homeowner Site Evaluation: CA - 530 543-1501 x103 or NV - 775 586-1610 x 28.

Also working in concert with the TRPA to promote best management practices and ecologically sound and beautiful gardening is our very own North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden and this newsletter.

When my husband and I were building our Incline Village home during 1998-2000, TRPA site inspections ensured that before we could get a permit from the Washoe Building Department to live in the house, we were in compliance with all the TRPA's BMPs. But many homes built before 1987 don't comply with BMPs. The TRPA's Retrofit program is intended to retrofit all these older structures with BMPs. Although, as of 2007, 4000 Tahoe homeowners and 8500 properties have finished their BMPs, there are still approximately 34,000 to be inspected by the NTCD or TRPA. If your home was built before 1987, you can get general information on the TRPA BMP Retrofit program from TRPA's Erosion Control Team at 775 589-5202.

Another partner with the TRPA is the University of Nevada, Reno's Extension Program, which has compiled the *Home Landscaping Guide for the Tahoe Basin* specifically to help homeowners complete BMPs and landscape their property in the most environmentally sensitive ways. This guide can be purchased for \$5 from the UNR Extension Office in Incline Village (775 832-4150). The indispensable guide covers everything from how to build a contour ditch to where to dispose of hazardous waste, and is the *sine qua non* for Tahoe gardeners. Questions pertaining to soil management (erosion, slope stabilization, mulching, vegetating, turfs, fertilization) or water management (irrigation, run-off, streambeds) can best be answered by the NTCD or the *Home Landscaping Guide*. The UNR's extension service website is a goldmine of gardening information (www.unce.unr.edu) (search publications).

As if it weren't difficult enough to find pretty plants that make it through the harsh Tahoe proving grounds, the TRPA encourages me to foster plants that maintain the natural environment (native



Trees In Our Gardens

By Ronda Tycer

When I look out the window to my garden, the most prominent plants are my stately pine trees that dot and ring my yard. I don't usually think much about trees as plants in my garden because they're more like edifices. Yet they affect what I grow because they give shade and affect the soil. More than any other way trees affect my garden, they put it at risk of fire. For this reason, tree maintenance is one of my most important gardening activities. I work in conjunction with the TRPA and the NLTFPD to ensure that my trees will be an asset rather than a liability to my yard.

According to the TRPA website, the Tahoe Basin has "too many trees, not enough diversity of trees, and an excessive number of dead and dying trees." For these reasons, the TRPA wants homeowners to remove trees on their properties to create defensible space. New rules have been generated and old rules simplified to help homeowners know what trees to cut and what trees to keep. The most important changes affect removing trees on your property.

Tree Removal

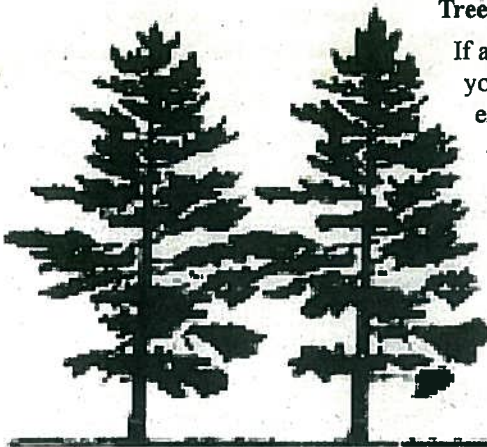
If a tree is less than 14 inches diameter at breast height (14" dbh or about 44" in circumference), you do not need a TRPA permit to cut the tree as long as (a) your property isn't in a stream environment zone, (b) the tree isn't in the backshore (the area between a house and the shoreline), or the tree was planted at the request of the TRPA. But the NLTFPD wants to be involved in your tree-cutting decision even if the TRPA is not.

After inspection and approval, you can cut down trees larger than 14" dbh for purposes of creating defensible space. To remove trees larger than 14" dbh, a TRPA tree-cutting permit must be submitted to the local fire district [the form can be downloaded from the TRPA website www.trpa.org].

Limb Removal

You can remove dead trees without a TRPA permit, and you can remove dead limbs without a permit. You can remove live tree limbs without a permit in order to maintain the following safety clearances:

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and adapted species). The *Home Landscaping Guide* includes extensive tables of TRPA's preferred plants, and the Lake Tahoe Basin Weed Coordinating Group, a branch of the NTCD, identifies invasive species I should avoid (usually the very ones that thrive in our difficult conditions).

The North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District encourages me to select and maintain plants to create a defensible landscape. The NLTFPD has joined with the TRPA to dictate how I can create a clean, lean, green defensible space around my house. I can cut and trim trees, bushes, and turfs per the NLTFPD's and the TRPA's mandates. Fortunately the NLTFPD has "education officers" (NV: 775 833-8106; CA: 530 543-3473) whose job it is to answer questions about creating defensible space.

The NLTFPD makes free defensible space inspections upon homeowner request, distributes tree-cutting permits, and provides a free chipping service for woody debris from cut trees and bushes. [Waste Not Disposal Services assists with seasonal pine needle recycling (775 832-1212).]

The Nevada Fire Safe Council's mission is:

- To create an organization that serves as a bridge between fire services and public agencies, and communities threatened by wildfire.
- To focus the organization's activities on creating a network of local community support, and
- To provide assistance to threatened communities to 1. Improve resident's understanding of the fire threat and accept personal responsibility for some level of community protection, 2. Identify

and rate the risks and hazards, 3. Develop and prioritize mitigation projects, and 4. Procure funding assistance to implement mitigation measures.

Learn more about this citizen's group at the NFSC's office (775 721-0130) or website: www.NVFSC.org

I can call the Washoe County Sheriff's Department (911) if I find a bear loitering near my back yard compost heap, but I'm pretty much on my own to handle other garden pests. Even though the TRPA restricts my use of poisons and pesticides, which may find their way into the lake, the *Home Landscaping Guide* has a highly helpful section on four methods of pest control I can use including cultural, physical, biological, and chemical.

I had to chuckle at the NTCD's offer to "provide recommendations for living with Tahoe wildlife; providing information on enhancing wildlife habitats on landowners' properties." It's not even May and I've already trapped and released four California ground squirrels, two chipmunks and two voles from my Hav-a-Hart traps. Enhancing wildlife in my garden? Maybe butterflies.

Becoming familiar with the various agencies' rules and regulations consumes time I would have preferred to spend in my yard. Still, I acknowledge that my homestead is a small plot of earth for which I'm responsible during a relatively brief residency. Hence, I'm willing to work with the multi-layered bureaucracy that provides continuity with future stewards of my garden. I must say, however, that gardening in Tahoe has given me a whole new understanding of the term "private property."



(Trees In Our Gardens, continued from page 3)

(Live limb removal safety clearances):

- Chimney outlet: 10 feet
- Buildings: 6 feet
- Driveways: 15-foot vertical clearance for normal use and fire truck access
- Walkways and paths: for pedestrian use
- Utility lines: Homeowners may prune limbs impinging on their service lines.

Tree Damage

All other live limb removal is restricted by the following TRPA mandate. No trees over 14 inches dbh (measured @ 4 1/2 feet from ground) should be materially damaged by:

- 1) topping
- 2) removing live limbs within the upper two thirds of the total tree height
- 3) girdling
- 4) applying chemicals harmful to the tree
- 5) purposefully exposing the cambium layer
- 6) damaging the tree in a way that will potentially result in its death or disfigurement, or in a significant way increase its susceptibility to insects or disease.

Trees are unquestionably the most majestic plants in our gardens, but also potentially some of the most dangerous. Good gardening maintains the precarious balance between enjoying their beauty and enhancing our safety.

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We hope you enjoyed this newsletter and will help to ensure the educational efforts of the **North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden** by becoming a *Friend of the Garden*. The NLTD Garden is a nonprofit organization and your donations are tax-deductable. A donation of \$25, or more, will make you a *Friend of the Garden* and will help maintain free community education classes, purchase replacement plants and tools, support our newsletter, and encourage our efforts to teach responsible gardening techniques that preserve the fragile environment of Lake Tahoe. Clip and return to PO Box 5387, Incline Village, NV 89450.

Membership Acceptance and/or annual renewal: \$25 \$50 \$100 Other _____

Name: _____ Telephone and/or email: _____

Address: _____

Yes, I would like to participate in the garden in other ways as well. I would be interested in helping with:

The Newsletter Garden Maintenance Special Events Teaching/Mentoring

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.

