



North Lake Tahoe DEMONSTRATION GARDEN



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

TIPS FOR SPRING GARDENS: CLEANUP TIME!

by Jan Steinmann



Writing this in early May, I'm seeing an unusual view outside my window: Flowering trees, warm, sunny skies, seedlings sprouting—a real Spring in Tahoe! We know from past years that the flowers may be zapped by hail, skies may turn cold and snowy, and seedlings may freeze and die. But if sunshine and optimism lure you outside, you can get a start on your spring garden with the following tips.

1. Rake up all of that grungy gray stuff flattened by the snow, but watch out for emerging seedlings and bulb shoots.
2. Rid your garden of excess pine needles, but leave a thin layer on bare dirt for erosion control.
3. Clean up debris from your flower beds and under shrubs (be especially diligent about roses) to get rid of any pests and fungus that may have overwintered.
4. Resist and restrain from:
 - cutting the flaccid, ugly leaves from daffodils because the bulbs need these for nutrients. Try planting forget-me-nots or other early-blooming annuals around the bulbs to hide the leaves. Or, tie 'em in a knot, tie 'em in a bow, just do not cut the leaves back.

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From the (Past) President's Plot

by Mimi Komito

Spring rain, yes!

As a gardener I welcome rain in the spring, it's refreshing and it saves me from having to drag out the hose. All the deciduous trees and shrubs are greening up, even here in Tahoe where spring is slow to emerge, and they can use a little extra moisture.



Mimi teaching container class

At the demonstration garden we are gearing up for a busy summer season. We have already had our first event of the season, the Contractor's BMP workshop.

This summer we are moving our High-Altitude gardening classes from Thursdays to Wednesdays. They will still be free for everyone and full of useful information. The classes will be coordinated by Wendy West, coordinator of the Master Gardener program with the UC Cooperative Extension. There will be speakers/experts on many subjects pertinent to Lake Tahoe's unique gardening environment. Details will be available on our website, www.demogarden.org, as soon as the class schedule is finalized. We are very excited about this joint venture with the Cooperative Extension and their Master Gardeners. We hope you will enjoy our new Green Thumb Wednesday classes this summer.

We are thrilled that Lake of the Sky Garden Club has included the Demo Garden on their popular Garden

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(Spring Tips cont.)

---planting seeds and transplants outdoors in May. However, bare-root trees, shrubs and berries can be planted when the ground thaws.

---blaming yourself for giving in to the temptations described above. Warm spring days are seductive, and we've all been guilty of cutting and planting when we shouldn't have. There are worse things you can do in life (such as—I speak from experience—planting white yarrow).

5. Start seeds indoors.
6. Prune dead, weak, and broken branches from trees and shrubs (only with very sharp pruning shears). Cut above an outward facing leaf bud to prevent crossed branches.
7. Do not prune spring blooming trees and shrubs such as lilac, flowering plum, and cherry, crabapple, mock orange, serviceberry, fruit trees, etc, or you will cut off the new flowers. Prune them after they flower.
8. Prepare planting beds for June with compost. Soil needs to be replenished often at Tahoe. By the way, all purchased compost is not alike. (See Michael Hogan's article on page 3).
9. Enjoy planning your summer and fall garden, concentrate on one small area at a time.



(President's Plot cont.)

Tour, held Saturday, July 27. Every summer, the tour highlights gardens from areas of Lake Tahoe and Truckee Meadows. This year again features special gardens in the Incline Village area—some are successful landscapes cared for by private owners and some are gorgeous lakefront estates.



We are pleased with the exposure this will give the Garden to the community of North Lake Tahoe. We are always looking for local organizations to tour the Garden and thus make more locals aware of the wonderful resource it is for Mountain Gardeners.

In this issue of our newsletter I'm excited about Michael Hogan's article on Compost and his wisdom on the value of compost as a soil amendment. I can't stress it enough, compost is truly Black Gold! If you don't do anything else for your garden beds - spread compost every year. You will be glad you did.

This issue of the Newsletter will be the last put out by our wonderful editor, Lesley Higgins, who is moving to the great gardening state of Washington. We wish her luck and will surely miss her.

As usual we, the Garden Board, are always looking for volunteers both in the Garden and on the Board. If you, or someone you know, is interested in joining us, please drop us a line.

See you down the garden path....

Mimi

SPECIAL EVENTS IN THE GARDEN FOR 2013

Lake of the Sky Garden Tour
Saturday, July 27

Lake Tahoe Master Gardeners Green Thumb Series
Wednesdays, June 26 through August 14



THE MIRACLE DIET FOR TAHOE SOIL

by Michael Hogan

I'm sitting here looking out the window at snow that has been melting rapidly. Patches of ground are appearing and I'm beginning to recall the shape and color of the earth that I haven't seen for a few months. As I begin to feel the gardening thoughts flow, I remember the first two seasons that I started gardening in the Sierra Nevada. Those were the seasons of miracles. I was just ignorant enough to know that I didn't know much, but adventurous enough to try lots of different plants. One thing that I believed in was the power of compost. In those days, I didn't have the 'knowledge' that I have now. I couldn't explain the chemistry or microbial dynamics of compost. But I knew that making compost reduced garbage and allowed me to play a part in my gardening process that no amount of fertilizer could give me.

So I hauled manure and hay, grass clippings and kitchen scraps and made my compost. I put it into some VERY poor soil, full of granitic sand and rocks, and hoped for the best. The snow fell after the first season of compost application, covering up all of the work I had done. And as I see the snow melting now, I remember looking at the composted area in that first garden and not believing what was revealed in the spring. It seemed that the soil had taken on a completely different character. It had gone from a poor, sandy soil to something much more like a garden soil. I wouldn't have believed it except that I had carefully observed the areas that I had treated with compost.

Once the soil warmed, I planted, transplanted and seeded. Those composted areas thrived. Neighbors would visit the garden and stand amazed that these types of plants could do so well in Tahoe. And so now, these few years later, I still believe that compost is probably the best single thing a gardener can do to his or her soil. I didn't understand then as much as I do now but intuitively, I knew that you must feed the soil



in order to feed the plants. And feeding the soil doesn't mean just fertilizer.

Microbes do most of the work in the soil and actually, it is the microbes that we are feeding. Microbes love compost like kids like fast food, except that compost is actually good for the microbes. So when a gardener asks you for advice on what to do in the spring time to prepare for planting, you might tell them that a healthy dose of balanced compost (not aged wood waste but a real compost) dug into the soil to 6 inches or so will do their garden wonders. Remember to tell them to feed the microbes and then the microbes will feed the plants.

If you want to know more about soil building, compost making, plants, mulches or whatever, think about attending one or more of the garden workshops at the Demonstration Garden this summer. And let us know exactly what you'd like us to talk about or what questions you'd like us to answer so we can really help you become a better, more successful and happier gardener.

Soil scientist Mike Hogan has been involved in revegetation, erosion control and recycling in the Tahoe Basin for 14 years. His approach focuses on building the soil in a sustainable manner.





NORTH LAKE TAHOE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN--A USERS GUIDE

by Jan Steinmann

Tahoe's high elevation and unpredictable climate causes gardeners, especially "transplants" from more genial flatlands, to search desperately for information on what, where and how to plant in our very tentative, ever-changing "Spring". The North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden, located on the Sierra Nevada College campus in Incline Village, Nevada, is an exciting resource where residents, landscapers, and visitors can learn about native species, successful growing techniques for lake and forest-friendly landscapes.

BEST WAYS TO USE THE GARDEN AS A RESOURCE

- Walk through the Garden any day of the week. Do your own self-guided tour, reading plant markers, interpretive signs. Revisit throughout the growing season to note changes in your favorite plants.
- Pick up brochures from UNR Cooperative Extension, Fire Safe, and other groups in the garden gazebo. Visit the garden website at www.demogarden.org to read past newsletters and check out garden information.
- Join a workday group for a hands-on learning experience. No gardening history required—high-altitude gardening is always challenging for everyone. Contact Margaret at marg@775.net.
- Sit in on a North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden (NLTDG) Board meeting to hear plans and to contribute your ideas and ask questions. Contact janetsteinmann@gmail.com.

GARDENING AND LANDSCAPING IDEAS



Bearberry in terracing exhibit

1. Begin at the Margaret Solomon Gazebo: Install Best Management Practices (BMPs): Signs around the gazebo explain how its construction and its tiny "driveway"

constructed with porous materials and drainage techniques, help filter water traveling to the lake.

2. Stroll down the path to your left:



Butterfly Garden

Landscape rocky slopes with poor, granitic soil: Three slopes demonstrations show ways to landscape your hillside with hardy, drought-resistant, and beautiful native flowers and grasses.

3. Continue down the path and check out to your left: Grow sustainable landscape grass yards: Nine plots show every kind of hardy mountain grass, some cut as turf and others left as mountain meadow grass. Choose which might work best for your property.
4. Farther down the path, a beautiful flowering garden: Select flowering plants to attract pollinating birds and insects: Our Bird and Butterfly Gardens, including a small "meadow" of seeded wildflowers, feature colorful flowers beloved of hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies.
5. At the end of the path you see our small shed, which houses tools used by volunteers to plant and maintain the Garden: Create Defensible Space for fire safety and forest health: Our Garden Shed serves as a miniature Demonstration "house and yard" with non-flammable landscaping. And the nearby native area has been pruned and thinned for fire prevention.
7. Walking back to the Gazebo: Control Invasive Plants from invading Tahoe: An interpretive sign describes the most likely invasive culprits and the demonstration shows attractive plants to encourage residents to use less aggressive substitutions.
8. Throughout the Garden: Choose native and adapted trees and shrubs for your yard. Check out the best native trees and understory shrubs for Tahoe's high-altitude area. Plant markers identify name, water needs and sun requirements.

