



# NORTH LAKE TAHOE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

Fall 2001  
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.*

## End of Season Tips

By Jan Steinmann



—Plant trees, shrubs and perennials until you can plant no longer because of snow or frozen ground. You need to water at planting and until the weather makes plants dormant. If a warm spell melts the snow for more than a few days, watering may be necessary, especially for new plants. The idea is to keep the roots in a moist environment so they can grow and establish themselves over the winter, and new plants may need attention depending on how our freeze/thaw temperatures go this winter.

—Collect seeds from your autumn perennials and annuals—rudbeckia (various Black-eyed Susan), sunflowers, Gaillardia (Indian Blanket Flower). Echinacea (Purple Cone Flower) and hardy asters. (Too late for Lupine or California poppy seeds.) These late summer flowers will spread themselves to some extent, but you can enjoy saving some of the seeds for spring or just till them lightly into the soil this fall.

—Tying up trees and shrubs is always questionable for mountain gardeners. You

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## *From the President's Plot*

### It's fall...and I'm finally getting my gardening hours back...

By Mimi Komito

Fall is here, the leaves have been changing colors, the flower seeds are ripening and the days are getting shorter.

During the last month, I have returned to places in and around the Sheep Flats meadow area off Mount Rose Highway where I spotted Lupines, Monkshood, Indian Paintbrush, Meadow Aster, and many more beautiful wildflowers this summer. Fall is seed collection time. It's when you go hiking with little zip lock baggies in your backpack (or deep pockets if you forget the baggies) and reach down and grab a few seeds here and there. Do not dig up wild plants, partially because they do not transplant very well and partially because it is illegal in some areas. When you pick seeds be sure to leave several seed heads on the plant so they can reproduce for coming years.

The Demonstration Garden is another great place to collect a few seeds. Your best friend or neighbor's garden could be another place to collect seeds. (Be sure to ask permission first).

When I "plant" wildflower seeds, I play Mother Nature and just sprinkle a handful here and there in my garden (they've usually been all mixed up in my pocket anyway) and water. I try to choose areas similar to where I collected the seeds. You can sprinkle some compost or soil on top of the seeds, as well, but it is not necessary. Just remember not to rake in the fall or early spring where you have planted your seeds. You can also save the seeds over the winter and start them indoors (under a bright shop light in the garage is OK) in early spring. Remember that in the wild, the high elevation seeds are stratified (scraped around by snow and rocks) naturally, so you will again need to play Mother Nature and help the seeds along. An easy way is to spread the seeds between two sheets of damp paper towels and wrap loosely in plastic wrap and place in your refrigerator's vegetable crisper for 2 to 3 weeks before planting in flats (or small individual pots). Some seeds may even "pre-sprout" during this treatment, which is OK. Seedlings started indoors can be planted outside in early June, but may need some protection for the first week or so.

Have fun collecting and planting your Wildflower seeds. Then sit back and wait for a few surprises to sprout in the spring. See you on the Meadows...



## From Oregon to the Clear Blue Skies of Lake Tahoe

By Lyn McDevitt, Guest Columnist

*Lyn McDevitt gardened in Oregon until being "transplanted" to Incline two years ago. She is passionate about preserving Tahoe's environment and loves growing and working with herbs.*

We moved to Tahoe from Oregon two years ago. Living all my life in Oregon, never did I dream that Oregonians would be facing the ecological problems as they are now. Do not get me wrong, if you go outside of the cities it is still green, clean, and pristine, but the cities have changed. Air pollution alerts, sewer spills in the river—I could not believe it happened so fast. How did it happen? Portland went from a small town to a big city overnight. Nobody could keep up with the growth. I asked my husband where we would go if that happened at Lake Tahoe. I just cannot live in an environment that is polluted.

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(continued, End of Season Tips.)

see aspen and mountain ash and other natives severely bound with landscaping tape (panty hose work well and add a personal note to your landscape) and ask yourself—is this really necessary? Here is my answer. If you have a special, beloved plant that you want to protect, then tie, mulch, and protect it as much as time allows. Sometimes I have tied up new plantings of aspen and maple trees 8 to 10 feet tall, but I do not think this is absolutely necessary.

—Japanese maple need some protection from Tahoe snows and hails, but the best thing you can do for them is to plant them in protected areas. That means no snow load, no high winds, and no direct mountain sun. These tend to be expensive plants but they need little care if given the right environment.

—Autumn is a great time to weed, if you can still dig into the ground. Get unwanted plants before they have an entire winter to develop root networks.

—Mulch flowerbeds and new plantings with (non-diseased) leaves, pine needles, or compost. Severe cold is not the worst threat to Tahoe plants—they are most often harmed by freeze-thaw winters when roots break dormancy and do not get water. The best winter is one in which the plants have a steady, protecting blanket of snow until warm weather and rain come.

—Some tender potted plants can be kept inside for the winter. I have had good

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(Guest Column, continued.)

What does this have to do with gardening you ask? Everything starts somewhere; and to stop it, well, maybe we just should not let it start at all. We can all prevent pollution and erosion in our own gardens. It is quite simple and will most likely make your gardening chores easier. Remember, everything goes somewhere, and eventually into our beautiful Lake Tahoe.

**THINK** about what you grow in your garden. Plants that are indigenous to our area are easier to grow and perform better. They also are beneficial to the critters and creepy crawlers that live with us. I know nobody wants to think about critters in their yard, but face it, they live here and we need them. Destroy one species and you start a domino effect that we may not know about for a long time.

**THINK** about how you fertilize and control disease and pests. A green lawn is beautiful, but how much water and fertilizer does it take to keep it that way, not to mention the hours of work. To control pests, the first step is a healthy environment. Good dirt is the best way to start. Start in a small area and add organic topsoil and compost. If you do a little area at a time, it is not so overwhelming. You can make your own compost or buy it. If that is not enough there are many “organic tricks” to try. For aphids and the like, I have found that ladybugs are great. The only problem is that they tend to fly away. An old hippy gardener told me to mix up coca cola and water (half and half), put it in a spray bottle and lightly spray the ladybugs while they are still dormant. This makes their wings sticky and they cannot fly away for a while. They will stay around long enough that way to lay eggs. It works. Ladybugs also need water and, of course, bugs to eat. I am sure Ladybugs are sold in the local garden center. If not, ask the center to order them for you; they are very inexpensive. Plant flowers that attract birds, birds eat lots and lots of bugs, and carry seeds that pop up everywhere. For weed control, try over-planting. I do not mind an overgrown garden. A nice lush overgrown groundcover keeps the weeds at bay, and helps retain moisture. The plant “nicotiana” repels mosquitoes, and my favorite lavender repels lots of bugs, especially when dried and brought in the house.

**READ** the labels before you buy any chemical. I have a rule. If I have to wear gloves, and a mask, if it is harmful to animals and children, I just do not use it.

This spring I am going to beef up my herb garden. I just love growing and using herbs fresh from my garden. I did not get to plant my herbs in the yard this year, but they are doing quite nicely in my dining room, waiting to be planted outside next spring. I have designed a small path and will plant “lemon thyme” around the steppingstones. Lemon thyme is wonderful when it grows on steppingstones. When you walk on the lemon thyme, the aroma wafts up all around you. It makes a wonderful, low maintenance ground cover and you can eat it. Here is a great recipe using lemon thyme.



### LEMON THYME POPPIES

**Cake:** 1 ¼ cup flour, ½ tsp baking powder, ¼ tsp salt, ½ tsp baking soda, ½ cup unsalted butter, softened, ½ cup sugar, 2 eggs, 1/3 cup lemon yogurt, 2 tsp grated lemon zest, 1 tsp poppy seeds, 1 tsp fresh lemon thyme or ½ tsp dried lemon thyme, ½ tsp vanilla.

**Glaze:** 2 cups confectioners sugar, 1/3 cup orange juice, 1 Tbs unsalted butter, melted.

Combine flour, baking powder, soda and salt. Mix and set aside. In a small bowl beat softened butter at medium speed until creamy. Gradually add sugar, beating until fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well. Add flour mixture alternately with yogurt, beating until just blended after each addition, beginning and ending with flour. Stir in the lemon zest, poppy seeds, lemon thyme and vanilla. Spoon into muffin cups filling ¾ full.

Bake in top 1/3 of oven at 370 for 12 to 15 minutes.

While cakes are baking, put confectioners sugar in a bowl and gradually add OJ and melted butter, whisking until smooth. When the cakes are done, remove each cake and dip into glaze, coating completely. Let cool and enjoy. This makes 40 miniature cakes, but I normally make full size – just adjust your cooking time for your oven.



## BATH BAGS—Gifts from Your Garden!

—Another Recipe from Lyn McDevitt, Guest Columnist

**Bath Bags:** Another recipe I like for my herbs is a bath bag, which also makes a nice gift. Ingredients: Dried rose petals; Dried lavender; Dried orange peels; Dried lemon peels; Oatmeal; 2 bay leaves; and, Essential rose or lavender oil.

Dry your rose petals and lavender from your garden (or you can buy it from an herb shop). When you peel an orange, cut the peel in small strips and put in a basket to dry; same with the lemon peel. When everything is dry, mix a cup of oatmeal with a handful of rose petals and some lavender, the peel of one lemon and one orange, the bay leaf, add a few drops of essential oil and mix it all up and store it in a glass jar with a tight fitting lid out of sunlight for a couple weeks. Shake it up once or twice and check the aroma and adjust the recipe by adding more roses or lavender if you wish. You can put this in little cloth bags that you buy or make. When you run your bath water just drop the bag in and you have a wonderful bath that smells good and makes your skin feel great. (Oatmeal relieves itching and makes your skin feel creamy, everything else just smells good.) I know the recipe is a little sketchy, but you can play with it for your personal taste. There is no way to go wrong. Just make sure you use a quality essential oil that is good for your skin.

## BULBS: Think Spring!



Sturdy green spears thrust through early April snow, as clusters of tall golden King Alfreds and glistening white Mt. Hood daffodils emerge under the hopeful buds of serviceberry. Daffodils and narcissus are second only to native Sierra plants in signaling a new season of spring growth and renewal to Tahoe gardeners.

However, spring dreams require autumn preparation, in this case luckily, bulbs can be planted as long as you can dig into the ground, even under early December snows. Here are some ideas for cultivating daffodils and narcissus:

- Bulbs don't have to be planted as deep as packages show, especially if large rocks dictate your landscape design. Drainage is essential.
- They look prettiest in natural plantings, cluster against a boulder or "naturalized" in groups throughout the yard.
- Bone meal is optional. Plant in sun for abundant flowering. In fact, blossoms will "look for the sun" turning their "faces" toward the light.
- All daffodils and narcissus are poisonous to squirrels, and the squirrels know it! The furry rascals may dig up one or two and mull them over, but you can just replant them. Ground squirrels adore most other bulbs, however.
- Don't worry about daffodil spears poking up during warm winter weeks—the bulbs seem to be very wise and just realize that spring has not yet sprung if it turns cold and snowy again. The flowers are also amazingly resilient even during fairly heavy spring snows—they just "pick themselves up and brush themselves off." (It doesn't hurt to help them a bit.)
- Exquisite miniature daffodils seem to come up first and are delightful in containers or rock-gardenish microclimates, where you can see them close up.
- Experiment with early and late-blooming species, so that you have a long season of spring flowers—they can sometimes bloom from March through June in Tahoe.

Following are some of my favorites. Unfortunately, I have not paid much attention to bloom times or even names, but I am learning to be more solicitous of these tough, bright little flowers!

*King Alfred (and his hybrids)*—the big Gotta have him!

*Thalia*—my all-time favorite, small but not miniature, many pure white and fragrant orchid-shaped blossoms. It is impossibly beautiful and blooms for a long time, fairly early.

*Mt. Hood*—a perfect white, tall trumpet daffodil which blooms early and prodigiously.

*King Alfred (and his hybrids, do not remember their names)*—the big and bright trumpet daffodil of Wordsworth's poems. Gotta have him, but go easy.

*Icicle*—refined with small, lacy pale yellow cups and sparkling white petals. Mid-season.

*Late Season Narcissus (I don't know their names)*—These beautiful blossoms bloom after the earlier flowers have dried up (and have been deadheaded! You do not want them to spend their spring energy filling their tiny ovaries with seed. But do keep the leaves around as long as you can stand it; they make nutrients for the roots.) Late-season plants seem to be clustered blossoms, often 3 to 5 flowers for each of their many stems. The best in my garden are a white-petaled, orange-cupped variety and one with translucent, delicate layers of petals. Both smell heavenly and bloom well into June.

At which time, other, less stalwart garden flowers are finally getting up their courage to face the mountain springtime.

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(continued, End of Season Tips) luck with geraniums, which just need a sunny window to flower through winter, although they definitely like summer outdoors better.

—Think about buying a living Christmas tree this year to plant outside in spring. Austrian pines are definitely the best, although some people have luck with blue spruce. Getting enough water while in the pot seems to be the biggest problem.

—Start making plans for the next growing season—contact the Demo Garden!



# GARDEN

*My Favorite Flower...*

## The Orchid Cymbidium

By Marie Sluchak

*Marie is co-founder of the Lake of the Sky Garden Club and has been an inspirational volunteer on Tahoe's West Shore for many years.*

Cymbidiums are gorgeous orchids, blooming in all colors from white, pink, yellow, maroon, and—my favorite—light green. The spikes are tall and flamboyant. They are so easy to grow and make beautiful potted plants or can be used as cut flowers for long-lasting bouquets. At Tahoe they can be very successfully grown indoors.

They are the best known and most widely cultivated of all orchids because they are so easy to grow and need little care. The secret is a moderate temperature, lots of light, and fertilizing at the proper time:

Being a practical person, I find the cymbidium not only gorgeous, but also, very useful. When entertaining, it is so easy to make up a cymbidium corsage for each guest. They feel like Royalty wearing it. The huge flowering pot can be wheeled into the entranceway for a dramatic bouquet. No wonder the Greeks loved this flower and named it after the boat-shaped lip petal as "cymbi (KYMBE) Sailing Happily Away in a Boat."

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## Become a Friend of the GARDEN

We hope that you have 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 Garden is a nonprofit organization and your donations are tax-deductible. A donation of \$20, or more, will make you a member of the Garden and will help maintain the 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 Tahoe environment.

Membership Acceptance and/or Annual Renewal:  \$20  \$30  \$50  \$100  Other

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

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Yes, I would like to participate in the garden in other ways as well!

Newsletter  Garden Maintenance  Special Events  Teaching

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