



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

MARCH 25: GARDEN BOARD MEETING at Patterson Hall, Sierra Nevada College, 10:30 AM. All are invited to come and learn about our plans for the 2006 growing season.

APRIL 29: EARTH DAY. The NLTGD will have a display at Squaw Valley. The Earth Day program is organized by the Lake Tahoe Environmental Education Coalition (LTEEC). Come absorb interesting and useful environmental information, meet and make friends, hear great music, and enjoy good food.

APRIL, MAY, JUNE SPRING WORK DAYS: Call for information on spring workdays in the garden. We'll start cleaning up and planting in April. Activities will include:

- Planting newly donated native plants
- Installing and repairing the irrigation system
- Creating a turf demonstration
- Seeding the wildflower meadow
- Planning a defensible space demonstration
- Helping Project MANA plant raised vegetable beds

JUNE-AUGUST: FREE GREEN THUMB THURSDAY CLASSES will be held June 22-August 10 from 6:00 PM-7:00 PM every Thursday in the garden. Contact Kelley Kelso at 775-586-1610 x26 for more information.

JULY 21: OPEN ANNUAL MEETING, WINE & CHEESE GARDEN PARTY. See progress and discover ways you can enjoy the garden. Learn about donation and naming opportunities as we add specially donated trees, benches, exhibits, and stepping stones.

ANY TIME: Join *Friends of the Garden*

For information about garden activities check www.demogarden.org, read local newspapers, or contact Margaret Solomon at 775-831-8437 or Jan Steinmann at jsteinmann@aol.com.

From the President's Plot

by Mimi Komito

Whew!!! After an exciting and productive year, the Demonstration Garden has been beautifully re-established at the Sierra Nevada College Lake Campus. The relocation efforts began in earnest in the spring of 2005 with the gazebo's big move, and continued until the first serious snowfall in November.

Last spring, at the earliest opportunity, George LeBard of project MANA and his volunteers planted the veggie garden with tomatoes, peppers, carrots, various lettuces, parsley, basil, and other herbs. You may have seen *The Bonanza* newspaper article and accompanying photographs showing George and a group of local children who harvested the veggies, made a tasty, healthy salad, and ate it for lunch in the garden. The satisfied expressions on their faces reflect our concept of successful gardening!

In June, John Cobourn of the UNR Cooperative Extension and his team from LTEEC used the garden for the 2005 Contractors' Best Management Practice workshop. They created three excellent slope stabilization demos as well as an almost-finished driveway demo conforming to BMPs.

Throughout the summer, a youth group from the Tahoe Community Church led by Bob Hanson cleaned up in the garden and created some of the lovely rock paths. In a collaborative effort, SNC personnel helped lay the brick floor in the gazebo, and allowed us to use heavy equipment from the Tahoe Center for Environmental Science construction site to move boulders, rocks, and dirt. We look forward to future SNC collaboration in the garden, especially with the nearby TCES building now nearing completion.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service generously provided financial assistance and donated native plants. Amy Roberts and volunteers from the Nevada Tahoe Conservation District planted the native plants, and spent countless hours working on various BMP demonstrations and installing the irrigation system.

Amy and her volunteers were also involved in designing the interpretive signs throughout the garden. Ben and Margaret Solomon together with other volunteers installed the new signs, and even managed to recycle some signs from our former site. They also "planted" our garden entry sign by the gazebo so visitors can now know who we are.

Last summer, Kelley Kelso presented several excellent classes in the garden as well as arranging a special tour. The garden tour involved the local Waste Not program, the North Shore Fire District, and the UNR Cooperative Extension, and received high praise from the community. Kelley also arranged for several interesting speakers for the ever-popular "Green Thumb Thursdays" in the garden, which will continue this summer.

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Saving Lake Tahoe Through Defensible Space

by Ronda Tycer

I'm living and gardening at 7000' because of what has been called the "pleasure of a view out over." Our "view out over" begins with the glass deck railing, extends over our landscaped back yard, soars over treetops of the Toiyabe Forest greenbelt, and transcends 22 miles of Lake Tahoe blue to the snow-capped lavender Mount Tallac beyond.

It's a mythic landscape of domestication and wild nature, the sort that inspires poetry and photo ops. Almost anyone around Lake Tahoe with such a view admits that all gardening efforts pale in comparison to the natural scenic landscape. Indeed, seeing the oval shape of Lake Tahoe satisfies our senses and primal needs in a way far deeper than any other "view out over."

Because of our love of the lake, my husband and I are loud members of the "Keep Tahoe Blues Band." Yet, when we moved into our Incline Village home 6 years ago, we were uninformed that we would be paying from our own pockets not only for a view of the lake, but for saving the lake itself. Having completed our North Lake Tahoe Fire District (NLTFD) *Residential Defensible Space Evaluation and Application for Tree Removal Permit*, we now have a much better idea of what our immediate financial contribution will be.

Like most residents at Lake Tahoe we're good citizens doing our part to save the lake by maintaining our property according to local ordinances, BMPs, and TRPA dictates. We respect easements, follow best management practices, and do whatever we can to preserve the environment. Hence, last summer when the NLTFD began issuing warnings of a potential catastrophic wildfire, which could not only damage the Tahoe basin—irrevocably in our lifetime—but also cause enormous property damage and loss of life, we put our names on the list for a defensible space evaluation.

The good firemen who initially inspected our yard gave us a C+ rating, citing 5 out of 14 areas where we needed to take corrective action. We didn't fail the test entirely, but our defensibility was definitely "challenged" (see Table 1). We assumed we only had to move the wooden tree-support poles from under the deck and re-stack the firewood away from the house. Then another fireman named Jeff came to fill out the *Tree Removal Permit*, and things took a more serious turn.

Our property abuts acres of forested greenbelt. Given that our home is lowest on the slope in our neighborhood, we are—as Jeff gently put it—"on the front line of defense in case of a wildfire." While Jeff talked casually about wildfires reaching 2000 degrees Fahrenheit and trees

exploding, we were forced to look at our yard not as a refuge but as fuel.

First Jeff noticed several highly flammable manzanita bushes in both the front and back yards, which had to go. Secondly, he pointed out that our wood landscaping chips on the backyard terraces were fire fodder. When we asked how to replace them, he said—only half jokingly—"Ideally, cement. But short of that, rocks." On the plus side, he was pleased we had a small lawn in the back yard, saying that the 30 feet of clearance from the forest on the down slope might just save our home by giving firemen a place to "make a stand."

Table 1: Checklist for Residential Defensible Space Evaluation

Item	Description	Yes/No
1.	Class A roof installed?	Yes
2.	Combustible materials removed from beneath decks, stairways, overhangs?	Yes
3.	Dry flammable vegetation within 30 feet of structure removed?	Yes
4.	Vegetation cleared 5 feet from house? (some close but well-irrigated)	Yes
5.	Branches/scrap lumber removed 30-feet from structure?	No
6.	Green trees limbed 6' from ground or 1/3 total tree height?	No
7.	Spark arrester in place? Vents and attic crawl space screened?	Yes
8.	Limbs within 10 feet of structure removed?	No
9.	Dry, flammable vegetation within 10 feet of propane tank removed?	N.A.
10.	All dead trees removed?	Yes
11.	All leaves, pine needles removed from roof and gutter?	Yes
12.	Firewood, lumber, etc. removed 30 feet from structures?	No
13.	Address clearly visible to emergency response personnel?	Yes
14.	Excessively dense tree cover removed?	No

Jeff then turned his attention to specific trees on our property. We'd planted deciduous trees—Quaking Aspens, Honey Locust, and Japanese Maple—among the pine trees to give a bit of color to the otherwise all green "tree-scape." Jeff was not impressed with our artistry. The aspens were water hogs and tended to form groves. Mother Nature saw groves as bundles of firewood. He "tsk-tsked" the maples and locusts pointing out that if they caught fire, they'd ignite the pines above them.



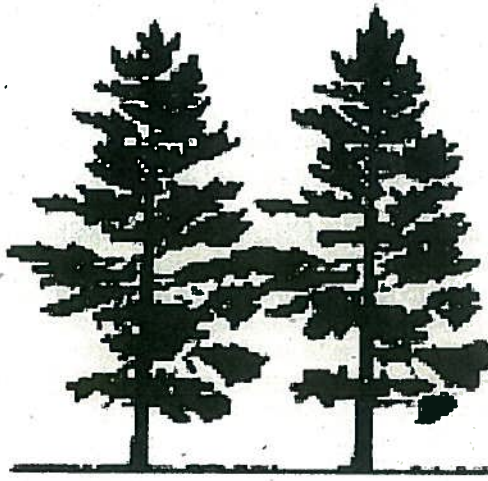


And then Jeff came to the cedars. When we finished construction 6 years ago, our highly reputable landscaper suggested we plant cedars to increase privacy from our neighbor's house 30 feet away. He convinced us that to get the most "bang for our buck"—meaning, the most foliage for our root-ball—we should buy trees in Oregon. So off we flew to Portland to walk the tree farms, picking out trees we wanted to transport back to Tahoe in a sort of "coals to Newcastle" twist. We selected mature Ince Cedars, Golden Deodora Cedars, and a prize Cedar of Lebanon (for which we paid \$1600 in insurance alone). We planted the cedars along the property line as he suggested, and the specimen Cedar of Lebanon—with the help of a crane—right next to the front door. It never occurred to us that by planting cedars close to our house we were building a potential bonfire of our vanities.

Jeff said our cedars created a fire hazard—a conduit from the forested green belt to both our house and our neighbor's. He said we could remove the trees, or, we could limb them to at least 3 feet off the ground, preferably more. My husband and I just stared at each other with dollar bills spinning in our eyeballs. When our voices returned, we opted to limb the trees hoping to save the tops, which still afforded us a wee bit of the privacy we'd purchased so dearly.

Finally we came to the pines. We love our pines so much that we have one in the front yard rigged with guy wire to force it back from our porch railing so we won't have to cut it down. But Jeff said our pine trees were too dense. In the front yard he pointed out a pine that had been "topped" by a previous neighbor trying to improve his view, which resulted in a U-shaped trunk at the top and the declining health of the tree. In the back yard a towering pine stood just a few feet away from the house. We hoped we could simply cut the branches touching the house, but he argued that by the time we did, the tree would be so damaged it would likely die. Then he found a kind of mistletoe in one of the pines. To prevent it from spreading to other trees, all infected branches needed to be cut back to the trunk. He continued marking trees that were too close to one another, told us to limb all trees within 30 feet of the house at least 6 feet off the ground, and said to create at least a 10-foot clearance around the house. By the time he finished, 15 of our pine trees had red paint rings ear-marking them for sacrificial removal. Adding insult to injury, losing them would not improve our view of the lake one twig.

Jeff then told us that we were not obligated to cut any trees—at present the defensible space effort is purely voluntary. But once we signed the *Application for Tree Removal Permit*, we were obligated to cut all the trees within 1 year as per Jeff's instructions. So during April and May, before spring growth starts, we'll chop and haul away 15 trees and limb two dozen more. We've agreed to the removals at whatever the cost because we're dedicated to keeping Tahoe blue. But we're equally dedicated to preserving our home and our lives so we can continue to enjoy our "view out over."



LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING GARDEN TIPS

By Jan Steinmann

—Winter daydreaming:

Go through catalogues for new ideas and products. Some of our favorites are *High Country Gardens*, *Wildseed Farms*, *Wayside Gardens*, *Bountiful Gardens* and *Peaceful Valley Farm Supply* (organic), and *White Flower Farm* (if only for the beautiful pictures). Of course, you could go to websites but nothing beats looking through catalogues in front of the fireplace while sipping a glass of wine.

—Prioritize spaces

to landscape and focus on one project at a time.

—Consider microclimates

in your yard: winter snow load, wind exposure, sun exposure (intensity, duration, time of day), moisture needs, heavy rain runoff, protection from hail, summer heat from nearby boulders, or heat from rock walls and borders.

—Plan for nonstop color:

Bulbs, rhizomes, and flowering trees for spring, perennials and variegated foliage for summer, gold and scarlet shrubs and trees combined with fall perennials for autumn. (Consult *Lake Tahoe's Home Landscaping Guide* (pp. 70-99) for ideas: www.unce.unr.edu/publications/EBPubs/EB0201.pdf.)

—Early spring planting:

Plant trees, shrubs, and perennials when ground is soft enough; keep moist if there is no rainfall.

—Early spring seeding:

Wildflower seeds need to be scraped in with good soil and mulch, then kept moist even after germination.





GARDEN

President's Plot

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To all of the above contributors and volunteers we give a collective cheer and eternal gratitude. The future delight of the garden will be in large part due to their dedicated handling of the myriad obstacles in moving the garden to its new SNC Lake Campus home. We're confident that when the snow melts this spring, the garden's beauty will reflect and reward their hard work.

But, a gardener never rests for long. During the upcoming season, with the continued support of our volunteers and *Friends of the Garden*, we expect to finish much of the work started last year. This includes:

- planting more native plants;
- creating additional demonstrations - an alternative turf demo and a defensible space demo with a house mock up, are two demos planned for this summer;
- bringing in local community service groups to raise awareness of the garden and to establish it as a community resource.

We hope that by showing off the garden we'll inspire others to volunteer to work alongside us and join us as *Friends of the Garden*. See you in the garden!

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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-deductible. 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.

