



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

SUMMER GARDENING TIPS

by Jan Steinmann

Best time to weed: Mountain gardens have fewer weeds than many other locations, but those we do encounter are quite a pain. Early growing season is the best time to yank them out while they are still young and unaware. The definition of a “weed” is “a plant growing where you don’t want it”, and this includes some stuff you have foolishly encouraged yourself. A major problem: how can you tell a weed from a wildflower in early summer? Come to the Demo Garden on work days or Green Thumb Thursday Classes to make sure that none of your lupine or Indian Paintbrushes are pulled up along with aggressive yarrow or rampant clover.

Feed your Soil: Just as the realtor’s Mantra is “location, location, location,” the Gardener’s bottom line is “Soil, soil, soil”. Most Tahoe soil has few nutrients, and fertilizer “fixes” only give our dirt a temporary high. Our soil must be amended with balanced organic compost which includes nutrients for the microbes which convert them into forms that roots can absorb. Your plants and the Lake will love you.

(continued on page 2)

Thyme in the Garden

by Jan Steinmann and Lesley Higgins

APRIL 28:

BMP CONTRACTORS WORKSHOP

We hosted the workshop this year and it was a big success! The all day workshop featured the garden for the outdoor session. The topics included Infiltration Systems, Soil Restoration, Vegetation, and Defensible Space and BMPs.



Contractors learning about plants

MAY THROUGH AUGUST:

FUN SUMMER WORK DAYS

We’ll be planting new natives and adding groundcover purchased with a grant from Lake of the Sky Garden Club, working to make our irrigation more efficient, and maintaining the garden with weeding, pruning, deadheading, and transplanting overgrown plants. We need lots of help from gardeners and those who just want to learn about what works here in Tahoe. Please contact Margaret at (775) 831-8437.

JUNE TO AUGUST:

FREE GREEN THUMB THURSDAY CLASSES

The North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden holds free classes Thursdays in the Demo Garden, from 5:30-6:30 pm, June 2, and June 23 through July 28 this year. Classes cover container gardening, raised beds, and landscaping integrated with BMP’s, plus many other topics. The class schedule is available on our website, demogarden.org, and in the Spring 2011 newsletter.





(Summer Gardening Tips cont.)

Buy small plants: They usually transplant better. Check larger, very floriferous plants to make sure they are not root bound. (It is OK to briefly pull the plant out of the pot to check.)

Plant Ecologically: Group your plants according to water and sun requirements. Hostas and sweet woodruff do well under high shade with irrigation, but mountain pride penstemon and blue flax would be bloomless and might drown in the same garden bed.

Give up Grass: Consider ground covers instead of lawns this year. Eastern-type lawns require more water and fertilizer than the lake can endure. A small grass lawn can work as Defensible Space but larger lawns waste water and money as well as your time, trying to keep it green all through our dry summers.

Deadheading: For longer and more attractive blooms, cut or pinch off spent blossoms from annuals, perennials and shrubs throughout the summer. Make sure you cut off the seed producing part of the flower - you want the plant to think it is still "dating" and must create more colorful, insect-enticing flowers for pollinators.



Like what you see? Be a supporter and join us at www.demogarden.org

MAKING SENSE OF THE GARDEN EXHIBITS

by John Cobourn, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

The North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden is not just pleasant, quiet and beautiful; it is also a work of experiential education. The exhibits show members of the Tahoe community what plants grow here. Visitors can see and smell the plants. They can learn their names by reading the name labels signs. They can watch them grow and flower throughout the growing season.



In addition to the individual plants, the garden is an outdoor classroom that teaches many landscaping practices that can reduce erosion, infiltrate storm water runoff, keep slopes from unraveling, and provide defensible space to protect from wildfire.

In the summer of 2003, as the garden was being moved from the old campus of Sierra Nevada College to its current location, the Board received recommendations from members of the BMP Retrofit Partners (specifically, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Nevada Tahoe Conservation District and TRPA) to build several new Best Management Practices (BMP) exhibits. BMPs are landscaping practices that tend to reduce water pollution of nearby streams and Lake Tahoe. The Board embraced the recommendations, and nearly all of them have been implemented in the Garden.



Driveway exhibit and infiltration basin

As you enter the garden at the Gazebo, a number of BMPs are demonstrated. Roof runoff falls onto an armored drip-line, where rocks dissipate the erosive force of the falling water and allow it to infiltrate into the soil. To the right of the Gazebo, a demonstration driveway displays several different types of paving materials, plus a channel drain designed to intercept runoff flowing down the driveway and convey it to an infiltration system. Below the driveway, a rock lined infiltration basin shows

(continued on page 3)





(Making Sense of the Garden Exhibits, cont.)



Terraces with vegetation



“Rip-rap” with vegetation

sible space. The erosion control grasses provide a more natural look, and they require much less maintenance than turf grass.



Butterfly garden

an easy-to maintain way to allow runoff to soak into the soil. At the right hand corner next to the parking lot, an underground infiltration system stores runoff from the roof gutter until it can percolate downward.

Walking clockwise from the Gazebo, the next major BMP exhibits are for slope stabilization. On properties that have eroding slopes over 50% in steepness, structures are recommended along with vegetation to prevent erosion. Because the Garden site is relatively flat, we built three mounds to simulate steep slopes. In each case, the back of the mound is supported by a retaining wall, and the front is stabilized by: 1. An erosion control blanket and grasses, 2. Terraces with vegetation, and 3. Rock slope protection (“rip rap”) and vegetation. If one didn’t read the interpretive signs, these demonstrations could easily pass for large attractive planters.

Below the slope stabilization mounds, the next exhibit shows eight different plots of grasses. The four plots on the right are “erosion control grasses,” while the four to the left of the sign are turf grasses. While we don’t recommend large turf lawns, smaller “appropriate turf areas” can provide locations for entertaining guests or playing with the kids. They can be an extension of the deck or patio, and when used next to structures, they provide good defen-



Grass plots

Next on the path is the Butterfly Garden. This exhibit displays a variety of colorful flowering plants that provide food and habitat for butterflies and hummingbirds. While not strictly an erosion control exhibit, this garden shows many spectacular plants that can be a part of an overall effort to vegetate bare soil and thereby prevent soil erosion.

Beyond the Bear Box, the Compost sign, and the Vegetable garden, the tool shed has recently become the site of our new Defensible Space exhibit. Specifically, the Board and volunteers created a “noncombustible area” for five feet around the tool shed. The exhibit shows different combinations of herbaceous (non-woody) plants and rocks, gravel and small boulders. These treatments, which resist ignition, are bordered by treated lumber, five feet from the structure, which keeps the rock and the plants neat and in place. This exhibit demonstrates how a component of defensible space can double as a roof dripline BMP. The rocks and herbaceous plants not only resist wildfire, they also protect the topsoil from the impact of falling water from the roof eaves, and allow it to soak into the ground instead of adding to the problem of storm water runoff.



Defensible space exhibit

Photos by Tahoe Conservation Services





HOW TO ENJOY HERBS FRESH FROM YOUR 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.



Lovage ©2010 4028mdk09

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, preferably 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



Thyme with Bee © 2007 Victor M. Vicente Selvas

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.



Borage ©2008 Jengod

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*)



Marjoram ©2005 Raulbot

