



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

END OF SEASON TIPS

by Jan Steinmann



Rather than the usual "Put the Garden to Bed" tips, which you can find in so many articles, including our archives, I'm focusing on a fascinating and very rewarding end-of-summer project:

Seed Saving and Sowing

Re-seeding plants such as forget-me-nots, feverfew and gaillardia, although sometimes pushy in more welcoming territory, delight Tahoe gardeners by spreading as much as possible in our short season climate. (Warning: no one is delighted by out of control invasive plants such as Dutch clover, wild sweet pea... but that's another article.)

We can encourage our happy native and adaptive flowers to reproduce in best conditions next spring by collecting seeds and replanting them. Here are some tips to consider:

Wild sources: Collecting seeds while hiking in the mountains can raise issues and may be illegal or require a collecting permit, so best to gather them from your own or friends' existing plants. A great article from the Calif. Native Plant Society about seed collecting is at cnps.org/cnps/grownative/propagation/seed_collect_clean.php.

Some of the best:—Too late by the time you read this but keep in mind for next year:

California poppies have already popped, Lupines have already loped, Columbines have

(continued on page 2)

From the President's Plot

by Cass Maller, Co-President and Treasurer

After that hard endless winter, I thought it would only be fair if summer lasted until December. I doubt that I will get my wish.

Actually, fall is a favorite time of mine. I do love putting the garden to bed. Cleaning up the beds, cutting back the perennials somehow appeals to my need for organization and fulfills a nesting instinct. I also take this time to put down a layer of quality compost. The compost acts as nutrition and insulation for my plants and it's the easiest way to improve the garden soil.



Bee Balm at the Gazebo

My other fall activity is planting bulbs. I try to plant a few each year. Each spring I forget what I planted and where, so it is always a fun surprise to see what comes up. Last year Martha Stewart planted 115,000 bulbs at her farm. Doesn't that make me feel like a total slacker!

If you have time, we would love to have you help out in the Demonstration Garden. There are any number of jobs (big and small) to be taken care of at this time of year. We have a very nice time playing in the garden, and chatting away the hours. We would welcome your company!

Please enjoy these lovely fall days in your garden. Feel the warmth of the sun on your back and embrace the peaceful solitude a day in the garden provides.

Cass

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(End of Season Tips cont.)

already dumped their seeds. Collect these in August when they turn almost dry, put in paper bags and let them pop away.

Still ready to ripen: gaillardia, coneflower, rudbeckia (black eye susan varieties), many penstemon, including mountain pride and azureous. Leave some pods to spread seeds but collect the rest and sow either in fall or next spring.

Some seeds need help to do well: if you've collected wild lupine seeds, a good idea is to soak them overnight before sowing. This gets them started germinating. You may get plants rather than flowers next spring but in future springs you will have a beautiful blue field.

Not a seed, but great for autumn propagating: divide irises and daylilies into sections that have some roots, and replant. (Plant the iris rhizomes very close to surface, almost exposed.) Neighbors who understand that this division is invigorating for their plants and will result in more flowers will appreciate the help in dividing and be happy to share parts of thriving, beautiful plants.



Lupin seed pods © 2005 Stan Schebs

Start making plans for next growing season--we are, here at the Demo Garden!

THANK YOU TO OUR GARDEN CLASS SPEAKERS!

We would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all of our **Green Thumb Thursdays** Garden Class speakers: Mimi Komito, George LeBard, John Cobourn, M.J. Cross, and Dick Post, Lesley Higgins and Forest Schafer. We had a wonderful series of presentations ranging from container gardening to landscaping with BMPs. The classes were well attended (except for a snowy June 2) and we hope the participants went away with some great ideas for their gardens here in Tahoe.



Mimi Komito's ever popular container garden class

George LeBard of Project Mana talks about his vegetable plots



John Cobourn explains the Defensible Space/BMP exhibit

M. J. Cross talks about soils in the gazebo



Photos by Lesley Higgins



New Plants for our Garden

by Jan Steinmann

Sunny mounds of buckwheat and cascades of dark evergreen bearberry anchored the 3 slopes at the NLT Demonstration Garden this summer. Mountain Pride Penstemon (newberryii), the bright pink blossoms that thrill Sierra hikers by creating magical rock gardens on the most desolate cliffs, also made an early summer appearance.

Unfortunately, we “killed with kindness” a couple of these spare, drought-tolerant natives. One important lesson we’ve learned and try to impart to our visitors: Dry area natives have a myriad of tiny, surface root systems that can drown from lack of oxygen in too much irrigation.

Other natives such as pink and yellow monkey flowers (mimulus) and the beautiful aspen groves, which thrive along our mountain creeks, will need more irrigation.

Despite inevitable learning experiences, the Demo Garden continues to mature. This year we have been very fortunate to receive a \$500.00 grant from Lake of the Sky Garden Club to expand our plant selection. We have decided to add new varieties to our three most successful mountain species: buckwheat, penstemon, and spirea.

Because our very short growing season makes starting from seed very difficult, we will try to find plants to buy this autumn and spring, from local sources if possible.

Buckwheat: this is a HUGE range of plants. To find which will do well in Tahoe and where to purchase them, we may need to go on line. In addition to gold sulfur buckwheat, possibilities would be a pretty pink-flowered buckwheat and also a lighter gold, lacier plant that seems to thrive along Hwy. 267.



Penstemon: so many varieties! Besides the pink Mountain Pride, our garden is lucky to have a delicate-looking but hardy plant (slender penstemon), which boasts lovely blue blossoms each growing season. We would like to add the gorgeous, blue-violet (azureus) and also a crimson variety that grows very well near the SNC library.



Spirea: an always reliable, pretty shrub with many deep pink flowers. Our plants have “babies” and also get very large. Time to transplant and add a couple of new varieties. Eric Larusson, from the Villager Nursery in Truckee, recommends a native --Summer Song (pyramidata)-- with softer pink flowers and also a prolific white flowered variety, Betula Folia.



Photos by Lesley Higgins

The Quest is on! By next season, the Garden will present exciting new varieties of our favorite plants. Thanks again to Lake of the Sky Garden Club for supporting our exploration.





GREAT GROWDCOVERS FOR TAHOE

By Lesley Higgins

Groundcovers are dense, low growing plants that blanket the ground, bind the soil together, and help prevent erosion. There are many hearty perennials for Tahoe's harsh environment that grow well up here and are an attractive addition to your garden. Native or adapted groundcovers can also serve as a low water alternative to the ubiquitous lawn and are a Best Management Practice to cover bare soil. Here are some of my favorites:

Mahala mat, *Ceanothus prostratus*, is the most common native groundcover, otherwise known as Squaw carpet. This evergreen native is highly prized for its dense, spreading growth pattern and lavender flowers, but is extremely hard to establish. Even the pros have a success rate of only 10% survival after planting. If you have Mahala mat on your property and want it to spread, try giving it a little bit of organic fertilizer in the fall, water a couple of times in the summer, and keep pine needles off.



Mahala mat © 2008 Peter King

Bearberry, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, is a good non-native alternative to Mahala mat and is also evergreen all winter.



Bearberry © 2011 Lesley Higgins

Creeping Snowberry, *Symphoricarpos mollis*, is a deciduous, shrubby native that propagates with creeping vine-like stems. Great for anchoring the soil but pine needles can be difficult to remove due to the rooting branches.



Snowberry © 2008 Peter King

Spring Cinquefoil, *Potentilla tabernaemontanii*, is a great native-like, low growing plant with yellow flowers, which will spread with moderate watering.



Cinquefoil © 2011 Lesley Higgins

Mountain strawberry, *Fragaria virginiana*. This native spreads via trailing runners. Not the best coverage in terms of plant density, but it does produce small fruits and doesn't need a lot of maintenance.



Strawberry © 2011 Lesley Higgins

Sweet woodruff, *Asperula odorata*, is an excellent native-like groundcover in shaded areas. The plant spreads rapidly and bears delicate white flowers in the spring.



Woodruff © 2009 Lee G Day

Creeping thyme, *Thymus praecox arcticus*, (or Woolly thyme) is a non-native that does very well up here and is good in a rock garden or other confined space.



Thyme © 2005 Qwertzy2

Moss pink, *Phlox subulata*, is another native-like plant that does very well here and provides a welcome splash of color in the spring and early summer. Use it in rock gardens, containers and borders.



Phlox © 2009 UpstateNYer

Cranesbill geranium, *Geranium sanguineum*, has the nickname of Bloody Cranesbill because its foliage turns a bright crimson in the fall. The typical cup-shaped flowers come in shades of pink, magenta and white. *G. sanguineum* has one of the best bloom displays of all the geraniums, and requires little to no care.



Cranesbill © 2003 <http://hdl.handle.net/1813/1010>

