

Be a Partner in Tahoe Conservation Landscaping

Fall

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Plant bulbs now for early spring color!

The time has come...to plant your bulbs! Among the first colors of spring against the melting Tahoe snow, annual and perennial bulbs offer early, vibrant blooms in your garden. Bountiful bulb blooms require timing, as well as smart fertilizing, watering and protection from pests. But with a little planning, you can expect a great floral reward for your efforts.

It's helpful to know a bit of bulb anatomy before you rummage that trowel out of the shed and start digging. Bulbs offer gardeners a bonus in that once planted in a fertile environment, they are fairly self-sufficient by biological design. Essentially modified stems compressed into fleshy layers for food storage, bulbs nourish an embryonic shoot or flower tucked away in their center. Onions are an everyday example of a bulb harvested solely for its nutritional value. You can also find native bulb species, such as the Camas lily, thriving in the wild around Tahoe—the meadows along Fallen Leaf Lake Road are prime location to spot them in the spring.

It's best to buy bulbs in person, rather than through a catalog. Make sure the bulbs are firm without any evidence of disease or mold, and for larger blooms opt for larger bulbs. Snowdrops and small crocus species are great early spring varieties in Tahoe. Dutch crocus, Siberian squills, glory-of-the-snow, grape hyacinths, tulips and daffodils



Crocus vernus

Garden Swag



Scilla siberica

Cold Climate Gardening



Galanthus nivalis

The Beauty of Animals



Upcoming Events

November 8-11th
CA RCD Annual Conference
Stockton, CA
(3 Tahoe RCD staff presenting)

November 16th
Trashion Show,
Tahoe Lake Elementary,
1:15-2:00pm

November 16th
AIS Public Forum,
North Tahoe Events Center,
5:30pm - 7:30pm

November 17th
Project WET Facilitator
Training, US Forest Service,
9:00am-3:00pm

February 2012
Project WET Educator
Training, US Forest Service,
9:00am-3:00pm

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
ON ALL OF THE EVENTS
VISIT:
www.TahoeRCD.org**

Need Volunteers!

The Tahoe RCD is looking for volunteers to help out with planting, weeding, and new developments in our demonstration gardens.

If you or a group are interested, contact us at 530-543-1501 ext. 113 or info@tahoercd.org

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Spring Bulbs Continued

are all great choices for the rest of the season. Though spring bulb species won't poke out of the ground until April or May, they need to be planted in the fall. The winter drop in temperature stimulates growth hormones that signal the bulb to send up shoots once the growing conditions are more favorable in the spring. If you plan on growing bulbs indoors over the winter, you'll need to simulate this by chilling them for several weeks.

But before you leave them to the winter elements be sure to prepare a good soil bed for your bulbs. Choose places in your garden that are the earliest to warm and thaw in the spring, and that drain well; bulbs will rot in overly wet soils. Increasing the organic content and fertility of your soil by incorporating rotted manure or compost and a high phosphate fertilizer, such as bonemeal, is very beneficial. The trench or individual holes you dig for the bulbs shouldn't be deeper than 2 ½ times the width of the bulb, otherwise they might not come up in our colder Tahoe climate. And lastly, be sure to water them well right after they've been planted, though you won't need to water them again until they sprout.

In the spring, when the shoots spurt up out of the warming



Muscari spp: Grape Hyacinths



Narcissus spp: Daffodil

ground, shaking off the frost of winter, be sure to give them one last dose of fertilizer at their base. Other than regular irrigation, the plants should do fine on their own, coloring your garden throughout the season. As the spring heats up into summer and your perennial bulb blooms start to die back, don't cut the leaves until they are dry and crispy. While a perennial bulb may no longer be flowering, the leaves are still photosynthesizing and sending energy to the bulb so that it will bloom again next spring. Before then, of course, there may be a few pests to ward off. Bonemeal, while a great natural fertilizer, can entice dogs to dig up your hard work; you may need to try a less aromatic fertilizer. If rodents are an issue in your garden, try planting bulbs inside a chicken wire box in the soil to prevent them from getting nibbled on.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote that, "The Earth laughs in flowers," and if that's true, spring bulbs break the quiet of winter in a beautiful ruckus of purples and blues, yellows and pinks. Bring bulbs into your garden this fall, and you certainly won't be disappointed by their wild colors as the snow melts. Happy gardening!

Natural Remedies for changing seasons

You can hear it spreading through town as fall chill settles in the Basin: sniffles, sneezes, and the raspy wheeze of sore throats and coughs. But even though our alpine environment can make us vulnerable to colds, our forests, meadows and gardens offer a surprising bounty of healthy and healing wild food remedies.

Oranges are often considered the standard vitamin C supplement, but with their vitamin C content of 1,700-2,000 mg per 100 grams, rose hips offer a greater boost of the nutrient than any citrus fruit. Not only do they provide a higher content of cold-fighting nutrients, they are also local and usually free of chemicals; it's like eating organic for free! And did we mention that they're delicious? Try these recipes below and enjoy nutritious rose hips in your Tahoe backyard, staying healthy while keeping your carbon footprint low.

Rose Hip Jelly

8 cups rose hips

6 cups water

½ cup lemon juice

5 cups sugar

1 package liquid pectin

Remove stems and ends from rose hips and place hips in the water. Simmer for about 30 minutes until hips are soft. Mash and strain them through a mesh strainer or cheesecloth to make 4 cups of juice. If you're short on juice you can simply add some water. Now add the lemon juice, sugar and pectin, and bring the liquid to a full boil for one minute. Pour into jars immediately and can.

Rose Hip Tea

Boil 2 Tablespoons of dried rose hips per pint of water for 10 minutes. To dry rose hips, simply cut them in half lengthwise and heat in the oven at 200° for 10 minutes, or store in a well-ventilated location.

Recipes and information taken from *Living Wild: Gardening, Cooking and Healing with the Native Plants of the Sierra Nevada* by Alicia Funk and Karin Kaufman and published by Flicker Press.

Turf Buy Back-IS BACK!!

Contributed by: Sarah Jones, Water Conservation Specialist
South Tahoe Public Utility District

Lawns help to provide defensible space, play areas for children and pets, and serve an integral role in a comprehensive landscaping plan. However, lawns are also the most water intensive landscaping option a homeowner can choose. Non-functional lawns are ones that are rarely used, waste water and represent an ongoing cost in both time and resources for the home or business owner. From an environmental perspective, lawns tend to be over fertilized and over watered. With porous Tahoe soils, this combination can push nutrients intended for the lawn into the watershed where they eventually make their way into Lake Tahoe. Once there, they provide nutrients for algal growth that can negatively affect the clarity of the lake.

The Turf Buy-Back Program (TBBP) has been very successful. Between 2008 and 2009 over 120,000 square feet of turf was "bought back." In 2009 the program was closed due to lack of funding. However, the South Tahoe PUD in partnership with the Tahoe RCD were recently approved for grant funding to reinstate TBBP, one of our most popular water conservation programs. Starting in the spring of 2012 TBBP applications will be accepted. Replace your existing irrigated lawn with Tahoe friendly landscaping and get paid \$1.50 per square foot of turf removed! A minimum of 400 square feet of turf must be replaced and your healthy, irrigated lawn must be verified by South Tahoe PUD water conservation staff prior



Turf plot; before treatment



Post removal; revegetation

to turf removal. This program is available to all South Tahoe PUD water customers and is first come, first serve. Terms and conditions apply. Funds are limited so call today to be placed on the waiting list. **Call: 530.543.6268**



Garden visitors taking notes



Fall garden preparations

Winter got you blue?

The good thing about gardening in Tahoe is that you have the winter to catch up on your planning and review your successes and failures.

Take this time to review and log changes made to the garden and what did and did not work. Record the amount and type of sunlight available and what areas are susceptible to early frost, poor drainage, prevailing winds and extra heat from massive structures such as your house foundation, rock walls or boulders. Before the snow falls, measure and photograph your landscape areas so you can plan your spring garden projects.

Now relax and take the winter off to research, plot and plan your next projects.

Early Detection and Monitoring Aim to Halt Cheatgrass Invasion



Max Neale, Tahoe RCD, mapping cheatgrass

“Notorious”, “ecosystem transformer,” and “invader that won the West,” are several titles assigned to cheatgrass in recent scientific literature. Although cheatgrass looks undernourished- it’s short, thin, and generally frail looking- it has the potential, with warming air temperatures and continued forest thinning operations, to become the first highly invasive plant to dramatically alter the Tahoe Basin’s native plant communities. This summer Tahoe RCD staff and volunteers collected cheatgrass population density and distribution data in the Upper Truckee, Bijou, and Rabe meadows. Our data indicate, as previous studies have shown, that cheatgrass prefers dry, disturbed areas such as the edges of roadways and urban areas.

Cheatgrass is a small (6-25 in.) annual grass that outcompetes native perennial grasses through prolific seed production and the ability to germinate in either spring or fall. Responsible for large-scale ecosystem change in the intermountain west, it now dominates the majority of the Great Basin and covers at least 17 million acres from southern

Nevada to Washington State and throughout western Idaho and Utah.

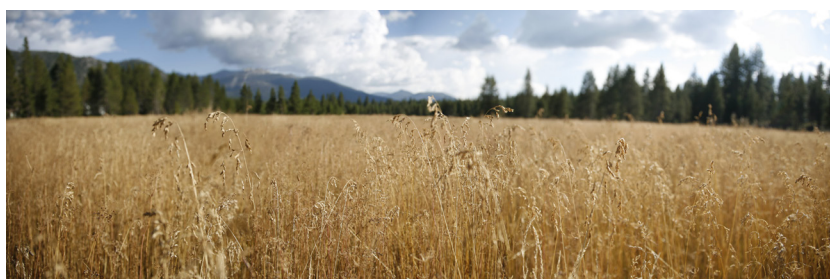
In outcompeting native plants, cheatgrass negatively impacts the environment by reducing plant diversity, which can be detrimental to wildlife. Additionally, it dries out earlier than native grasses (June-July in Tahoe) and becomes highly flammable. Cheatgrass fires can produce flames in excess of eight feet and travel up to five miles per hour. These fires can serve as kindling for larger brush or forest wildfires that could link to an urban area. Furthermore, cheatgrass seed remains viable for up to eight years: a fire started or promoted by cheatgrass can transform an area once dominated by native vegetation to one covered entirely by cheatgrass.

Over the last decade cheatgrass has crept up the Tahoe Basin’s eastern slope and is now established in dense, scattered populations throughout the Basin, with the majority of populations lying along the south and east shores. Through Tahoe RCD field surveys this summer we found that drier sites in disturbed areas are more suitable for cheatgrass than wetter undisturbed areas. For example, cheatgrass is found in high densities along the fringes of meadows, but not in the middle where moisture levels are higher.

Climate change may benefit cheatgrass. An earlier snowmelt and warmer air temperatures could decrease soil moisture levels and allow cheatgrass to move into large areas not currently suitable for it. The south and east shores also contain large unoccupied areas that are climatically suitable for cheatgrass. A recent modeling effort done by the U.S. Forest Service suggests that climactic suitability for cheatgrass will be high for at least the next 60 years and that low precipitation areas (the south and east shores) are prone to quick and uninterrupted invasion.

It is imperative for large land managers such as the California Tahoe Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service, both of which lead forest thinning and meadow restoration projects, to conduct pre-surveys, monitor project areas after thinning, construction, and burning, and to eradicate new populations.

Preventing the spread of cheatgrass in the Tahoe Basin is a necessary step towards maintaining native plant communities a reducing the threat of wildfires. Remove it from your own property and inform your neighbors if you see it on theirs. Also record where you see it in meadows and forested areas and submit a report online at www.tahoeinvasiveweeds.org



Cheatgrass in Bijou Meadow

Winterizing Your Garden

As winter is fast approaching, its time to use this last bit of dry weather to get your garden ready for the snowy season ahead. Here are a few tips on how to wrap up the gardening season.

Weed! Weed! Weed!

Fall is a great time to get a jump start on the weeding that inevitably has to be done in the spring. Pull perennial weeds such as grass and clover and remove any annual weed seed heads now. Invasive plant debris shouldn't be composted; these seeds have the ability to stay viable till the next season and create new weed problems where you spread your compost.

Trim plants back

Remove all plant parts including roots of annuals and remove dead or diseased leaf foliage from perennials. Cut herbaceous perennials almost to the ground. Don't remove the pine needles yet, they provide protection from soil erosion.

Fall planting

Autumn is a great time to plant. Why? Cooler temperatures decrease transplant shock. Some deciduous trees and shrubs produce up to 75% of their annual root growth after their leaves fall. Also, most plants establish better when they are planted as they enter dormancy. Planting now allows plants to take advantage of our entire short growing season next year. Don't forget to shop the end of the season plant sales!

Feed your lawn

Before you shut down your irrigation, top-dress your lawn with a thin, even layer of fine textured compost and thoroughly water. There are many benefits to enriching your soil and feeding your lawn with compost. If you feed the soil, it will feed your plants! Using mineral or synthetic fertilizers can starve the living

organisms in your soil, making your plants more fertilizer and irrigation dependent. Check out our Fertility Management tip sheet for more information.

Irrigation

Don't forget! Before persistent freezing nighttime temps:

- Turn off irrigation controller and manually run your irrigation as needed. Less irrigation helps plants transition into dormancy.
- Use quick connects or remove



Mulching and fall planting

spray nozzles on hoses so they drain and won't ice up.

When it's time to call it quits:

- Shut off irrigation water supply at valve and manually drain your irrigation lines if necessary.
- Remove and store back-flow prevention devices and temporary irrigation timers.

Winter protection

Young deciduous trees benefit from staking, which helps to prevent them from breaking under heavy snow and ice loads. The stake that came with the tree is not going to do the trick. Learn how to properly stake your trees to encourage a strong supportive trunk and root system. Wrapping your newly planted or winter damage prone shrubs and trees prevents breakage and deformity. This type of protection also helps

young shrubs and trees reach their height potential. Ornamental or newly planted evergreen shrubs and trees will benefit from a good late fall watering and thick layer of mulch to protect them from the desiccating wind and winter sun. Newly planted deciduous trees and shrubs may need to be pruned to prepare them for winter snow loads. Dense canopies hold snow which can break branches. (link to protecting trees and shrubs from winter damage).

Seeding

Many native seeds need our cold winter to break dormancy. Seeding right before the snow covers the ground will give them the best conditions to pop up in the spring. Prepare your seeding bed now and spread those seeds right before we get our first big snow. For more information on how to best grow plants from seed in Tahoe, check out our Seeding tip sheet.

Prep your tools for next spring

Clean and make sure to remove any rust, sharpen dull blades and remove burrs.

- For hand pruners, use a flat file or sharpening stone and work the beveled edge at a 20-30% angle until the desired sharpness. Then run the file on the flat side at a 0-5% angle to just get rid of the burrs on the back side of the blade. Shovels and hoes also benefit from sharpening. File both sides of the edge of the shovel at a 30% angle and rid the edge of burrs.
- Oil joints, blades and wooden handles (boiled linseed oil is great) to prevent rusting of the metal and splintering of wood.

State of the Gardens a poem for conservation

*Financial resources are dwindling,
But our community is kindling.*

*Sparking ignition of people
participation,
Not fuels flammation.*

*Michael Plansky and John Roos
were the Tahoe RCD Specialists,
Charged with managing this grand
demonstration.*

*Revamping the 20 year Garden at
LTCC,
And developing Leona's lot for the
Angora Community.*

*Plants and Pests,
Signs for guests.
We "Demonstrate Care",
And inspire some flair.*

*Ideas for mulching and composting,
for pruning and trails.*

*"Epic Adventures" helped fix our
swales,
While South Tahoe Garden Club
raked and weeded our beds into
bales.*

*In one day and a half, CTC erected
a fence, defining our space and
guiding our guests,
Who often come Wednesdays for a
weekly address.*

*Covering various landscaping
topics, from attracting birds to
helping plant stress. Hooray! The
Ledbetter Terrace is hosting events!*

*Please come and enjoy the space,
But don't leave a trace.*

*Tell one and tell all, seeking
landscape ideas,
Tried and tested in our Garden, For
years upon years.*

*Alleviate those Tahoe Gardening
fears!*

Triumphant Autumn Fest

With the sun shining, our Tahoe community came out to appreciate the wonderful fall spirit at our 5th annual Autumn Fest, a fundraiser for the Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden. Alicia Funk, author of *Living Wild*, delighted the crowds with her delectable Sierra Mountain treats from chocolate covered acorns to Manzanita-peach jam.

Full Circle Compost owner Craig Witt demonstrated vermiculture techniques with his always exceptionally fiery personality. The smiling faces of young children were entertained by Krissi Russell's wildlife sing-a-longs and Polynesian dancers and the dazzling creations of face painting specialist Gina Stowell, and Lake Tahoe Balloon Art's Sean Rogers. The South Tahoe Garden Club and Tahoe Resource Conservation District staff covered the bake sale table with scrumptious treats. The silent auction was a sight to see with local businesses and Outdoor Gear Lab stepping up to the challenge of making this the biggest year yet!



Monique LeMay and her family enjoying Autumn Fest

With generous donations, local musical and artistic talent, and a huge volunteer effort, funds raised grew by a whopping 25% and our crowd multiplied. This year's event was nothing short of a great success. Thank you to all that made this event possible, including our dedicated Tahoe RCD staff and members of the Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden Committee. We hope you will all join us again next year for more *Fall in the Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden!*



Thank you to all Tahoe RCD contributors and partners for providing information for this issue.
870 Emerald Bay Road, Suite 108
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
530.543.1501 ext 113, Fax
530.543.1660, www.TahoeRCD.org