

# Be a Partner in Tahoe Conservation Landscaping

# Spring



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## Summer is around the corner!

**S**pring has finally arrived! Leaves and shoots are on their way back. This article will provide information on spring clean up for residential landscaping, irrigation systems, planting and plant selection. South facing yards with consistent sun exposure are already showing signs of returning perennials. North facing yards will shortly follow as we continue to have warm days. The following suggestions can help you get your yard ready for summer and protect Lake Tahoe at the same time.

**Irrigation systems:** As you get your yard or garden ready for summer, now is a great time to check irrigation systems for proper function. Check for damage of sprinkler heads and above ground lines from critters, weather or snow removal as you restart your system. At this time you can make adjustments to spray coverage and angle and set your watering cycle for the season. You can also audit for water use and whether your sprinklers adequately reach the intended areas. Tahoe RCD is launching a California residential irrigation efficiency program this year. We can assist you in conserving water in your yard by working with you to improve the efficiency of your irrigation system. Contact Tahoe RCD to get more information on this new service.

**P**lant selection: In Tahoe, the potential for frost is greater before June 15th. Plan your planting projects with this in mind. Plant selection, including hardy plants from local sources, is often a more successful approach. Some plants are quite delicious to local wildlife after a long winter, so choose your plants with care. Three plants that are less likely to

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### Upcoming Events

May 28th - June 5th, Wildfire Awareness Week  
Pine needle pick up, youth education, and much more throughout the week

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June 1st, Invasive Weed Identification Workshop-South Shore, 1pm - 4pm

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June 4th, Migratory Bird Festival, Taylor Creek Visitors Center, 10am - 4pm

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June 5th, Native Species Festival, Taylor Creek Visitors Center, 10am - 4pm

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June 6th, Invasive Weed Identification Workshop-North Shore, 1pm - 4pm

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June 24th, Wildfire Awareness Summit, Granlibakken Resort, 9am - 4pm

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June 26th, Green Thumb Series Kick-off, LT Demonstration Garden, 2pm - 5pm

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June 29th - August 31st, Green Thumb Series, LT Demonstration Garden, 5:30pm - 6:45pm

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June 30th, Weed Pull at Fanny Bridge, 4pm - 7pm

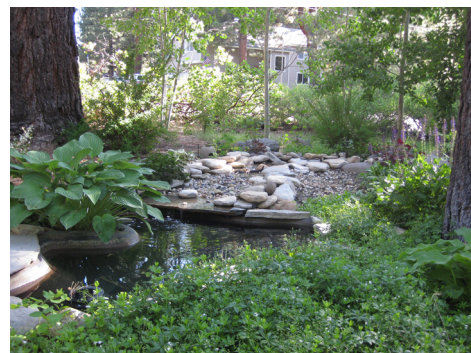
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ALL OF THE EVENTS PLEASE VISIT: [www.TahoeRCD.org](http://www.TahoeRCD.org)

be devoured by our local critter are Penstemon, Columbine, and Blanket flower. Local nursery staff are a great source of information in making the right choices for your garden. Plants that have been in the Tahoe area over the winter are better prepared for our climate than plants from lower elevations which have already peaked. Addition of amendments such as compost and a top dressing of mulch can also help your plants thrive.



*Sierra Currant*

**Remove the Dead and Down:** After the snowmelt, more of our garden areas are visible and we find the debris left behind by winter storms. As we rake up the smaller pine cones or collect the larger cones we also find branches that have fallen from trees. This woody material can be combined with leaf litter and pine needles for disposal. For fire defensible space and soil conservation, it is recommended to rake pine needles once each spring, but leave the dark layer (called humus) of fine particles on the ground. This organic layer replenishes the soil and gradually becomes food for plants; it builds structure for the soil and adds nutrients that plants utilize to grow. Allow the pine needles that fall each year to hold this layer in place for the rest of the season and leave the fresh needles until next spring. This is also a good time to prune broken or diseased branches on shrubs and trees. Check with your



*Fire-wise landscape*

local fire district for information on curbside chipping programs. Removing excess yard waste from your property helps with defensible space. Wildfire Awareness Week (May 28th to June 5th) is a great way to learn more about defensible space or online at [www.livingwithfire.info/tahoe](http://www.livingwithfire.info/tahoe).

**F**or more information on conservation landscaping or to sign up for Tahoe RCD services contact us at [www.TahoeRCD.org](http://www.TahoeRCD.org), 530.543.1501 ext 113.

## Disposal of Yard Waste in the Basin

**West and North Shore:** Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal customers can place bagged residential yard waste with regular garbage pick up or dispose of this material at the land fill. Both options involve a fee. Pine needles are re-distributed as mulch and woody debris is chipped at the land fill. Both materials are available as mulch at the land fill.

**Placer County residents:** Participate in a free defensible space clean up day on June 25th. Yard waste can be delivered to three locations from 7:30am to 2:00pm. Locations include: Cross Country Ski Area, 925 Country Club Drive, Tahoe City; Homewood South Lodge; North Tahoe Regional Park (main office). Acceptable items include woody debris only (tree limbs and brush, pine needles, yard trimmings, dry grass and dead leaves). Debris should be no more than 4 feet in length. Stems should be no more than 4 inches in diameter. Limit is 3 yards per trip or 3 yard capacity trailers. For additional information, please contact Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal at [www.ttsdinc.com](http://www.ttsdinc.com), 530.583.0148.

**South Lake Tahoe:** Yard waste such as pine needles, pine cones, leaves and small branches can be collected by your local refuse collector. Bag up these materials separately from other trash and leave them for pick up on your regular pick up day. South Tahoe Refuse now recycles green waste for use in local re-vegetation projects. South shore residents on the Nevada side of the lake should note that as of May 1st Tahoe-Douglas residential customers can put out one bag of yard waste per week for every can of garbage service. If service is two cans per week, they can put out two bags of yard waste. No special bags are used for the yard waste collection. Nevada residential customers with 'on-call' garbage service do not have yard waste collection included. Instead, they can pay extra to have yard waste picked up or participate in the "Compost Your Combustibles" program. This is an annual program where yard waste can be dropped off at the Heavenly Boulder Lodge parking lot through the July 4th weekend. Take a look at the South Tahoe Refuse website for additional information [www.southtahoerefuse.com](http://www.southtahoerefuse.com).

**Incline Village/Crystal Bay:** Incline Village General Improvement District (IVGID) residents can drop off mixed green waste for free on Saturday June 18 at the IVGID Facility at 1220 Sweetwater Road between 7:30am and 2:00pm. Curbside Pine Needle Recycling Week is May 30 to June 3. You can place up to six bags (pine needles only) with the special orange label attached at your curbside on your regular service day. Some restrictions apply. Call IVGID Waste Not at 775.832.1284 or visit [www.ivgid.org](http://www.ivgid.org).



*Removing top layer of pine needles*

## Water Conservation: Landscape Irrigation

Contributed by: South Tahoe Public Utility District

The South Tahoe Public Utility District (STPUD) encourages you to consider the limited use of turf. Turf is, by far, the most water intensive landscape option you can select. Instead, consider using native and water efficient plants and shrubs that can be every bit as attractive, yet only use a fraction of the water that turf requires. And don't forget—turf doesn't mow itself! Save yourself some work and don't over turf. If the only time you walk on your lawn is when you mow it—you have too much turf!

Consult your local landscaping experts to help design and select landscaping options that minimize the use of water and fertilizer. Lake Tahoe Basin soils are primarily decomposed granite and have limited water holding capacity, so

over-watering and over fertilizing can flush nutrients from your lawn into the nearest waterbody. From there, nutrients make their way into Lake Tahoe and will provide food for algal growth that impairs the Lake's legendary clarity. A seemingly simple decision, like limiting turf in your yard, can have a significant long-term effect on Lake Tahoe's water quality.

If you are a metered account, the less turf the better—your pocket book will thank you. If you must have turf, please take the time to properly amend the soil to increase its water holding capacity. Consider a professionally installed irrigation system as they are generally more efficient and will ensure your



Over-head water efficient sprinkler head

lawn will receive all the water - not your driveway, decks or the street! Automatic timers allow you to water only on your designated watering days, for the correct amount of time, and can be programmed to go on in the early morning or early evening rather than during the heat of the day.

## Fertilizer, Friend or Foe?

Spring means green in the garden. Unfortunately, it can also lead to algal growth in Lake Tahoe. Use caution when applying fertilizer this spring and learn from these tips:

- Use phosphorus free turf fertilize on your established turf areas. Phosphorus already exists in our soils.
- If fertilizer is required, use slow release formulas which release nutrients at a rate in which they can be taken up by plant roots.
- Lawn clippings left in place provide enough nutrients to feed turf grass for the entire growing season.
- Using a thin layer of compost as a fertilizer will feed your turf and improve the soil.
- Only apply fertilizer when the turf is actively growing and avoid liquid fertilizer.
- Landscape with Tahoe natives which don't need fertilizer
- Apply no more than 1 lb. of Nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of turf grass in the spring and water in slowly.
- Don't fertilize within 25 feet of a riparian area, stream environment or the shoreline.

If you fertilize turf, read this informative guide, *Yard Fertility Management*

To request a free landscape water efficiency evaluation or obtain advice on Tahoe friendly landscaping practices, contact the Tahoe RCD, [www.TahoeRCD.org](http://www.TahoeRCD.org), 530.543.1501 ext 113

## STPUD: Right Way - Right Day

- Do not hose driveways, decks, or other impervious surfaces. Use a broom instead.
- Hand-watering, with an automatic shut-off nozzle attached to the hose, is acceptable at any time.
- Exemptions exist for those installing TRPA BMPs, however, you must call the district to request an exemption.
- Homes with addresses ending in an even number, water on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
- Homes with addresses ending in an odd number, water on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday.
- No landscape irrigation on Saturday. It is our peak demand day.
- Drip and low flow irrigation systems are exempt from designated watering days.

For information on STPUD's water conservation programs contact 530.543.6268 [www.stpud.us](http://www.stpud.us)

## Demonstration Garden Happenings

Garden workdays are gearing up at the Evens Family Garden at 1383 Mount Olympia Circle. Tahoe RCD will be organizing gardening projects on Thursday mornings from 9am to Noon for interested volunteers. Projected activities include landscaping around the new garden arbor, planting a veggie garden, getting the compost bins cooking, seeding a wildflower garden and much, much more. Contact the Tahoe RCD if you want to join us in making this garden continue to rise from the ashes and grow into a beautiful teaching garden and community retreat.

Green Thumb Conservation Landscaping presentations will kick-off Sunday June 26 at 2pm with guest speakers at the Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden,

located on the Lake Tahoe Community College Campus. Demonstrations, garden tours and refreshments to follow.

If you haven't been to this beautiful 3-acre garden in the last year, this event is the perfect time to come see the new improvements including the

Ledbetter Terrace now available to rent for your next special occasion ([www.ledbetterterrace.org](http://www.ledbetterterrace.org)). The Green Thumb Gardening presentation series is now happening at three locations around the Lake, Tues-Thurs, throughout the



Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden on the Lake Tahoe Community College Campus, One College Drive, South Lake Tahoe

summer months. These presentation will cover gardening topics from fire-wise landscaping to attracting wildlife to working with compost. Visit [www.TahoeRCD.org](http://www.TahoeRCD.org) for a complete schedule of events and workshops.

### Don't forget to replenish your mulch after spring clean-up

#### Mulching the soil around trees, shrubs and plants:

- ❑ Reduces soil moisture loss
- ❑ Inhibits seed germination - less time pulling weeds
- ❑ Moderates soil temperatures, providing a better environment for beneficial soil organisms
- ❑ Looks attractive

#### Organic mulch:

- ❑ Breaks down and feeds soil organisms = more nutrients for plants
- ❑ Decomposes into soil = more moisture and favorable rooting soil conditions
- ❑ Can be made from composted yard waste and kitchen scraps = free and easy
- ❑ Is a by-product of chipping overcrowded trees, limbs and shrubs = less waste and fire fuels
- ❑ Apply deeper than 3", in a widespread manner or next to structure = increased fire risk

### You Know You Are Addicted to Gardening When . . .

- Your neighbors recognize you in your pajamas, rubber clogs and a cup of coffee
- You grab other people's banana peels, coffee grinds, apple cores, etc for your compost pile
- You have to wash your hair to get your fingernails clean
- You know the temperature of your compost every day
- You buy a bigger truck so that you can haul more mulch
- Your boss makes "taking care of the office plants" an official part of your job description
- Your non-gardening spouse becomes conversant in botanical names
- You plan vacation trips around the locations of botanical gardens, arboreta, historic gardens, etc
- You sneak home a 7 foot Japanese Maple and wonder if your spouse will notice
- You always carry a shovel, bottled water and a plastic bag in your trunk as emergency tools
- You appreciate your Master Gardener badge more than your jewelry
- You talk "dirt" at soccer practice
- You spend more time chopping your kitchen greens for the compost pile than for cooking
- You like the smell of horse manure better than Estee Lauder
- You have pride in how bad your hands look
- You have a decorative compost container on your kitchen counter
- Soil test results actually mean something
- You'd rather go to a nursery to shop than a clothes store
- You take every single person who enters your house on a "garden tour"
- You look at your child's sandbox and see a raised bed
- You ask for tools for Christmas, Mother/Father's day, and your Birthday
- You can't bear to thin seedlings and throw them away
- You know how many bags of fertilizer/potting soil/mulch your car will hold
- Your preferred reading material is seed catalogs
- You know the four seasons are: Planning the Garden, Preparing the Garden, Gardening, Preparing and planning for the next Garden

-Author Unknown



Thank you to all Tahoe RCD contributors and partners for providing information for this issue.  
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