

Sugar pine planting to honor former board member

By Tressa Gibbard

The Sugar Pine Foundation (SPF) is a local nonprofit working to save the sugar pines and other white pines from the threat of a nonnative, incurable fungus called “white pine blister rust.” The SPF is working to maintain Tahoe’s legendary environmental health and scenic beauty by finding sugar pine trees that are resistant to the blister rust fungus, collecting their cones and planting their progeny.

In October and November, the SPF will be conducting planting events throughout the Tahoe region. They hope to plant more than 5,000 sugar pine seedlings that will add to Tahoe’s healthy forests of the future – and they are looking for community volunteers to help with this task.

Community planting events are planned for Nov. 6 in the Angora burn and Nov. 13 in Zephyr Cove. At 10am volunteers will receive instructions and materials for the planting that will last until noon. Some seedlings will also be available for people to take home.



Sierra Nevada
Alliance
AmeriCorps
volunteers
Reyna Yagi and

Nick Santos
plant a sugar
pine at the
Sugar Pine
Foundation's
April
community
planting in
Zephyr Cove.
Photo/Provided

The Nov. 6 planting is a special event dedicated to the memory of Susie Kaiser. Kaiser served on the SPF's board of directors and was tragically killed in a kayaking accident in late August. Kaiser's friends and family have helped sponsor a community planting in her name on a lot in the Angora burn that Kaiser identified for sugar pine restoration.

The planting on Nov. 13 will take place at the Whittell High School in Zephyr Cove. The purpose of this planting is to enhance forest health by adding sugar pines in an area where the Jeffrey pines are heavily infected with mistletoe.

Planting trees is fun for everyone, kids and adults alike. Maria Mircheva, executive director of SPF says, "Kids especially love to come back and visit their trees." Mircheva conducts plantings in conjunction with teachers and students throughout the Tahoe region. This fall, the SPF will plant trees with Glenshire Elementary School fourth-graders, Whittell High School students, and the sixth-grade class at North Tahoe Middle School.

Support for these projects has been obtained primarily from local sources, which is a testament to the community's commitment to the environment. The Foresight Fund at the Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation and the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation are funding the Whittell High School and Glenshire Elementary school plantings, respectively.

Sugar pines are renowned for their enormous cones and uniquely beautiful, octopussy shape, but less well known is the fact that they are the largest species of pine in the world. Historically, sugar pines accounted for 25 percent of Tahoe's mixed-conifer forest composition at lake level. Today, due to heavy selective logging during the Comstock era of the late-1800s and the more recent introduction of the blister rust fungus, sugar pines account for only 5 percent of the trees in Tahoe's forests.

Restoring Tahoe's forest composition with sugar pines that can survive the presence of blister rust is highly beneficial for forest and watershed health, wildlife and fire safety. Maintaining Tahoe's scenic beauty and recreational potential is also a key to sustaining tourism as the economic backbone of the region. Educating Tahoe's youth about the importance of forest stewardship will ensure that this place is protected and cared for properly for generations to come.

There are so many good reasons to come out and plant trees with the Sugar Pine Foundation, so mark your calendar, bring the whole family, and plant some sugar pines this fall.

Nov. 6, 10am-noon, Susie Kaiser Memorial Planting at 1045 Coyote Ridge Circle in South Lake Tahoe. Street parking available.

Nov. 13: 10am-noon, Whittell High School in Zephyr Cove. Park in the school parking lot.

Please bring a shovel or trowel if you can.

For more information, visit www.sugarpinefoundation.org or call Maria Mircheva at (650) 814.9565.

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