

Opinion: LTCC Demonstration Garden takes learning outdoors

By Melonie Guttry

In 1984, a single individual envisioned the Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden, which is now a flourishing 7-acre garden showcasing attractive native and adapted plants, while using conservation techniques to address water quality concerns. The Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden is located on the Lake Tahoe Community College property behind the G-Wing Garden Buildings near the Child Development Center.

This site was originally very disturbed by human activity, having served as a borrow pit for the construction of roads and later as a recreation area for off-road vehicles. Its bare compacted soils supported little vegetation and directly contributed sediment into Lake Tahoe via Trout Creek.

Construction began in the spring 1990 with a grand opening in 1991. Now it is a thriving, functional landscape where the community and visitors can enjoy and learn about Tahoe's unique environment.



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The garden continues to expand and make improvements through generous donations and agency partner collaboration. The

garden's community partnership is designed to protect and preserve the Lake Tahoe Basin by showcasing landscapes to:

- Promote the use of water efficient native and adapted plants and gardening practices;
- Display native and adapted plants in an attractive natural setting;
- Demonstrate best management practices and other backyard conservation practices
- Provide a public venue for inspiration and education.

The Tahoe Resource Conservation District in partnership with the UC Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners started the Green Thumb Gardening series in South Lake Tahoe in June 2010 at the Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden. This educational series was developed to promote conservation landscaping techniques and inform homeowners and gardening enthusiasts that gardening in Lake Tahoe is fun, beautiful and beneficial to our treasured natural environment. There is something for everyone in this year's line-up of informative classes. You are encouraged to bring your questions and to share your experience and knowledge. All presentations are outdoors in the beautiful garden setting and lively discussion between attendees and the presenters enrich the experience.

Running through the end of August, Green Thumb presentations will be at the UC Davis Field Station on Tuesdays and at the Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden on Wednesdays from 5:30-6:45pm. This summer's topics will cover native vegetation, veggie gardening, native bees, sprinkler system check-ups, invasive weeds and much more. The Tahoe RCD will be participating every Tuesday and Wednesday evening. California Tahoe basin residents can stop by to sign you up for free technical assistance services, such as BMP, conservation landscaping and invasive weed evaluations. You will also have the opportunity to learn more about the Master Gardener

Program and how you can become involved.

Green Thumb gardening at the Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden is just one of many reasons to visit and enjoy the garden. If you haven't experienced the newest addition, the Ledbetter Terrace, you will be in for a treat. Wedding and event bookings are currently being scheduled at this unique outdoor Tahoe venue. To learn more or book your next event, go online. If you'd like to learn about sustainable landscaping practices on your own schedule, visit the many informative garden demonstrations and ask the Tahoe RCD demonstration garden specialist to share their knowledge. The garden can always use a helping hand. If you are interested in volunteering for organized work events at the Demonstration Garden, please contact Jennifer Cressy at Tahoe RCD. You will be sure to leave not only with a sense of community and accomplishment, but you will also learn a thing or two about sustainable landscaping practices.

For a full schedule and topic descriptions go to our calendar online.

Melonie Guttry is executive director of the LTCC Foundation.