

# Gardening in Lake Tahoe – it's possible

By Kathryn Reed

While it can be dicey in the Lake Tahoe Basin to put plants in the ground before Memorial Day weekend, it doesn't mean there isn't gardening to be done now.

Carolyn Meiers drove that point home Tuesday night during a talk at the South Lake Tahoe library that was sponsored by Friends of the Library. Meiers, who is a master gardener, knows the soils of Tahoe well from living here for decades and being part of various garden clubs.

"Just because they sell it in Lake Tahoe, don't assume it will be OK. There are a lot of things you should not be buying," Meiers said May 7.

She suggests people go to reputable garden centers to talk to experts about plants.



Master gardener Carolyn Meiers says frost cloth will protect plants from freezing. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Reading the information on the tags that come with plants is also critical because they talk about sun and shade, growing

season and how tall the plant will become.

While there are rules to follow, Meiers also advocates for just trying something to see how well it does in your yard.

Sun, shade, wind, water, soil – they all play a role in the success of a plant's life.

“You don't want to put a \$5 plant in a 50-cent hole” is a phrase Meiers said she has borrowed from a fellow gardener. This means making sure the soil is nutrient rich.

“You need to modify the soil. There are all kinds of mulches you can buy,” she said.

Ideally, much of the work on the soil is done in the fall so when spring rolls around it's perfect for planting.

Now is the time when everything should be raked, weeds dug out and anything that has blown into beds plucked out. Meiers even said people should be picking their daffodils. Some of the nearly 50 in the audience laughed, saying theirs were barely out of the ground and blooms have yet to be seen.

“Be careful how you fertilize. It's either going in the air or water or on your own body,” Meiers said. “Use the least toxic pest control method. We do have a beautiful lake that we need to protect.”

Critters are something every gardener has to contend with. Rabbits have been growing in numbers on the South Shore in recent years. Meiers talks fondly of climbing roses she once had. Then a beaver “decimated” them. She is left with photographs of them.

A member of the audience suggested using sonar devices that are stuck into the ground to rid a yard of voles. Steer manure compost was another suggestion.

Putting tulip bulbs in nylon stockings stops the squirrels

from uprooting them.

There are always daffodils. Squirrels don't go after them.

A trend in gardening is to have edible plants as landscaping, and not just be part of a vegetable garden.

Even after Memorial Day the basin is susceptible to freezing nights. Meiers recommends using a frost cloth to put over plants on those occasions. She said lots of things could be used – just use something that is not too heavy.

For those who are going to start with seeds, time is ticking because they usually take four to six weeks before needing to be transplanted.

Meiers suggests everyone in the basin have a copy of “Home Landscaping Guide for Lake Tahoe and Vicinity” to use as a resource for gardening.

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**Note:** University of Nevada Cooperative Extension will host its annual Master Gardener Plant Faire and Sale from 7am-2pm May 18 at the Master Gardener Greenhouse, No. 13, 920 Valley Road in Reno. Thousands of certified organically grown plants will be available for sale.