

Garden tour to focus on drought-resistant flora



Darya Vogt points out various features in her garden.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – *“Gardening is such a surprise.”*

So said one of several people on Monday’s preview of the annual Tahoe in Bloom Garden Tour.

Much of the time they are good surprises. For the six houses that will be featured on the July 25 tour the recent hail storms were an unwanted surprise. Most homeowners lamented how prior to the storms their gardens were in much better shape, leaves didn’t have holes in them and plants didn’t look so downtrodden.

Call them perfectionists because the beauty that spills forth

from this neighborhood off Kingsbury Grade is a sight to behold. Despite most of the yards having grass – and some with quite a bit, the focal point is what can be done without sod.



This field of lavender was planted in October and one day will be filled in.

Robin and David Winter created the most drastic change after removing sod from the side of their house. It's now a lavender field.

"The main thing I wanted to do was save money on water and save water," Robin Winter said. And save they did. In summer 2012 they used 44,000 gallons of water per month. Now usage is 18,000 gallons per month.

Six varieties of lavender are planned. Eventually, the perimeter will have the tallest which will create a fence of sorts around the property. Another variety will be used to make oils for Winter's massage therapy practice.



Karen and Billy Hayes grow a variety of veggies in their back yard.

Billy Hayes has multiple rows of raspberries out front covered with mesh to keep the birds out. These edibles were brought from Cottonwood, where he lived years ago. They are thriving at Tahoe.

More things to eat are being grown in the back yard in raised beds.

Burying bowling balls halfway into the ground created a unique element to borders. Golf clubs and sawed off skis are accent features.

Some areas of various yards are more manicured than others. While most have sections that look wild and a bit unkempt, it's that natural setting with native or adapted native plants that oozes Tahoe. No need to go on a hike – these yards have plenty of wildflowers.

Drought-tolerant plants are everywhere. Some are ground cover, while others are waist high and make for a kaleidoscope of color.

Paths meander through the colorful flora. Yard art is popular

in most places – whether it's birdhouses, an old two-seater chairlift swing from Stagecoach and ski boots planted with flowers, or a fire hydrant with recirculating water.



Big blue

Sitting areas abound to be able to enjoy these natural works of art.

All houses are within walking distance to each other. The tour, sponsored by the UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe, will have a master gardener at each house who will be able to answer questions in addition to the homeowner.

At three of the houses will be specific presentation stations. They are:

- Fill your yard with perennials that reseed – how to make it happen in Tahoe.
- Toss that lawn and plant water-wise Tahoe friendly perennials.
- Square foot vegetable gardening and attracting Mason bees.



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Notes:

- Tahoe in Bloom Garden Tour is July 25 from 9am-2pm.
- Tickets are \$20. They are available at Nel's Garden Center, Aspen Hollow Garden Center, Tahoe Outdoor Living, and Sun Basin Nursery.