

Turf buyback expands into major yard overhaul



Gutters will go in on the facing roof line, with the rocks for erosion to be repurposed, and the area near the door being redesigned. All of this is outside the scope of the turf buyback program. Photos/LTN

Publisher's note: This is one in a random series of stories about what it's like to go through the South Tahoe Public Utility District turf buyback program.

By Kathryn Reed

House projects are never as simple as one would like them to be. They often mushroom into something larger than originally anticipated. Even removing sod has had this outcome.

I thought pulling out the grass, creating a path to where I

split wood and planting foliage would be no big deal. Wrong. Related side projects are taking unexpected time and unbudgeted money.

South Tahoe Public Utility District reimburses for turf removal, not all the other projects. Obviously that makes sense, it's just something to consider before embarking on such an endeavor. Tying all the pieces together isn't always as straightforward as one imagines at the get-go. At some point, though, the cash flow spigot runs dry and priorities have to be determined.

My TRPA-designed drip line doesn't do a great job on erosion control. And it's just not pretty. Well, it is better than the dead grass. Still, though, it won't work with the new landscape design. Plus, I'm going to repurpose those rocks as part of a dry riverbed to catch the excess water from the rain barrel.

Gutters will replace the drip line. I've learned not many businesses install gutters in South Lake Tahoe.

Winter's Electric does through a subsidiary company. They want me to install a fascia board before the gutters are installed. They don't do that type of work. Luckily, my friend and neighbor Bob does all sorts of stuff like this. The purpose is that it will be a surface for the gutter to attach to. Considering a ton of runoff comes from this section of the roof the reinforcement is necessary.



This is the pile of **sod** from the 3.5 rows removed by the homeowner. South Tahoe Refuse will pick it up if it's bagged or in cans – but not like this.

The river bed is “required” because the rain barrel is likely to fill up fast and I’ll need a place to direct the water in a logical manner – meaning away from the house and so it doesn’t flood the newly designed yard. Plus, this will filter it a bit.

Rain barrels come in all types of material, sizes and design. Unfortunately, I came up short on my shopping trip this week to Home Depot. They only have them online. I still need to order them. (I’m buying two. The other will go on the downspout from the back gutter.) I’m leaning toward one that allows plants to grow on the top.

What to plant is almost as overwhelming as to what the design should look like. I’ve gone on the South Shore **garden tour** (which this year was hosted by the master gardeners) numerous times. What a fabulous way to get ideas about what to do in your own garden – ideas about plants, colors, design, mulch and other things to add to the yard.

It does seem like the people who open their yards to these

tours spend a ton of hours each week working on them. I don't have that kind of time nor the desire to find it. That in itself is something to consider.

Many people have yard art or other things that make the space inviting. I've decided to move my chairlift swing so it faces the California Tahoe Conservancy lot instead of the driveway-street. That is my biggest non-foliage item – at least for now.

My friend Mike came over to talk about turning a couple rounds of wood into a bench. He pointed out the need to pay attention to the length so they are about the same and not wanting them to be tilted. Kim wisely suggested using snowboards or skis as the bench part. Mike has the tools to drill them into the wood and cut the skis if necessary.

I envision this going near the wood cutting area so I can rest. Plus, it ties into the ski lift theme of sorts.

I've removed the wood along the edge of the yard. I don't want any barriers like that again. The rocks and wood stepping stones near the front door have also been moved. This is more area to contend with that has nothing to do with the turf buyback.

I also want to make some changes to the backyard that will necessitate removing some plants-bushes. I'd like to transplant them to the front. This will spur me to get on that project soon so it's not an ugly mess. At least it's behind a fence in case I don't get to it soon.