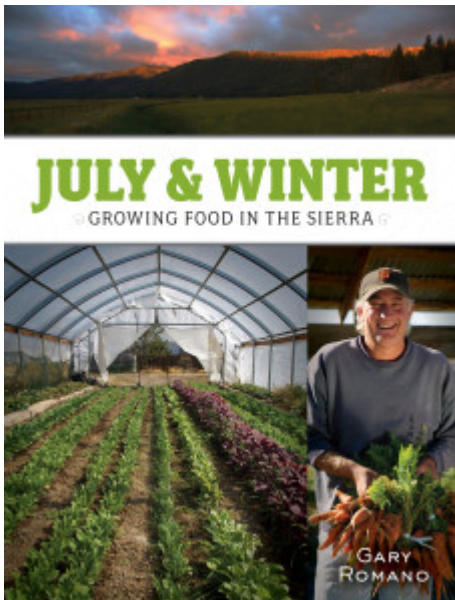


'July & Winter' simplifies gardening in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Stop making excuses for not growing produce in Lake Tahoe. There is finally a book that seems to answer every question imaginable.

"July & Winter: Growing Food in the Sierra" is Gary Romano's tell-all book about gardening at higher elevations. The book came out last year; published by Meyers-based Bona Fide Books.



Now is the time to start reading this book if you intend to be digging in the soil later this year. For one, it's not a quick read because it is really a reference book. It's nothing like Romano's book "Why I Farm" that came out in 2013. That was more of a memoir. "July & Winter" is a how-to book.

It's not just for those in Tahoe, though. The wealth of information is pertinent to anyone living at higher elevation – this includes the foothills.

"In any attempt to farm or garden in the Sierra, the consideration of extending your season is a must. Because of our short season, from 30 to 80 days at elevations above 4,000 feet, trying to grow any crops other than cool-season crops from June through September is difficult without some kind of season extension structure such as cold frames, hoop houses, or green houses," Romano writes.

While Romano is a farmer, he is speaking to the masses in this latest book. It's for the average person who wants to grow their own produce. Romano doesn't glamorize the process. In fact, in some ways I felt exhausted at times reading the book. He made me realize why my feeble attempts at growing vegetables at 6,200 feet have not been all that successful. At the same time he has taught me how to change the outcome.

So many pages are dog-eared and passages underlined. I don't usually like to deface a book, but at the same time I think reference books should be written in. One day my own notes about how things worked will fill the margins.

To me, this is one of those books that is better in print than electronic form because you might want it in the backyard as you construct the hoop house, or in the garage as you assemble parts. An index makes it easy to tap into a specific topic.

Romano doesn't hold back in his opinion about how to do things and what to use (never use Round Up), but he is also humble as he shares what has gone wrong for him.

It's not just what to plant and how to do it. Topics include dealing with wildlife, fruit trees, soil, water management and more.

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Notes:

- "July & Winter" is available **online** for \$19.95.