Abundance of color, creativity dominate garden tour yards

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – If there were any doubt about summer's arrival in Lake Tahoe, one need only go on next weekend's annual garden tour on the South Shore. Lush green lawns and plants are accentuated by splashes of color representing all shades of the rainbow.

Creative water features prove these aren't just something flatlanders can have. Meandering paths create an artistic flow to the outdoor oasis. Vegetable gardens are robust – enough so that if they pooled their resources the neighbors could establish their own farmers' market.

Russell Crawford has a knack for creating unique features for his yard. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The Lake Tahoe Historical Society's seventh annual garden tour

is June 31. This is the society's major fundraiser, with most of the money being used at the museum in the middle of South Lake Tahoe by the senior center.

While many garden tours have professionals come in and work the yards, the eight on this tour are created and maintained by the homeowners.

"Our theme is anyone could do it," said Lynne Bajuk, this year's organizer.

Though it's true these eight houses have at least one gardener in the family, the truth is many left this reporter exhausted just looking at them. Some of the land is on more than an acre. At least one house had a riding lawn mower. Not all are retirees, so odds are a ton of time after work is spent in the garden.

Each has a uniqueness, with the overriding theme being a tremendous amount of pride and love for their property.

Two weeks before the public tour, organizers and homeowners take a look at the gardens, see what the flow will be like for the public, and answer questions the owners may have about the event.

Many of the owners pointed to the long winter delaying growth. Everything seems to be about three to four weeks late this summer. Some complained of voles – but looking around, their complaints seemed minimal compared to non-garden tour yards.

A sampling of the gardens

Without giving away all the details about the gardens, *Lake Tahoe News* will give you a sneak preview of seven of the eight yards.

Beverly Pevarnick is quick to point out it's her husband, Dennis, who gets most of the credit for their expansive yard that backs to Lake Tahoe Golf Course. There is little

delineation between their backyard and the greens.

No golf balls have hit the house, but plenty end up in the yard.

Islands of flowers, shrubbery and boulders break up the nearly acre lot that is full of grass, making a ride on the lawnmower something of an adventure.

It’s the back yard of Jerry and Marcia Gaudet that is full of raised planter beds. He starts most things with seeds.

A greenhouse is where the tomatoes start. Silicon oil on the windows allows them to expand in the heat so the ventilation is automatic.

Various lettuces, strawberries, beans, onions, beats, carrots, snap peas, potatoes and other veggies fill the planter boxes.

“I make my own compost,” Jerry Gaudet said of the soil mixture.

An abundance of bears have come by their Bakersfield Street house. In the last couple years, cottontail rabbits have been visiting the garden.

Some might say it’s cheating that Diane and Chip Morrill’s garden is on the tour because she works for Aspen Hollow nursery.

Dirt from the old Office Depot site was transformed into a mound in their front yard that features a tremendous amount of plants, a wooden stairway that seems to lead to nowhere when in fact a water feature is at that top that looks like a mini stream. This water eventually forms a waterfall dropping into a small basin.

Their robust asparagus plants caught the eye of several of the gardeners on the preview tour.

The back is full of flowers from seeds Diane Morrill threw out, along with beds of veggies.

The accents in the garden at Russell and Judy Crawford's are mesmerizing. Judy Crawford's stenciling on part of fence above a dresser that has plants in the drawers is eye-catching.

The backyard expands in the lot they bought after moving into the house decades ago.

"Every time she watches HGTV I go 'oh, no'," Crawford said of his wife.

Walt and Debi Shild's 1.25 acres feels like much more than that. It goes on and on – in a good way. On the far side is the chicken coop, where they can get 15-20 eggs a day in the summer. On the opposite side is pea gravel with a fire pit and wildflowers.

In between are two distinct sections – one is the veggie garden, the other lawn and other vegetation.

A short walk from there is the garden of Rick and Laray Taylor.

On this nearly acre lot, the Taylors have 360 feet of riverfront property. Laray Taylor said only once has the Upper Truckee River caused her concern – during the 1997 flood when it came close to being at the edge of their lawn.

Wild aspens in the landscape would make this an ideal fall garden tour spot.

Next door is the home of Sue and Bob Novasel. Pool or river? That's the tough question they have to ask themselves.

With the steep grade from the house to the river, it must make mowing a challenge. It flattens out at the bottom where two chairs sit; looking over what is now a mildly flowing river.

Tour details:

July 31 from 10am-4pm. All gardens are in El Dorado County. Five of the eight gardens are on land once owned by the Celio family. Tickets are $20 and may be purchased at the museum at 3058 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, and at Aspen Hollow, Tahoe Outdoor Living, Nel’s and SunBasin. Tickets are limited and last year it sold-out. For more information, call (530) 541.5458.

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