# Gardeners show off what can be done in Lake Tahoe yards

**By Kathryn Reed**

Whimsical, practical, lush, inviting, colorful – that's what people will find as they meander through the six gardens on the annual Lake Tahoe Historical Society Garden tour.

Concentrated mostly near the Y in South Lake Tahoe, the property owners have been working hard to get their gardens in tip-top shape for the July 31 event. With such a long, wet spring, it means not as much color in some yards because blooms are late this year. But it also means irises are still out, which is unusual.

The Piscitellis have more than plants decorating their yard. Photos/Kathryn Reed

"Everything is late," Lynne Bajuk, with the historical society, said walking through one of the gardens during the preview.

Three of the six gardens belong to people who are or were

employed by Lake Tahoe Community College. A fourth LTCC gardener was to be on the tour, but Trout Creek flooded the yard, which prevented the homeowner from being able to participate.

A little bit of everything is presented this year. One yard in Tahoe Keys is an example of what can be done with an extremely small space. It's a good showpiece for people who don't want to spend much time in their yard.

Creeping thyme acts as a ground cover, lupine brings color, as will the ragosa when it blooms.

Another yard on the water is just the opposite – open, sunny, and more work. It's a bit more traditional, with several potted plants. Jim Duke said his back still hurts from all the bending over.

Vibrant orange poppies sprout from the rocks near the water's edge. Taking a peek from the dock, it would be a reason to paddle through the Keys – as kayakers were doing that day – to get a view of all the backyards along the canals.

Once the daises come out, this yard will be even more eye-catching.

Nearby, but not on the water, is a home in the Keys with a yard that definitely takes a lot of work.

Jim and Pam Jennett have lived here for eight years. It's impossible to tell they started with a dirt lot.

Jennifer Cressy with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District described their yard as a "classic cottage garden."

Erigonium – a purple thistle that looks like a miniature artichoke plant – is one of the more rare plants on the tour. The back is full of flowers, but not overdone.

"So much comes up naturally," Pam Jennett said. "We are always

needing to thin things. All of the columbine is volunteer.”

Bearded tongue dot the front yard, along with an array of other plants circling the lawn.

Tony and Shelley Piscitelli for 10 years have been working on various aspects of their yard.

“There are a lot of fun things in the yard,” Tony Piscitelli said as he took people from the front to the back.

Old bicycles and a Tonka truck have been incorporated into the yard in a decorative, creative manner. Reusing things is what they like to do.

A greenhouse helps be able to keep things alive through the winter and to be able to have color in their yard sooner than a lot of neighbors.

A couple miles away Becca Harper Cunningham also uses a greenhouse to work her magic. That’s the only way a lemon tree can survive in Lake Tahoe. She has the largest vegetable garden in the tour – with tomatoes that are already red, beans, broccoli, lettuce, asparagus and Swiss chard.

Her hollyhock is about 3-feet tall, but by August when it’s blooming will have doubled in size.

“This is all play. I have a hard time leaving the yard,” Cunningham said.

Tickets for the July 31 tour, which is the historical society’s main fundraiser, are $20. They may be purchased at the museum (3058 Lake Tahoe Blvd.) or at Aspen Hollow, Nels Garden Center, Sun Basin and Tahoe Outdoor Living.

Music and refreshments will be served at the Lake Tahoe Community College demonstration garden.

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