

Flower gardens can be low maintenance

By Melinda Myers

Grow a beautiful flower garden with minimal care by investing a bit of time at the start of the season to reduce on-going care.

Always match flowers to the growing conditions and the care you are willing to provide. Low maintenance plants need minimal or no deadheading and staking. This means you'll be growing good-looking plants with little effort on your part. And if the plants are suited to the growing conditions and resistant to common pests you'll be doing less work managing insect and disease problems.

Further reduce your workload by selecting self-cleaning or free flowering annuals and perennials and those bred for long bloom and compact growth. You'll enjoy more colorful flowers with less pruning and grooming.



Rudbeckia Prairie Sun and Ageratum Blue Horizon make a nice combination, adding

plenty of color to the garden.

Photo/Melinda Myers LLC

Ageratum, angelonia, calibrochoa and many of the newer petunia cultivars are just a few of the annuals that do not need regular deadheading for continual bloom. Include perennials like willow amsonia, bugbane, Solomon seal, turtlehead and sedum autumn joy for lower maintenance and big results.

Prepare the soil and provide proper fertilization before planting. Work several inches of compost or other organic matter into the top 8 to 12 inches of soil to improve drainage and water holding ability. Incorporate a low nitrogen organic fertilizer at the same time. The slow release formulation provides needed nutrients throughout most if not all of the season. Plus, it promotes slow steady growth that won't interfere with flowering, is less susceptible to pests and is more drought tolerant.

Properly space the plants, making sure they have sufficient room to reach their full size. Overcrowding means you will be thinning or dividing plants more often or battling disease problems instead of enjoying the full beauty the plants provide.

Consider removing flowers on annuals at planting. This allows plants to focus energy on establishing roots instead of flowers. Can't bear to do this? Then remove the flowers on every other plant or every other row. Then a week or two later remove the flowers on the remaining plants. You will soon be rewarded with full compact plants that will produce more flowers throughout the season.

Pinch back long and leggy transplants. Use a hard pinch to remove the tip and several inches of stem. Use your pruners or fingers to remove stems just above a set of leaves. The remaining plant will still look good while you wait for new leaves and stems to grow and produce new blooms.

Encourage branching on single stemmed plants with a soft pinch. Remove just the uppermost portion of the stem where the leaves and tip are starting to develop. Soon you will have a well branched plant and more blossoms.

Improve plant posture and reduce the need for staking with early season pruning. Keep mums and asters compact by pinching them back to six inches throughout June to encourage compact growth. Eliminate floppy growth and the need for staking on late bloomers like Boltonia, Autumn Joy sedum, Russian sage and Heliopsis

Revive catmint and perennial salvia that flop open in the center with pruning. Cut flopping plants back halfway once or twice a season as needed.

And don't forget to mulch. Covering the soil surface with an inch or two of shredded leaves, evergreen needles/pine straw or other organic material will conserve moisture, suppress weeds and improve the soil as they decompose.

Always water new plantings often enough to keep the top few inches of soil moist. Once established water thoroughly and only as needed. This encourages drought tolerant roots, so you'll need to do less watering in the future.

With proper planning, plant selection and soil preparation you can keep your ongoing care to a minimum. That means more time to relax and enjoy your beautiful garden.

Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of horticulture experience and has written more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening" and "Midwest Gardener's Handbook".

DCSD board faces \$1.7 mil. shortfall

Douglas County School District needs to find \$1.7 million in revenue or expenses to cut before May 18 when the board is expected to approve the 2016-17 budget.

At this week's meeting Holly Luna, who heads the finance department, gave the bad news to the board members.

Funding for a reading grant is ending, which accounts for about \$1 million of the shortfall. Enroll is off as well.

At the April 12 meeting no one brought up the idea of cutting staff to save money in what is projected to be a \$56.69 million budget.

The next meeting is in Minden on May 18 at 5pm.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

EDC resident launches robo calls for roads



El Dorado County has warnings on View Circle on the South Shore because the roads are so bad. Photo/Susan Wood

By Kathryn Reed

Tony Russo is prepared to unleash another round of robo calls targeting El Dorado County supervisors if they don't start funding roads.

"If the supervisors address the road fund and maintenance issues, I won't do it again. If they don't, I will," the El Dorado Hills resident told *Lake Tahoe News*.

For one day calls were placed to the supervisors' districts telling residents what a horrible job the electeds are doing and that it's time the public made their concerns known.

Russo enlisted the help of Californians Against Wasteful Spending to place the calls. They cost about 5 cents each.

His road on the West Slope has not been touched since he moved there in 1994.

"When it rains, water pours out of the manholes," Russo said.

Roads throughout the county are in bad shape. With Tahoe finally having a winter, the freeze-thaw cycle and beating

from snowplows has created potholes that can lead to the need for vehicles to be realigned.

Supervisor Sue Novasel at a Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe meeting on April 13 briefly touched on the subject. She told the group the robo calls mainly had to do with another supervisor.

The truth is at the Feb. 23 board meeting **she voted against** using General Fund money for roads even though this has been the norm for years. The chief administrative officer recommended this course of action even though he admitted at the meeting to not having read the budget.

On the flip side, Novasel told her Soroptimist sisters that taking money out of the General Fund is being looked at.

At the April 26 board meeting the supervisors are scheduled to get an update on items that likely won't be funded for the next fiscal year. Roads are expected to be on the list because that is how CAO Larry Combs wants things and the supervisors follow his recommendations instead of being the ones to set policy like they were elected to do.

Burning Man ticket sale was broken after all

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

Immediately after Burning Man 2016 main sale tickets sold out in late March, Burners were certain that something had gone wrong during the sale.

And, although Burning Man denied that anything had gone wrong

at the time, something had.

In short, the online “waiting room” was a flop.

The waiting room, which had been set up last minute to hinder an overload of the ticketing website, benefited no one other than 3,500 people who signed on before the waiting room even opened. Of the 30,000 people who bought out all of the tickets in a half-hour, that was more than a tenth of them. Tickets cost \$390 each in the main sale, excluding the ticket fees and taxes.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Staples in South Lake Tahoe is closing June 5.
- The annual Community Clean Up Day in North Lake Tahoe and Truckee will be June 4, 9am-1pm, rain or shine. For more info, email info@northtahoebusiness.org
- Tina Shannon, management analyst for South Lake Tahoe, and her husband have bought the restaurant at Lake Tahoe Airport. They are going to make it a sports bar. The contract is on the April 19 City Council agenda.
- The South Lake Tahoe Outrigger Canoe Club is having an introductory meeting for adults and youth on April 30 at 4pm at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center.
- Truckee Town Council is having a budget strategic planning session on April 18 from 4-8pm at the Town Hall.

Barton Hospital scores well with patients

Based on patient surveys conducted between April 2014 and March 2015, Barton Memorial Hospital earned a four star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

“This is a new program that CMS has rolled out to compare hospitals with the same survey and criteria,” explained Katie Shea, Barton’s patient experience coordinator.

Five stars is the highest rating. Barton received three stars last time.

Barton is in the top 14 percent of the 298 hospitals in California that were assessed. Facilities across the country that are Medicare certified acute care took part in the survey.

Nearly three-quarters of the patients surveyed rated Barton a 9 or 10 for overall hospital experience. Barton scored well in categories that assessed patient satisfaction, including communication with nurses and physicians, staff responsiveness, and room and bathroom cleanliness.

“Barton employees and physicians value the patient input from these surveys and has made a tremendous effort to improve the patient experience and quality of care,” Shea told *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Hiking changes our brains for the better

By Meredith Carey, Conde Nast Traveler

Life isn't a walk in the park, but according to a handful of recent studies, hiking may make it at least a little easier.

We've all experienced how time outdoors can clear your mind and ease stress, but there's new evidence that taking a hike can do much more: it can change our brains. From lessening negativity to boosting creativity, hiking in fresh air actually boosts brain power and can help certain parts of the brain grow.

The study found that even though the technology helped get backpackers from point A to point B, it actually was so distracting that it lowered their cognitive function.

[Read the whole story](#)

Talk to delve into basics of local government

Tahoe Regional Young Professionals is launching an event series called Tahoe Town Hall. The inaugural event will take place in the Student Center at the Lake Tahoe Community College on April 20 from 6-7:30pm.

The free talk will feature a panel discussion about the creation and governance of local ordinances and how South Lake Tahoe's Vacation Rental Ordinance and plastic bag ban came to be.

Panelists will include representatives from South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Agency reps will explain how jurisdictions propose local rules, how they become law, and how they are enforced.

A moderated question-and-answer session will follow the panel presentations.

Senate passes Nevada Native Nations Land Act

By Juan Carlos Flores, KRNV-TV

The Senate has passed the bipartisan Nevada Native Nations Land Act.

The legislation would transfer land into a trust for six Nevada tribes: the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe of the Fort McDermitt Indian Reservation, the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe, the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe.

Read the whole story

Author, former cop to talk human trafficking

John Vanek, a retired lieutenant from the San Jose Police Human Trafficking Task Force, will discuss his book "The Essential Abolitionist: What You Need to Know about Human Trafficking & Modern Slavery" on April 26.

He will address the most commonly asked questions and topics surrounding human trafficking and the challenges involved in fighting this crime and assisting its victims. In addition, he will examine the myths and misconceptions related to modern slavery.

This event sponsored by the South Lake Tahoe Friends of the Library starts at 6pm.

Vanek's book will be available for purchase. South Lake Tahoe Library is at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.