Raised beds can make gardening easier

By Melinda Myers

Don’t let a sore back, bad knees or lousy soil stop you from gardening. Elevate your garden for easier access and better gardening results.

The simple act of creating a raised bed improves drainage in heavy clay soil. Add in some organic matter to further increase drainage and improve the water holding ability for sandy soils.

And if your soil is beyond repair or you don’t want to wait, a raised garden allows you to bring in quality soil and create a garden right on top of the existing soil or even paved areas.

The quality soil and easy access will allow for dense plantings without pathways. This means greater yields, up to four times more, in raised beds than in-ground gardens.

Raised beds also help conserve water. You’ll concentrate your growing efforts in smaller areas and that means less water wasted. Increase the benefit by using soaker hoses or drip irrigation in order to concentrate water application to the soil nearest the plants, right where it is needed.

Make your raised bed a comfortable height. Elevating the garden minimizes bending and kneeling. Design raised beds in corners or edges suited for sitting or areas narrow enough to set a garden bench alongside for easy access.

Design raised gardens so they are narrow enough for gardeners to easily reach all plants growing within the garden. Or include steppers or pathways if creating larger raised garden areas.

Add a mowing strip around the edge of the raised bed. A narrow strip of mulch or pavers set level with the soil surface keep the area tidy and eliminate the need for hand trimming.

Select a material suited to your landscape design. Wood, brick and stones have long been used to create raised beds. Consider using materials that are long-lasting and easy to assemble, like a paver stone. These stone sections can be set right on the ground, fit together easily, and can be arranged and stacked to make planters the size, shape and height desired.

Start a raised bed garden by measuring and marking the desired size and shape. Remove the existing grass and level the area. For taller raised gardens edge the bed, cut the grass short and cover with newspaper or cardboard prior to filling with soil. Be sure to follow directions for the system being installed.

Once the raised bed is complete, fill it with quality soil. Calculate the volume of soil needed by multiplying the length times the width times the height of the raised bed, making sure all measurements are in feet. Convert the cubic feet measurement to cubic yards by dividing it by 27 (the number of cubic feet in a cubic yard). Don’t let the math overwhelm you, most topsoil companies and garden center staff can help you with the calculations. Just be sure to have the raised bed dimensions handy when you order your soil.

The best part is that this one time investment of time and effort will pay off with years of gardening success.

Melinda Myers is a gardening expert, TV/radio host, author and columnist whoe has more than 30 years of horticulture experience and has written more than 20 gardening books.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Brooke

Brooke is a very sweet dog, just 1-year-old and full of life.

However, she needs a special home. Brooke is deaf, so she needs an understanding, patient, and caring new family to take care of her. She is a nice dog who loves to go for walks and is quite affectionate. She's about 45 pounds, and likes to climb fences.

Brooke has been at the shelter for over a month, and had been at a shelter in Reno before that. we hope she is able to find her new home at Tahoe soon.

Brooke is spayed, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go online or to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go

online.

– Karen Kuentz

Cal-OSHA investigating Tahoe Keys Marina

By Kathryn Reed

Cal-OSHA officials were at Tahoe Keys Marina earlier this month looking to see if the South Lake Tahoe facility is in compliance. It's not.

"We are working on getting all of our forklifts and equipment up to standard," a marina employee who didn't want to be named told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We are trying to upgrade everything to get everything up to standard so we have a good summer."

Marina General Manager Robert Spinnato did not return multiple calls.



Per Cal-OSHA, forklifts are not supposed to be used by Tahoe Keys Marina staff. Photo/LTN

Despite the state ban on using certain equipment, a source close to the marina told *Lake Tahoe News* that employees are continuing to use the equipment and did so last week to unload a handful of boats.

Boats can still launch and the Fresh Ketch restaurant is open. But the marina is not supposed to be using some of its equipment because employees have not been properly trained and inspections have not regularly been completed per state law.

OSHA is reportedly looking at service manuals to know when and how equipment was maintained.

“We have an open inspection with them. We don’t release information until the investigation is complete,” William Estakhri with Cal-OSHA told *Lake Tahoe News*. “That is usually six months.”

The state Occupational Safety and Health Administration opens an investigation when an employee files a complaint, there has been an injury or a complaint has been filed. Cal-OSHA is designed to protect workers from health and safety hazards in the workplace.

Peter Milton, spokesman for Cal-OSHA, told *Lake Tahoe News* that every business is supposed to have an injury and illness prevention program. They are also required to have a training and safety program.

It is possible the marina will be fined if any infractions are found at the end of the investigation.

The marina uses a 1979 travel lift to haul boats out. It is rated at a maximum capacity of 69,000 pounds, but has been used to transport vessels weighing more than that, according to a boat owner who didn’t want to be named.

The marina is also having to deal with a lake level that will be unseasonably low this year because of the drought. While an

employee said the paperwork for a dredging permit has been submitted, the permitting agency said that is not true.

Alan Miller with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board told *Lake Tahoe News* his office has spoken with a consultant for the marina, but no application has been submitted. He added that one is expected this week.

Lahontan has 30 days to review the permit to make sure it is complete. It's possible a permit could be issued within two weeks.

Miller added that he is expecting the application to be multifaceted and to also include chemical treatments.

The Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association is responsible for the main channel that homeowners use. The organization has not filed for a dredging permit, according to Miller.

Opinion: Calif. not treating taxpayers fairly

By George Runner

Did you know that if the California takes your money in the form of an illegal tax or fee, you might not be able to get it back?

I was outraged when I first learned if a taxpayer pays a tax or fee that is later found to be unconstitutional or illegal in court, the government does not necessarily have to refund their money.



George Runner

Currently, taxpayers are only eligible to receive refunds if they have exhausted all of their “administrative appeals remedies,” even if the tax they paid is later declared illegal or unconstitutional.

In order for taxpayers to exhaust their “administrative appeals remedies” they must file a timely refund claim with the proper agency. The time period to file a refund claim is different for each tax and fee program, ranging anywhere from 30 days to several years.

That’s right; your state government will keep any and all money it illegally took from you, unless you have already jumped through several confusing administrative hoops – even hoops that you were never aware of.

That’s why this legislative session, I am proud to sponsor legislation to change this situation by extending important, common-sense protections to taxpayers. Two identical measures, AB2510 and SB1327, would require the state to provide a full refund to all individuals who paid a tax later declared unconstitutional or illegal.

These bills would require the state to automatically issue refunds to taxpayers who were illegally taxed. It would also open up an additional appeals period of one year after a state tax is declared unconstitutional, giving taxpayers a chance to apply for the refunds they deserve.

Our legislation would apply to state taxes and fees paid by both businesses and individuals, and would affect people all

across California.

For example, these bills would apply to the controversial fire prevention fee, paid by nearly 800,000 rural homeowners every year. Even if the class action lawsuit currently challenging the fire fee is successful, only taxpayers who filed appeals within 30 days of the date on their bills would be eligible for refunds. Under SB1327 and AB2510, every fire fee payer would receive a refund.

Businesses and large taxpayers would also benefit from these bills becoming law. For example, a number of years ago the Board of Equalization overstated the property values of a number of power plants. One of the plants, Elk Hills Power, sued the BOE and eventually won, resulting in a partial refund of the taxes it paid. However, several other plants were deemed ineligible to receive a refund because they did not protest the original assessment.

In my opinion, this is just wrong.

According to SB1327 author state Sen. Steve Knight: “When government makes a mistake, they need to do the right thing. This bill would return illegally collected taxes to the taxpayers… it’s just common sense.”

Assemblyman Donald Wagner, author of AB2510, adds: “When California taxpayers have been illegally forced to pay a tax, it should not be their responsibility to fill out paperwork that they may or may not know exists, in order to recoup this money. The State needs to reimburse the taxpayers as quickly and painlessly as possible – it is not our money.”

It is criminal that California can keep money it illegally collects from its citizens. Anyone who in good faith pays what ends up being an illegal tax should get their money back. It’s as simple as that.

George Runner represents more than 9 million Californians as a

taxpayer advocate and elected member of the state Board of Equalization.

Tahoe assemblyman gets stent after chest pains

By Laura Myers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada Assemblyman Jim Wheeler had angioplasty on Saturday and doctors placed two stents to open his blocked arteries, his campaign manager said.

The procedure happened after Wheeler, 60, reported chest and arm pains on Friday and early Saturday. But his cardiologist said he did not suffer a heart attack, said Wheeler's campaign manager, Steve Donahue.

"He had blocked arteries," but the problem was caught before he could suffer a heart attack, Donahue said.

"He'll be able to start walking his district in a week, the doctor said," according to Donahue.

Wheeler, R-Gardnerville, is running for re-election to Assembly District 39, which covers Lake Tahoe in Douglas County, Storey County and part of Lyon County.

Read the whole story

Backpack full of food helps kids in need



Bags of food are given to students in need in Lake Tahoe Unified School District. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

The one-person Page & Sage program has evolved into a service club project.

Paula Peterson started the food giveaway program with a $1,000 grant from American Century Championship, the celeb golf tourney in Stateline. It is now a project of Tahoe Douglas Rotary, to which Peterson belongs.

“I started with backpacks and a book for five kids at South Tahoe Middle School that first year and started to involve my fellow Rotarians,” Peterson told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We then got another grant last summer, as well as donations from Rotarians and moved to 20 kids this school year. Then, with more donations from the Rotary Club and a private foundation, and food for some through the El Dorado County Food Bank we moved to 20 at STMS, five at STHS and 34 at Tahoe Valley.”

She gave a presentation about the program last week to Lake Tahoe Unified School District’s board of education.

Individual backpacks have single serving food items and a book. The idea is to feed the stomach and the brain.

“The food bag is made up of things that kids can serve themselves should it be necessary. They love the cup of noodles,” Peterson said.

Food is stored at Temple Bat Yam, where the backpacks are put together.

“We are now looking for a committee of interested community members to take Page & Sage to the next level,” Peterson said.

To reach 10 percent of the students in the district who receive a free or reduced lunch 230 backpacks would need to be made each week. It costs about $7 per child, per week for a book and food.

Food and cash donations (checks may be made out to the Tahoe Douglas Rotary Foundation) are accepted by going online or calling 530.307.0909. Tahoe Valley Elementary School is having a food drive the first two weeks of May for the program.

Here is a list of suggested food items:

Single use oatmeal, Pop Tarts, single use cereal, yogurt cereal bars, fruit cereal bars, single fruit cups, kid-friendly canned veggies (as in no beets), canned beans, canned fruit, canned soup, canned meals (raviolis, Spaghettios, chili, stew), canned tuna, canned chicken, single use juices, shelf stable milk, mac and cheese, boxed grains, Cup of Noodles and Top Ramen. Individually wrapped snacks such as fruit snacks, crackers, granola bars, nuts, dried fruits, trail mix and raisins are also welcome. Also needed are new or gently used books for grades K-12.

U.S. middle class no longer the wealthiest in the world

By David Leonhardt and Kevin Quealy, New York Times

The American middle class, long the most affluent in the world, has lost that distinction.

While the wealthiest Americans are outpacing many of their global peers, a New York Times analysis shows that across the lower- and middle-income tiers, citizens of other advanced countries have received considerably larger raises over the last three decades.

After-tax middle-class incomes in Canada — substantially behind in 2000 — now appear to be higher than in the United States. The poor in much of Europe earn more than poor Americans.

The numbers, based on surveys conducted over the past 35 years, offer some of the most detailed publicly available comparisons for different income groups in different countries over time. They suggest that most American families are paying a steep price for high and rising income inequality.

Read the whole story

Brown issues second drought proclamation

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown on Friday signed a sweeping new emergency drought proclamation, cutting red tape for a variety of government functions to help water agencies find new supplies, and to press the public to use water carefully.

“I call on every city, every community, every Californian to conserve water in every way possible,” Brown said in a statement.

The governor first proclaimed a drought emergency Jan. 17. This second proclamation goes further by waiving compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and the state water code for a number of actions, including water transfers, wastewater treatment projects, habitat improvements for winter-run Chinook salmon imperiled by the drought and curtailment of water rights.

The order also suspends competitive bidding requirements for drought-related projects undertaken by a number of state agencies, including the departments of Water Resources, Fish and Wildlife, and Public Health.

Read the whole story

Letter: Gypsy looking to return to the stage

 **To the community,**

Gypsy became a household name in the 1980s after being discovered at La Cage Aux Folles cabaret in Beverly Hills. He was discovered by Mel Brooks.

His fame in Lake Tahoe came 20 years later in February 2000, when James “Gypsy” Haake opened Carnival Cabaret in Lake Tahoe at the Horizon Casino Resort.

Gypsy, as most friends and fans know her, starred in that show for four years. The show became the longest running show in the history of Lake Tahoe. It was so popular, the Horizon Casino management asked for it to return in September 2008. It ran for another three years until January 2011.

After his fourth retirement from stage, Gypsy is ready to return to work at 82. Along with several partners, he is raising capital to open his own showroom in Palm Springs. Currently, he has raised money from a private donor, however, he is currently crowd funding to raise additional money.

We need your support. You can visit Gypsy on his Facebook page or by going to this website to donate.

Any donation is acceptable, this is a crowd funding scenario, the larger the crowds, the less your donation can be.

Help put this actor and amazing performer back to work in his final request, to star in a showroom named after him.

I was 19 years old when I met gypsy and now I am 45, and he is

82 still wearing stilettos, and healthy, plus extremely active.

Dan Gore, Carnival Cabaret producer

Calif. courts strike down local sex-offender ordinances

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

The California Supreme Court has left intact a lower-court ruling that invalidates local ordinances aimed at restricting the movements of registered sex offenders in dozens of cities statewide.

The court's decision Wednesday not to hear a case involving a Southern California sex offender means city and county ordinances banning such offenders from public parks and other public areas no longer may be enforced, attorneys say. Instead, a state law governing where sex offenders on parole may live now stands as the main restriction.

"If I read the tea leaves correctly, it's probably dead everywhere in California," Susan Kang Schroeder, chief of staff to Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas said Thursday.

Read the whole story