# 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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# Recession spurs increase in employee productivity

**By Bill O’Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal**

A recent memo to salaried managers at the Grand Sierra Resort underscores a fact of life during recession: Businesses are boosting productivity out of existing staff instead of hiring more workers.

The memo, a copy of which was faxed anonymously to the Reno Gazette-Journal on July 6, directs all salaried managers to make sure they work 50 to 60 hours a week and to document actual hours for their superiors.

Bill Wright, president of the Grand Sierra Resort, confirmed the email memo but said the intent is to ensure that the Reno hotel-casino’s 150-plus managers are “visible” during the special events-filled summer season.

“We launched our pool party, we’ve had three concerts. It’s important (employees) see managers around,” Wright said. “We’re ensuring a consistency of service. It’s critical we, as management, need to be here. … This is our peak season, and it’s important to be around.”

But it also speaks to the broader challenge of survival in recession, others said.

**Read the whole story**

# Prescribed burn in Rubicon Bay area

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will carry out prescribed fire operations July 19 near Rubicon Bay.

Operations will be conducted on approximately 20 acres, and will continue through the end of the week.

All prescribed fire operations are dependent on weather and available staffing.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from prescribed fire project areas. Smoke management is part of every prescribed fire burn plan, and efforts will be taken to reduce actual or potential smoke impacts on community areas.

This and other prescribed fire projects are designed to reduce wildfire risks to communities and critical resources.

State and local fire management agencies may also be conducting prescribed fire work during this period.

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# NDOT taking comments on how to pay for roads

The Nevada Department of Transportation will host a public meeting July 21 to gather comments on a study of a potential future fuel tax replacement.

The Vehicle Miles Traveled Fee Study examines alternatives to allow Nevada to continue to fund public roads amid a

transportation funding deficit and changing energy resource issues:

· By 2016, vehicle fuel efficiency will increase to an average 37 miles a gallon and an estimated 20 percent of new vehicles will be alternative fuel vehicles. While an important positive for our environment, this will lead to less road funding collected from fuel taxes per gallon to fund public roads.

· Current funding for road construction, maintenance and operations comes from fuel taxes. Today, due to inflation, these fuel taxes cover approximately half of the road construction, maintenance and operations costs per gallon that they funded when last raised in 1992.

The study, a partnership between NDOT and UNLV and UNR researchers, reviews VMT fees as a potential fuel tax replacement. In this study, participants being charged a fee based on the number of miles driven instead of per-gallon fuel taxes will be simulated. Similar studies are being conducted in other states and by federal agencies.

The meeting will befrom 3:30 to 6:30pm at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center located at 4590 South Virginia St. in Reno.

Comments can also be made before Aug. 12 by email to vmtfeestudy@vmtfeenv.com or by mail at VMT study manager Alauddin Khan, 1263 S. Stewart St., Carson City, NV 89712.

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# TY&FS celebration in Gardnerville

Tahoe Youth & Family Service’s celebrates 40 years on July 23

from noon-5pm at the Gardnerville Drop In Center in the Ranchos.

There will be a family barbecue, popcorn, cotton candy, ice cream cones and bounce house.

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# Fire leaves South Tahoe residents without place to live

A house on Fresno Avenue in South Lake Tahoe sustained about $20,000 in fire damage July 17.

Light smoke was coming from the gable vents and roof area around the chimney when firefighters responded at about 7:30pm.

An electrical malfunction is believed to be the cause, though the investigation is ongoing.

No one was home at the time of the fire. However, the renters were relocated to a hotel because the fire marshal declared the residence at 3033 Fresno Ave. unfit for habitation.

The insulation was removed and two trusses were found to have major damage, one of the trusses had a 3-foot section of the bottom chord burned through, according to firefighters.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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# TRTA hosting 2 backcountry camps

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association will host two backcountry camps Aug. 6-7 and Sept. 3-5.

Both camps will be near the Mt. Rose trailhead of the TRT, at the top of Highway 431. Volunteers of all ages and skill levels are welcome to attend.

The TRTA's backcountry camps are a family friendly way to work on the trail and enjoy the Tahoe outdoor lifestyle. Food will be provided, but in order to offset this cost the camp is $30 for the two-day August camp and $40 for the three-day September camp.

Families are welcome, and children's camping equipment is available upon request.

For more information or to register, call Teresa Crimmens at (775) 298.0239.

Volunteers must bring their own camping equipment, and must wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots and work gloves; bring sunscreen, bug spray and plenty of water. Check the weather reports and bring additional clothing as necessary. The Tahoe Rim Trail Association will provide hard hats and all trail tools.

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# Lake Tahoe vacation rentals

# stabilize; short stays the new norm

**By Rob Sabo, Northern Nevada Business Weekly**

The market for vacation rentals at Lake Tahoe is strengthening and consumers aren't demanding deep price discounts as they did in recent years, property managers say.

However, shorter stays are still the norm.

The market for high-priced rental homes in Lake Tahoe tanked with the national economy as cost-conscious vacationers opted against weeklong trips to the lake, and revenues for property owners fell as price-minded property managers slashed costs in hopes of luring more customers. However, several of Lake Tahoe's largest property management firms say business is on the rise this summer over last year, and customers are unlikely to see further price cuts.

NAVIS, a Bend, Ore. firm that helps vacation property managers track market statistics, says check-ins at Lake Tahoe properties rose 84 percent in the second quarter versus the same period in 2010, but revenues increased just 38 percent in the same time frame.

Susan Grigoleit, accounting manager with the Hauserman Rental Group in Tahoe City, which manages more than 160 properties on the west and north shores of Lake Tahoe, says business is up 30 percent over last summer. The past three years were stagnant for the 45-year-old company.

"It was a real break-even scenario," Grigoleit says. "Our company has been very productive in the Tahoe area for many years, and we have seen growth every year, but the last three years we were barely breaking even. It wasn't what we had gotten used to. We definitely felt the change in the economy

and people not spending money like they used to."

In the midst of the recession, Hauserman Rental Group dropped its pricing on rental homes to match its competitors, and Grigoleit says the company gave further discounts to savvy consumers in order to rent properties. However, this season the company is holding firm on most quoted prices. Last-minute and "shoulder-season" bookings – reservations made after the ski season and before summer kicked off – still enjoyed additional discounts.

"We made price adjustments and had no problem doing that the last couple of years," Grigoleit says. "But we were definitely losing ground, and we decided our rates are still very competitive. Prime time, we are sticking to our rates."

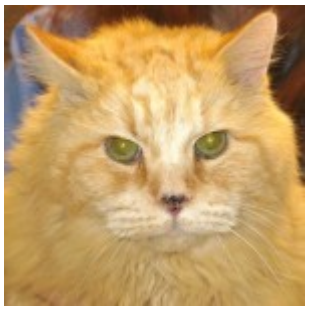
Chuck Maas, marketing consultant to Lake Tahoe Accommodations, the largest property management firm at Lake Tahoe with more than 300 properties and four offices, says bookings are up about 15 percent this year over last. Reservations typically lag in late April, May and early June, and in late September, October and part of November. The typical vacation rental is only occupied between 16 and 24 weeks per year, Maas says.

**Read the whole story**

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# Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Blotter and Stone are two nice older cats whose owner could no longer look after them. They would like to be adopted together to a home without other cats, but they like children and would tolerate a well mannered dog.



They are both fit and healthy (Blotter has a scratch on his nose that is almost healed) and like to play. Their adoption has been sponsored so the fee is only $40 for both of them.

Blotter and Stone are neutered, microchipped, and vaccinated. They are at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

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*

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# Take a class from a pro

**By Merrie Leininger, Reno Gazette-Journal**

If you're looking to learn a new skill, trade, language or craft, Northern Nevada is filled with successful professionals from every background and field who also are terrific resources for anyone willing to learn. Everything from the University of Nevada, Reno, to the Nevada Museum of Art's museum school offers classes taught by experts who practice what they preach.

"People are usually pleasantly surprised when they come to the college," said TMCC's media relations coordinator Kelly Frank. "They don't expect to find experts. But these are people who

want to give back. They’re not doing it to get rich and famous.”

Here are just a few Northern Nevada residents from whom you can gain from the benefit of their experience.

**Read the whole story**