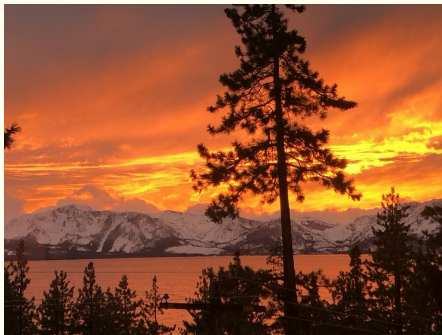




# Advice to Grow by...Ask Us! Master Gardener Program

University of California Cooperative Extension 



## January 2024

As I put together our first UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe newsletter of the year, a genuine snowstorm is happening outside! It is covering my unprepared yard with inches of white powdery snow. This fall, I had to help with a family health crisis which kept me from doing most of those fall chores we write about!

On a 40 degree afternoon after Christmas, I was able to do some clean up, pruning my dogwoods, ninebark bushes, and other perennial shrubs to

(hopefully) prevent them from getting splintered by too much snow. Walking through our neighborhood, I observe that many folks learned a lesson from last year's severe winter and tied up long branches or pruned leggy summer growth. This can still be done, if you can reach your bushes. Be careful walking in your flower beds, so you don't crush your drip emitters, fragile plants hiding under the snow, or any garden ornaments you forgot to round up before the bad weather.

This month, we take you on a virtual visit to the Napa Valley. Remember how easy it is to travel out of the basin and reach warmer climates to get inspiration! We are planning our 2024 events now, highlighted by the Grow Your Own garden festivals. Please stay tuned for more details about these events. Check out Dave Marston's column on the benefits of goats, and learn a few tips on growing herbs indoors, if you yearn to garden right now.

As always, please [contact me](#) if you would like to us to write about what interests you most! Thank you for enjoying this newsletter. Here's to 2024 and more January Tahoe sunsets like this one!

Sandy Gainza  
UCCE Master Gardener Volunteer, Newsletter Editor



## Tahoe Gardeners: Save These Dates!

The 2024 Grow Your Own Festivals are scheduled for three dates and locations this year:

- Friday, May 31 in Tahoe City
- Saturday, June 1 in Truckee
- Saturday, June 8 in South Lake Tahoe

UC Master Gardeners will be at each event offering information on successfully growing summer produce at home in the Tahoe area.

The Grow Your Own committee needs help planning these events. You don't need to be a Master Gardener to help plan, find participants, or resources. Please contact committee chairman [David Long](#) if you can help.

## Upcoming Events

A flyer for a seed swap event. The background is white with various vegetables and herbs scattered around the text. The text is centered and reads: "Master N Gardeners Douglas County Master Gardeners Invites You to Our Annual SEED SWAP join us on January 27, 2024 10am-1pm Douglas County Community Center 1329 Waterloo Ln Gardnerville, NV 89410 Suggested \$5 for Program Support". At the bottom, there is a small disclaimer: "An EEO/AA Institution: Extension is a unit of the University of Nevada, Reno's College of Agriculture, Biotechnology & Natural Resources engaged in Nevada communities, presenting research-based knowledge to address critical community needs. It is a county-state-federal partnership providing practical education to people, businesses and communities".

**Master N Gardeners**  
Douglas County Master Gardeners  
Invites You to Our Annual  
**SEED SWAP**

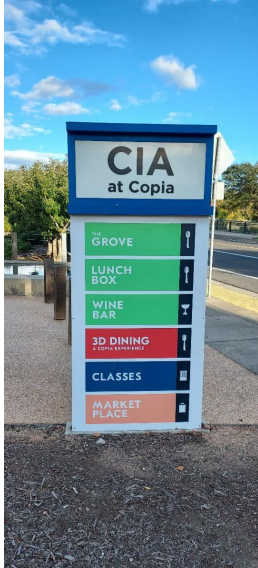
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- [Click here to discover UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County events.](#)
- [This link will take you to the complete list of UCCE Central Sierra events.](#)
- [Click here to discover UCCE Master Gardener of Placer County events.](#)
- [Click here to discover UCCE Master Food Preserver of Central Sierra events.](#)
- [Click here to see a list of University of Nevada Extension events.](#)

### **Culinary Institute of America's Garden at Copia Napa California David Long UCCE Master Gardener**

The Culinary Institute of America's Copia campus is located in Napa California adjacent the Oxbow Public Market Place and around the corner from the world-famous Napa Valley Wine Train's station. The adjoining garden is approximately 2 acres in size, divided into over 30 plots with several rows of fruit trees. The garden is open to the public, with restrictions on picking or eating the produce. The fruits and vegetables being grown are used in the culinary classes, incorporated into the on-site restaurant's



at certain times of the year are offered for sale. All fruits and vegetables are grown using organic gardening practices. Familiarizing student chefs with how herbs, vegetables and fruits are grown, the garden offers the opportunity to observe in-ground appearance of crops, proper harvesting and food handling methods. The garden is also used for private events and occasionally hosts concerts.

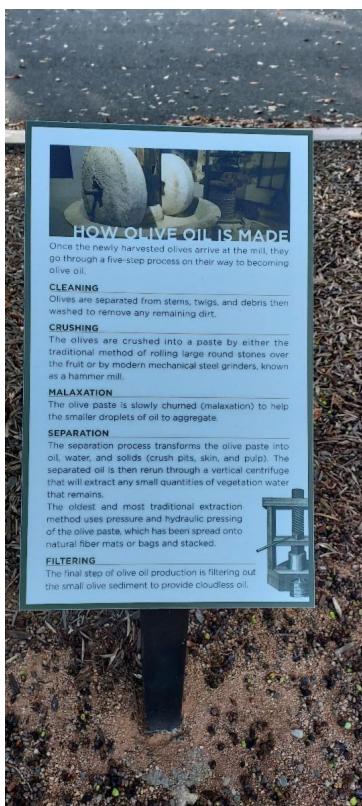
This property was originally founded as Copia: The American Center for Wine, Food & the Arts in 2001. The Culinary Institute acquired the property in 2015, and after nine years of neglect, the reimagined garden opened in 2016, with many of the fruit trees transplanted to the site from other gardens. There is an extensive line of specimen citrus fruit trees, many with rare or unusual fruit. Other fruit trees in the garden are pomegranate, apple, fig and nectarine. A whole row of olive trees, with signage on how

olives are grown, picked and processed into different qualities of olive oil anchors the orchard.

There are a number of plots dedicated to herb production, which are used both fresh and dried by the restaurants and student chefs. The garden is set up to be productive year-round, using row covers and mulches during the cooler winter months. All plots have some variation of drip irrigation. The wide walkways between the planting beds make for an enjoyable stroll through the garden. Better signage of the plots so that the visitor could tell what variety of vegetable is being grown would be nice. The garden is an excellent demonstration garden for which fruits and vegetables thrive in the Bay area climate. For more information on the CIA Gardens at Copia, click [HERE](#).



Copia Garden Beds are prepped for cold weather.



The olive tree exhibit includes information on harvest and production of olive oil.



Copia garden beds host fall and winter crops in the Napa, CA area.



## Wildlife & Water Friendly Gardens: Free Series 2024 Online

Learn to modify your gardening practices to benefit and attract wildlife, all while protecting the health of our watersheds. Sponsored by the Environmental Learning Center in

Oregon. Take advantage of these FREE one hour seminars, running on Thursdays, noon to 1 p.m. from January 25 through March 7.

**Registration is Required**



### Goats can be a forest's best friend!

By Dave Marston

Goats are particularly good at one thing: Eating. Unlike a horse or cow that leaves noxious weeds behind, goats eat the whole menu of pesky weeds, bushes and small trees. That means goats can be one of the answers to the growing problem of tinder-dry, highly flammable forests. In Durango, Colorado, former firefighter Jonathan Bartley runs a business called DurangoGoats, along with partner Adrian Lacasse, and it's so

popular they're booked daily. Their herd usually works along the wildland-urban interface of the San Juan National Forest, clearing undergrowth around private houses in heavily wooded, steep areas at the town's periphery.

Thanks to his work, Bartley has come to a conclusion about newcomers to the West: "When people move here thinking 'I'd love to live in the woods,' they're probably making a big mistake." If they do choose to live surrounded by trees or next to a forest, though, he has advice. Because utilities cut off electricity during fires, he suggests buying a generator to keep sprinklers for irrigation running. He also advises homeowners to install a metal roof to repel wind-driven sparks. Always, he adds, have a go-bag ready with your most important stuff if flight becomes necessary. Most of all, he wants homeowners to create flame breaks around their house with gravel while also cutting back trees and shrubs within 30 feet of the house.

That last bit of advice is key. Firefighters triage neighborhoods, he said, picking winners and losers. When they scan neighborhoods quickly, they tend to give defensible homes extra resources while deciding that the brushy, overgrown properties are going to be lost causes.

Bartley knows fire well. He worked for a private company called Oregon Woods as part of a hand crew of 20 based in Eugene, Oregon. There, the Holiday Farm Fire started within a half-mile of his house. From that experience, he learned that our approach to wildfire is backward: "We react, rather than manage landscapes ahead of time. Spending a few million dollars on fire mitigation would have saved hundreds of millions of dollars."

These days, he said, "I'm still fighting fires — just with goats."

Bartley is quick to point out that fire itself is beneficial to forests. Even Cal-

Fire, the firefighting arm of the state of California, says on its website, "Fire removes low-growing underbrush, cleans the forest floor of debris, opens it up to sunlight and nourishes the soil."

The problem across the West, Bartley said, is so many unmanaged dense forests full of deadfall and brush — "ladder fuels" — that allow fire to climb into tree canopies. "By the time wildfire gets into the treetops to become crown fires," Bartley said, "firefighters have evacuated and are miles away." Everyone knows that western wildfires are becoming worse. Half of the 10 biggest fires in the United States this century all burned in this region. When wildfires grow massive and super-hot, they destroy forest ecosystems, leaving nearly sterilized bare ground that's perfect for flammable cheatgrass to invade. That sets up burned areas to burn again, often quickly.

Bartley has big ambitions for his goat herd, which can clear a quarter-acre in a day. DuranGoats charges \$400 daily, he said, much less than the cost of a crew of landscapers armed with weed whackers and loppers on hilly, broken terrain. Moreover, the goats' sharp hooves churn the dirt and fertilize it with poop and pee, setting up a regenerative cycle that improves the soil.

In northwestern Montana, former journalist David Reese has a similar business called Montana Goat. His herd moves daily, and once the animals strip leaves off small trees and gobble up the cheatgrass and knapweed, he said, it's quick work to chainsaw small trees and dead branches. Like Bartley, Reese has found he has almost more business than he can handle. He plans to scale his herd to 400 goats, while Bartley aims to build up to 100 goats. Both are angling for bigger contracts from homeowners and also government agencies.

Finding four-legged workers is easy. "A male dairy goat has a life expectancy of a week," said Bartley. "They're not plump like meat goats, have no dairy value and often are dispatched at birth."

Extra income for DuranGoats comes from outdoor weddings. Festooned with wildflowers and bells, goats roam the grounds and are a favorite with all the guests, even pitching in as ring-bearers, or in a pinch, groomsmen. But like any single man at a wedding, they have a wandering eye, which means that flower arrangements can be gobbled up quickly.

*Dave Marston is the publisher of Writers on the Range, [writersontherange.org](http://writersontherange.org), an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He lives in Durango, Colorado. Thanks to Dave and the Tahoe Daily Tribune for allowing us to reprint his article.*

**[www.tahodailytribune.com](http://www.tahodailytribune.com)**

## Herb Gardening Indoors?

Many of us are wondering how we can get through a long winter without a garden. Well, many herbs can be grown inside. You will need to check the light and temperature requirements of different herbs to see what will work best in your home. Keep in mind that the indoor air is very dry, so water needs must be met. Plants also need good light, so look for south facing windows as your best chance this time of year to provide enough light, unless



you have special grow lights installed or use an indoor lighted hydroponic system, such as the Aerogarden shown in the photo above. Parsley, Berggarten Sage, Basil (needs a really warm house!) Mint, Oregano, and Chives top the lists of successful indoor herbs.

Here are some links to resources on the web to get you get started:

**[Sonoma County Master Gardeners' Tips.](#)**

**[Butte County Master Gardeners' Blog on Herbs as Houseplants.](#)**

**[Tips from the Homes and Gardens Website.](#)**

**[Tips from Bonnie Plants' blog.](#)**



**20-year study confirms California forests are healthier when burned or thinned. (from UCANR news)**

A 20-year experiment in the Sierra Nevada confirms that different forest management techniques — prescribed burning, restoration thinning or a combination of both — are

effective at reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire in California. Read more **[HERE.](#)**

## Gardening Tips for January in the Tahoe Basin

1. If you can still get to them, wrap trees and shrubs susceptible to breakage from heavy settling snow or drying winds, specifically evergreens. Shorten any leggy branches which could be damaged by the snow.
2. Clean and store any tools left out in the garden.
3. Continue to rake and clean a five foot area around your home of flammable debris, such as pine needles.
4. Make sure your water shutoff and gas meter continue to be clear of snow in case of emergency.
5. Now is a good time to check your indoor plants. Are they getting enough light? Are they positioned away from heater vents? Keep in mind, most indoor plants originate from warm, humid climates. Our dry air is stressful for them, so keep them misted and hydrated. You can repot your indoor plants now, but wait to fertilize them until the spring.
6. Sort through your seeds and see which ones might be viable for the upcoming season. (Head out to the Douglas Master Gardeners' Seed Swap on January 27!)
7. Take a break from the snow and visit gardens in milder climates.

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