

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

University of California Cooperative Extension 

April 2024

This month your UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe are busy planning a summer full of community outreach and partnerships with several aligned organizations in the Tahoe Basin. Read on to learn about our Grow Your Own festivals, movie showings, the upcoming Gardening in Lake Tahoe series, cosponsored by the South Tahoe Public Utilities District, and our June plant sale. We also will fire up our volunteers to meet you at the Farmers' Market when those begin in June. Get out and enjoy the spring, but be cautious about planting....there are many cold nights ahead in April and May.

Your feedback is important to us. Please contact [me](#) with suggestions and requests!

**Sandy Gainza**  
UCCE Master Gardener Volunteer, Newsletter Editor

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### Grow Your Own Garden Festivals are just around the corner!

The UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe, Slow Food Lake Tahoe and the UC Davis Environmental Research Center know how to grow food successfully in the Lake Tahoe area and they would like to share their knowledge with you! Hands-on workshops on growing vegetables curated

for our high elevation climate will be hosted by the Master Gardeners. *Plants can be purchased online or at the festivals.* Garden tours will be offered at all festivals. Tables staffed by local community organizations, food for sale, and a plant sale are also features of these FREE events. **Yes, all festivals are FREE.** These three celebrations of gardening will highlight growing your own food at home or at community gardens around the Lake Tahoe area.

Participants can preorder seedling sets or seeds to pick-up at the event. **Purchase preorders** at Slow Food Lake Tahoe's [website](#). A list of seed and plant varieties is available [HERE](#). Click on each date to see the list of events for each location. We look forward to seeing you at one or all festivals!

**Friday, May 31, 4-7 pm**

**Host: Tahoe Environmental Research Center  
2400 Lake Forest Road Tahoe City CA**

**Saturday, June 1, 11 am-2 pm**

**Host: Slow Food Lake Tahoe Gardens  
8000 Estate Drive, Truckee CA**

**Saturday, June 8, 11 am-2pm**

**Hosts: Great Basin Institute and UCCE  
Tallac Historic Site  
1 Heritage Way, South Lake Tahoe CA**

**Register for any event at the [Slow Foods website](#).**



**Slow Food Lake Tahoe Hosts  
"Seeds, Sips and Songs" in  
Truckee on April 20**

A FREE family-friendly afternoon celebrating the upcoming garden season with veggie seed giveaways, kids' activities, and sweet songs from Tahoe Truckee School of Music.

**[More Information Here!](#)**



**Tahoe  
Environmental  
Resource  
Center hosts  
"Common  
Ground"  
screening on  
May 14**

Kick off the popular Grow Your Own High Elevation Gardening Series with TERC, the UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe and Slow Food Lake Tahoe. Join us at Sunnyside Restaurant & Lodge for a night of fun and community! Bring your friends and family for a special movie night under the stars. We'll be screening "Common Ground", a film featured at the last year's 9th Tahoe Film Fest that celebrates the power of growing your own food and regenerative farming. Delicious snacks will be provided. Dinner and drinks will be available for purchase throughout the evening at a 20% discount.

A wake-up call for the entire world, this dramatic and gorgeously shot documentary focuses on the power of regenerative farming to transform the Earth, and how soil health is the key to all health. Filmmakers Rebecca and Josh Tickell *dig* into the impact contemporary agriculture has on everyday lives, with

celebrities including Laura Dern, Jason Momoa, Rosario Dawson, Woody Harrelson, and Donald Glover introducing us to farmers, scientists, and concerned citizens literally “on the ground” working to save the planet. The film delves into the financial and political drivers behind farming decisions, including a look at the unsettling racial history of American agriculture, the role of government lobbyists, and the influence of chemical companies like Monsanto. Ultimately it delivers a hopeful message as a growing number of innovative farmers find strategies to not only produce nutritional food, but also revive our faltering ecosystem.

[Click here to register!](#)



### Did someone say "Plant Sale?"

Yes! This year the UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe are hosting a plant sale. Save this date!

**Saturday, June 29**

**Cowork Tahoe**

**North Parking Lot 3079 Harrison Ave,  
South Lake Tahoe, CA.**

Come at 11 am for a Master Gardener clinic on the use and care of the plants offered for sale. Sale begins at noon and ends at 1:30 pm. Plants sell fast, so don't be late.

Plants offered for sale will include; Snowberry, Red Twig Dogwood, Columbine, Coral Berry, Shasta Daisy, Black Eyed Susan, and Milkweed, among other native and adapted plants. More details coming in the May and June news.

- [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.](#)

### STPUD/Master Gardeners present "Gardening Through the Seasons" Series

Save the date! The spring workshop for the 2024 "Gardening Through the Seasons" series will be held at South Tahoe Public Utilities District office boardroom on May 14 from 6 to 7:30 pm.

This event is **free**. The address is 1275 Meadowcrest Drive, South Lake Tahoe, CA.

Future dates are: June 18 (summer) and August 27( fall). Time and place are the same.





## Is there a fungus among us, or is this the first wildflower of Spring?

Lisa Strand, UCCE Master Gardener

A few weeks ago, looking out a sunny window between snowstorms, I spotted a bright yellow wildflower under some Jeffrey pines. Excited to see what blooms so early, I saw a dainty plant that presented green leaves towards the base, bright yellow towards the top. Suspicious that it might not be a flower, I did some digging and opened myself up to the world of *Puccinia monoica*, also known as Mustard Flower Rust; it's not a plant, it's a fungus!

*Puccinia monoica* spores infest mustard family perennials in late-summer to fall. In our area *Arabis glabra*, Tower Mustard, and *Arabis holboellii* (Holboellii's Rockcress) are common targets, though the fungus agrees with many other members of the mustard family. The fungus absorbs nutrients from the host plant, rendering the host plant unable to reproduce.

At this time, the host becomes a zombie-like plant: due to processes not quite understood by scientists, *P. monoica* causes the plant to grow differently: sending out green leafy structures with the tops turning a bright yellow color - creating a pseudo-flower. Between its color and sweet nectar-like substance produced, pollinators visit the plant, where they pick up cells that are then carried to other plants, allowing for sexual reproduction of the fungus.

From that point, *P. monoica* continues to spread, but to a second host: grass species *Koeleria*, *Trisetum*, and *Stipa*. Reproduction goes through a later-season cycle to generate spores that - you guessed it - are spread via late-summer winds to infect mustard family plants. By the following spring, the cycle continues.

Is *Puccinia monoica* considered a pest? Neither UC's Integrated Pest Management inventory, nor the California Invasive Plant Council, have identified this fungus as a landscape problem. In fact, there are two different *Puccinia* species that have been approved for use in biological control of unwanted non-native plant species.

Sources:

<https://www.colorado.edu/asmagazine-archive/node/1785>

<https://taylorlab.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/taylorlab/publications/roy1998.pdf>

<https://tahoetrailguide.com/discovering-something-sinister-afoot-while-searching-for-sierra-nevada-wildflowers-at-lake-tahoe/>

## 2nd and 3rd Grade Students Learn About Growing Microgreens

By Kristianne Hannemann,  
Master Gardener Class of 2024

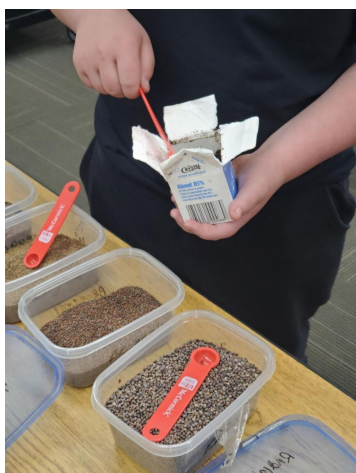
This spring, Lake Tahoe Master Gardeners (LTMG) taught a lesson on how to grow microgreens to 11 classes of third graders at four school sites within LTUSD, as well as second graders at Zephyr Cove Elementary. This project is part of a larger effort to involve more students in the community in gardening.



About 250 students got to plant their own microgreen seeds and learn how to grow and use them. They were given instructions and seeds to take home. Similar to last year, growing microgreens in the classroom will be followed up with a nutrition lesson from CalFresh (CA Department of Social Services' nutrition program).

Growing microgreens is easy for children and adults alike. The nutrition is within the seeds themselves, so they can be grown on any medium and in any type of container. Medium ideas shared with the third grade classes included paper towels, soil, sponges, shredded paper, and coffee grounds. Some of the third grade classes saved used milk cartons from the cafeteria to use as containers to grow their microgreens – a great way to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle!

LTMG and Grow Your Own Tahoe-Truckee provided seeds, soil, and the classroom instruction/planting activity with teachers guiding follow up plant care. Students planted their microgreen seeds and will be able to harvest them in about 2 weeks. After each lesson, students were excited to share what they learned about growing microgreens with family and friends.



### What is "Organic" Anyway?

If you shop for food, do you look for organically grown foods? What does that really mean? The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a website with information for consumers and producers of organic foods. This link explains what the term organic means in the United States and what standards must be met in order to claim a food is organic.

**[USDA Certified Organic: Understanding the Basics | Agricultural Marketing Service](#)**

# April Tips for Tahoe Gardeners

## **Master Gardener Annie Christy shares her April to do list:**

Most of us still have quite a bit of snow on the ground, but here's some helpful tips.

- Keep reading seed catalogues and order something new.
- Protect any tender plants you wistfully planted by putting cages around them.
- Re-cover shrubs or roses if you uncovered them.
- By the end of the month, you can prune ornamental grasses nearly to the ground. This will leave some protection for pollinators who are likely hiding in the spent foliage, while eliminating that dead spot in the middle of grasses.
- When freezing temperatures are over, fertilize lightly to give plants a strong start.
- After the freezes, unwrap any shrubs or roses so they know to leaf out. Remove dead or damaged branches and cut plant back by 1/3 in height. Make cuts just above large healthy buds for the best growth.
- Trim off any dead wood or blooms on shrubs and trees.
- Some daffodils and tulips probably started to bloom. When they start again, cut a few flowers to enjoy indoors. Daffodils should be in a vase by themselves because their sap damages other flowers.
- Enjoy our last moisture of the season!

## **IPM (Integrated Pest Management) Selected April tips from the University of California IPM Checklist for the Central Sierra region:**

Ants - Manage around landscape and building foundations, such as using insecticide baits and trunk barriers.

Carpenter bees - Paint or varnish and seal wood in which they nest. If intolerable, treat tunnels during fall or early spring.

Fire safe landscape: LEAN - Thin out thick vegetation and eliminate fuel ladders that allow fire to climb up trees. CLEAN: Mow grasses and trim shrubs. Remove dry, resinous or dead plants and flammable debris. Cut branches back 15 to 20 feet from buildings. Use non-combustible surfaces for walkways, patios and driveways. GREEN: Landscape using low-growing, non-woody plants.

Irrigation - Adjust watering schedules according to the weather and plants' changing need for water. Check systems for leaks and broken emitters and perform maintenance as needed. Consider upgrading the irrigation system to improve its water efficiency. *This tip may not apply in all areas due to frozen ground and snow cover. Wait until your ground is no longer frozen to activate your irrigation system.*

Yellowjackets - Place out and maintain lure traps or water traps. (You want to catch the queens as they emerge. While you may not see many yellowjackets yet, setting and maintaining traps early in the season is crucial to control later on.)

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