

Master Gardener Mary Wall welcomes community members to the 2024 plant sale.



Native and adapted native plants were organized by sun and shade tolerance.

July 2024

Happy Independence Day Month! Your UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe were busy in June! We celebrated growing food in Lake Tahoe at our final GYO Garden Festival on June 8. All three events were attended by over 1,100 folks. Most people took home some veggie plants or some edible flowers. We thank our partnering organizations: Slow Food Lake Tahoe, UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, and the Great Basin Institute. We also thank Full Circle Soils and Compost for their donation of compost and tomato plants to attendees of the festivals. The Lake Tahoe Leadership Team (SLT Chamber of Commerce) helped us publicize the event and facilitated attendance via shuttle to the Tallac Historic Site. Thank you!

On June 29, we hosted the first plant sale since 2019 in the CoWorx parking lot in South Lake Tahoe. Over 130 people came to our native plant "clinic" and most purchased a few plants to take home. While Tahoe native plants were featured, there were many adapted native plants to try as well.

This month we feature some links to resources on wildfire preparedness, smart irrigation controllers and offer some tips on prolonging the beauty of your summer landscape.

Since July is "Irrigation Efficiency" month, Jen Cressy, Master Gardener and STPUD representative, contributed a list of tips to make watering your landscape simpler and more water wise.

Take a minute to relax in your garden this month! Summer is in full flower; the beaches, trails and roads are crowded with visitors. Staying home with some iced tea and a good book (surrounded by your plants) may be the best way to enjoy living around this beautiful lake.

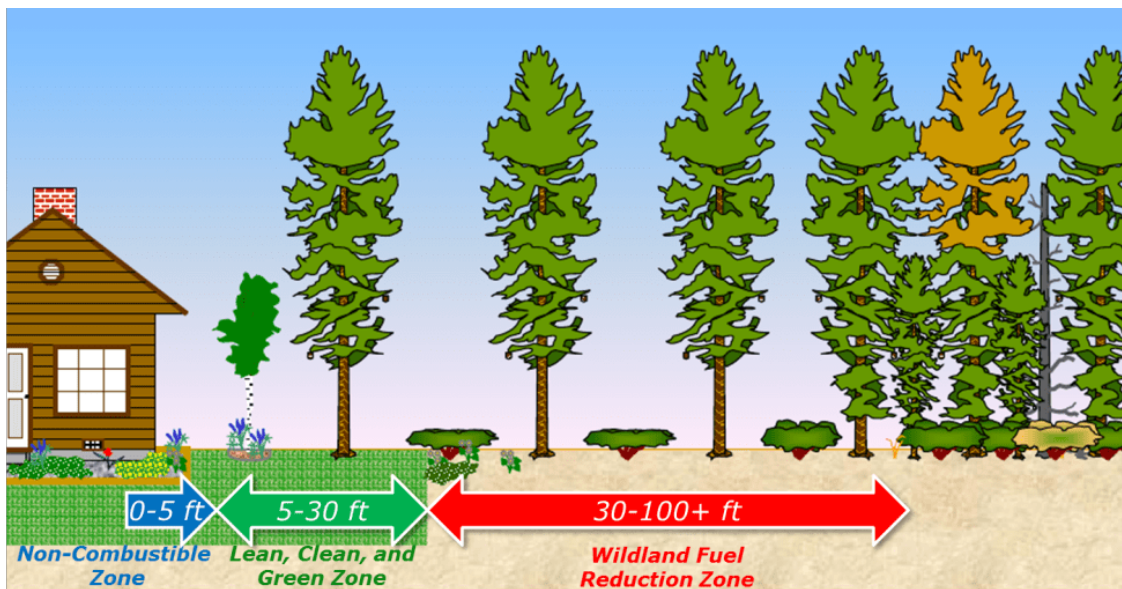
Feedback is always important to us. Please contact [me](#) with suggestions and requests!



Master Gardeners at the El Dorado Farmers' Market Tuesday Mornings!

Beginning this month, look for the UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe sign at the **El Dorado Farmers' Markets** on Tuesday mornings. We will be eager to answer gardening questions, share your growing successes (or war stories), and offer you the tips you need to increase your enjoyment of your summer landscape. The market runs from 8 am to 1 pm and is located at 2732 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA.

Ask a
Master
Gardener



Be Fire Aware in July!

Fireworks are a tradition on Independence Day, but are extremely dangerous for us here in the Tahoe Basin. Please keep these tips in mind as the dry season progresses.

The free brochure "[Backyard Native Plants](#)" can be downloaded from the [Tahoe Living With Fire](#) website. While Master Gardeners often recommend the use of native plants for conservation purposes, many of our local natives are high fire risk plants. In addition to photos and cultural requirements, this brochure lists the fire risk of each native plant. You will recognize many of these plants and you may be surprised to learn which are more combustible than others.

Download this free brochure [Fire Adapted Communities: The Next Step in Wildfire Preparedness](#) and find out what more you can do to decrease your risk of fire.

If you have any questions about whether your home and surroundings are fire safe, you can request a defensible space evaluation from your local fire district. Find your district [HERE](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- [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.](#)

Master Gardeners collaborate with STPUD to present the final "Gardening Through the Seasons" Seminar on August 27!

Save the date! The fall workshop for the 2024 "Gardening Through the Seasons" series will be held at South Tahoe Public Utilities District office boardroom on **Tuesday, August 27 from 6 to 7:30 pm.**

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



Beat the Heat with Irrigation Efficiency

By Jen Cressy, UCCE Master Gardener and STPUD representative



As the thermometer climbs this week, gardeners are reaching for the hose to water the dry spots in their lawns and flower beds. ***What caring plant lover wouldn't be caught coddling their landscape along during the heat of July?*** But alas, there is a better way! July is National Smart Irrigation Month. That means it's time to improve irrigation efficiency and free your dependency on the garden hose. **[Read more here!](#)**

"Smart" Irrigation Tips

Sandy Gainza, UCCE Master Gardener

There is a whole new world of irrigation controllers out there. On the market are many brands of "smart controllers". What is "smart"? A sprinkler controller that uses home Wifi, allowing the user, via a phone app, to turn on and off sprinkler valves, set watering schedules and add or subtract watering duration. Additionally, smart controllers can use local weather data to adjust the watering schedule, skipping when freezing temperatures are predicted, or skipping when it is too windy, too cold or too rainy to water efficiently. Even better, some controllers are equipped with soil moisture sensors and/or rain sensors which provide an individualized watering program based on what is happening in your own landscape. Smart sprinkler systems save water and resources!



If you are a part time resident of Lake Tahoe, these systems make a lot of sense. Take a look at this photo from May 10, 2022. My neighbor is not in Tahoe very often and they had their system going during freezing weather! If they had a smart controller, they would have saved their plants!

I have owned a generation one Rachio eight station controller since 2014 and it has both saved water and my landscape from damage during frost and wind. I have put links to several review sites at the end of this article. I also like that I can walk around my yard, turning on and off stations to check for leaks and wayward sprinkler heads. Check out the different features and see if one of these controllers makes sense for your landscape. South Tahoe PUD will give up to a \$100 rebate on the purchase of a **WaterSense** labeled irrigation controller. **Tahoe City PUD** offers a \$25 rebate each for purchase of Rain Sensors, Soil Moisture Sensors, and Temperature Sensing Gauges.

[Warm Season Irrigation Checklist from UC Agriculture and Natural Resources](#)

[Resources from University of California on Smart Irrigation Controllers](#)

[Chicago Tribune Reviews of Top Smart Controllers](#)

PS! If you really want to see something that will blow your mind, go to the **[IRRIGREEN](#)** website and watch their video of a sprinkler system that maps your yard and adjusts its throw to the exact shape of the landscape. This company in Minnesota has a whole new approach to using AI and mapping to produce a custom watering system. While we UCCE Master Gardeners cannot recommend

July Tips for Tahoe Gardeners

1. With all of the irrigation information provided above, be sure to monitor your irrigation this month. Check for leaks, broken lines, clogged or broken drip emitters and fix as soon as you can.
2. Continue vigilance regarding fire risks around your home. Be sure and keep the five feet perimeter around structures free of needles and woody vegetation. Upgrade defensible space with tips from the [Living with Fire](#) website. Maintain BMPs by cleaning them and removing vegetation and pine needles.
3. There's never a time when onions aren't ready for harvesting. They can be picked and eaten at any stage. No matter how many onions you use during the season though, it's nice to have a crop of big onions mature at the end of summer to store for the fall and winter months.
4. Prune spring blooming shrubs like lilac and forsythia now. Buds for next year will develop on this year's wood. Be sure not to remove more than one third of a shrub in a single season.
5. It might be time to add a bit of fertilizer to your garden. Use slow release fertilizers and avoid fertilizers with phosphorus here in the Tahoe Basin. Phosphorus is the middle number.
6. Harvest your spring greens and replant for a second crop. You still have time to put in a second crop of lettuce, kale, chard, arugula, and spinach if you live in the cooler sections of the basin.
7. Weed, weed, weed! Weeds rob your plants of water and nutrients so keep them under control.
8. While weeding, consider "deadheading". If you have flowering perennials such as coreopsis, shasta daisy, gaillardia, rudbeckia and echinacea (coneflower), you can prolong the flowering by removing spent flowers as soon as they turn brown or wilt. When you cut off the dead flower, be sure and look down the stem for any small buds that may be ready to emerge. The plant will put more effort into new blooms when the old ones are removed before setting seeds. The same idea applies to annual blooming plants, such as pansies, snapdragons, petunias and pelargoniums ("geraniums" to some). Cut to a lateral bud and you will extend your flowering time.
9. Now is a great time to divide your bearded Iris. Cut off the bloom and excavate the rhizome clump. Watch this [two minute video](#) on how to do it. One way I remember when to divide iris is to divide every presidential election year!
10. If you like to plant spring blooming bulbs, now is time to get them ordered while the selection is the best. Normally, mail order bulb companies will ship their products at the correct time for fall planting. If rodents have been a problem for you in the past, check out [these tips](#) from the University of New Hampshire extension on wildlife resistant choices.

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