



July 2022

Greetings Tahoe Gardeners,

After a long, windy and chilly spring this year, July promises to be a pleasant month. Less pine pollen and fewer moths are two things I am happy about in 2022. Now, if we can just avoid having fires all summer...

Your Tahoe Master Gardeners have prepared several articles for your perusal. "Sun" seems to be the theme this month! See below for an update on Master Gardener activities or scroll down for information on the Sundew flowering plant, Sunchokes, tomato care this month, and a list of gardens around the lake which are in their prime right now, ready for a visit on a sunny day!



The Tahoe Master Gardeners are also be at the South Lake Tahoe Tuesday Farmers' Market. The Farmers' Market



The "Grow Your Own"

is located at the American Legion Hall (Hwy 50) 2732 S. Lake Tahoe Blvd. Our volunteers are working on special presentations to share with the public at the markets. Keep in mind that our space will rotate each week as assigned by the market staff, so look for our signs! We look forward to seeing you at the market, and can help answer questions you have regarding gardening in our area!



workshops finished in June. The series reached over 500 participants, distributed 1200 plants, 100 potato starts, and 100 sets of beans and peas. Thanks to donations and sale of the plants, the program should be able to continue next year. Thanks to all the people from Slow Food Lake Tahoe, Tahoe UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and the Lake Tahoe Master Gardeners who worked hard to provide valuable information on food gardening in our area. Thanks to all that participated in the classes. We hope to hear back from those of you who purchased plants. Feedback will help us find out which varieties of which vegetables, greens, and herbs do well in our area. If you missed any of the Grow Your Own presentations; they are posted on YouTube and you can watch at your leisure **HERE** on the UC Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe YouTube channel!



## **Sunchokes (Helianthus Tuberosus): The Edible Sunflower; Beauty and Nutrition in a Sunny Package**

**By Melissa Guthrie, Master Gardener**

### **Sunflower Versus Sunchoke**

Sunflower seeds are something many of us grew up on. Salty, and spit worthy. We all remember the packets of tiny nuts we loved as kids. The beautiful bright flowers of Helianthus Annuus represent a symbol of hope, which is so needed

now, as well as a symbol of loyalty. Sunchokes (*Helianthus Tuberosus*), also known as Jerusalem artichoke, are perennial members of the sunflower family. Sunchokes are adaptable, drought resistant, and survive in scorching heat and frozen plains. This makes them a valuable vegetable for our area and the ever changing climate.



Grow Your Own Lake Tahoe offered a few sunchoke plants this year (White “Lola” and Red “Brazilian”) in hope that you find solace and some hope in growing easy plants, for joy and health. There are over 25 varieties that vary in shape, color and knobiness. Please see the workshop **Sunchokes and Potatoes** on YouTube.

Sunflowers are often represented historically. Think Van Gogh, the French, and 70’s granola bars. The Incas used them in their sun worship. They are a reminder of what a backyard can provide. There is a reason that the seeds, flowers, and oil of sunflowers are commonplace in daily life. They are beautiful, nutritious and easy to grow. In our little area of the world the sunflower’s cousin sunchoke grows magnificently and comes back every year. The tuber of the agricultural *helianthus tuberosa* is a delicious staple of native Americans and in my opinion, has been overlooked. Sunchokes are a neglected nutritional, **easy** to grow treat especially for new veg gardeners embracing our unique Tahoe area.

### Why “Jerusalem Artichoke”?

There is a story about the Latin/Hispanic name for sunflower “girisole”. A French explorer named Samuel de Champlain discovered the cultivated root in North America and said that it tasted of artichoke. In the 1600’s he brought it to Europe. A French historian, Marc Lescarbot described them as “as big as truffles and like chard but more pleasant”. Oddly they do not taste like artichokes and have no direct link to Jerusalem. One explanation is that when you quickly pronounce the Spanish name for sunflower “girasole” is that it can sound like “Jerusalem”.

### Nutritional Notes

The taste and culinary preparations of sunchokes are similar to potatoes. Think creamy and easy on the stomach. A good source of iron, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and indigestible fiber. In addition, they’re low in calories and can be used to replace, even upgrade potatoes or other starchy root vegetable with their unctuous taste. Sunchokes also act as prebiotic being digested further on in the digestive track. Eating them can lower cholesterol levels, and offer other health benefits.

The best part of sunchokes in your garden are that pre harvest, they make pretty flowers and regenerate like crazy every year. Sunchokes are seriously prolific. However, their growth needs to be kept in check and they need to be eaten in moderation. Because they are digested in the lower intestine, they can cause a bit of flatulence....initially. That goes away after adding them in small amounts to your diet. They have a good prebiotic and diabetic benefit. Stay the course.

## Cultivation in the Lake Tahoe Region

Sunchokes can be started by seed or division. Like potatoes, for vigorous growth you will want to have two “eyes” when planting or dividing. This is where the shoot will start and insure vigorous growth. Keep in mind that minimal cuts will avoid fungal disease although they are not as fussy about “curing” cuts like potatoes. They like to stretch.... but luckily, are fine with slightly gritty soil or in our area the local “sandy” nutrient-poor granite soil. Sunchokes are not picky but don’t take kindly to compact soil. They are easily divided and or harvested in spring and fall in the Tahoe area.

Sunchokes are the gift that keeps on giving so plant them in containers or on the periphery of your garden to keep them in check. They will over winter and you will never harvest them all. This is always a bright spot the next year. They transplant easily, so you can share your bounty with friends.

Water once a week at least. Resistant to most pests. Deer will eat them, but they will grow back without much damage to the yield.

### Culinary Considerations

Mild tasting, they can add a nutty rich flavor to any potato or salad dish and can be eaten raw, roasted, chipped, sautéed or mashed. As the potato lady of Tahoe, I like to augment spuds. In addition to chives or any of the herbs offered in our 2022 season, sunchokes will add to a truly flavorful, healthy meal. See recipe below.

### Smashed Sunchoke with Thyme Butter

Sunchokes

Olive oil and unsalted butter

Flaked or pink Himalayan salt for finishing ( any will do for boiling)

Herbs (Thyme and/or chives , minced)

- Cube washed sunchokes.( You can eat the skin)
- In a medium sauce pan, cover sunchokes with cold, salted water. Simmer until just tender. DO NOT OVER COOK. Think “al dente”.
- Drain, cool.
- Smash to slightly flatten, (this creates a larger browning surface)
- Add to skillet with a tiny amount of olive oil and half the thyme
- After gently browned on one side, add unsalted butter.

Add remaining thyme and some chives. (parsley, cilantro also work well)

- Let herbs infuse while butter melts, spooning over sunchokes until butter is almost brown, about 4 minutes. Remove to a plate.
- Use the pan herb-butter to dress the warm sunchokes.

Serve with scrambled eggs or a mixed greens salad.

They can be made ahead and warmed as needed.

\*for a semi-sweet twist, add maple syrup and mint instead of the herbs and serve with fresh fruit.



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## **Tomato Tips from Sue Tanzi, Master Gardener**

Happy July!

Now is the time when things really get growing and the best month for tomatoes to be pollinated. You should be seeing them grow a little daily. They love the heat, so keep them in the sun. You should see:

Lots of growth and foliage  
Flower set  
Bees and other insects pollinating  
Fruit set (baby tomatoes)

If you see any suckers remove them.  
Be careful not to remove flowers, they grow out of the same place.

Feed your tomatoes, calcium prevents "catfacing" and helps make tomato skins strong

Be consistent with water, and don't rinse off any pollen.

I have tons of flowers and a few plants have fruit set.

Keep watching your plants, They will let you know whats going on!



## Sundews

By David Long, Master Gardener

### Tahoe Plants and Trees

#### Rounded Leaf Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*)

There is a carnivorous plant native to the Tahoe Basin that is unfamiliar to most of us. The Rounded Leaf Sundew or common sundew, is found in seeps, wet meadows and fens (a wetland formed by laminar surface or ground water movement across or through peat or mosslike vegetation. The soil being fully saturated). This species is circumpolar found upper latitudes of Europe and Asia. In North America found at higher latitudes but also in suitable habitat areas on the west coast to the San Francisco area and in the Sierras and Rockies. On the east coast south to Florida.

In the Tahoe Basin this sundew is found in marshes and fens in the upper Truckee Watershed, Grass Lake, Osgood Swamp and High Meadow. While not common this small plant's lifestyle of insect eating makes it one to look for on hikes through wet seeps and meadows.

The plant is small, only about 2 inches wide and maybe the same height, excluding the flower stalk that might reach 4-5 inches. The leaves are found as a basal rosette. Leaf stems may be 1/2 inch long with leaf pad being round. Leaves pads are modified, having red or pink hairs that exude a sticky sugary droplet that attracts then ensnares insects. As the insect struggles to escape it touches multiple hairs that traps the insect. Enzymes are also contained in the droplet that start to dissolve the victim, with nutrients absorbed by the plant.

The sundew's flower stalk is slender and comes from the center of the leaf rosette. Flowers are usually white or light pink in color having 5 petals. During winter the plant dies back with an overwintering bud (hibernacula) formed at base of leaves.

#### References:

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## Gardens Around the Lake

Try and see a few of these in the next month or two, as Tahoe gardens are probably at their peak soon!

List compiled by David Long and Jen Cressy

### Public Spaces & Gardens Information

#### **Eriksson Education Center & Gardens**

(Tahoe City Field Station)

(Historic Hatchery)

2400 Lake Forest Rd.

Tahoe City, CA 96145

530-583-3279

Free – Limited Parking

Garden - Daily dawn to Dusk

Eriksson Education Center 8:00 – 5:00 weather permitting

#### **Sierra Nevada College Demonstration Garden** (formerly North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden)

291 Country Club Drive

Incline Village, NV 89451

Signage provides for self-guided tour of the garden. Examples of BMP's are on exhibit. Some raised beds of vegetables and lots of Tahoe adapted plants are on display. Picnic tables available on first come basis.

#### **Lake Tahoe Community College Demonstration Garden**

One College Drive

South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

530-541-4660 Ext. 219

Free

Daily dawn to Dusk

Demonstration of a variety of landscaping techniques based on level of maintenance. The garden also has information on BMP requirements.

Site may be reserved for special events. Fees may apply

### **Tallac Historic Site**

One Heritage Way, South Lake Tahoe. Gardens and grounds are open year-round during daylight periods. Tours available Friday-Sunday of gardens and historic buildings. A self-guided tour is available using signage from spring to fall.

### **Thunderbird Lodge and Gardens**

(George Whitell Estate)

George Whitell Road, New Washoe City, NV 89704

(775) 832-8750

Tickets required to enter site and are part of tours.. Extensive landscaping integrated into historic structures and grounds.

### **Truckee Demonstration Garden**

Truckee Regional Park, 10050 Brockway Rd, Truckee, CA 96161. The Garden is located in the Truckee Regional Park.

Garden is behind the children's playground.

Slow Food Lake Tahoe has managed the garden since 2014. The mission of the Truckee Demonstration Garden is to cultivate a community committed to local food production and increased local food security, through education and demonstration of high-altitude gardening techniques. Residents can also rent garden space at the adjacent community garden.

[truckeegarden@gmail.com](mailto:truckeegarden@gmail.com)

Free. Always Open for Visitors. Please be respectful and leave the garden as you found it. Be sure to close gates when you leave. We offer gardening, mindfulness and nutrition classes through the UC Master Gardener program, the UC Environmental Research Center and community members. Additionally, we host monthly "dig-in's" on the last Saturday of each month.

### **The North Tahoe Public Utility District**

875 National Avenue, Tahoe Vista, CA 96148 (530) 546-4212

North Lake Tahoe Recreation and Parks has a newly renovated community garden located at the North Tahoe Regional Park. Area residents can "rent raised beds for growing vegetables or other plants. Water is provided, as is some exclusion supports to keep the critters out of the raised beds.

### **South Tahoe Public Utility District**

1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe 96150

There is a beautiful demonstration of a Tahoe friendly garden in front the the South Tahoe Public Utility District administrative building which demonstrates water efficient plants and irrigation that attract pollinators, birds and gardeners alike. Come by and learn which plants can not just survive but thrive in your high mountain garden.





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