




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

University of California Cooperative Extension 

FALL is HERE! Time to enjoy your garden and prepare for the cold weather ahead. Below find a few September to-dos. This month we feature a recap of the Edible Gardens Tour. Sheri Burke, guest contributor, explains why plant prices have increased and what to do about it. David Long's plant of the month is Showy Milkweed. Melissa Guthrie provides seed saving techniques.



FALL WORKSHOP!

Wednesday, October 12, 6 p.m. ZOOM with the Grow Your Own Team and learn about growing Microgreens indoors. Sign ups will begin soon at slowfoodlaketahoe.org. The pick up date for greens and garlic will be Saturday, October 15 at three locations. Check back with Slow Food for the details!

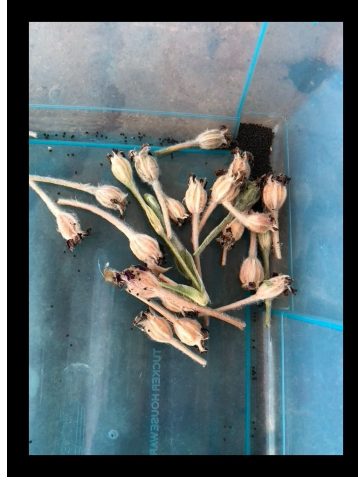


We mentioned it last month, but there is still time to divide iris clumps, especially those that have not been divided in the last three or four years. **Click here for how to divide Iris!** Other perennials that benefit from fall division include daylilies, ornamental grasses, and hostas.

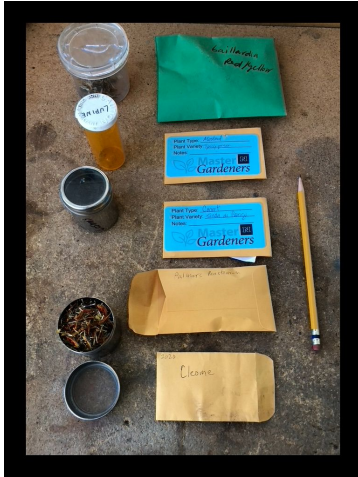


Finish harvesting your vegetables! Reap your rewards for planting your veggies. Frost cloth can help extend your growing season as the average first frost date occurs between September 11-19.

SAVE SEEDS! NOW is the time to collect seeds! Check out the article written on seed saving by *Grow Your Own's* Melissa Guthrie **HERE**



Melissa describes many ways to collect and store seeds. Here is an example of seed harvest using a plastic shoe box to collect the small seeds of Rose Campion. Make sure the box is in a well ventilated area until the seeds are dry and you can store them in a paper envelope or small container!



Apply a slow release fertilizer to your lawn, if you have one. If you are thinking of replacing lawn, Master Gardener Karen Price's article on sheet mulching and STPUD's lawn replacement incentives will be in our October newsletter.

Vertbrate pests reach their peak this time of year, and are digging in your garden to hide their winter cache. Two tips to discourage them: use bird netting over your pots and/or try a sprinkle or two of cayenne pepper around the soil. It does the trick in a small area or for container plants!



Plant Feature for September



Showy Milkweed

Dave Long

Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)

The Showy Milkweed is only occasionally found in Tahoe Basin, often at disturbed sites near moist and riparian zones. Its occurrence around Tahoe seems to have expanded in the last several decades. The plant is a short-lived perennial that grows to about 4 ft. tall. Leaves large and oval/lanceolate with a single midrib and parallel veins. Leaves are arranged in an opposite configuration, leaf pairs are swirled around a single stout stem. Flowers are white/pink with 5 petals. Seed pods large and shaped like a pickle. Mature seeds are brown flat and oval shaped. Each seed has a downy attachment that allows for wind distribution. The root system consists of a tap root with lateral roots and rhizomes. The plant contains a white latex-like sap that is exuded when leaves are removed or stem damaged.

The milkweeds are associated with the Monarch butterfly. As the range of the Showy Milkweed expanded within the Basin, reports of Monarchs (caterpillars and adults) in the area have increased. The plant hosts other butterflies, flowers are visited by various bee species and hummingbirds. The plant has a relative long bloom period which makes it attractive for gardeners. Plant can spread by rhizomes so keeping it contained can be an issue in the garden. Milkweeds generally are known to attract aphids so that may be a consideration for introducing the plant into the garden.

The latex like sap contains alkaloids and cardenolides that are retained in the caterpillars and adults which make them taste unpleasant to predators. The young stems, leaves, flows and immature seed pods were eaten (raw or boiled) by certain western indigenous peoples. The plant when found in quantity was processed for cordage. The sap itself was collected, heated and mixed with animal fat then used as a chewing gum like product. Various medical uses of the plant have also been reported.

References:

Beaulieu, David. 2022. How to Grow Showy Milkweed.

The Spruce. <https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-grow-and-care-for-showy-milkweed-5094148>

California Native Plant Society. Calscape. Showy Milkweed

[https://calscape.org/Asclepias-speciosa-\(Showy-Milkweed\)?srchcr=sc580aa60beec07](https://calscape.org/Asclepias-speciosa-(Showy-Milkweed)?srchcr=sc580aa60beec07)

No author reported. 2021. Showy Milkweed for Western Monarchs. Monarch Butterfly Garden LLC. <https://monarchbutterflygarden.net/milkweed-plant-seed-resources/asclepias-speciosa>

Richardson, Will. 2020. Winged Wonders. Tahoe Quarterly.

Young-Mathews, Annie. 2012. Showy Milkweed Plant Fact Sheet. USDA.





The Plant Shortage and Why

Sheri Burke

Member, National Association of
Landscape Planners

For those gardeners who have been living under a rock, there has been a shortage of plants due in large part to the residual effects of COVID, which put a halt to plug production, thereby causing a trickle effect to other plant materials.

ABOVE: Yucca Gloriosa

In addition to the shortage, there has been a plant increase not only caused by the shortage, but also lack of visas being issued for the labor force, California minimum wage increase and inflation. **ATTACHED** is the 2022 Plant Shortage report for further in-depth information.

At the beginning of COVID, people had to "shelter in place" causing them to take a look at their landscape and realized how ugly it was, then decided to do something about it. And, since nurseries were deemed an essential business, these people plus others bored out of their minds being stuck at home, flocked to the nurseries.

As a landscape designer and contractor, also deemed an essential business, I saw these people clogging up the nursery aisles and buying every plant known to mankind, which left me to switch up designs because the plants were no longer available or in limited quantity. Their wholesalers couldn't keep up with the supply and demand, also driving up costs.

On the upside, nurseries were reporting a 500% or more profit which was unheard of and not necessarily due to the price increase, but the volume of customers. In our current state with the increase in fuel and wholesale plant prices, profit margins have dwindled as have the people.

My two go-to plants for evergreen and low water usage are Lomandra longifolia 'Platinum Beauty.' Pre-COVID in a 1-gallon it was \$15, during COVID \$27 and now it is \$18. However, the plant size is not what it used to be. The other is Yucca gloriosa 'Bright Star.' A 3-gallon pre-COVID was \$32, then went up to \$57 and now is \$38; it also is a smaller plant if you can find it.

Conifers and trees are at an all-time high. They were already expensive for the simple fact that it can take up to 10 years to get to retail, but now add in the shortage and lack of labor.

But, what is shocking to me, and is also referenced in the attached report for the North, many of the 1-gallon perennials have not had much of an increase, if at all.

Those impatient people that can't watch grass grow want instant impact

by buying 3- and 15-gallon containers, but those have increased. So, the moral is to buy small, itty bitty plants, sit tight and watch them grow as it will save you money in the long run. The downside, per the report, is a shortage that will follow due to demand.

BELOW: :Lomandra Longifolia



SLOW FOOD TAHOE EDIBLE GARDEN TOUR

Cindy Wise



On Saturday August 27, Slow Food Lake Tahoe hosted an Edible Garden Tour in Truckee. Slow Food Lake Tahoe is a chapter of Slow Food USA. Slow Food is a global, grassroots organization, founded in 1989 to encourage people's interest in the food they eat, where it comes

from, and how food choices impact the world. Slow Food Lake Tahoe is a key partner with Lake Tahoe Master Gardeners in the Grow-Your-Own Workshops, a garden series focused specifically on high-elevation growing.

The Edible Garden tour started in the Slow Food Lake Tahoe Food Bank and Community Gardens located in the Truckee River Regional Park. One hundred percent of the produce grown in the Food Bank Garden is donated to a local hunger relief agency. Last year, the Food Bank Garden was able to feed over 75 locals each week with 388 pounds of culturally appropriate food for a predominantly Latinx recipient base. This was accomplished with the help of over 850+ volunteer hours. The garden also recently hired a full-time garden manager. Top producers in the garden included green beans, squash, potatoes, garlic, tomatoes, onions and kale. To fund this operation, Slow Food Lake Tahoe has hosted several fundraisers, auctions, and applied for various local grants.

Adjacent to the Food Bank garden, a community garden was added beginning in 2020. Slow Foods Lake Tahoe raised \$25,000 to develop the Community Garden by building 35 critter-proof

(covered) beds, which included five elevated, wheelchair-accessible beds. All the beds sold out in their first year as well as for 2022. Rent for the beds for the growing season ranges from \$25 to \$100. The beds are rented to full-time residents on a sliding scale. Some are awarded via scholarships based on financial need. All the wheelchair-accessible beds were donated to a group of adults with special needs.

The garden site also includes a community compost facility where citizens can drop off food waste and other compostable materials. These materials are composted onsite and available for use in both the Food Bank and Community Gardens. A Children's Garden is also onsite to encourage

interest in gardening by the young ones. The Boys and Girls Club of Lake Tahoe is interested in developing a composting facility and Children's Demonstration Garden in South Lake Tahoe. A Boys and Girls Club staff member participated in the Edible Garden tour. The Boys and Girls Club is requesting that Lake Tahoe Master Gardeners collaborate with the Club in these future efforts.

The second stop on the tour was at a large garden with an adjacent chicken coop on an undeveloped lot across from Alder Creek Middle School. This site included fruit trees, strawberries, squash, garlic, and tomatoes. Eggs, flowers and produce were available for purchase by locals at a farm stand located on the site.

The third and fourth stops on the tour were at private residences in the Glenshire Subdivision in Truckee. Both of these stops were great examples of how edible plants can be incorporated along with ornamental plants into very attractive residential landscapes.

Alderwood School, left, center and right, Food Bank Garden, Truckee



What would you like to read about?

Let us know! Call or email us at the address below. We will research and write what you need to know about!

Coming in October: Sheet Mulching, Garlic, Potato Harvest and GYO Microgreens!!!

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