



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

University of California Cooperative Extension 

January 2023

Happy New Year Tahoe Gardeners!

With storm after storm pounding the Tahoe basin, we are grateful for the snow and rain, but distressed about falling trees, broken branches, and icy roads. This month, a few new topics to kick off the new year.

Explore the idea of passive solar greenhouses, learn how to tend your holiday plants, check out our master gardeners' New Year's resolutions for their gardens and more. Learn about the local native junipers from Dave Long, and check out Jen Cressy's January to do list.



We found several events you can plan on, such as the Douglas County (NV) Master Gardeners' Seed Swap on Saturday, January 28. It is a great way to get seeds and meet some new gardeners!

We would also direct your attention to our sister groups, the **Master Food Preservers** and the **UCCE Central Sierra** group which oversees Master Gardener programs in El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties as well as our small band of MGs around the Lake Tahoe Basin. Central Sierra offers many informational articles, events and links to resources. If you haven't already subscribed to their monthly newsletter you can do so **HERE**. Their January newsletter, currently out, has several virtual events you can attend such as the Post-Fire Forest Resilience workshop shown in the flyer below. The Master Food Preservers have several events coming up in January. Take a look and sign up **HERE**

While our Lake Tahoe Master Gardeners are here to help you with the specific gardening environment around the lake, we like to leverage our communication with other aligned groups to bring you the best information we can find. Next month, look for information on other Tahoe non-profits which might interest you, such as the Sugar Pine Foundation, Slow Food Lake Tahoe, and the Mountain Area Preservation Organization. Meantime, stay warm and enjoy the snow!

Very best,

Kevin Kamp
Lake Tahoe Master Gardeners
Program Coordinator

Sandy Gainza
Newsletter Editor

Upcoming Events

		
	<h3>Save the Date!</h3> <p>Register now for a California Post- Fire Forest Resilience Workshop</p> <p>Online weekly Wednesdays 6:00pm – 7:30pm, February 1st to March 15th and in-person field trips on Thursday March 16th and Friday March 17th</p>	
<p>Hosted by: University of California Cooperative Extension</p> <p><i>in collaboration with:</i> CAL FIRE California Association of Resource Conservation Districts United States Forest Service</p>	<p>Learn about managing forestland after wildfire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing disturbances in Sierra Nevada forests• Post-wildfire issues: erosion, invasives, hazard trees, fuels• Time frame and steps needed for reforestation• Landowner support groups and financial assistance• Safety and erosion control for the short and long term• Dealing with dead trees/ salvage logging/ slash treatment• Reforestation/seedling orders/ climate change/ planting• Dealing with competing vegetation and on-going maintenance• Post-wildfire range land management• Getting professional help and cost-share opportunities	
	<p>Participants will use online resources on their own time to complete learning modules and short activities. Zoom meetings with all participants and presenters will take place once a week on Wednesdays, 6-7:30pm. The focus is on recent fires in the central Sierra Nevada. The in-person field trips will visit the Creek and Oak fires to see fire impacts, restoration needs and strategies and restoration projects on private and public lands.</p>	
<p>University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources</p>	<p>Registration for the workshop is \$25. Sign up now at: http://ucanr.edu/post-fireworkshops For questions, contact Daylin Wade, dwade@ucanr.edu.</p>	

Seed Swap

Please join the UNR Extension Master Gardeners of Douglas County(NV) for our 2nd Annual Seed Swap. All experience levels are welcome. You don't have to bring seeds, suggested donation \$5. For more information contact Jessica Gardner @ 775-782-9960 or jessicagardner@unr.edu

Saturday, January 28 at 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
1325 Waterloo Lane, Gardnerville NV 89410

ALSO:

UC Integrated Pest Management Webinars Begin January 19!
Third Thursday of each month; webinar format; no cost but you must register.

January 19, 2023: Houseplant Problems

Time: 12:00-1:00pm PDT

Presenter: Lauren Fordyce, Urban and Community IPM Educator

Register for this webinar

February 16, 2023: Dealing with Pantry Pests

Time: 12:00-1:00pm PDT

Presenter: Karey Windbiel-Rojas, Associate Director for Urban & Community IPM/Area IPM Advisor

Register for this webinar

March 16, 2023: Preventing Pest Problems at Seeding

Time: 12:00-1:00pm PDT

Presenter: Lauren Fordyce, Urban and Community IPM Educator

Register for this webinar

April 20, 2023: Aphids, Scales, and Mealybugs, Oh my!

Time: 12:00-1:00pm PDT

Presenter: Karey Windbiel-Rojas, Associate Director for Urban & Community IPM/Area IPM Advisor

Register for this webinar

Douglas County (NV) Master Gardeners Present:

Plant a Pollinator Garden in a Weekend Workshops

Join UNR Extension Master Gardeners of Douglas County for a 4 part workshop series - Plant a Pollinator Garden in a Weekend.

2/4/23 - Basic Garden Design

2/11/23 - Hummingbirds

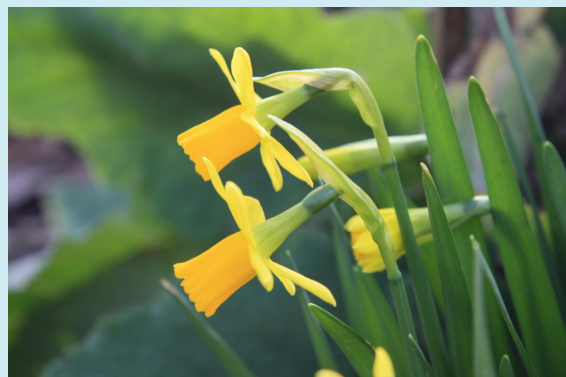
2/25/23 - Butterflies

3/4/23 - General Pollinator Gardens

Registration is required

Free

Contact jessicagardner@unr.edu or 775-782-9960 for more information



January Tasks

By Jen Cressy

1. When using ice melt on your driveway and walkways, select one that is plant friendly and follow the application instructions. More isn't better.

(Please review this guide from the Penn State Extension on the various chemical make up of de-icing products to choose the least toxic one.)

2. If you are overwintering potted perennials outside, keep them buried in the snow to insulate the soil and protect the roots from freeze thaw damage.

3. After you remove your holiday tree decorations, place your tree upright outside in an open area anchored in the stand and snow. You'll be delighted by how many chickadees will seek shelter in your winter habitat garden!

(Don't forget to remove the tree later in spring when it is dry and becomes combustible material!)

Tahoe Plants and Trees

Sierra Juniper (*Juniperus grandis*) By David Long



The Sierra Juniper is found from lake level to near the summits of the Lake Tahoe Basin. It is most often found in open forest areas or rocky slopes, especially in the south and western portions of the basin. This striking tree can grow to over 50 feet tall with larger trees having stout trunks. At higher elevations and/or in more exposed locations the trunk and tree can be twisted and stunted (many varieties of trees with this appearance are referred to as having a rummholz form). At lower elevations in the basin the trees are found interspersed with Jeffery pines and white fir, as part of the coniferous forest. In higher elevations find them proximate to white bark pine, hemlock or as solitary trees. The bark is reddish brown, often peeling. Mature trees may show effects of lightning strikes or fire damage. The oldest known Sierra Junipers are over 2500 years old.

Leaves are greenish gray, scalelike and tightly surround the branch tips. There are four leaf scales that circle leaf stem in an alternating pattern. The majority of the trees are usually dioecious (male and female plants) but a small percentage monoecious (male and female on same plant). The fruit, commonly called juniper berries, is actually a type of cone, and is blue/black and resinous when mature.

The Sierra Juniper was previously considered a subspecies (var. *australis*) of the Western Juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*) but was elevated to species status in 2006. The two species are very similar, with distinct geographic distribution differences. The Sierra Juniper being found south of the Cascade/Modoc ranges and the Western Juniper being found north of the Sierra Nevada.

The trees are an important nesting site for birds and the berries a food source to birds, and squirrels. The tree is host to several types of butterflies and moths. The indigenous peoples used the wood for tool making and as fire wood. Berries were collected, mixed with water and used as a beverage, or eaten after some preparation. Green leaves and branches could be burned for medicinal value.

The wood, while resistant to rot and insect damage, is generally not commercially

utilized due to its twisted or irregular wood fiber orientation. Occasionally the juniper wood is used for fence posts, firewood or charcoal. Freeform furniture and drawer liners are other uses for the wood of this juniper.

References:

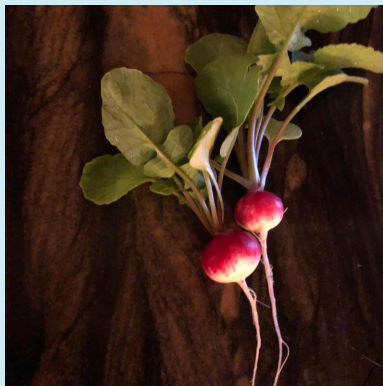
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New Years' Gardening Resolutions

Check out what some of the Tahoe MGs are planning to do differently or add on to their to do list this year!

Jen Cressy:

My New Year's resolution is to install 1/8 inch screens on my attic vents to exclude potential fire embers and remove some vegetation in the zero to 5 foot zone around my house. A little bit every year to keep our home more fire resilient. We love our home and

Annie Christy:

I hope to figure out where to place and create 2 more 4'x8' raised beds this year (dependent on hubby's muscle) as I need more room to rotate tomatoes and potatoes! I'll use row covers on the tomatoes earlier in the season, planning on weather that



Sandy Gainza:

neighborhood and want to stay here with our community of friends.

Jen, check this out from UCANR:

[Attic Vents for Fire Prevention](#)

Kevin Kamp:

I plan to build some raised beds to inaugurate my first Tahoe garden this season. I also wish to plant a pollinator garden in my front yard.

Kevin, check out these resources:

[Master Gardeners of Marin Guidelines for Growing in Raised Beds](#)

[Creating a Pollinator Garden](#)

is either too hot or too cold. I'll grow greens and herbs in pots near the kitchen. I also plan on incorporating more native plants in the garden.

Dave Long:

Do more by working less!

Okay Dave, check out **sheet mulching!** Less work than turning piles!
OR: **Conservation Tillage!**

Vicki Schussel: I am trying to recover from pneumonia, so my intention is to sit back and watch things grow! Get well, Vicki! Good advice for anyone under the weather this time of year!

My containers this year will produce more food than flowers. I have found that mixing in Rainbow Chard, Russian Kale, Red Oakleaf Lettuce, and Parsley look great, grow well and can come to my table for dinner. Edible flowers that do well here in the Lake Tahoe basin include pansies, marigolds, nasturtiums, bachelor buttons, and borage. Lavender also flourishes with the excellent drainage our soils offer. The only downside is increased critter control. They love veggies too! I will check this website: **Vegetable Tips from Master Gardeners**

Melissa Guthrie, aka "Potato Lady" on the New Year

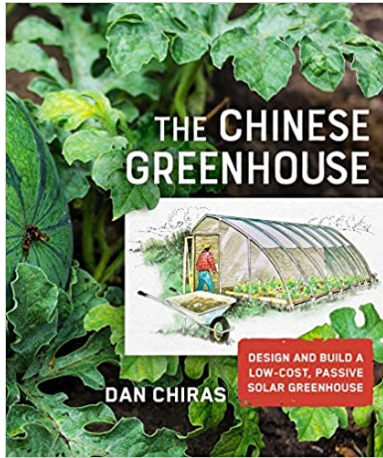


Cheers to a productive and rewarding growing season even with the wild and wonderful weather we are having this January. Snow is always magical to watch. It gracefully meanders down and settles on our garden decks and yards. It is food for what will soon spring up and provide for a gardening adventure. Super annoying at times, but welcome. My resolution is to concentrate on the soul satisfying tried-and true vegetables that grow well here. My efforts may be year-round, new to me, old friends, or come and go...

I am going back to basics and reinforcing my previously successful vegetable crops. Eatable bounty vs. variety. I plan to concentrate on encouraging new Tahoe gardeners to grow what we have found through the years grows best. I also resolve to get those that have passion and knowledge, to teach. I am going to try to grow ginger and basil all year round, inside and out. I'd like to plant more chamomile in places that critters won't find as easily. Then I can share the unique taste of Tahoe chamomile tea with friends, especially when it's just too slushy to go skiing. Growing in our area is a little frustrating but the imperfect self-dug potato, bountiful fresh-picked cherry tomato salad, and dried thyme

seasoning, that you share..... are worth the effort hands down (and dirty).

Growing Food in Lake Tahoe



Passive Solar Greenhouses...an idea for Tahoe? Sandy Gainza

I recently read an article about the use of passive solar technology in China. China began over 30 years ago to expand food production in northern and central China by building three walled structures which would capture heat during the day and let it warm the interior at night. The three walls are made of dirt, bricks or clay and are sited on the north, west and east sides of the greenhouse. The south side and the roof are covered by plastic film which has become available in China. The film is lighter than glass, which makes creating the roof structure less expensive. The thermal mass of the the three walls keeps the temperature above freezing by slowly radiating heat captured during the daytime. There are now almost five million acres of these greenhouses functioning in China and they have proven effective up to the 42nd parallel, which is the same latitude as Chicago. Further north, the greenhouses cannot sustain above freezing temperatures inside.

These greenhouses are a bit labor intensive because they must be covered each night and uncovered each morning. Originally covered with straw blankets, insulated material is now more common. Automated systems have been developed for some. A Chinese immigrant to Alberta, Canada has successfully implemented the same technique and is producing commercially. He can grow tomatoes and cucumbers (warm season crops) without additional heat until December.

Until the 1800s, gardeners in Europe used thermal mass (walled gardens) to retain heat and extend the growing season. The idea of artificially heated glass boxes is relatively new. Given that many of us are looking for ways to save energy, passive solar technology for our gardens is worth a thought, even if we cannot

reproduce the large, labor intensive greenhouses described in the articles below. I currently use a polycarbonate cold frame but it cannot grow much besides green onions and chard in the winter. I am going to experiment this year using concrete blocks along the north wall of the frame to see if I can raise the night time temperature a few degrees.

If the idea of using passive solar to extend your garden interests you, check out these articles for more details.

[Mother Earth News Solar Greenhouses](#)

[Alberta Grower Uses Passive Solar Greenhouse](#)

[The Year Round Solar Greenhouse by Lindsay Schiller \(book you can purchase\)](#)

[The Chinese Greenhouse by Dan Chiras \(Mother Earth News\)](#)

Taking Care of Holiday Plants



Did you buy a Poinsettia this year? I bought three (they were \$2.50!). How about a Christmas cactus? I have one that has reliably bloomed every December for over 10 years. That bromeliad peeking out behind the poinsettia? Valentine gift from last year. After the holiday, I normally lose interest in the rather garish looks of a red poinsettia, but I have a tender heart and hate to just discard it. I found a few tips in case you want to keep your holiday plants alive after the season. Keep in mind that most of these plants are tropical natives and cannot tolerate the temperatures we experience here in the Tahoe area during the winter. They also are planted in a very light potting mixture which, when dried out, will not take water easily. Try and water them using a pie plate or casserole dish. Set the plant in the dish and add an inch or two of water. Leave the plant alone for an hour or so until you can feel the pot has gained some weight. The water will move through the planting mix and irrigate your plant more thoroughly than overhead watering. With good light and proper watering, these plants can brighten your home for another few months. If you are really ambitious, read the articles below to challenge yourself into making them bloom next year! As for the bromeliad, it has

prospered for almost a year by living in a cool part of my dining room, near a window, with only occasional water into the center of the plant, and misting it when I think about it.

[Country Living on Christmas Cactus Care](#)

[Iowa State Extension Article on Poinsettia Care](#)

[Better Homes and Gardens on Poinsettias](#)

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