



By: Lynne Brosch, UCC Master Gardener of Lake Tahoe

What Does a Gardener Do in the Winter?

Yes, the garden is buried in snow or soon will be. Out of sight out of mind? Not for a true gardener! This is the season to begin planning your garden for next year. In the dark and snowy days of winter it's time to relax by the fire and make notes on what was successful and what you might want to add or change for your next year's garden. It's also a good time to peruse your gardening books and get some new ideas.

Have you noticed that our summers in Tahoe are getting warmer? More days of consistently high temps, even the high 80s, and some nights I noticed we didn't even get much below 60. This is a dramatic change in growing conditions for many of our natives. It will be important to keep an eye on your plants for signs of wilt and burned leaves. You may find you are getting a lot more hot sun in places where these plants were very satisfied before. Even though natives are adapted to our drier days of summer, with the heat we have been experiencing in past summers, even they will require some hand watering. Plants that have been designated for sun or part sun may need part shade with the heat of summer. This is the time to reevaluate your plant placement. Perhaps you will want to move a shrub or perennial to a more shaded spot next summer.

Perhaps you would like to add something new to your garden. How about a section for herbs or adding edibles into your perennial garden? Herbs are a wonderful addition in our summer gardens and a delight to use freshly picked in summer dishes or drinks. Edibles like cabbage, lettuce, kale, squash will enliven the look of your garden and make it very useful as well. Edible gardening does have some special requirements to consider. You will need at least 6 hours of sun. For many people this may require you to plant the edibles in your front yard where the sunny spots are. No problem, edibles can fit right into your landscape of beauty. You also will have to closely monitor your edible plants throughout the season. Pests are somewhat more common on edibles and may need removal. Edibles will be growing quickly and ripening of their food will need harvesting at various times through the summer. Water is crucial for edibles so if you don't have a drip system which can be adjusted to cover the edibles' needs you may have to hand water to supplement water needs of your plants. You may find it easier to plan for a raised bed for your vegetables. If you add hoops like the one pictured you can then put a frost cloth over the bed when temperatures drop or cover in a clear plastic to raise temperatures in the bed in the early part of the season. Gardening in containers can be a very easy way to success in both herbs and vegetables, especially in our Tahoe climate.

How about adding more natives to your garden? Remember, natives are so much more successful as they are adapted to our high Sierra climate. Natives attract beneficial insects which help to support your garden and our environment. Want to see more butterflies, bees and birds? Plant natives. Save water. A lawn consumes about 30 gallons of water per square foot annually while a

native landscape consumes 3-5 gallons per square foot annually. Native plants are more resistant to common pests. The seeds, fruits, flowers and leaves provide food and cover for many varieties of wildlife.

Have you thought about adding succulents? There are many winter hardy succulents that can be added to your garden. They do well with little to no water and can usually take lots of sun. They also do better than many other plants in our decomposed granite soil. Try sedum and sempervivum.

Another addition to your garden you may not have thought of could be ornamental grasses. It is important to keep them away from your home or other buildings on your property but if you have a large garden area they certainly add interest to your landscape. Check out some possible varieties on pages 70 -71 in your **Home Landscaping Guide**.

Have you thought about starting a compost bin? Compost is a great way to recycle waste food and paper and a cheap and easy way to enrich your soil. Check out our Master Gardener article on Compost included below.

There are many resources to help with your winter reading listed below, but also check out some of our earlier articles that relate to this topic and watch for upcoming articles on Container Gardening, Adding Ornamental Grasses to Your Landscape, Growing Herbs in Tahoe, Good Succulents for the Tahoe Garden, and watch for more of our Food Gardening series workshops.

If you have comments or questions please send them to:
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UCCE Master Gardener of Lake Tahoe Articles:

Edible Landscaping

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/files/258648.pdf>

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/files/258649.pdf>

Compost: A Recipe for Mudpies

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/files/258646.pdf>

Building a Raised Bed

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/files/258654.pdf>

Plants for Pollinators

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/files/258667.pdf>

Right Plant, Right Place

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/files/258674.pdf>

Micro-Climates, Micro-Worlds

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/files/258684.pdf>

Further Resources:

Tahoe Friendly Garden

[http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/Tahoe Friendly Garden Program/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/Tahoe%20Friendly%20Garden%20Program/)

Tahoe Friendly Garden: Home-Grown Food Resources

[http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/Tahoe Friendly Garden Program/Friendly Garden Resources/Home-Grown Food Resources/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/mglaketahoe/Tahoe%20Friendly%20Garden%20Program/Friendly%20Garden%20Resources/Home-Grown%20Food%20Resources/)

Planting Guides: These guides are geared specifically for the Lake Tahoe region. They can assist with plant selection. In each of the Tahoe Friendly Garden Sections we have suggested at least 5 plants that can assist with your objective of making a Tahoe Friendly Garden.

- Home Landscaping Guide for Lake Tahoe and Vicinity:
<https://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/nr/2006/eb0601.pdf>
- Backyard Native Plants: Identification and Treatment of Shrubs and Ground Covers for Fire Safe Landscaping at Lake Tahoe: [http://tahoercd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Backyard-Native-Plants-Booklet High-Quality.pdf](http://tahoercd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Backyard-Native-Plants-Booklet-High-Quality.pdf)
- Choosing the Right Plant for Northern Nevada's High Fire Hazard Areas: <https://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/nr/2007/eb0701.pdf>

Edible Landscaping

[http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/metro/sites/default/files/Edible Landscaping.pdf](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/metro/sites/default/files/Edible_Landscaping.pdf)

Tahoe BMP Handbook

<http://www.tahoebmp.org/bmphandbook.aspx>

Designing Landscapes for Northern Nevada's Arid Climate

<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/ho/2011/sp1115.pdf>

Flowers at the Border

<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/ho/2014/sp1407.pdf>

Rosalind Creasy

<http://www.rosalindcreasy.com>

Emily Tepe's Edible Landscaping Blog

<http://www.artichokesandzinnias.com>

The Herb Society of America

<http://www.herbsociety.org>

Bringing Nature Home

<http://www.bringingnaturehome.net>