



The South Tahoe Garden Club

“Fifty Eight Years of Fun and Sun”

By Carolyn Meiers, UCCE Master Gardener of Lake Tahoe

(please note this article is written in the first person by Carolyn Meiers)



I am writing this history of the South Tahoe Garden Club while reviewing seven scrap books filled with memorabilia, newspaper clippings and photos. It is truly a ‘walk down memory lane.’

Having lived here since the 1950’s, many of the members are familiar to me, and a few were still members when I joined the club. Many newcomers to Tahoe did not continue to garden as they did prior to moving here. They were happy to leave their lawn mowers behind and enjoy the barren, pine needle terrain, and the ponderosas reaching to the sky. Naturally beautiful!

But as time went by they missed the beautiful flowers and deciduous trees from former gardens. So experimentation began. What would grow at this elevation? Trial and error prevailed (and still does). They were following in Luther Burbank’s style. He once said, “a flower is nothing but an educated weed.” Another said, “cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education!” The ladies were looking for help with what and where to plant, and when to let ‘Mother Nature’ prevail. Winter!

So then a group of eight women united to share current knowledge, socialize, and assist with public beautification. They began in May of 1961 to form a “Ta-hoe-ers” Garden Club. They later changed the name to the South Tahoe Garden Club as it is today. By 1968 there were twenty members, with five inactive. Limited membership continues to this day due to meeting in members’ homes and gardens.

The organization was composed of five officers and six committees. The following year’s programs were filled with education, field trips, luncheons, teas and flower show competitions. Public plantings included Barton Hospital, Happy Homestead Cemetery, the Airport and later El Dorado County Library. They also helped start the Truckee Garden Club. Dues were \$3.00 a year with flea markets and plants sales to help offset costs for plants.



They kept busy with garden work, but also prioritized socializing, and fun. A big event was the yearly barbeque with husbands and guests.

Years 1976-1984 as before included women from both sides of the Stateline- California/Nevada. The late 80's through 1990 recalls many floral competitions and field trips out of town for floral shows. Minutes of meetings reveal plans to help the Lake Tahoe Historical Society move from log cabin to the present location on Hwy. 50. In 1986 they adjourned through the winter months. That spring they started the work at the Tallac Site/Baldwin garden. Apple Hill became a tradition every fall. Horticulture reports and time spent in each other's gardens were a major benefit of membership.



The final scrapbook (of seven) describes many field trips to Filoli Garden, Apple Hill, Thunderbird Lodge, KHigh5 Ranch, and High Sierra Iris Garden. Before and after photos of the Baldwin Garden that they helped plant are quite a contrast. During this time there was a much needed revision to the club by laws, and then another revision in 2017 kept everything current with the 'times.' Also of note are several Tahoe Tribune newspaper columns by members that include ideas and information for high sierra gardening. The Lake Tahoe Community College demonstration garden was recognized then as another needy spot and is often the recipient of weeding and 'TLC' by the group.

The club has remained much the same in its structure and intent through the years. Lifelong friendships support the core of the many accomplishments and shared ideals, especially the love of nature and care for the earth.

The club is often applauded for the work at the Baldwin Garden. The bird houses are a standout attraction along with the 'rock river' that includes memory rocks painted with past members names.

"We come from the earth, we return to the earth, and in between we garden."

-Carolyn Meiers

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