Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe

Issue#6b

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Let it Grow... South Shore Students Growing Food at 6,250 ft.

January Newsletter 2015

Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe strive to meet the horticulture needs of the Lake Tahoe Basin Community, we are pleased to extend research-based information to fellow gardeners on home horticulture. Our Master Gardener volunteers receive training and certification from the University of California Cooperative Extension and provide practical scientific gardening information.

We can be reached at 530-543-1501 ext. 101
Email us at mesuarez@ucanr.edu

Become a Master Gardener!

Come Grow with Us! Applications due January 23rd

Do you enjoy getting your hands dirty?
Do you enjoy sharing your knowledge?
Do you want to meet new people who share your gardening passion?

Then you sound like an ideal candidate to become a

It has been a long road for some avid local gardeners but 4-season vegetable gardening has become a reality at 6,250 feet. Sierra House Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe now has two (18- foot domes) that will be a year-round living laboratory that will grow food for the school cafeteria. One of the project spearheads is local Master Gardener of Lake Tahoe, Rebecca Bryson. She along with many local community groups, agencies, teachers and other parents were the brainchild for the project.

Master Gardener of Lake Tahoe. You will be trained by the University of California Cooperative Extension in science-based horticulture and then volunteer to teach others on sustainable gardening practices.

Learn It! Attend the initial 50 hour training series. Attend regular continuing education classes.

Grow It! Get your hands dirty by teaching at community & school gardens. Propagate plants for the annual Tahoe friendly plant sale.

Teach It! Educate residents at Farmer's Markets, workshops and events. Be a docent at one of our garden tours.

12-Week Training Schedule

Fridays:
March 13, 20, 27-- April 17 & 24 --May 1, 8, 15 & 29

Saturdays:
March 21 & 28--May 2

Cost: $185 (includes books and resources)
Classes held at Lake Tahoe Community College from 10 - 3

Applications due January 23rd. Apply at: http://ucanr.edu/uccemglt-application

For more info:530-543-1501 x101 mesuarez@ucanr.edu

Manzanita, January Bee Plant

Growing Domes are highly productive 4-season geodesic greenhouses **designed especially for alpine climates.** They are self-sufficient, relying entirely on passive solar heating and requiring very little maintenance to the structure. (Think $50 a year!) Managed effectively they will be able to provide fresh organic produce to incorporate into school lunches and an ecology lab to study soil, vermiculture, aquaponics, math, science, and language arts. Sierra House Elementary School is proud to be part of regional food security organizations like the The Tahoe Food Hub and the Dome Raising Project**.**

The Dome Raising Project, out of Truckee is working collaboratively with schools and hospitals to raise Growing Domes for educational and food procurement purposes for their respective institutions.

The Dome Raising Project is focused on RAISING

of the Month

Author: Christine Casey

Manzanitas (Arctostaphylos spp.) are a diverse group of California native plants that serve as a great winter resource for bees, especially native bees that fly early such as Osmia spp. and Bombus melanopygus. They are shrubs (mostly) and groundcovers (a few) that should be used in more California gardens. The waxy green leaves, peeling bark, smooth reddish to mahogany branches, and upright leaves are attractive throughout the year. These plants have stomates on both sides of the leaf so leaves are held perpendicular to the ground, rather than parallel, to minimize sun exposure and water loss. Some begin flowering in late fall, while most flower in January and February. In my own garden these held up well to drought this summer without any supplemental watering.

The California Native Plant Society has a nice article on this group; I also use the websites of Las Pilitas Nursery and California Flora Nursery to learn about new species for inclusion in the Honey Bee Haven. According to California Bees and Blooms, two of the best for bees are the Arctostaphylos densiflora cultivars 'Sentinel' and 'Howard McMinn'. These two are also among the easiest to grow and fastest to reach mature size; the former tends to be upright

awareness for good nutrition, RAISING an understanding for eco-literacy, and RAISING healthy, sustainable grown food in our food insecure region. By raising domes, we raise a deeper connection and respect for our food and our human ecosystem.

Sierra House Elementary School plans to educate students and the community about growing food using energy-efficient design in an alpine setting; increase awareness of healthy food, good nutrition and ecological stewardship all while providing their students healthy organic produce.

"I see a difference when kids learn first-hand," says Michelle McLean, a parent of a Sierra House Elementary student, member of the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative's, and Co-project leader for the domes.

McLean says she has noticed that students become more engaged and responsible when they participate in this learning platform.

Sierra House Elementary isn't the only school in South Lake Tahoe working to educate students on growing food in Alpine environments.

Tahoe Valley Elementary School has a greenhouse (pictured below) and has 5 raised beds. They are also

while 'Howard McMinn' tends to be more rounded in shape. It is also the most adaptable; this UC Davis Arboretum All-Star can tolerate heavier soils than most manzanitas as well as some summer irrigation. Two other great cultivars for gardens are 'Austin Griffiths' and 'Sunset'.

Manzanitas host a gall aphid, Tamalia coweni. The aphid lays eggs in manzanita leaves and hormones secreted by the developing aphid induce formation of a gall on the leaves. Cut these open to view the developing aphids inside; they are not considered to be a plant pest.

This article was published on January 5, 2015 in The Bee Gardener, Bee gardening news and education from the UC Davis Häagen-Dazs Honey Bee Haven

Lake Tahoe Gardening Q & A...

Q & A: I live in "add your town" within the Lake Tahoe Basin. How do I find out which planting zone I should use and what is the difference between Sunset and USDA zones?

Most gardening books, catalogs, and seed packets refer to plant hardiness zones, climate zones, or growing zones. Temperature hardiness climate zones are based on normally expected high and low temperatures and serve as guides to help you know which plants will grow where you live.

Temperature is not the only factor in figuring out whether a plant will survive in your garden. Soil types, rainfall, day length, wind, humidity, and heat also play their roles. Even within a city, a street, or a spot protected by a warm wall in your own

looking to expand by creating an ethno-botanical garden. South Lake Tahoe's Family Resource Center, "Gardens for a Healthy Tahoe" project is adjacent to Bijou Elementary School and has five raised beds and nine hugelkatures.

For More Information on Growing Domes: http://www.growingspaces.com/youth-garden-education.htm

Please note: Disclaimer "No endorsement of this product/company is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products/Companies that are not included." UC Cooperative Extension

Planting Zone Maps for Lake Tahoe Region

garden, there may be microclimates that affect how plants grow. The zones are only a guide and a good starting point, but you still need to determine for yourself what will and won't work in your garden.

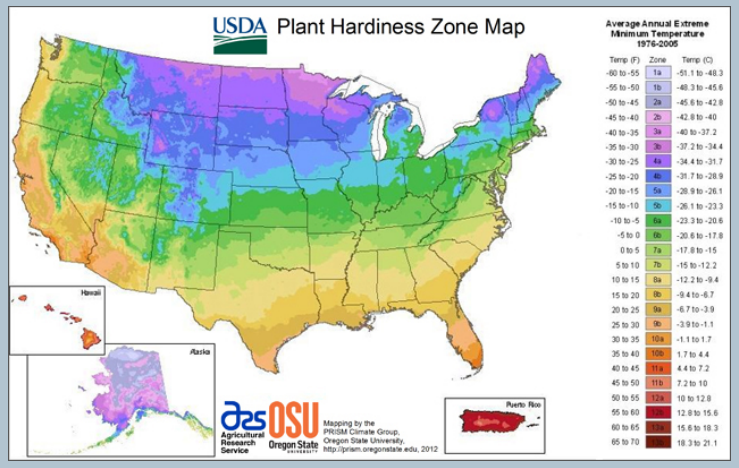
The USDA plant hardiness map divides North America into 11 hardiness zones. Zone 1 is the coldest; zone 11 is the warmest. When you order plants from catalogs or read general garden books, you need to know your USDA zone in order to be able to interpret references correctly. The American Horticultural Society has also issued a Plant Heat-Zone Map. You'll notice that each zone is divided into "a" and "b," with "a" having, on average, five degrees colder winters than "b."

In Lake Tahoe our USDA zones tend to vary depending on where you are between 6b -7a. Here are some examples: 7a includes: Tahoe Vista, Tahoe City, and Stateline, NV. 6b includes: South Lake Tahoe CA, Carnelian Bay CA, Tahoma CA and Incline Village NV.

Gardeners in the western United States sometimes are confused when confronted with the 11 Hardiness Zones created by the USDA, because we are used to a 24-zone climate system created by Sunset Magazine. The Sunset zone maps, considered the standard gardening references in the West, are more precise than the USDA's, since they factor in not only winter minimum temperatures, but also summer highs, lengths of growing seasons, humidity, and rainfall patterns. In Lake Tahoe, we are mostly in Sunset zones 2B (all of the California side) and 1A (sections of the Nevada side). Refer to the new Sunset Western Garden Book.

Hardiness zones remove some of the mystery of

Sunset Zones for Northern California (Lake Tahoe)



USDA Hardiness Zone Map

gardening by allowing a gardener to know at a glance whether a plant will survive winter cold in his or her part of the country. So they're both empowering and budget-conscious, since these zones can help stop you from buying plants that won't survive from year to year.

While hardiness and heat zones are extremely helpful, they don't tell the whole story. There are many other weather effects that can determine how well a plant will grow for you, including humidity, rainfall and wind.

The hardiness zones maps were compiled based on average temperatures, so they don't account for unusual weather patterns, such as temperatures hitting the single digits on Halloween night or 59 degrees in January as we have seen in Lake Tahoe. Nor is the hardiness zone map an assurance that winter temperatures will never be colder than what's stated on the map. Other factors that can't be included on a large national map are the effects of soil and soilfertility, and the health of your plants in general.

Zone maps also don't tell us about microclimates, which are small areas with different weather. A good example of a microclimate is a mountain. The largest microclimate would be the whole mountain, which has different weather based on elevation, but smaller microclimates are the north and south sides of the mountain. Next might come wind-sheltered pockets on the south side or areas beside a mountain stream. Finally, a very small microclimate might be the north side of your house or a south-facing brick wall. Several microclimates can exist in one place, with one adding to or cancelling out the effect of another.

How can you tell if you have a microclimate where you live? Take your own temperature readings around your yard. Or use your plants as a guide: If certain plants that are supposed to be hardy to your zone continue to die in your yard, you may have a cold pocket. Or if you're growing a Zone 8 plant in Zone 7, you may have a warm pocket.

Happy Gardening!

References:
http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/Your_Climate_Zone/
http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/#
http://www.sunset.com/garden/climate-zones/sunset-climate-zones-california-nevada

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