



## UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe *Lake Tahoe Horticulture News*

December 2016

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### **Coordinator's Corner:**

*"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." --Audrey Hepburn*

Greetings!

Winter has arrived and our gardens are covered with a blanket of white. It is time to turn our thoughts inward to care for our indoor plants and prepping for next year's spring projects. In this issue we have a few articles to get you through the long winter months on how to care for both your indoor and outdoor plants. Additionally, we have some information for you on how to care for holiday plants as well as possible gift ideas.

With the end of the calendar year comes the end of a hard-worked Master Gardener volunteer season. The UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe would like to thank you for attending one of our many workshops, farmers market booths, public garden tours and other events. We would also like to thank many of the partners that worked with us over the past year including: *South Tahoe Public Utility District, Tallac Association, Lake Tahoe Garden Club, Lake of the Sky Garden Club, Tahoe Food Hub, El Dorado County Farmers Market, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Tahoe Valley Elementary School, Sierra House Elementary School, Bijou Community School, LTESM School, Truckee Community Demonstration Garden, Lake Tahoe Community College, Tahoe Resource Conservation District, Nevada Tahoe Conservation District, UNCE, South Tahoe Refuse & Recycling Center, Family Resource Center, Boys and Girls Club of Lake Tahoe, Lake Valley Fire Department, Evan's Family Garden, North Tahoe Demonstration Garden and UC-Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center.* We are so very thankful to all of these organizations and partners. With their assistance we were able to host over 57 horticulture-based public workshops/events.

We are already fastidiously planning for next season. This fall Master Gardeners planted over 350 native/adapted plants that are Tahoe Friendly. These plants will overwinter at the lake to ensure they are ready for the 2017 June Plant Sale. Additionally, we are working on a *Tahoe Friendly*

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## Fact or Fiction?

*Spider plants absorb the volatile chemicals inside your home?*

**FACT!** But don't go rushing out to buy spider plants until you've heard the whole story.

Studies show that houseplants, especially spider plants, do remove volatile chemicals, like resins and solvents, from household air.

Formaldehyde, for example, is steadily off-gassing from many of the things, like paints and fireproof couches, and in winter we often shut the house up tight.

But sadly, an average home would need about 70 spider plants to handle all the formaldehyde in an average home. THAT would be a lot of plant care!

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*Landscaping Certification program and future workshops for our Growing Food in Lake Tahoe program.*

We hope you have a wonderful holiday season and joyous New Year.

Sincerely,

*Megan Suarez-Brand*

## Winter Watering

**By: Jen Cressy, UCCE Master Gardener of Lake Tahoe**

Don't let yourself get disappointed by dead landscape plants in the spring. Dry winter months can damage and kill your plants through dehydration, especially unestablished plants not insulated from exposure by the snow and established lawns, trees, shrubs and flowers in sunny windy or exposed areas.

*Words of wisdom:*

Trees and shrubs that don't receive regular water, especially in a drought, will search for it, oftentimes unfortunately in your wastewater pipes. Root intrusion is a common cause of costly wastewater pipe repair. **Service lines are the homeowner's responsibility**, therefore it is recommended to have your pipes serviced annually or more frequently if you live in a heavily-treed location. If you've had a wastewater backup in the past, chances are it will happen again if you wait too long between cleanings.

Consider these tips when winter watering in the absence of snow cover. [Continue reading...](#)

## A gift for the gardener in your life: *forcing paperwhite bulbs (Narcissus tazetta)*

**By: Megan Suarez-Brand, UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe**

The paperwhite bulb (*Narcissus tazetta*) is in the same family as daffodils but is a tropical flower. Unlike daffodils, the paperwhites do not require a cold period to grow. They require little less than to be potted (with or without soil) and watered to produce clusters of fragrant blooms. The white, fragrant flowers usually open up within 2-3 weeks of planting. The bulbs can be planted in soil, stones or decorative rocks in shallow bowls or jars. Just add a little water and the bulbs rapidly form roots, grow leaves, and shoots. The only drawback with these beautiful indoor winter plants is that they tend to get leggy and wilt over.

Researchers have found some easy solutions to deal with the "leggy problem." Research conducted by the Flowerbulb Research Program at Cornell University has found a simple and effective way to reduce stem and leaf growth of paperwhites. The "secret" is using dilute solutions of alcohol. [Continue reading...](#)



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## How to Select and Care for a Healthy Poinsettia

**By Scott Oneto, Farm Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Central Sierra**

The poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is the most popular Christmas season plant. It was introduced into the United States in the late 1820's from its native Mexico by our first ambassador to that country, Joel Robert Poinsett. The plant was first known and probably is still best known for the bright red leaves or bracts that surround the inconspicuous, small, yellow, true flowers. Poinsettias may be purchased in colors ranging from white and cream through the various shades of pink and red. The following hints will help you choose a healthy poinsettia plant and how to care for it.



Choose a plant that hasn't shed pollen yet. To check, look for yellow pollen showing on the petal-like red and green bracts. Poinsettias showing pollen grains don't stay nice as long as those that haven't yet released pollen. Pay attention to the conditions where poinsettias are being sold. Poinsettias offered in stores during the holidays have been raised in a greenhouse at 60 to 70 degrees, in high humidity and maximum sunlight or growing lights. Store displays that mimic these growing conditions closely may contain healthier poinsettias than those for sale in hot, dry, and low-light conditions. [Continue reading...](#)

## Holiday Season Brings Poisonous Plants in Home

**By: Lauren Snowden, UC Master Gardener Statewide Training Coordinator**

During the holiday season many plants, cut flowers and flowering bulbs are used as decoration and given as gifts. Many of these items can be poisonous to both humans and pets with long-term negative effects to one's health.

Plant poisoning can range from simple rashes and blisters all the way to organ damage and in severe cases death. Be safe this holiday season by being mindful of what plants and flowers you are either giving, receiving or decorating with. Common holiday plants that pose a toxic risk are; Amaryllis (bulb portion), Chrysanthemums, Holly (berries), Mistletoe (berries and leaves) and Poinsettia.



*Amaryllis plants (Hippeastrum sp.) have toxin primarily in the bulb but also the leaves and stem.*

Seven simple steps can be taken to help minimize the risk that poisonous or toxic plants cause when brought into the home:

1. Know what plants you have in your home and the health risks they pose
2. Place poisonous plants out of reach of children and pets

[Continue reading...](#)



*Mum plants (Chrysanthemum sp.) have toxic parts above ground.*

## Winter Care for Your House Plants

**By Bonnie Turnbull, UCCE Master Gardener of Lake Tahoe**

We do love our houseplants--and yes, they are taking care of you, too.

The most important thing to know is that most houseplants settle down for "a long winter's nap" from November to March. Many of them originated in tropical rainforests--areas of high humidity. The best thing you can do is match that environment.

So, as you guessed, they do like your heater. Most thrive at temperatures between 65 and 75 degrees during the day, between 60 and 65 at night. That's probably not so different from your house.

But what they are most craving is light, and missing that, active growth slows or stops. But if you are like me, you crave "plant time" in January. Maybe you are tempted to water them more often, or give them a little extra love/fertilizer. [Continue reading...](#)

## Winterizing Garden Tools

**By Jackie Woods, UC Master Gardener SLO**

With the winter months looming ahead and the cooler temperatures already upon us, gardeners everywhere may wonder "now what?" Before settling in for the winter with a stack of seed catalogs to droop over, why not first gather up all the garden tools for some much-needed TLC? There will be no better feeling come next spring than opening up the tool shed to find clean, sanitized, sharpened tools that are ready to go.



Dirt and contaminants left on tools can contribute to the spread of plant disease. The first step is to thoroughly scrub each tool with a wire brush or steel wool to remove caked-on dirt from all metal surfaces. (Safety first, folks! Please wear eye protection!) Using rough sandpaper will help remove rust spots. Once cleaned, disinfect tools. There are several different agents readily available that would do the job (bleach, alcohol, Lysol) each with their own pro's and con's. Washington State University researcher Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott conducted a study on disinfectants and found Lysol to be the least corrosive to the tools with bleach being the most corrosive.

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## **Resources: July & Winter- Growing Food in the Sierra by Gary Romano**

In *July & Winter: Growing Food in the Sierra*, owner of Sierra Valley Farms Gary Romano shares his knowledge from decades of experience growing food in the Sierra Nevada. Despite the challenging mountain climate and soil, Romano has successfully grown food on his 65-acre organic farm and shares hard-earned tips in ten essential chapters for home gardeners and small farmers. In this book you'll learn:

- the varieties of vegetables, fruits, nuts, and berries that are right for your region
- whether to use seeds or transplants
- when and how to plant to maximize yield
- how to work with the soil, water, and nutrients specific to your site
- the benefits of biodiversity
- how to manage pests
- how to extend your growing season

This book could make a nice addition to your library or to give as a gift this holiday season. There is also a bit of information on the Sierra House Growing Dome Program, located in South Lake Tahoe at Sierra House Elementary School. UCCE Master Gardeners of Lake Tahoe have been involved with this program since the beginning and are proud to support this and the other emerging school-based Lake Tahoe gardening efforts.

For more information on the book: [Bona Fide Books](#)



### **JULY & WINTER** GROWING FOOD IN THE SIERRA



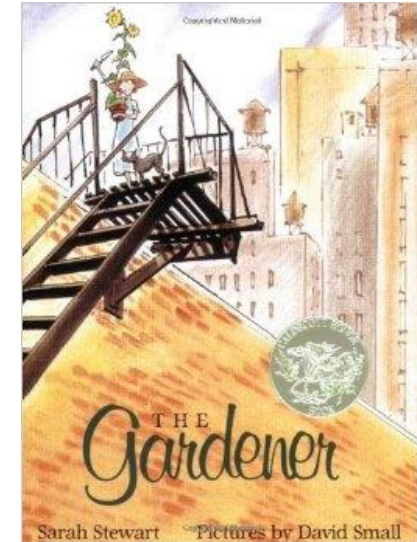
## Gardening Books for Lil Ones...

**By: Pat Andrew, UCCE Master Gardener of Lake Tahoe**

Why not spread the joy of this season with gardening-related books for the lil ones in your life? Oliver Holmes once said, "A mind stretched by a new idea never returns to its original dimensions." Spread the wonder of gardening with one of these treasured children's books.

### ***Title, Author, Ages***

- Growing Vegetable Soup, Ehlert, 2-6
- Planting a Rainbow, Ehlert, 2-4
- Grow a Pumpkin Pie, Gerver, 3-6
- The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree, Gibbons, 4-7
- The Apple Pie Tree, Hall, 4-8
- The Carrot Seed, Krauss, 3-5
- Inch by Inch: The Garden Song, Mallett, 4-8
- The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Potter, 3-7
- The Garden in Our Yard, Quinn, 3-7
- The Gardener, Stewart, 4-8
- Gardener's Alphabet, Azarian, 4-7
- Eating the Alphabet, Ehlert, 2-4



## Federal Funding Available to Address Tree Mortality on Private Forestlands

**CONTACT: Jonathan Groveman (530) 792-5692**

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DAVIS, Calif., Nov. 7, 2016 - The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California is expanding its initiative to assist private forestland owners in addressing tree mortality and other drought-related damage to improve forest health. NRCS will provide financial assistance for landowners with dead and dying conifer forest trees in certain counties. Removing dead tree debris and other woody material will also help reduce the spread of invasive pests and reduce the threat of wildfire.

"The dry conditions posed by California's ongoing drought have increased the potential for devastating wildfires and insect-related tree mortality," said Carlos Suarez, NRCS California state conservationist. "In the upcoming year, NRCS will continue and expand our 2016 forest recovery efforts by initially allocating \$4 million for tree mortality projects. We will also provide additional forestry staff to meet the overwhelming demand for assistance."

Landowners with dead trees on non-industrial private conifer forestlands in Amador, Calaveras, **El Dorado**, Fresno, Kern, Lake, Los Angeles, Madera, Mariposa, **Nevada, Placer**, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Tulare and Tuolumne counties may be eligible for financial assistance. Funding is available through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program.  
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ca/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=nrcseprd440606>

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*Sincerely,*

*Megan Suarez-Brand, Program Coordinator & UCCE Master Gardener of Lake Tahoe Contributors: Pat Andrew, Jen Cressy, Julie Lowe and Bonnie Turnbull. Thank you to the other UCCE contributors.*

The UCCE 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.

The University of California working in cooperation with County Government and the United States Department of Agriculture.

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