

GARDEN GAZETTE

April - May 2010

John Christianson, *Editor*

CHRISTIANSON'S Nursery & Greenhouse

An Enticing Selection of Common and Uncommon Plants . . . Friendly Service . . . Expert Advice

History in the Making

It was several years ago when John noticed an article in the Skagit Valley Herald about a roundabout scheduled for the intersection of Best and McLean Roads. This intersection is about 500 yards north of our Nursery and being the compulsive gardeners that we are we started designing the plantings during conversations when we would go through the intersection. While envisioning different garden styles, we knew Pacific Northwest, tropical, woodland, arid, modern and formal were out. With farmland views from all angles of this intersection any one of those styles would look silly. The roundabout needed to be planted with respect to the surrounding farmland and in a manner complementary to the old row of poplars and the weeping willow planted about eighty years ago that stand to the north. So we agreed it would look best if it were planted with the same trees and shrubs that surrounded old farmhouses in Skagit Valley during the early 1900's. We, of course, realized all along we had no control over what was planted in the roundabout but it was fun to talk about. We did, however, become so convinced of the need for a country-style garden that John asked the county if a farmhouse garden could be planted there. They told us the landscaping company with the lowest bid would decide what was planted unless we wanted to volunteer to plant the garden. After considering what the design possibilities might be if we did not volunteer, we decided to offer our time and donate our plants. Once the county gave us the responsibility of planting the area we actually had a problem narrowing down what we wanted to do. We knew we wanted continuous seasonal color and a Red Maple in the center of the roundabout. With its dark tracery of graceful limbs against the sky during the Winter and its superb Fall color it is a tree that would have been grown on the southwest side of old homes because it would have provided shade to the upstairs bedrooms in the Summer and allowed light in during the Winter. We also wanted a *Zephirine Drouhin* climbing rose because our friend Coleen Thulen told us that years ago just about every old farmhouse had one growing near their doorway. And the fact that all the *Zephirine* roses grown back then had been started from cuttings from one generous gardener who shared pieces of her rose with the whole community put it in second place on our list of priorities. Then during a man-style moment, John decided we needed old farm equipment to complement the plantings and the countryside. Lefebers Turf had an old seed drill and they were happy to donate it to the garden. They not only donated it but moved it to the roundabout with their heavy equipment. Gail Thulen offered an old cultivator from the same era and he promised to find an old lug wheel tractor the likes of which would have pulled the seed drill and cultivator back at the beginning of the last century. True to his word he located one on Lopez Island and even arranged to have it delivered and placed in its permanent location in the garden. Additionally, I called the Roozens who volunteered to plant the edge of the roundabout and the dividers between the lanes with tulips. So on a clear sunny day they sent their staff to plant thousands of bulbs that will be in bloom this month. This January we broke ground and planted a Red Maple sapling in the center of the roundabout. And because we like to commemorate tiny little pieces of family history we had Ian and Maeve, two of our grandchildren, help plant the tree. Years from now when they drive through the roundabout and notice the 60 foot Red Maple in the center they will remember the photograph taken on a cold, windswept January morning with them standing next to the slender whip of that very same tree they helped plant in 2010. I have a feeling Ian will be pleased. Maeve – not so much. She will wonder why in the world no one thought to dress her in one of her darling dresses with cute little shoes but instead bundled her in many layers of mismatched clothing all wrapped up in a neon orange highway construction vest making her look like a roly poly winter squash. However, through the years she will enjoy the garden whenever her school bus takes her around that garden on her way to Nana and Grandpa's Nursery for a special after-school visit. And the rest of us will appreciate the garden as a reminder of pioneering farm families and the very fertile soil that is the basis of the agricultural community of Skagit Valley. Perhaps we will take another picture after the garden has had a few years to fill out. We will take it on a warm Spring day with all the lilacs and peonies in full bloom and, more importantly, with all the people who helped with their generous donations, their time and their labor to finish the Best and McLean Roundabout Garden. Perhaps then Maeve can wear one of her adorable little dresses and a darling pair of shoes.

Toni Christianson

Springtime in Primrose



April and May are perhaps the most fun for us in our gift shop. While most of us would rather be outdoors in our gardens Primrose provides an opportunity to bring the outdoors into our homes with cloches and bases for terrariums, trays for entertaining with blooming plants instead of cut bouquets, baskets for May Day and, most importantly, many choices for Mother's Day gifts. Linda Schull, our buyer, has sought out the purest personal care products for keeping both our Moms and Mother Earth healthy and we invite you to visit for ideas to celebrate Springtime.

Better Together

Two passionate gardeners prove that a couple can, in fact, garden together without killing each other. This is both the title and subtitle to a recent article about our home garden that is featured in **Better Homes and Gardens Special Interest Publication – Country Gardens** for Spring 2010. John and I are very excited about it but a little surprised about the comment that we have learned to ‘garden together without killing each other.’ That has never been a consideration, at least not for me....except, maybe a few times...like when John would not let me grow a Cecile Brunner climbing rose up into an original old pear tree that is on our property. It would be so beautiful climbing up and cascading out of the tree on the road side for drivers to enjoy as they come down off Pleasant Ridge and into La Conner. Or that he would not prune our fruit trees into the lovely horizontal shapes that are so beautiful in fruit and flower. The fruit would be so much easier to pick. Or that he would not give his okay to plant the orchard grass in daffodils and crocus. It would be wonderful in the Spring when we are so in need of a reminder that warmer weather is on the way. But then again, those places are all in his garden space and he does have a reason for saying no to each one. And I do get to do what I want in my space so I guess it's fair. However, now that I think about it, John has more space than I do. Maybe we need to renegotiate this whole thing . . .

- Toni Christianson

Art in the Schoolhouse

April 3 - May 2

Spring in Skagit Valley is defined by the bursts of color that are the brilliant tulip fields and the return of *Art in the Schoolhouse*. For the third year the Stanwood Camano Arts Guild will take up residence in our 1888 Meadow Schoolhouse to showcase the works of 25 artists. Lara and Marc Knowles will exhibit their glass art including fused plates and pendants and Marc's cast glass sculptures. Now in her third year Beverly Reaume returns with her stained glass art ranging from sun catchers to detailed window panels as well as her popular staked ornaments destined for your garden. Other art work intended for outdoor use are the metal sculptures of Ron Hinshaw. Photography that captures the mood of the Valley is provided by Kent and Roberta Baker, Josephine Heitzman and Carl Jaegel. For those interested in unique jewelry don't miss the work of fused glass artist Dorothy Faydo. Flowers and landscapes are among the subjects captured by watercolor artists Ann Daletski and Joan Penewell along with Saundra Knapp and Maggie Miller who offers assorted gifts and cards based on their original art. Tulips and others subjects are captured in oils on canvas by Mary Ann Hinshaw and by Sue Swapp. A newcomer to the show is Sheila Saxon exhibiting her felted fantasies—handcrafted purses with needle-felted art. Returning to this year's show is the ever popular Rocky Barrick displaying his unique acrylic and pencil sketches and Candi Martin Baker known for her acrylics and large format watercolor prints. Candi will perform “live” on two Sundays during this month long event. Check your local paper for a complete listing of demonstrations or go to www.stanwoodcamanoarts.com. Open daily 10 am - 5 pm.

Deciduous Azaleas

This group of overlooked shrubs is often commonly referred to as *Exbury Azaleas* referring to a group of plants hybridized by Lionel de Rothschild in Exbury, England. Hybridization began as early as the 1820's by a baker living in Ghent lending its name to the Ghent (Belgium)Azaleas. Deciduous azaleas are largely hybrids of two or more Rhododendron species and were actually the first azaleas to make their way to home gardens while the popular evergreen azaleas we are so familiar with didn't come on the scene until the end of the Victorian era. While the more obvious difference from their counterpart is their loss of leaves in the fall their claim to fame is their brilliantly colored blooms offered in large round trusses born at the end of bare stems. Added to their showy blooms is their wonderful springtime fragrance. Their vivid oranges and yellows are unparalleled in the springtime palette and combine nicely with similarly colored or contrasting spring bulbs. Their bright green leaves emerge after the blooms are spent and as fall approaches they put on a repeat show with their colorful foliage. Deciduous azaleas are quite hardy, some withstanding temperatures to -25 degrees. Unlike evergreen azaleas , deciduous azaleas grow well in the sun but can tolerate almost any location given the proper moisture and good drainage. If left un-pruned they can reach upward to 4' and beyond with similar lateral spread. If you are looking for a new addition to your garden consider adding **Azalea Exbury 'Gibraltar'** to your landscape. It exhibits bright orange flowers with shades of red and gold with frilled petals.

Christianson's Spring Calendar

Artist Soirée

Friday, April 16 6:00 - 7:30 pm
reservations required

Plan to attend the Soirée for exhibiting artists in our Meadow Schoolhouse, held in conjunction with the **27th annual Tulip Festival**. Meet and greet the artists, watch demonstrations and enjoy light refreshments served in our Propagation House. Circle your calendar and don't miss this very special occasion!

Create Your Own Hanging Basket

Friday, April 23 6:00 - 7:30 pm
complimentary demonstration re servations required

It is that time of year to put your artistic talents and green thumb to work and create one-of-a-kind hanging baskets. **Joanne Romann** will demonstrate the how-to's and work with you to create baskets destined for sun or shade-loving locations. Free soil and fertilizer will be provided for participants in this first in a series of container gardening programs.

The Other Fuchsia

Friday, April 30 6:00 - 7:30 pm
\$5 re servations required

 **Kevin Jones**, owner of *Jordan Nursery Greenhouses* in Stanwood is a familiar face around Christianson's and is responsible for growing many of the fuchsia plants we sell here at the Nursery. Join Kevin as he explores the "cousin" of the ubiquitous hanging fuchsia—the hardy fuchsia. This group offers something for every gardener—upright or trailing habits, single or double corollas and a color palette ranging from rose/white to pure white to deep red or violet and shades of orange or coral. Don't miss this informative and entertaining program.

Mother's Day Craft Class

Friday, May 7 6:00 - 7:30 pm
\$5 re servations required

This make-and-take class will feature Pop-Up Flower Garden Cards. Children ages five through twelve will have the opportunity to create a one -of-a-kind 3-D card to accompany the annual plant he or she will select from our vast selection of blooming annuals. Older siblings and Dads are encouraged to attend and assist in this fun-filled workshop to create a memorable gift for this special occasion.

Growing a Tea Garden

Friday, May 14 6:00 – 7:30 pm
complimentary demonstration re servations required

Joanne Romann will lead this workshop in planting a tea garden. The satisfying hobby of growing teas will provide months of pleasure as you harvest the leaves to make herbal infusions. The choice of herbs and flowers to make teas is broad and selection is based on personal preferences of flavors. From lavender to lemon verbena, from chamomile to coriander, the combinations are endless. Plan to attend this demonstration and get "recipes" for making your own tisanes. (Following the presentation participants may purchase their own container and plants and receive free soil and fertilizer to plant their unique tea gardens).

Summer Containers

Friday, May 21 6:00 - 7:30 pm
complimentary demonstration re servations required

Container gardening is on the rise and is a wonderful way to enjoy the new varieties of annuals and perennials that are introduced in the trade each year. Plan to attend this demonstration conducted by **Joanne Romann** as she offers formulas for success incorporating thrillers, fillers and spillovers to make bountiful pots that will offer months of interest. Participants can plant their own container after the demo and Joanne will assist in helping you create your own design based on your color preferences and light requirements. (Soil and fertilizer are complimentary).

Flowering Shrubs

Friday, May 28 6:00 - 7:30 pm
complimentary lecture and tour re servations required

John Christianson will conduct this informal peripatetic class using the Nursery as his classroom to instruct you in the particular attributes and culture requirements for his favorite blooming shrubs. From Encore azaleas to Endless Summer hydrangeas John will answer your questions and help you decide which shrubs will best satisfy your landscape needs. Wear comfortable shoes and bring paper and pen. Class starts promptly at 6:00 pm!



Arbor Day
April 14, 2010
Plant a Tree to become part of
your family's history.

Spring Specials

April 2 - 15

Magnolias

hundreds of beautiful blooming trees with white, pink, purple and yellow flowers, including evergreen varieties

20% off

May 1 - 9

Basket Stuffers

dozens of different premium annuals for planters, baskets or flower beds growing in 2" pots

20% off

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Geraniums

thousands of blooming zonal, ivy scented and fancy leaf geraniums growing in 4" pots

20% off

May 21 - 31

Fuchsias

hardy, upright and trailing fuchsias that bloom all summer

2, 4 and 6-inch sizes & baskets

20% off

April 16 - 30

Rhododendrons and Azaleas

thousands to choose from in bud and bloom, including evergreen and deciduous azaleas

20% off

May 8 - 9

Mother's Day Weekend Special

Dogwood Trees

eastern and Asiatic dogwoods in bloom (approximately 6' to 8' tall)

20% off

May 10 - 20

Shady Days

shade-loving tuberous begonias, fancy double impatiens & New Guinea impatiens in 4" pots

20% off

June 1 - 13

Vines

vigorous growing clematis, honeysuckle, jasmine, wisteria, akebia, kiwi and more

1 gallon to 5 gallon sizes

20% off

If your address label is not correct, please call us and let us know. Thanks!

www.christiansonsnursery.com

15806 Best Road • Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Nursery & Greenhouse

CHRISTIANSONS

CLASSES & EVENTS

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April 3 - May 2 10:00 am – 5:00pm

Artist Soirée

April 16 6:00 pm

Hanging Baskets

April 23 6:00 pm

The Other Fuchsia

April 30 6:00 pm

Mother's Day Craft Class

May 7 6:00 pm

Plant a Tea Garden

May 14 6:00 pm

Summertime Containers

May 21 6:00 pm

Flowering Shrubs

May 28 6:00 pm

Weekly Radio Broadcast

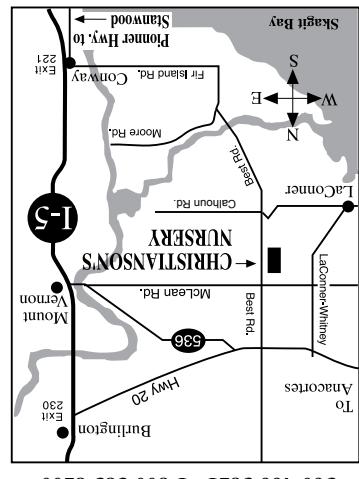
The Garden Show

Sunday Mornings

With John & Mike

AM 660 KAPS • 9:30 am

From Belligham: Take exit #230, 5 miles West on Hwy 20 to Best Road. 2 miles South on Best Road. From Everett: Take exit #221, 8.5 miles West on Fir Island Road to Best Road. 1 mile North on Best Road past Chilberg/Cahillou Road.



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