

# GARDEN GAZETTE

September - October 2010

John Christianson, Editor

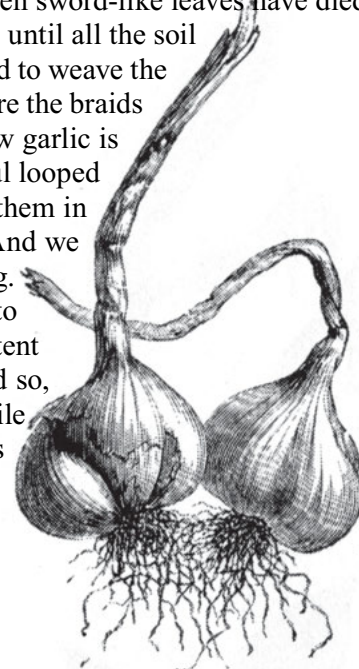
## CHRISTIANSON'S Nursery & Greenhouse

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

### *Garlic: Russian Penicillin*

Harvesting, curing and storing garlic brings remembrances of my Pop. It is the vision of Russian immigrants with braids of garlic draped around their necks that reminds me of him. It was not the culinary arts that made him even think of garlic. It was all the colds that we shared in our family that would make him suggest, with a smile on his face, that we should be wearing garlic around our necks as the Russians did in the small, rural village in North Dakota where he spent much of his childhood. He was French and cooked as his mother cooked with thyme, sweet marjoram, parsley and shallots but never garlic. Maybe back in the fifties those not fortunate enough to be born into a Russian or Italian family were not aware of the goodness of garlic. And so I grew up with a vision of full-bearded Russian men in thick furry hats with garlands of garlic laying across their necks and covering their chests in an attempt to ward off colds and flus. This is the only context in which I knew of garlic until my late teen years when garlic bread became popular to eat with spaghetti. Now we use fresh garlic with everything from pasta to chicken to beef to salads. I cannot imagine anything more important to our meals than the flavor of garlic. The aroma of a pot roast browning in garlic and butter is so much better than browning in just butter alone. I think it does more for certain foods than salt. And now that I have grown it for a few years I realize how versatile the plant itself is. The first year I planted garlic in the spring and because it did not have enough time to mature and look like the garlic from the store by the first frosts I threw it away. What a mistake! I liken it to the sun-dried tomatoes I made many years ago and threw out because they looked so unappetizing. Then I saw them at Johnny's Market in a huge glass jar for almost twenty dollars a pound. They looked just as unappealing as those I had thrown out years before. And so I did some research on garlic and now know to plant it in October and harvest it the following July or August when the green sword-like leaves have died down by half. We dig it and let it dry out of the sun and then rub the heads with gloved hands until all the soil and the outer dried covering falls away. We have learned to eat the hard-necked garlic first and to weave the soft-necked into garlic braids to be used for later in the season because it keeps longer. We store the braids in a cool dark place in our basement and enjoy it after the hard-necked is gone. We also know garlic is good in every form and I did not need to throw our first year's crop away. We eat the beautiful looped garlic scapes coming from the hard-necked varieties in salads and stir fries and we also use them in flower bouquets. We eat immature garlic in every way we eat the larger full-grown heads. And we use many heads of garlic for frozen pesto sauce that brings us a taste of summer all winter long. In addition our extended family of children and grandchildren eat raw garlic for resistance to disease. We each have a daily slice of raw garlic about 1/8 inch thick. Because of its sulfur content it has drastically reduced the number of colds circulating in our families by about 75%. And so, the Russians of the early twentieth century were way ahead of us in disease control and I smile to think of the visual I had of Russian immigrants while growing up. I always thought Pop was just pulling my leg because he also said they sewed themselves into their long-johns in the fall and did not take them off until spring. Imagine what that added to the picture in my head!

Toni Christianson



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## Autumn Leaves



Each year as days grow shorter and nights grow longer, hinting of cooler days to come, the ritualistic phenomena that is autumn's changing leaves is ushered in. Trees that once bore varying shades of green shed summer's monochromatic palette to make a fashion change in electrifying shades of yellow, orange, maroon and red. While maples bedazzle us and often monopolize this chameleon-like transformation, there are other noteworthy trees recognized for their resplendent fall color which are appreciated by discriminating gardeners. **Serviceberry (Amelanchier)** is native to western Canada and mountainous parts of western United States. It is a small tree growing to 20'. In early spring it produces snowy white flowers that are followed by one-half inch purple berries sought after by birds. Graceful and airy it exhibits new purple growth that turns to a deep green and fiery orange in the fall. Serviceberry 'Rainbow Pillar' is a new serviceberry cultivar from Ohio that produces beautiful white flowers in spring and mildew resistant summer foliage that turns a brilliant red in autumn. Its strong upright habit makes it a good screening/hedging plant.

**The Maidenhair tree (Ginkgo biloba)** is one of the oldest living tree species having virtually remained unchanged for 150 million years. It is easily identified by its 3" long fan-shaped leaves. Its delicate soft green leaves persisting from spring to summer turn a brilliant gold in fall. The ginkgo grows anywhere from 50' to 80' high. 'Autumn Gold' is a popular male broad-spreading variety. **Katsura (Cercidiphyllum japonicum)** is described as sheer elegance in a shade tree. It was unknown in the Pacific Northwest until about 1950. This medium growing tree has a pyramidal shape when young, later developing a broad crown. It has notable stiff arching branches with shaggy bark. It bears distinctive heart-shaped leaves that emerge reddish-purple changing to blue-green as they mature. In autumn they change to yellow to orange to red and even maroon and release a strong spicy fragrance not unlike cotton candy. It is common for several colors to be present at the same time. Described as pest free and disease resistant these attributes add to the desirability of the Katsura that can reach upwards to 40'. A newer shorter variety reaching 25' is 'Red Fox' known for its outstanding heart-shaped leaves that appear dark purple in the spring later putting on a fall show with pink-red to violet leaves.

**Sweetgum (Liquidambar)** is a large tree up to 50' with a pyramid-shaped crown that develops an oblong to rounded crown as it matures. Its name derives from the brownish-yellow sap it produces when the bark is cut. Its dark gray bark forms scaly, regular ridges. Its star-shaped leaves are a dark lustrous green that put on quite a show in the fall turning yellow, orange, red and purple and persist late into the season. Its fruit are spiny long-stemmed spheres attractive to birds and squirrels. 'Slender Silhouette' is an excellent columnar form with moderate growth rate. Its extremely narrow shape makes it effective in mass plantings. 'Slender Silhouette' is a durable tree that holds its summer foliage late into fall. Liquidambar is an excellent candidate for moist soils. **Sourwood (Oxydendrum arboretum)** is native to the southeastern United States and competes with the dogwood in its showy floral display. Growing to 20' in the Pacific Northwest it has a distinctive pyramidal shape with branches bearing shiny, bright green or dark green foliage. Branches droop toward the ground providing a graceful outline when planted as a single specimen. The branching and persistent fruit give the tree interest in the winter months. Flowers which appear in mid- to late summer are born in terminal clusters of racemes which curve upward. The fall color is particularly striking displaying shades of red and orange. **Persian Ironwood (Parrotia persica)** is a member of the witch hazel family and like members of that family puts on a fine fall show. Slow-growing to fifteen to twenty feet Parrotia offers something for each season: small ruby red flowers appear between January and March followed in spring by emerging leaves in reddish-purple, later turning to deep green; fall brings a showy display of orange, red and yellow, and in the winter the bark and trunk start flaking off to make a striking mosaic of gray and white. Parrotia 'Vanessa' is a narrow version of P. persica growing to 25' high with a 10' spread. It also has attractive peeling bark for winter interest. In the fall it displays yellow-orange-red-purple colors making it a striking sentinel in the landscape.

**Stewartia pseudocamellia** is perhaps one of the most prized trees for area gardens and earns its description as an all-season performer. Recognized for its branching pattern in the winter, camellia-like white flowers that appear in late June and bright yellow, orange and red foliage in autumn, Stewartia never ceases to be a source of enjoyment. Stewartia average around 30' and make an excellent patio tree or specimen for an entry way or as a canopy tree over a walkway. Stewartia koreana is a small, pyramidal-shaped tree sporting dark green foliage that turns red to reddish purple in fall. Its flowers measure three inches across, white with yellow stamens and bloom sporadically over an entire summer. For winter interest it exhibits flaky bark with color ranges from gray-brown to orange-brown, often mottled.

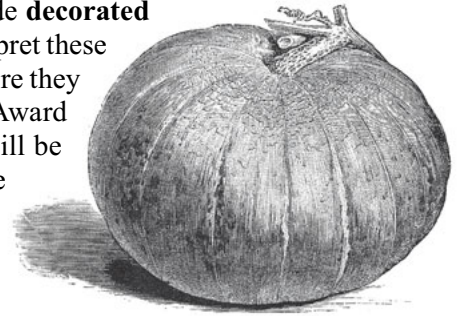
Joanne Romann

*(For a more in-depth look at trees and shrubs for fall/winter interest plan to attend the lecture presented by Ani Gurnee of Aulos Design on October 16<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am in our Schoolhouse).*

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## *It's Pumpkin Time!*

This year Christianson's is broadening its **Third Annual Scarecrow Contest** to include **decorated or carved pumpkins**. This contest is open to artists and novices alike who wish to interpret these fall icons. All entries must be submitted to the Nursery by Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> where they will be displayed for two weeks. A ballot box will be set up for the People's Choice Award inside the Garden Store. The winning entry will receive a \$100 Gift Certificate and will be announced on Saturday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. All gardeners and Halloween enthusiasts are invited to participate and put their imaginations to work in creating an original design celebrating the season! Join in the fun...you might just be the winner!



## *Festival of Family Farms*

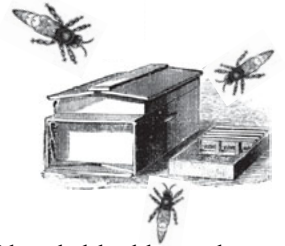
The 12<sup>th</sup> annual Festival of Family Farms will be celebrated this year on October 2<sup>nd</sup> at Christianson's. This is the perfect opportunity to explore the grounds of the Nursery and visit our greenhouses.

Reserve this date and plan to join us for our scheduled activities:



**For freshly squeezed apple cider** visit our south greenhouse from 11 - 2 and see how cider is made on our antique press.

**Stop by the Beekeeper's Display** hosted by *Austin's Stilly Valley Honey* from 11 - 2 and watch working bees in their observation hive. **David Austin** will be on hand to answer your questions about beekeeping. And don't forget to take home a bottle of local blackberry honey (creamed or liquid, starting at \$5 a bottle)



At 11:00 **attend the complimentary slide presentation** on "*Care of your Dahlias*" by **John and Kathy Willson** from the Swede Hill Dahlia Sunflower Farm on Whidbey Island.

From 12 - 2 **have your child participate** in a **Pumpkin Painting Workshop** with Camano Island artist **Bobbi Samples** (cost \$3 per pumpkin).



## *Coming to Primrose*

Continuing our practice of offering sustainable goods we are adding a new line of nightgowns from **Bamboo Dreams**. They are cool when you need cool and cozy in the winter. We will also be adding La Tourangelle cold-pressed gourmet oils from California to accompany imported artisanal pastas from **Italian Harvest**. This colorful pasta comes in different shapes that are formed to hold whichever delicious pasta sauce you prefer.

## *Time to Plant Bulbs!*

October is just around the corner and it is time to think of planting bulbs for the holidays ahead or for a springtime display in gardens and containers. For those looking for variety in tulips we have fringed, parrot and lily shaped. Our tulips are categorized by the time they bloom so when planting groups of early, mid and late-flowering tulips it is possible to extend the season from late March to May. We also have the much sought-after alliums that make such a show in our Schoolhouse garden. This member of the onion family has blooms in different sizes depending on the variety and their seed heads add interest to fall floral arrangements. Other selections not to miss are our amaryllis, crocus, daffodils, and bearded iris. Visit our Garden Store early for the best selection. Bulbs will be arriving daily.



# Christianson's Autumn Calendar

## *The ABC's of Home Brewing*

Saturday, September 4      1:00 pm  
reservations required      \$5.00

If you have ever been curious about the process involved in the home brewing of beer then this is a class you won't want to miss. **Bob Toombs**, owner of *My Own Vintage* in Mount Vernon, will demonstrate the entire process of fermentation resulting in a quality beer that you can make at home. The classic reference book "*The Joy of Home Brewing*" will be available for purchase along with Brewer's Best equipment and brewing kits.

Hurry and sign up for what promises to be an informative and entertaining program to start you on your way to becoming a home craft brewer!

## *Heath & Heather - Color for all Seasons*

Saturday, September 11      11:00 am  
reservations required      \$5.00



**Gerry Wilson**, Manager of the *Heather Garden at WSU* in Mount Vernon, will present a slide show on heath and heather examining their differences, plant selection, cultural requirements, pruning techniques and propagation. This program will also focus on the design aspect of heath and heather used in tapestry gardens where their varied foliage and flowers provide year-round color interest. Join us for this presentation that spotlights one of the most versatile plants for Northwest Gardens.

## *Native Plants in Home Gardens*

Saturday, September 18      11:00 am  
reservations required      \$5.00

**Sandy Koffman, Shawn Brown and Bev Reaume** from *Camano Island's Community Wildlife Habitat*, will talk about the advantages of "Going Native" in home gardens. Known for adaptability to the local landscape, as well as beauty and variety, native plants also offer multiple benefits to the land, water resources and wildlife. For trees there is the vine maple or Pacific crabapple. Shrubs include the Pacific wax myrtle and the ever-popular red-osier dogwood as well as salal, oceanspray, snowberry, mahonia and Pacific ninebark. Groundcovers and vines offer additional plants to satisfy your landscape needs. From bunchberry to

kinnikinnik to Maidenhair fern to Western columbine there are countless candidates for both sun and shade situations. Consider "Going Native" and learn the basics of gardening with native plants by attending this interesting class.

## *Fabulous Fall Containers*

Saturday, September 25      11:00 am  
reservations required      \$5.00

Let **Annie Reiss** from *Skagit Gardens* help you update your summer containers giving them a new look for the fall or give you ideas for planting a new container to provide a visual treat for your entryway or deck. The end of summer does not mean the end of exciting plantings to showcase elegant grasses, fall blooming perennials, sasanqua camellias and much more. Annie always delivers a class that is both informative and fun-filled so make your reservation and plan to be inspired!



## *Digging, Dividing and Storing Dahlia Tubers Made Easy*

Saturday, October 2      11:00 am  
complimentary

**John and Kathy Willson**, owners of the *Swede Hill Dahlia Sunflower Farm* on Whidbey Island, are local dahlia experts who unravel the myths surrounding dahlia gardening. In this program they provide a hands-on demonstration to walk you through their fail-proof method of winterizing this well-established favorite of many Northwest Gardeners. John and Kathy will answer your questions and teach you how to dig, divide and store your favorite dahlia tubers.

# Christianson's Autumn Calendar - continued

## Fall Color Tour

Saturday, October 9 1:00 pm  
complimentary

This annual walk led by John Christianson has become an anticipated event each year as the shorter days work their magic on fall leaves. John will serve as your guide as he heads toward La Conner Flats, the 11-acre English Garden adjacent to the Nursery. This established garden offers many visual treats for the gardener and you will have the opportunity to view the many late-blooming flowers and trees dressed in their autumn best. Participants should gather at the Schoolhouse where the tour begins in the surrounding rose garden. Rain or shine the tour will go on. *Following the tour Tea will be served by Margie Hart at the Granary. The cost is \$12 per person. Call 446-3190 for reservations and prepayment. Sign up early for this popular event. This tea features sandwiches, scones, fruit and dessert and is the perfect ending to an afternoon stroll.*

## Trees and Shrubs

### for Fall/Winter Interest

Saturday, October 16 11:00 am  
reservations required \$5.00



**Ani Gurnee** of *Aulos Design* will be the speaker on this timely topic of trees and shrubs noted for their intense fall shades of red, yellow, maroon and orange. Valued for their striking foliage or ornamental berries these plants prolong the summer season with their colorful autumn palette. In addition many trees offer twisted branching or striated or peeling bark providing visual interest in the winter landscape. Let Ani familiarize you with the wonderful selections that are available and help you select the one best suited for your lawn or garden.

## Calling all Pond Enthusiasts!

At a recent program on *Water Gardens* presented by **Scott and Kathy Ramin** at the Nursery it was suggested that a Pond Club be started for this area. Scott and Kathy generously agreed to help get a club started and the first organizational meeting will be held October 23 following their presentation (see above). If you would like to participate or need additional information please contact Joanne Romann by calling Christianson's Nursery at 466-3821.

## Winter Care for Your Pond

Saturday, October 23 11:00 am  
reservations required \$5.00

**Scott and Kathy Ramin** of *Stillwaters Aquatic Nursery* return to offer their advice on winterizing your pond for the months ahead. As entertaining as they are informative, the Ramins will share their years of experience with water gardens and give practical guidelines for putting your pond to bed. The latter half of the program will serve as an organizational meeting for forming a Pond Club in Skagit Valley with informal meetings scheduled to be held monthly at Christianson's Nursery. Whether your pond is small or large or in the planning stage you are encouraged to attend and get involved in planning topics for future meetings.

## Fall Berry Tour

Saturday, October 30 1:00 pm  
complimentary

This annual tour is another favorite among gardeners at Christianson's. Once again the destination is La Conner Flats and **John Christianson** will conduct the tour through this 11-acre English Garden. Leaves have been falling and now the showy jewel-toned berries of callicarpa and holly stand out in the autumn landscape inviting local birds to feast. John will identify trees and shrubs and answer your questions as you stroll this bucolic setting.

*Following the tour plan to have  
TEA AT THE GRANARY.*

*Call 466-3190 for  
reservations. Cost for this  
delicious afternoon sampler  
is \$12. Hurry and reserve a  
spot today!*



## Reminder

We will be changing to our Winter Hours  
effective Sunday, November 7  
Closing daily at 5:00 pm

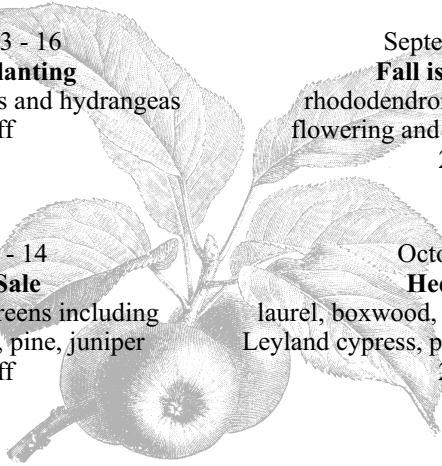
# Autumn Specials

September 3 - 16  
**Fall is for Planting**  
 roses, perennials, vines and hydrangeas  
 25% off

September 17 - 30  
**Fall is for Planting**  
 rhododendrons and azaleas, fruit,  
 flowering and shade trees (7' to 14')  
 25% off

October 1 - 14  
**Conifer Sale**  
 tall and dwarf evergreens including  
 spruce, fir, cypress, pine, juniper  
 25% off

October 15 - 31  
**Hedging Sale**  
 laurel, boxwood, photinia, Japanese holly,  
 Leyland cypress, privet and arborvitae (to 8')  
 25% off



Mark your calendar for  
**Arts Alive** and our  
**Holiday Open House**  
 celebrated *November 5th - 7th*

# CLASSES & EVENTS

**The ABC's of Home Brewing**

September 4 1:00 pm

**Heath and Heather -  
 Color for All Seasons**

September 11 11:00 am

**Native Plants in Home Gardens**

September 18 11:00 am

**Fabulous Fall Containers**

September 25 11:00 am

**Festival of Family Farms**

October 2 9 am - 6: pm

**Digging, Dividing And Storing  
 Dahlias**

October 2 11:00 am

**Fall Color Tour & Tea**

October 9 1:00 pm

**Scarecrow & Pumpkin Contest**

October 15 - 30 9 am - 6 pm

**Trees and Shrubs  
 for Fall/Winter Interest**

October 16 11:00 am

**Winter Care for Your Pond**

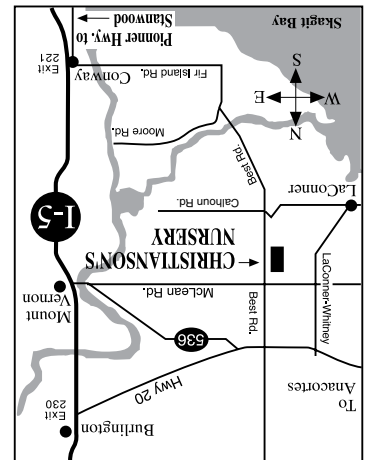
October 23 11:00 am

**Fall Berry Tour & Tea**

October 30 1:00 pm

**Weekly Radio Broadcast**  
**The Garden Show**  
**Sunday Mornings**  
 With John & Mike  
 AM 660 KAPS • 9:30 am

**From Bellingham:** 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/Cathoun Road.



360-466-3821 • 1-800-585-8200

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

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