

GARDEN GAZETTE

September - October 2011

John Christianson, Editor

CHRISTIANSON'S Nursery & Greenhouse

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

Stepping Sideways Into Autumn

There is always a morning, around the first of August, when suddenly the smell and feel of autumn permeates the air, like a haunting premonition. The first huge spring leaves of the cottonwood let loose and drift silently down, scattered lightly across the grass. An eerie quiet pervades the dawn. Now, as the summer balances in that moment of weightless suspension, like a swing at the peak of its arc, and time, for one ethereal instant untethers from the turbulent year and like a bubble blown onto the mid-day air, floats sparkling in the luminous stillness, stop. One light step sideways. You are released from the propulsive flow, and poised motionless. Listen. The meadow now so bereft of song. Even the Swainson's Thrush now silent. Drift for one brief moment in the overwhelming immensity of time. Feel the moisture rise along the shadow of the hedge. Feel the sultry light shimmering amongst the leaves. Feel the sinewy stretch of muscle as you bend for that slender sprig among the laden stems. Smell the warm ferment of the soil. Take in, as though it were your last moment on earth, the musty wealth of soil and light and life that is your garden.

– Ani Gurnee, Guest Writer

Giant Pumpkin Festival

Saturday and Sunday, October 1 and 2, from 9 am to 6 pm

Our Giant Pumpkin Festival coincides with the Skagit Festival of Family Farms weekend and will be great fun for all!

Food • Live music • Cider pressing • Classes and Activities

Schedule of Events

Saturday, October 1
10:30 – noon Savory Pumpkin Cooking Class
1:30 – 3:00 pm Country Wine Making Class
11:00 – 2:00 pm Apple Cider Pressing
1:00 – 4:00 pm Live Old-Time Music
2:00 – 4:00 pm Giant Pumpkin Contest Weigh-in
4:00 pm Award Winners Announced

Sunday, October 2
1:00 – 2:00 pm Tool Care and Maintenance Class
2:30 – 5:30 pm Tool Sharpening Service onsite

Bring your favorite tools to the nursery on October 2nd and start the new season with everything in ship shape!

*Reservations are required for all classes (class fee: \$5).
Please call the nursery at 360-466-3821 to make your reservation.*



How's your pumpkin growing?

For those of you who are growing a pumpkin to enter in our 'Giant Pumpkin Contest' things are probably getting a bit interesting about now. With our cooler-than-usual temperatures the past few months, Skagit Valley pumpkins are taking their sweet time to mature. Nonetheless, the show will go on and we will be accepting any and all entries. We may not set any records this year (the world record was set in 2010 with a pumpkin weighing in at 1810 pounds!) but we will still have fun sharing stories about the trials and tribulations of growing pumpkins in the infamous Summer of 2011.

Giant Pumpkin entries accepted:

Friday, September 30, from 9 am – 6 pm

Saturday, October 1, from 9 am – 1 pm

Contest entry forms will be available in our Garden Store and on our website starting in mid-September. Entry forms must be accompanied by a photograph of your pumpkin growing in your garden so you can start taking pictures throughout September to show the progress your pumpkin made during its last weeks on the vine.

The Giant Pumpkin Contest: Saturday October 1

Weigh-In: 2 pm - 4 pm

Awards: 4 pm

\$500 cash prize for the largest pumpkin!

\$100 gift certificate for 2nd place and \$50 gift certificate for 3rd place



The Proverbial Pumpkin

"I would rather sit on a pumpkin, and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion"

~ Henry David Thoreau

With Christianson's upcoming **Giant Pumpkin Weigh-in**, coinciding with the **Festival of Family Farms**, Henry Thoreau might indeed recline in style on one of the sizeable and accommodating Cucurbita maxima, the "king of the garden", that differ in size and appearance from the crooked-necked variety of pumpkins used by Native Americans. When the pioneers discovered New World maize, or corn, they grew it together with beans and these "pumpkins" in the Three Sisters tradition, a symbiotic relationship where each species provides support, shelter, and nutrients for the other two. This example of sustainable agriculture illustrates the wisdom and ingenuity of the indigenous farmers. Pumpkins were an important food source which they used in its entirety. The seeds were roasted for medicinal value as well as taste. The flowers were incorporated in stews. Dried pumpkin was ground into flour, and the sweet flesh was savored as a vegetable, much as we use it today. Pumpkin shells were made into vessels and containers, and people even used dried pumpkin strips to weave mats for trading. Columbus is said to have taken the seeds back to Europe, where resulting harvests yielded fodder for livestock. The English name comes from the Greek word "pepon," meaning a large melon, which morphed through the centuries into "pompom," then "pumpion" (and today roasted pumpkin seeds are commonly known by their Spanish name, "pepitas"). It was the American colonist who - like dear old Thoreau - finally settled on "pumpkin." The pumpkin became an important staple as testified by this old verse:

For pottage, and puddings and custards and pies,
Our pumpkins and parsnips are common supplies.
We have pumpkins at morning and pumpkins at noon,
If it were not for pumpkins, we should soon be undone.

Whoever thought that pumpkins would hold such a place in history? Now with pumpkin stands springing up in the Valley we revel at the varying shapes, sizes and colors of the Cucurbita Pepo destined to become Jack-o-Lanterns or a fall delicacy. For those with culinary leanings look for Sugar Pie or Cinderella whose sweet flesh is like custard. This fall try making pumpkin gnocchi or pumpkin fritters, the latter a specialty of the Christiana Campbell's Tavern in Colonial Williamsburg, which George Washington often frequented. So the next time you slice into a piece of pumpkin pie or butter a slice of warm pumpkin bread stop and reflect on this autumnal wonder that has criss-crossed the globe and has never ceased to enchant or satisfy.

Joanne Romann

4th Annual Scarecrow Contest

Join in the fun this October as we host a 'Scarecrow Party' in the Propagation Greenhouse. Our Fourth Annual Scarecrow Contest is open to all ages, individuals, families, groups, and businesses. Scarecrow entries will be displayed inside the front area of our Propagation Greenhouse. Nursery visitors will cast their votes for the People's Choice Award and the winning entry will receive a \$100 Christianson's Gift Certificate.

Scarecrow entries accepted: October 1 –17
Winning entry announced: Saturday, October 29, at 3:30 pm



Contest guidelines:

- Scarecrow entries must be fully assembled by the entrant(s).
- Entries must be checked in no later than 5:00 pm on Monday, October 17.
- If your scarecrow has perishable parts, it should be submitted closer to October 17.
- Winner need not be present to win.
- Entrant(s) will be asked to pick up their scarecrow between October 30 - 31st.

Help!

For those readers who remember the story about the Roundabout at the intersection of Best and McLean Roads and the project we took on to keep the gardens consistent with the surrounding farmland, we are asking for your help to keep the newly planted gardens maintained. We need just a few volunteers who would like to share time with other volunteers and our staff to keep the central garden and the medians weed free. This spring was a certain challenge for us when it was either too busy at the Nursery or the weather was too wet and wild and the gardens were out of control. We have set the first Tuesday of each month at 2:00 in the afternoon as the time to weed and groom the roundabout. If you are interested, please call 466-3821 and have your name placed on the list of volunteers. We will have the bright orange vests, tools to get the job done and hot drinks with refreshments in the cool months and cold drinks with cool treats in the warm months. With five to six volunteers it could be finished in one to two hours at the most. You do not need to commit to every month but any time you can donate would be so much appreciated by our Nursery. There is the added benefit of waving and calling to friends who pass around the intersection or smiling and waving to strangers who are honking or giving a thumbs up in appreciation of the garden. All in all it will be a very productive and fun few hours.

Primrose

If you are a Halloween aficionado be warned that our Halloween display is wicked and somewhat menacing. Every year we expand the shocking so expect to be amazed. Then, on a completely different note, in our effort to work and play gently on Mother Earth, we are carrying Blue Q shopping bags in two sizes. These bags are made from 95% recycled material consisting of plastic bottles and used grain sacks. The sacks are collected, cleaned, ground and melted into rolls of recycled plastic. The result is a durable fabric that is then printed with fabulous graphics and sewn into bags. The bags are useful for all sorts of things and would make great trick or treat bags for kids and grownups alike. And then, when the bag has run its course of usefulness it is, again, recyclable.

Autumn Events at Christianson's

October 1 and 2: Giant Pumpkin Festival

9 am - 6 pm both Saturday and Sunday

See article on cover page for details and 'Schedule of Events'

October 1 – 29: 4th Annual Scarecrow Contest

Entries accepted October 1 – 17

Winner announced Saturday, October 29, at 3:30 pm

November 4, 5, and 6: Holiday Open House and Art's Alive! 2011

November 26: 16th Annual Holiday Tea from 1 pm – 5 pm

Christianson's Autumn Calendar

Using Grasses in the Garden

Saturday, September 10
11 am – noon
reservations required
class fee: \$5

Do you find grasses unfamiliar and intimidating in a garden setting?

Are you perplexed by how to integrate them amongst other plants? Do they kind of all look the same...and kind of like weeds? This class aspires to help you appreciate the amazing variety of ornamental grasses available to us today, to know their individual attributes and how to choose those most suitable to your particular site and aesthetic. As an accent, a contrasting and unifying texture amongst perennials, a meadow – grasses are a whole world unto themselves. Speaker: **Ani Gurnee** from *Aulos Design*.



Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland

Saturday, September 10 1 pm – 2 pm
complimentary but reservations requested

In this informational session we will learn about SPF's current work to protect and preserve Skagit Valley agriculture, the importance of community support and the upcoming **Celebrate Skagit Harvest 13th Annual Dinner & Auction on September 24**. Guest Speakers: **Dave Hedlin**, SPF Board Member, Founding Member and Co-chair, and his wife and SPF member, **Serena Campbell**.

Heavenly Hydrangeas

Saturday, September 17 11 am – 12:30 pm
reservations required class fee: \$5

What other shrub blooms in the shade, is drought, slug and pest resistant and makes such a big impact year after year? Hydrangeas are "Heaven Sent" indeed! **Marianne Binetti** will teach you how to prune, how to dry the flowers, and how to grow the cool new dwarf and re-blooming hydrangea varieties. Plus, step by step instructions on how to design your own outdoor hydrangea/hellebore room - perfect as a secret garden with walls made from blooming hydrangeas in the summer and colorful hellebores blooming in the winter. Marianne Binetti is a noted writer, guest lecturer, and syndicated columnist in the Pacific Northwest.



Revitalize Your Garden Design

Saturday, September 24 11 am – noon
reservations required class fee: \$5

Sometimes all it takes is a little inspiration and a few design tips and an existing garden can be given a fresh look and new vitality. **Ani Gurnee** from *Aulos Design* will help you discover how transformative it can be to move a few things around, add some highlights and seasonal color, and a focal point or two. What draws you out into your garden? What might give it a sense of variety? Does it need more or less structure? Contemplate some of these basic questions and see where they might lead you.

Savory Pumpkin Cooking

Saturday, October 1 10:30 am - noon
reservations required class fee: \$5

Suzanne will kick off our **Giant Pumpkin Festival** weekend by taking apart a whole pumpkin in the Schoolhouse, then she'll take us to India for 'Pumpkin Pakoras', to Italy for 'Pasta with Pumpkin', and to Mexico for 'Pumpkin Cooked with Chiles and Cream'. Prepare yourself for a tasty pumpkin journey! **Suzanne Butler** is a Chef Instructor at Skagit Valley College and Graham Kerr's Cooking Assistant since 1993.

Country Wines

Saturday, October 1 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm
reservations required class fee: \$5

From bramble to orchard, this class will introduce you to the art of crafting your own fruit wines from nature's harvest. Basic winemaking techniques and principles will be taught by local businessman **Bob Toombs**, owner of *My Own Vintage* in Mount Vernon. Students will learn about fruit preparation, fermentation, racking and clarifying, as well as some basic testing of wines-in-progress. Books and equipment will also be available for sale.



Tool Care and Maintenance

Sunday, October 2 1 pm - 2 pm
reservations required class fee: \$5

Having the right tool for the job can absolutely determine whether a garden task is easy or difficult, requiring great expenditures of time and energy or almost none. Tools that are sharp and well adjusted similarly make all the difference. Learn some basics and share your dilemmas and enthusiasms. Everyone has his or her favorites, so if you have a tool you swear by, bring it along for the discussion. Speaker: **Ani Gurnee** from *Aulos Design*.

A Mobile Tool Sharpening Service will be at the nursery after class from 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm so bring your garden tools!

*Trees and Shrubs for
Fall & Winter Interest*

Saturday, October 8 11 am - noon
reservations required class fee: \$5

In the Pacific Northwest we have access to an unbelievable variety of trees and shrubs that can lend both spectacular and subtle depth and intensity to the fall and winter garden. We will discuss the merits of a range of species and varieties both evergreen and deciduous, and explore how the manner in which they are used in different landscape contexts can also enhance their best qualities. Guest Speaker: **Ani Gurnee** from *Aulos Design*.

Preparing Your Garden for Winter

Saturday, October 15 11 am – noon
reservations required class fee: \$5

The timing of fall and winter garden tasks can make a difference in drainage and water retention, plant health and disease transmission, and general efficiency and convenience in your maintenance schedule. Learn what matters (and what doesn't) and gather tips on mulching, protecting plants from cold spells, soil improvements that will affect winter survival of plants, and more. Speaker: **Ani Gurnee** from *Aulos Design*.



*Fall Color Garden Walk
With John Christianson*

Saturday, October 15 1 pm
reservations requested complimentary

This annual favorite led by **John Christianson** has become an anticipated event each year as the shorter days work their magic on fall leaves. This walk starts in the Schoolhouse rose garden and continues on to La Conner Flats, the 11-acre English Garden adjacent to the nursery. Along the way John will highlight the many late-blooming flowers and trees and shrubs dressed in their autumn best. Rain or shine the tour will go on.

Coming in November ~ mark your calendar!

November 4, 5, and 6:

Holiday Open House and Art's Alive! 2011

November 26:

16th Annual Holiday Tea

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm



Garden Photography Workshop

Saturday, October 22 11 am – noon
reservations required class fee: \$5

There's a distinct parallel between creating a garden and composing images of it. Composition, framing, color, and texture are common components between them. Skagit Valley photographer **John Holtman** will discuss how to go beyond 'pretty flower pictures' and create images that highlight aspects of interest in a garden. Who knows? You may start looking at your garden in new ways after seeing it through the lens of your camera.

*Weaving Rose Hips in
Wreaths and Swags*

Saturday, October 29
11 am – noon
reservations required
class fee: \$35 class limit: 15



Don your gloves, grab your pruners, and join **Laura Campbell** from *MoonRose Antiques* in La Conner as she guides you through the artistry of wreath weaving. Laura will provide a hand-woven wreath or swag (your choice) and show you the ins and outs of embellishment with plump, fresh rose hip sprigs. This is a hands-on "prickly" class so wear long sleeves. Our goal is to send you home unscathed with a lovely handmade rose hip wreath or swag to enjoy throughout the holidays and for years to come.

*Fall Berry Garden Walk
with John Christianson*

Saturday, October 29 1 pm
reservations requested complimentary

This tour has become an annual favorite among gardeners at Christianson's. Join **John Christianson** in the Schoolhouse rose garden and enjoy this late season walk as he guides you through the 11-acre English Garden at La Conner Flats. 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 garden walks on October 15 and October 29, plan to have Tea at the Granary served by Margie Hart. This tea features sandwiches, scones, fruit, and dessert and is the perfect ending to an afternoon stroll. Call 466-3190 for reservations and prepayment for this popular event (\$14 per person)

Autumn Specials

September 2 – 15
Fall is for Planting
 roses, perennials, vines,
 and hydrangeas
 30% off

September 16 – October 6
Fall is for Planting
 rhododendrons and azaleas, fruit,
 flowering and shade trees (7' to 14')
 30% off

October 7 – 20
Conifer Sale
 tall and dwarf evergreens including
 spruce, fir, cypress, pine, juniper
 25% off

October 21 - 31
Hedging Sale
 laurel, boxwood, photinia, Japanese
 holly, Leyland cypress, privet and
 arborvitae (to 8')
 25% off



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

CLASSES & EVENTS

Saturday, September 10
 Using Grasses in the Garden 11:00 am
 Skagitians to Preserve Farmland 1:00 pm

Saturday, September 17
 Heavenly Hydrangeas 11:00 am

Saturday, September 24
 Revitalize Your Garden Design 11:00 am

October 1 – 29
 4th Annual Scarecrow Contest

Saturday & Sunday, October 1 and 2
 Giant Pumpkin Festival at Christianson's
 Skagit Valley Festival of Family Farms

Saturday, October 1
 Savory Pumpkin Cooking 10:30 – noon
 Country Wine Making 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm

Sunday, October 2
 Tool Care and Maintenance 1:00 pm
 Tool Sharpening Service 2:30 – 5:30 pm

Saturday, October 8
 Trees & Shrubs for Fall/Winter Interest 11:00 am

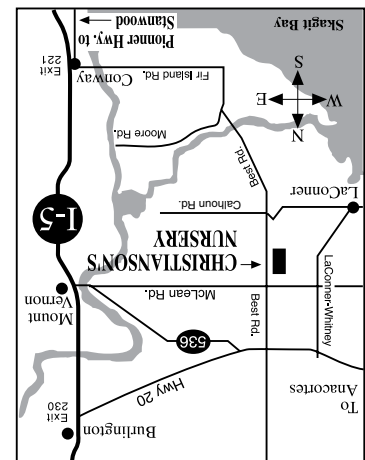
Saturday, October 15
 Preparing Your Garden for Winter 11:00 am
 Fall Color Garden Walk with John 1:00 pm

Saturday, October 22
 Garden Photography Workshop 11:00 am

Saturday, October 29
 Weaving Rose Hip Wreaths & Swags 11:00 am
 Fall Berry Garden Walk with John 1:00 pm

Open 9:00 am to 6:00 pm daily
Hours

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

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