
GARDEN GAZETTE

November 2012 - January 2013

John Christianson, Editor

CHRISTIANSON'S Nursery & Greenhouse

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

A Recurring Memory

Around this time of year I start to think about meaningful gifts for holiday celebrations and the process always causes me to stop and remember a friend from years ago. Cindy was born to parents with ongoing drug and alcohol addictions. At the age of thirteen she was drinking, using drugs and often running away from home. As authorities recognized the neglect and abuse in her home they took her from her parents and she was placed in foster homes where she continued to run away. At the age of fifteen she was placed in a therapeutic home with a foster mom who understood the needs of troubled teens. Her foster mom, Louise, noticed the marks on Cindy's back from the beatings she had endured as a child. Each night Louise massaged vitamin E into the scars to help minimize the marks and while she was tending to Cindy's back, they would discuss Cindy's day. Because this woman did not judge Cindy but considered her destructive behaviors to be a consequence of her childhood environment, Louise would wisely share her thoughts with Cindy in regard to how she would handle the different temptations and situations that were presented to Cindy each and every day. Never telling Cindy that she "should" or "should not" or that she "had to" do the same as she would, she left those decisions up to Cindy. This provided Cindy with a completely different perspective than she had known in her young life. With two steps forward and one step back, Cindy slowly became less of a victim and more of a thoughtful survivor. The loving human touch from massage helped dissipate her anger and the conversations helped Cindy learn to make intelligent, thoughtful choices. She no longer reacted to what life sent her way but was able to get her life under control. And liking to stay home with her foster mom, Cindy started to notice the way Louise lived her life actually spoke louder than did their bedtime conversations. The chaos and betrayal of her younger life changed to stability and trust when she was with Louise. She was loved and she loved in return.

After reclaiming her life, Cindy graduated from high school and while attending college continued to come to Louise's home for summers and holidays. Cindy has become a strong mother and professional woman in her own right. At some point she left her entire birth family behind and she considers Louise to be her rightful Mother and her children's rightful Grandmother. Their holidays are joyously filled with time spent celebrating with some of Louise's other foster children who are now adults with children of their own.

The gifts Louise shared with Cindy and other troubled teens were not given but once a year and they were not expensive. These gifts were her love and her patience. They were genuine and they had a profound effect on the lives of her foster children. In many cases the cycle of abuse was broken. I cannot think of gifts more worthy of a child's love and trust than the gift of tender loving care and the gift of time. They are the most important gifts of all.

My very best to you for a meaningful Holiday Season and a New Year filled with love and abundant time to spend with family and friends.

Toni Christianson

Winter Scenes

Capture the frosty details of the season for our **Winter Gardens Photography Contest!** Gift certificates for winners; entries will be displayed at our Winter Festival March 1-3. The deadline is February 24. Details are on our website and in the Garden Store.

Holiday Open House and Art's Alive!

November 2nd, 3rd & 4th



Festivities fill Christianson's on the first weekend in November: six local artists and their works, artisan cheese tasting, live music, two inspiring classes and apple cider served from our antique cider press. It's our **Holiday Open House**, with our gift store, Primrose, dressed up in special finery for the season and joining in **Art's Alive!**, the celebration of the arts held throughout the La Conner area. Most of these events are happening from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Artist Appearances / Artwork on Display

Jack Dorsey, painter (Saturday)

Tom Newell, bird decoy carver (Saturday)

Carl Jaegel, photographer (Saturday and Sunday)

Richard Nash, Northwest fine artist (Saturday and Sunday)

Tim Chomiak, custom chicken coops (coops on display Saturday and Sunday)

Susan Rothschild, glass tile, marble and paper artist (Sunday)

Other Special Events

Classes: Learn a new twist on wreathing with **Laura Campell** on Friday, November 2, and be inspired to bring art into the garden with **Kathy Hirdler** on Saturday, November 3. (Details on Page 3)

Musicians Laurel Bliss and **John Clark** will play old-time, Cajun and bluegrass music (Saturday).

Samish Bay Cheese offers tastings and specialty cheeses for sale (Saturday).

Apple cider will be offered fresh from our antique cider press (Saturday).

Primrose for the Holidays

If you are looking for ideas to make your holidays merry and bright remember to visit **Primrose** for unusual gift and decorating ideas. Primrose will be dressed from floor to ceiling in festive attire to help celebrate the season and our expert staff is always available to answer questions if you need assistance.

Giant Pumpkin Winners

Congratulations to **Joel Holland** of Sumner, who won the \$2,000 first prize with his 1,281.5-pound pumpkin at our Skagit Valley Giant Pumpkin Festival on September 29. Second-place winner was **Jim Sherwood** of Mulino, Oregon, with a 1,100.5-pound pumpkin. Third place went to **Lee Roof** of Coupeville, with a 609.5-pound entry. The day was filled with fun: toad races, pony rides, games, face painting and delicious food and cooking classes. Pumpkin growers, get ready for 2013! Watch our newsletters for information about a class we'll hold in the spring to get you off to a roaring good start.

Many thanks to our sponsors: **Pacific Northwest Giant Pumpkin Growers**, **Skagit Farmers Supply**, **Skagit Valley Food Co-op**, and **Coastal Farm & Ranch**. **Dean Biss** was a huge help in the many months leading up to the festival (and he brought his state-record giant cabbage to show!). Also a big thank-you goes to **Erickson Farms**; their forklift was essential in lifting these pumpkins!



Flower Buses to the Show

The **Northwest Flower and Garden Show** will be held in Seattle February 20-24 and we are happy once again to offer our "Flower Buses" so you can gather your friends and enjoy going to the show without the stress of driving and parking. The Flower Buses leave the Nursery at 8:30 a.m. and return at approximately 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, February 20, 21 and 22. The cost of a combination show ticket and bus ride is \$52. Call the Nursery today to make your Flower Bus reservations (360-466-3821). More show ticket details are on Page 6.

Christianson's Winter Calendar

Holiday Vine Wreathmaking: Beyond the Round

Friday, November 2 1 – 2 p.m.
reservations required class fee: \$35



Learn a new twist in wreath-making – square, rectangle, oval or diamond – in this hands-on workshop guided by the creative **Laura Campbell** of *Christianson's Nursery* and *MoonRose Antiques* in La Conner. You supply the wreath form, perhaps an old window (no glass), picture frame or any odd repurposed frame (not too big or heavy). Laura will guide you through the weaving of vines and twigs around your frame of choice. If you're familiar with Laura's hand-woven rosehip wreaths, you'll enjoy this fresh "square" alternative! Remember to bring pruners, gloves and a frame, or buy one at the workshop. Vining materials will be provided; feel free to bring your own special snippets.

The Artful Garden

Saturday, November 3 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
reservations required class fee: \$5

What does art in the garden mean? You turn a corner on the garden path to find dramatic scenes of stone, symmetry and silhouette ... or you smile at the fairy-tale creatures amid the primroses ... or light soars into rainbows from a crystal bobble tucked into a tree. **Kathy Hirdler** of *Floribunda Designs* will help you see art as another layer to add in your garden. Photos from her garden travels provide sparks of ideas, and she has the practical know-how for making it work in our Northwest climate. With simple design principles – placement, scale and color – and using outdoor-appropriate materials, you can infuse your garden with inspiration.

Problem Trees in Your Garden?

Saturday, November 10 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
reservations required class fee: \$5

We're in the season when wind, soggy soils and snow loads are going to test just how sturdy are your trees. Come hear what a certified consulting arborist has to say about evaluating hazardous trees and what to do to keep them safe and healthy. **Jim Barborinas** of *Urban Forestry Services* in Mount Vernon will begin his talk in the Schoolhouse, then guide a walk to look at some mature trees on the Nursery grounds and La Conner Flats next door. Dress for outdoor weather.



Conifer Walk with John Christianson

Saturday, November 17 1 p.m.
reservations required complimentary

Here in the Evergreen State, we are fortunate to color our landscapes year-round with the rich blues, golds, bronzes and, yes, greens of conifers. Join **John Christianson** as he points out the colors and textures you can bring to your garden with pines, spruces, cedars and more. The walk starts in the Schoolhouse Garden and continues on to the 11-acre English garden at La Conner Flats adjacent to the nursery.



Following the Conifer Walk on November 17, plan to have **High Tea at the Granary** at La Conner Flats. This tea features scones, fruit, tea sandwiches and desserts. For reservations, call 425-765-0046 (\$21 per person). Space is limited; early reservations suggested.

Seventeenth Annual Holiday Tea

Saturday, November 24 noon – 5 p.m.
reservations required complimentary

John and Toni Christianson extend their appreciation to customers with this Holiday Tea to celebrate the start of the holiday season. Come enjoy tea, cider and assorted delicacies in our 1888 Schoolhouse, decorated with a forest theme, candlelight and the live music of autoharpist **Bob Harper** and violinist **Dennis Burkhardt**. Take part in what has become a valley tradition and make your reservations today.

Donations will be collected to benefit the La Conner Boys & Girls Club. Your contributions over the years have helped keep this program viable.

Arrival of Father Christmas

Saturday, November 24 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Father Christmas will be in his red sleigh nestled among the trees in our South Greenhouse. He is excited to greet children of all ages and listen to their Christmas wishes. Come in your holiday finest and either take your own photos or have your picture taken by professional photographer **Barb Roberson**.

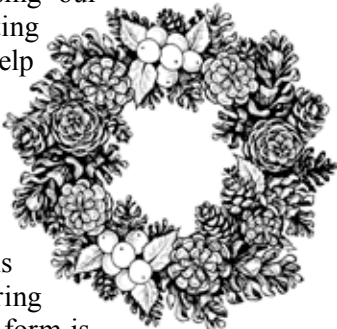


Christianson's Winter Calendar – continued

Holiday Wreath Making

Saturday, November 24 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.
reservations required class fee: \$5

Deck the halls with ease by using our wreath-making machine and getting the practical and inspiring help of **Rachel Anderson** and **Lily Hirdler** of *Christianson's Nursery*. These are one-hour classes (starting at 11 a.m., noon, 1 p.m., 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.). We provide a delightful array of greens (sold by the pound); feel free to bring your own. The cost of one wreath form is included in the class fee. Wear warm clothing and bring your own pruners and gardening gloves.



Independent Wreath Making

November 25 – December 24 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
reservations required

Beginning the Sunday after Thanksgiving, our South Greenhouse will once again be the venue for independent wreath-making. Two wreath-making machines will be available every day from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wire rings and greenery are available for purchase, or you may bring your own. Invite your garden club, family and friends to enjoy a creative time together, spreading holiday cheer.

Trumpeter Swans of the Skagit

Saturday, December 1 10:30 a.m. – noon
reservations required complimentary



The majestic beauty of fields filled with trumpeter swans is virtually at Christianson's doorstep in December, January and February. Come hear wildlife biologist

Martha Jordan describe these amazing birds – the largest waterfowl in the world – and Skagit Valley's best places to view them. Get a free Swan Identification Pamphlet and see excellent slides to help you distinguish among trumpeter swans, tundra swans and other birds of the Skagit. Please see Page 5 for more information. (Illustration by Judy England)

To make your reservations for classes and events,
please visit the Nursery or call us at
360-466-3821 or 1-800-585-8200

Nature's Beauty for the Holidays

Friday, December 7 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
reservations required class fee: \$10

Adorn your table, nooks and hearth with botanical abundance this season! Sought-after floral designer **Stacie Sutliff** of *Blush Custom Floral* near La Conner will inspire ways to bring the outdoors from your garden and woods to the indoors for elegant and creative holiday décor. Sophisticated or spontaneous ... simple or opulent: Stacie's designs are sure to surprise and delight you. Please note this is a special Friday afternoon class.

Growing Tea in the Valley

Saturday, January 12 11 a.m. – noon
reservations required class fee: \$5

It's been almost four years since **Richard Sakuma** of *Sakuma Brothers Farms* gave a talk at the Nursery about his venture growing tea with *Camellia sinensis* shrubs. So what's new with Skagit Tea? While still facing challenges of growing the tea plants, Richard has been working on perfecting his processing techniques for green, oolong, white and black teas, as well as creating blends using Northwest botanicals. You'll get to sample an assortment of teas that Sakuma Brothers sells online and at the Market Stand in Burlington.

Pruning Trees & Shrubs

Saturday, January 19 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
reservations required Class fee: \$5

You'll probably have a few "aha! moments" about pruning when you hear **Bess Bronstein** give this overview of pruning ornamental trees and shrubs, as you learn why your cuts *will* or *won't* produce the effect you want. Bess is a certified arborist based on the Kitsap Peninsula and has been a horticulture faculty member at *Edmonds Community College* since 1989. She will talk about tools, techniques and timing. This is a great foundational class to pair with our other pruning classes (see Page 5).

Orchids

Saturday, January 26 11 a.m. – noon
reservations required class fee: \$5

The orchid grower that provides Christianson's with most of our sumptuous blooms will be here to give an "Orchids 101" talk and to show off and sell some great varieties. **Joe Griener** of *Emerald City Orchids* in Seattle will describe caring for and troubleshooting of orchids, including his tips for using safe horticultural oils for pest problems. A nice bonus: Orchids – and all our house and conservatory plants – are on sale all January!

Our Swans of Winter



Photo by Gerald Plowman

Each winter, the Skagit Valley is host to the largest concentration of trumpeter swans in the United States: an awesome sight to behold when you consider that these elegant birds were close to extinction in the 1960s. *Christianson's Nursery* wants to help celebrate this annual migration with a special free slideshow and talk by wildlife biologist **Martha Jordan** on Saturday, December 1, at 10:30 a.m. (Please see Page 4 for more information; reservations are required.)

Trumpeter swans (*Cygnus buccinator*) are the largest waterfowl in the world. They have a wingspan of 8 to 9 feet, weigh between 25 and 30 pounds, and may stand 4 feet tall. They are long-lived, some more than 20 years, and they mate for life. (Martha will bring a life-size decoy of a trumpeter swan so you can experience their size; she needs a 6-foot-long table to hold it!) When you hear their deep, loud call, you will understand why they are called trumpeters.

The trumpeter swan population is stable and increasing now, but Martha will shed light on some challenges the birds face in their wintering grounds, such as habitat loss and the ongoing problems of ingestion of lead shot pellets from years when lead shot was allowed for waterfowl hunting. She helps in the conservation of trumpeter swans by fostering cygnets (baby swans) in her backyard, in cooperation with Northwest Trek.

Martha is the coordinator for *Washington Swan Stewards*, which is the local branch of *The Trumpeter Swan Society*. She has a degree in Wildlife Science from Oregon State University, and will also be talking about the native tundra swans and the multitudes of snow geese that visit Skagit fields in the winter. For more information online, see www.trumpeterswansociety.org.

Kris Moe, Classes and Communications Coordinator

Pruning Fever

While plants are dormant in winter and before the sap starts to rise, gardeners start getting itchy for their pruners. Oh, to wrestle that tangled shrub into elegance! Ah, to give a crowded rose room to breathe and hopefully avoid that cursed black spot! Maybe some tree branches look precarious, too unsafe to be around what's precious to you.

A series of pruning and tree health classes over the next few months at the Nursery can help give you confidence and skill. See Pages 3 and 4 for details of these first two classes, and watch our upcoming newsletters in 2013 for the other classes.

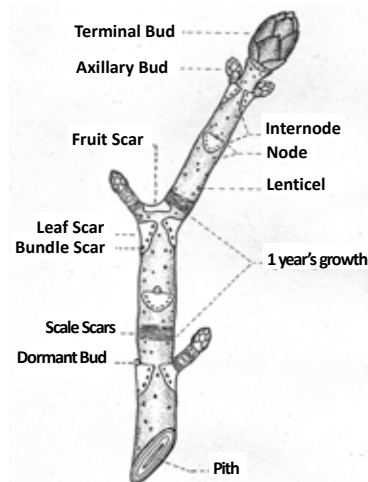
November 10: "Problem Trees in Your Garden?" Consulting arborist **Jim Barborinas** of *Urban Forestry Services* talks about assessing the health of mature trees.

January 19: "Pruning Ornamental Trees & Shrubs" will be a great foundation for understanding pruning fundamentals, taught by *Edmonds Community College* horticulture faculty member **Bess Bronstein**.

February 16: "Getting Young Fruit Trees off to a Good Start" will encourage you to give your new trees the all-important early pruning and training to get an abundant fruit crop; taught by **Ani Gurnee** of *Aulos Design*.

March 9: "Pruning and Renovating the Overgrown Garden" will be a hilarious and edifying slide show about how to deal with an utter garden mess, with **Cass Turnbull**, founder of *Plant Amnesty*, inspiring you on.

March 10: "Pruning Roses" will give you the confidence for shaping different types of rose shrubs to get the best blooms.



Easy Ways to Stay in Touch.

Website (www.christiansonnursery.com): Our upcoming classes and events, plus links to current and past Garden Gazette and Garden Notes newsletters

Garden Notes: Our emailed newsletter sent the first week of each month

Facebook: Look for the Facebook icon on our website

November - January Specials

November 1 – 30
Roses
 end of season sale
 hundreds of bushes from which to choose
 50% off

November 12 – 30
Camellias
 winter and spring flowering Camellias in
 bud or bloom
 1-gallon to 5-gallon sizes
 20% off

January 1 – 31
House & Conservatory Plants
 tropical plants for home or greenhouse
 (free repotting with plant
 and pot purchase)
 25% off

November 1 – 11
Ground Covers
 kinnickinnick, ivy, juniper, salal,
 Cotoneaster, Vinca, Pachysandra and
 Euonymous
 25% off

December 1 – 31
Christmas Holly
 traditional English holly plus many rare
 and uncommon varieties, 1-gallon to
 6-foot sizes
 20% off

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

Mark Your Calendars!

NORTHWEST
FLOWER & GARDEN
 SHOW*
 February 20-24, 2013

Tickets will be available for purchase in our Garden Store starting December 15 (\$16 for early bird tickets, \$20 during the show). Call today to reserve your spot on our Flower Buses (see Page 2), heading to the show on February 20, 21 and 22: \$52 per person (includes ticket to the show).



CLASSES & EVENTS

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, November 2, 3 & 4
 Holiday Open House & Art's Alive!

Friday, November 2
 Holiday Wreathing: Beyond the Round 1 p.m.

Saturday, November 3
 The Artful Garden 11 a.m.

Saturday, November 10
 Problem Trees in Your Garden? 11 a.m.

Saturday, November 17
 Conifer Walk with John Christianson 1 p.m.
 (followed by optional tea at the Granary)

Saturday, November 24
 Arrival of Father Christmas 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 Holiday Wreath Making 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.
 17th Annual Holiday Tea noon – 5 p.m.

November 25 – December 24
 Independent Wreath Making 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

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 Trumpeter Swans of the Skagit 10:30 a.m.

Friday, December 7
 Nature's Beauty for the Holidays 1 p.m.

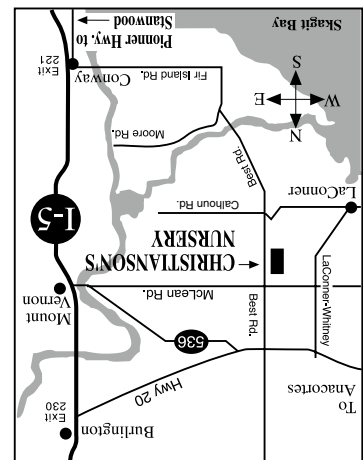
Saturday, January 12
 Growing Tea in the Valley 11 a.m.

Saturday, January 19
 Pruning Ornamental Trees & Shrubs 11 a.m.

Saturday, January 26
 Orchids 11 a.m.

Winter Hours
 Beginning November 4
 Daily 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

From Bellingham: Take Exit 230. Go 5 miles west on Hwy. 20 to Best Road. Turn south, go 2 miles on Best Road.
From Everett: Take Exit 221. Go 8.5 miles west on Fir Island Road to Best Road. Go 1 mile north on Best Road past Chillyberg/Calhoun Road.



360-466-3821 • 1-800-585-8200

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