

## CHRISTIANSON'S Nursery & Greenhouse

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

*Skagit Valley*

### *Giant Pumpkin Festival*

Saturday, September 29 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Giant Pumpkin Weigh-off • Harvest Food • Classes  
FREE • Pony Rides • Family Carnival Games • Face Painting • FREE

**\$2,000 cash prize for the biggest pumpkin!**

Christianson's Nursery promises our second annual Giant Pumpkin Festival to be *packed* with family fun and *loaded* with eye-poppin' pumpkins!

Pumpkin celebrations are also going on this day in nearby Burlington, with its Burlington Harvest Festival & Pumpkin Pitch (those crazy, homemade trebuchets) — so make a day of it with your family!

For details on entering your giant pumpkin in the weigh-off, please see Page 3. Giant pumpkins will remain on display at Christianson's through Sunday, September 30.

### *Festival Schedule*

- 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Giant pumpkin entries accepted — come by to see the parade of special deliveries. (Entries are also accepted on Friday, September 28, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.)
- 10:30 a.m. – noon Cooking Class: So Much More Than Pumpkin Pie! (see Page 4)
- 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. Tweets, the scrumptious café in Edison, offers Tastes of the Harvest



- 1 – 2 p.m. Making Hard Cider at Home Class (see Page 4)
- 1 – 3 p.m. Free pony rides with Lang's Traveling Ponies
- 1 – 3 p.m. Face painting and family carnival games
- 2 – 4 p.m. Giant pumpkin weigh-off
- 4 p.m. Award winners announced (1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes)



**Reservations are required for both classes (class fee: \$10).  
Please call the Nursery at 360-466-3821 or 1-800-585-8200 to make your reservation.**

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## *Asters: The Autumn Stars*



Near the end of summer when most other perennials have stopped blooming and are fading towards winter dormancy, asters are just coming into perfection. These under-used and under-appreciated plants are among the easiest to grow and form the backbone of the fall garden, extending the season by providing fresh, long-lasting color. Asters make excellent cut flowers and are an important nectar source for butterflies and beneficial pollinating insects. If the plants are left standing through winter, their faded flowers provide seeds for finches, sparrows and towhees.

*Aster x frikartii* 'Monch' is one of the earlier-blooming varieties, beginning its enchanting show in early August and blooming long into October, with profuse displays of 2.5-inch, lilac-blue daisies. 'Monch' tends to flop and sprawl if not staked and benefits from being pruned or pinched in early June. Be sure not to pinch past mid-June or you might remove the flower buds just beginning to form. 'Monch' grows best in full sun and is drought-tolerant once established. If you live in an area where deer snack on your garden, you'll find that all asters are, for the most part, ignored by them.

Another striking variety is *Aster lateriflorus* 'Prince,' with narrow, strikingly dark-purple foliage and a neat, upright habit that doesn't require staking or pruning. By late August or early September, this 2- to 3-foot perennial is covered with hundreds, if not thousands, of tiny, star-like white daisies with raspberry-pink centers. This eye-catching display carries long into October and combines beautifully with ornamental grasses and upright sedums. Provide full sun for the best foliage color.

If sun is limited in your garden, there's still an aster for you. *Aster divaricatus*, or wood aster, actually thrives in dry shade! A low-growing ground cover, it weaves quietly among the hostas and ferns during summer. Then when fall arrives, and you've perhaps forgotten about it, it reappears with a sweet surprise of tiny, airy white stars peeking out here and there. The foliage is a glossy dark green with black wiry stems. The wood aster will also tolerate some sun if the soil is kept moderately moist.

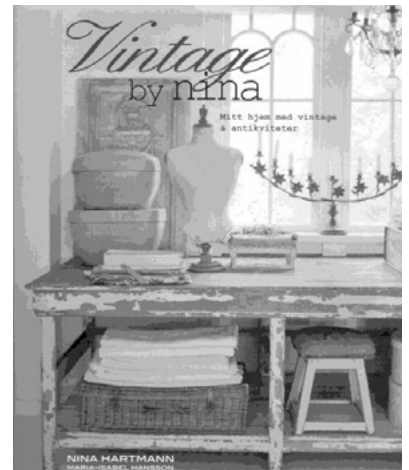
There are about 600 varieties of asters from which to choose, hailing from all over the world, and the three listed here are just a few of my favorites. Whichever variety of aster you choose, I know you'll be happy with this star of the autumn garden.

Rachel Anderson, Certified Professional Horticulturalist

## *Primrose Musings: Nina's House*

*Vintage by Nina*, a new favorite book in **Primrose**, is filled with enchanting photographs described ... in Norwegian. The book is so wonderful, and I am such a visual person, I purchased the book without caring if I could read it or not. It has been widely published in different languages in Europe and now will be available in English in September. The Norwegian version will be in Primrose in the meantime, and if anyone speaks fluent Norwegian, it would be fun for our staff to hear some of it read in Norwegian and also translated into English. The burning question for us is: "Is this the house Nina Hartmann actually lives in?" We will find out for sure in September when the English version arrives in Primrose. You are welcome to leave your name and number in the Garden Store if you would like to be notified as soon as they are delivered.

Toni Christianson



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## *Pumpkin Growers Aim for the Big Time*



As word spread early this spring that we were planning another weigh-off of giant pumpkins, gardeners with the grandest of goals started planting their seeds ... most likely, one of the Dill's Atlantic Giant seeds or one of its progeny.

Our champ last year was the 933-pound behemoth grown by Phil Renninger of Coupeville. Dick Kilburn of Anacortes placed 2nd with a 615-pound fruit, and Steve Radich of Mount Vernon placed 3rd with a 579 pounder. (Efforts anywhere to topple the world record failed last year; the record stands at 1,810 pounds, grown in 2010 in Wisconsin.)

As the final weeks march on to the weigh-off, hopefully the final pounds will also mount up. Giant pumpkins can easily grow 25 to 35 pounds a day under favorable weather conditions, according to Dean Biss of the Pacific Northwest Giant Pumpkin Growers and a key advisor for our festival planning this year.

Contest entry forms are available in our Garden Store and on our website, [www.christiansonnursery.com](http://www.christiansonnursery.com). Our generous sponsors include the **Pacific Northwest Giant Pumpkin Growers, Coastal Farm & Ranch, Skagit Valley Food Co-op, and Skagit Farmers Supply.**

## *What to Do with Empty Nursery Pots*

At Christianson's, "Fall is for Planting!" – it's a great time to let roots settle in when the rains return. But once you've planted new beauties *into* the earth, what can you do responsibly *for* our planet Earth to clean up the clutter of empty pots?

**REUSE:** Several places welcome donations of pots for propagation or exchange programs:

### **Christianson's Nursery**

ACCEPTED: 2-gallon (8-inches wide) and larger pots of standard green or black plastic

WHEN: Nursery open hours

DROP-OFF POINT: Check in with staff when you arrive, please.

### **Skagit County Master Gardeners**

ACCEPTED: Only clean, 1-gallon square pots

WHEN: Anytime

DROP-OFF POINT: Outside the Discovery Garden greenhouse, 16650 State Route 536 (Memorial Highway), Mount Vernon

### **Stillaguamish Tribe Banksavers Nursery**

ACCEPTED: Any pots

WHEN: By arrangement, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday-Friday. Call 360-629-4960.

DROP-OFF POINT: 25525 Dahl Road, Arlington (just east of Interstate 5 at Exit 212 to Stanwood).

### **Skagit County Master Gardeners**

ACCEPTED: Any pots. This is a pot exchange: bring pots, and take what you need. Leftovers will be recycled.

WHEN: Saturday, May 11, 2013

DROP-OFF POINT: Skagit County Fairgrounds, Mount Vernon

**RECYCLE:** Curbside recycling service in Skagit County by both **Waste Management** and **Allied Waste Services** does allow rinsed-out plastic nursery pots to be placed in household recycling containers, according to officials for both companies. This is a relatively recent change, so some customers might not be aware of it. Do not include plastic plant tags; those go in the garbage (unless you have a creative reuse for them!).

**Skagit River Steel & Recycling** also accepts plastic nursery pots for recycling, at no charge for ordinary household amounts. Do not include plastic plant tags. 1265 S. Anacortes St., Burlington.

Do you have more ideas for reusing or repurposing plant pots? Please send your ideas (especially those that use large numbers of pots!) to [kris.christiansons@gmail.com](mailto:kris.christiansons@gmail.com).

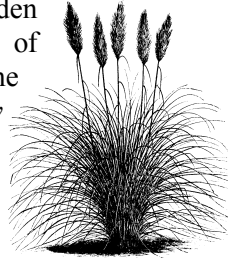
Kris Moe, Classes & Communications Coordinator

# Christianson's Autumn Calendar

## Gorgeous Grasses

Saturday, September 8 11 a.m. – noon  
reservations required class fee: \$5

Add texture and movement to your garden with some of the amazing assortment of ornamental grasses that grow well in the Northwest. **Sara Burns** of *Wind Poppy Farm & Nursery* in Ferndale will talk about some of the most versatile and successful grasses – and introduce you to some undiscovered gems that are worth exploring.



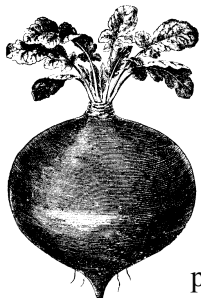
## Rain Gardens and Ponds for Winter

Sunday, September 23 2 – 3 p.m.  
reservations required class fee: complimentary

Expert growers of water-loving plants, **Kathy and Scott Ramin** of *Still Waters Aquatic Nursery* in Mount Vernon, are teaching a timely class as we get ready for the rainy season: how to deal with all that runoff in soggy spots of the garden, and how to winterize a pond feature where you've been encouraging the aquatic plant life. Rain gardens use tough, often native plants to absorb and slow the rush of water, such as near a downspout. And garden ponds will benefit from some fall maintenance, such as dividing plants and dealing with leaves and needles.

## Preserving Your Harvest with Fermentation.

Saturday, September 15 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
reservations required class fee: \$10



Savor your September vegetables for months by preserving them with traditional, enzyme-rich, lacto fermentation. **Scarlet Starkey** – who has served as the Skagit County Fair's canning superintendent for the past several years – will demonstrate side dishes such as a Latin American sauerkraut (*cortido*), pickled roasted red peppers (tasting so good they're "to die for," Scarlet says), and the

Russian beet beverage, *kvass*. Bring a clean quart jar and go home with some *cortido* of your own ... inspired by Sally Fallon's book, *Nourishing Traditions*.

## Rhododendrons for the Rest of the Year

Saturday, September 22 11 a.m. – noon  
reservations required class fee: \$5

In spring, the luscious colors of rhododendrons delight, but come fall and winter, do you think of them as just ho-hum background shrubs? Discover the fascination of leaves, bark and the overall form of rhododendrons in the "off season." **Don Lee** of *Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens* on Whidbey Island will show what a great variety of rhodies we can grow here for year-round interest, and he'll give tips for their fall care. Don was Washington's Master Gardener of the Year in 2009 and is president of Meerkerk's board of directors. (A bonus: This class is being held during Christianson's 30% off sale on rhododendrons!)

## Cooking Class: So Much More Than Pumpkin Pie!

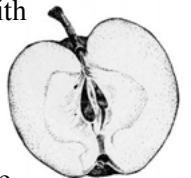
Saturday, September 29 10:30 a.m. – noon  
reservations required class fee: \$10

As part of our Skagit Valley Giant Pumpkin Festival, Chef **Suzanne Butler** returns with creative ideas for putting pumpkin on the plate: Spicy Roasted Pumpkin Soup with Pumpkin Crisps, Pumpkin Gnocchi with Crisp Fried Sage Leaves, and Pumpkin Maple Ice Cream. Suzanne, Culinary Arts instructor at *Skagit Valley College*, was "Galloping Gourmet" Graham Kerr's cooking assistant for many years and manager of the Mount Vernon Farmers Market.

## Making Hard Cider at Home

Saturday, September 29 1 – 2 p.m.  
reservations required class fee: \$10

Learn the basics of making hard cider with some simple and rather inexpensive equipment in your own kitchen. Master cidemaker **Drew Zimmerman** will be at Christianson's to discuss choosing the right apple varieties, hygienic practices and the steps that will take you through fermentation, racking off and bottling for drinking in the spring.



## 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

# Christianson's Autumn Calendar – continued

## Asian Pears for Western Washington

Saturday, October 6 11 a.m. – noon  
reservations required class fee: \$5

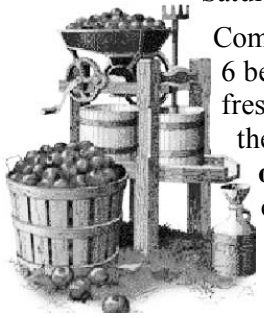
Asian pears are a relatively easy fruit to grow in our maritime climate, with an intriguing range of varieties and flavors. **Dennis O'Neil** tends 1,000 Asian pear trees at his *Dry Slough Orchard* in Mount Vernon, and he will discuss organic strategies for success. (Dormant spray and thinning the fruit are key steps, he says.) You need two varieties for best pollination, and Dennis will help you choose by bringing taste samples from his bountiful orchard. This class is held during the weekend of the **Skagit Valley Festival of Family Farms**; check out other events at [www.farmtour.com](http://www.farmtour.com).

## Fresh Cider Pressing with John Christianson

Saturday, October 6 12:30 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Come by *Christianson's Nursery* on October 6 between 12:30 and 2 p.m. for apple cider freshly made on our antique press! This is the weekend of the **Skagit Valley Festival of Family Farms** (see [www.farmtour.com](http://www.farmtour.com) for more information). We're also offering a farming-themed class that day, with **Dennis O'Neil** of *Dry Slough Orchard* talking about growing organic

Asian pears (see above).



## Mosaics for Garden & Home

Saturday, October 13 1 – 5 p.m.  
reservations required class fee: \$35

**Constance Funk** returns to *Christianson's* to teach an interactive class on her mosaic techniques for garden and home. Participants will learn about design, products, safety and methods for this art form that has endless possibilities for expression. A class guide with invaluable resources will be provided to get you started on your own projects at home. You will leave inspired and informed, ready to exercise your creative imaginations! Light refreshments will be served.

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

## Fall Color Walk with John Christianson

Saturday, October 13 1 p.m.  
reservations requested complimentary

Come see the glorious fall colors of leaves and berries at the 11-acre English Garden of *La Conner Flats*, adjacent to our Nursery. **John Christianson** begins the tour in our Schoolhouse Garden, and then you'll stroll past our llamas, sheep and chicken coop on the way to the mature garden at *La Conner Flats*.



Following this walk, plan to have **Fall Harvest Tea at the Granary at La Conner Flats**. This tea features scones, fruit, tea sandwiches and desserts. For reservations, call 425-765-0046 by October 10 (\$21 per person). Space is limited; early reservations suggested.

## Starting a Veggie Garden from Scratch

Saturday, October 20 11 a.m. – noon  
reservations required class fee: \$5



Are you contemplating a patch of grass or weeds that you'd rather see planted with carrots, cabbage and corn next spring? Give your crops a huge jump start with some prep work in the fall. **Ani Gurnee** of *Aulos Design* will show you the easiest and most fertile ways of getting your soil ready. Raised beds or open mounds? How big? Cardboard or plastic "sheet mulch" to kill weeds and seeds over the winter? Digging or layering in soil amendments? Wear gardening shoes and clothing, as much of the class may be outdoors.

## Hedgerows and Habitats

Saturday, October 27 11 a.m. – noon  
reservations required class fee: \$5

England is known for its ancient tradition of hedgerows, which form charming threads weaving across the landscape. Hedgerows can create near-impenetrable privacy barriers and – most importantly – provide habitat for birds and insect pollinators. **Ani Gurnee** of *Aulos Design* describes how to turn a peripheral area on your property into a hedgerow with varied heights, colors, densities and textures.

## Autumn Specials

September 1 – 16  
**Fall is for Planting**  
 roses, perennials, vines and hydrangeas  
 30% off

September 17 – October 4  
**Fall is for Planting**  
 rhododendrons and azaleas, fruit, flower  
 and shade trees (to 14 feet!)  
 30% off

October 5 – 18  
**Conifer Sale**  
 tall and dwarf evergreens, including  
 spruce, fir, cypress, pine, juniper  
 25% off

October 19 – 31  
**Hedging Sale**  
 laurel, boxwood, photinia, Japanese holly,  
 Leyland cypress, privet and arborvitae  
 25% off

## Mark Your Calendars!

**November 2, 3 and 4**  
*Holiday Open House  
 and Art's Alive! 2012*  
 Meet local artists  
 Art-inspiring classes  
 Enjoy the Nursery dressed up  
 in holiday finery

**Saturday, November 24**  
*17th Annual Holiday Tea*  
 Arrival of Father Christmas  
 Holiday Wreath Making

## CLASSES & EVENTS

**Saturday, September 8**  
 Gorgeous Grasses 11 a.m.

**Saturday, September 15**  
 Preserving Your Harvest  
 with Fermentation 11 a.m.

**Saturday, September 22**  
 Rhododendrons for the Rest of the Year 11 a.m.

**Sunday, September 23**  
 Rain Gardens and Ponds for Winter 2 p.m.

**Saturday, September 29**  
 Skagit Valley Giant Pumpkin Festival  
 So Much More than Pumpkin Pie! 10:30 a.m.  
 Making Hard Cider at Home 1 p.m.

**Saturday, October 6**  
 Festival of Family Farms (also Sunday)  
 Asian Pears for Western Washington 11 a.m.  
 Apple Cider Pressing 12:30 – 2 p.m.

**Saturday, October 13**  
 Mosaics for Garden & Home 1 p.m.  
 Fall Color Walk 1 p.m.  
 (followed by optional Tea at the Granary)

**Saturday, October 20**  
 Starting a Veggie Garden from Scratch 11 a.m.

**Saturday, October 27**  
 Hedgerows & Habitats 11 a.m.

### Weekly Radio Broadcast

*The Garden Show*

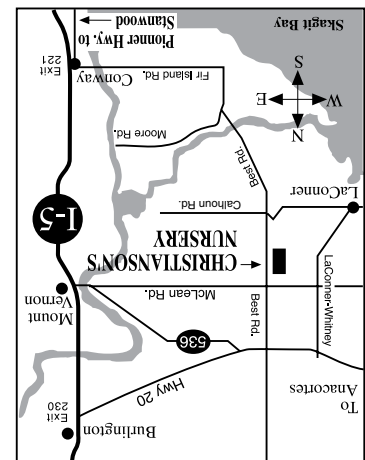
**Sunday Mornings**

With John & Mike

AM 660 KAPS • 9:30 am

**Open Daily**  
 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
*Open Labor Day*

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

**CHRISTIANSON'S**  
 Nursery & Greenhouse  
 15806 Best Road • Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
 www.christiansonnursery.com

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