



JULY - AUGUST 2020



GARDENCOMM
Garden Communicators International



National Federation of Press Women
2019 National Award Newsletter,
On the QT

Register Now!

See Virtual Conference on Page 5

GARDENCOMM
VIRTUAL
conference
AUGUST 10-13, 2020

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Lessons Learned During Trying Times

On the QT asked members to tell us what they have learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, protest and riots, as well as other 2020 challenges. Thanks to the members who shared their experiences with us.



ELLEN ZACHOS

I've learned that the most important things in the world to me are my friends and family. Everything else can wait. Work, entertainment, eating out, yes, even plant shopping! When we are able to travel freely again, I am going to make a concerted effort to visit more friends and stay better connected to the people I love. Consider yourselves warned. I will not be shy about saying, "Hi, can I come visit you?"

SUSAN MARTIN

More than any other time in recent history, people have found a desire to garden this season—to grow their own safe, accessible food, to spruce up their landscapes and to create healthy outdoor living spaces. Their desire comes at the same time there are fewer products available in stores and by mail, and at a time when shipping channels are completely maxed out. For the first time in a long time, demand is exceeding supply. I am amazed at the resiliency of retailers to adapt and serve. The dedication and work ethic of their staff deserves high praise.



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Visit MyGardenComm under Member Resources, or [click here](#). A login screen will appear. Click "Forgot your password?" Enter your email address. A message will be sent with a secure link to set or reset your password. Click the link and choose a new password. Once complete, you may login using your email as username and your new password. For issues, please call 212-297-2198.



On the QT is the membership newsletter of the GardenComm: Garden Communicators International. It is published six times a year and distributed electronically.

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Executive Director **Marla Schrager** • Kellen

DIRECTORS

N = National Director • R = Regional Director • Date = Term Expires

REGION 1

Sally Cunningham (2022 N)
AAA Garden Discovery Tours
Charlie Nardozi (2021 R)
Gardening with Charlie Nardozi
Ellen Ecker Ogden (2020 R)
Kitchen Garden Designs

REGION 2

Kathy Jentz (2021 N)
Washington Gardener
Louise Clarke (2020 R)
The Morris Arboretum
Teresa Speight (2019 R)
Cottage in the Court

REGION 3

Diane Blazek (2022 N)
All-America Selections/
National Garden Bureau
Beth Botts (2020 R)
Morton Arboretum
Alicia Rittenhouse (2021 R)
HYR BRIX Fertilizer

REGION 4

Kate Copsey (2021 N)
Freelancer
Helen Newling Lawson (2021 R)
Spot On Communications
Marie Mims Butler (2020 R)
Garden Speaker

REGION 5

Bill Johnson (2022 N)
Bill Johnson Nature Stock
Photography Inc.
Rita Perea (2020 R-North)
International Contemplative
Garden Association
Dee Nash (2020 R-South)
Red Dirt Ramblings
Shelley Cramm (2021 R-South)
Garden in Delight

REGION 6

Mary-Kate Mackey (2020 N)
Freelance
Anne Reeves (2020 R-North)
Moment of Delight
Jacqueline Soule (2020 R-South)
Gardening with Soule
Chris Sabbarese (2021 R-South)
Corona

REGION 7

Ken Brown (2021 N)
gardening-enjoyed.com
Andrea Whitely (2020 R)
Andrea Whitely Garden Consultant
Rob Howard (2021 R)
The Hamilton Spectator

"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you."

— **Frank Lloyd Wright**



When I read the quote above, it occurred to me that it is a direct correlation to my first six months with GardenComm.

The first part, "study nature," is related to how much knowledge GardenComm members have about the green industry. I am learning so much in everyday conversations and in the latest webinars. I didn't know there were so many plants and fruits that can be eaten or that you can change the color of a hydrangea by changing the soil amendments. When I hear members

talking about their desire to learn more and teach, I'm also reminded of how important it is to "study nature" and share that wisdom.

The second part, "love nature," is evident by the passion members and the leadership have for GardenComm and the industry. Even a simple planning discussion has underlining themes of the love of nature. If you didn't love it, this organization wouldn't exist.

Reading the third part, "stay close to nature," means a lot to me right now. I can't think of another time in my life that flowers were more vibrant or the sky was bluer. Is it that I am paying more attention because there are fewer distractions due to the lockdown? Perhaps. But I know it is also because I am motivated by all of you and the amazing work you do to share nature with the world.

The last part wrapping up the quote brings me hope. No matter what was going on in the world over the last few months, nature prevailed. We, too, shall never fail and be diligent in learning and growing to make GardenComm the best it can be.

Now is the time to focus all our resources on driving innovation, execution and monetizing programs. To help us do so, the Kellen team is working closely with the Board and committees to build our virtual offerings, communicate value to our members and continue to recommend revenue drivers.

I'm pleased to share we have almost made the full transition from Jenn Perrone to Leslie Laguardia as your account manager. Anything you would have worked with Jenn on can now be directed to Leslie. Below is your GardenComm Team. An overview of our roles and responsibilities can be found here. Please don't hesitate to reach out if we can help you.

- Executive Director - Marla Schrager
- Account Manager - Leslie Laguardia
- Account Coordinator - James Cafiero
- Social Communications Managers - Crystal Rankin, Peter Harris
- Meetings Manager - Monica Saunders
- Controller - Jennifer Kingsbury

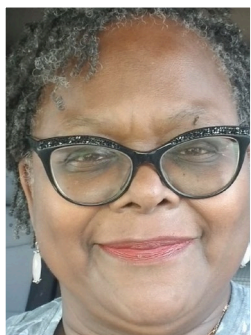
I want to share some exciting updates with the [committees](#). The Education and Programming Committees have been merged. This will provide the structure needed to plan programming strategically so members can study and share their knowledge. Thanks to **Maria Zampini** and **Kim Toscano Holmes** for leading this committee. Much of the work thus far has been spent shifting the in-person conference to a virtual one, which has not been easy, but they did it gracefully with wonderful support from the rest of the committee. We look forward to seeing you online in 2020. A special thanks to **Becky Heath**, as well, for her help securing Williamsburg in 2021.

Another very exciting shift is within the Communications and Marketing Committee. **Sue Markgraf** and **Natalie Carmolli** are the new co-chairs. Working closely with the Kellen team, the mission is to drive messaging for all GardenComm activities from membership to conference to helping members thrive. Thanks to both of them.

Last, while everything around us is evolving, this is a perfect time to evaluate what GardenComm has been and what it can be in the future. On the Leadership Committee call in late June, an exercise was assigned to everyone to re-imagine GardenComm.

— Continues on page 4

Many of those gardening this year are doing so for the first time. Education is extremely critical, and people are looking anywhere and everywhere for advice. Now is the time for garden communicators to step up and produce as much educational content as possible to help these new gardeners learn the basics so they will have success and make gardening a hobby that lasts long past the nightmare of COVID-19.



TERI SPEIGHT

I have learned to shop from my cupboard. I can make a meal from what's in the house. I grow a lot of salad greens. I feel better eating what I can grow. I can make my own clothes like I used to and not just collect cute fabric. My garden is my place of peace. With music from the birds, crickets, the sound of leaves fluttering in the breeze, my garden is the sanctuary I need to breathe, pause and enjoy a simple life.

I have learned to podcast with a passion and minimal investment and a lot of trial with errors. I have also learned how to create a Power Circle. It enables getting to know others within GardenComm. I have also found time to start renovating my own garden. It has been a period of reflection and putting things in perspective of how to continue gardening as I age. Having downtime has its virtues.



CAROL MICHEL

I've learned from all the questions being asked via social media that many people do not have even a basic understanding of how to plant a garden. Now more than ever, these people need the patience and wisdom of experienced gardeners, and garden communicators, to answer those questions. We want them to be successful and keep planting.

I've personally learned more about shooting video, editing video, and putting it up on YouTube. Though far from professional, I have enjoyed making each video. I've allowed myself the opportunity to experiment and try different formats. I even managed to record a Zoom meeting with plants. I don't know if I have a future in video, but I have enjoyed the learning process.

When I realized I would be home all spring, I decided to start more vegetable plants inside from seed. I took inventory of all the seeds I had purchased over the last several years and ended up with seedlings for a dozen tomato varieties and a dozen pepper varieties.



BETH BOTTS

I've learned that in a time of crisis and paralysis, you need to be nimble. Keeping up with my weekly newspaper gardening advice column has sometimes meant writing and discarding two or three columns before I settle on a topic that does not seem tone-deaf and keeps up with the current requirements of social distancing. I've also started teaching and giving garden club talks by Zoom.



ANDREA WHITELY

When all the world goes mad and the toilet paper starts to run out and you can't buy rice or pasta, suddenly like a light switch, everyone wants to garden and grow their own edible plants. The world took a deep breath in about March and we were all forced to stay home and embrace the spaces that we have, from large plots to small pots, every vessel was filled with potting mix, seeds and plants. Garden centers and big box home improvement

stores have been emptied of seedlings and seeds, and yet the knowledge gap remains huge. Many folks have no idea what and when to plant but the great thing is they are giving it a go.

It's possibly the most exciting time for those who are in a position to educate others about gardening and connecting with nature. People are now appreciating how important it is to slow down and experience nature, take the kids to the park and get out and into their gardens. Garden centers are now delivering daily, offering click and collect services and online sales. Customers are desperate to plant anything they can eat including Bush Tucker (native bush food plants favored by indigenous peoples) and other native plants. Everything has been flipped on its head. As garden communicators, it is our time to shine. We are the source that the new gardeners need in order to be successful.



PEGGY RICCIO

Through *Gardens 'n Plants*, I dove into the podcasting world and quickly graduated from my iPhone and free Anchor to purchasing a professional microphone and headset, recording with Zencastr, and editing two soundtracks with Audacity. In the Podcasting Power Circle meetings, I have learned about show notes, marketing, sponsors, voice quality, and SEO.



DEBRA KNAPKE

Having been a counselor/diagnostician, and then a teacher for 35 years, I have always been aware of the differences and similarities of people who have come from many walks of life. But recent events have made me search for what I still need to understand and address in my reactions and core beliefs. The most important lesson from COVID-19 and the recent unnecessary deaths and resulting protests is that when the time comes, we all must

do what is right, not accept that this is just how it is. There will be folks who will say that what is right is an amorphous statement, but it really isn't. 🌱



Cultivate '20 Goes Virtual

[Cultivate '20 Virtual](#) will include more than 50 live education sessions covering all aspects of the horticulture industry, online discussion forums, exhibit hall, and more will be featured at various times July 13 through July 16. The expo is now free and education is just \$99. If you have previously registered, please contact AmericanHort directly regarding your registration/refund options.

#Garden365 Calendar of Promotions Available on the National Garden Bureau Website

It's not just any day. It's a great day to promote Gardening! In an effort to inspire and support national "day of, week of and month of" celebrations, the **National Garden Bureau** has worked in partnership with GardenComm to create and launch a new web page listing many popular dates. These are fantastic opportunities for garden communicators to promote gardening. The current list is the best of the best. There is something that will appeal to just about everyone regardless of age or gardening experience. Use this list to plan for your speaking, blogs, videos, content calendars, and social media posts to educate, have fun, and inspire gardeners to get out and get their hands in the dirt. In many cases, suggested hashtags are included, so feel free to use those to raise the tide of gardening. 🌸



I have to say, 2020 has not been anything like I thought my first year as president of this esteemed group would be like. Challenging, indeed.

So far, we continue to weather COVID-19, which broadsided our members' speaking engagements and other income-producing endeavors. And after concerns about how the green industry would do, we've learned that garden centers and nurseries added online ordering, curbside pickup and delivery options to the ways they sold plants.

We've learned that garden centers sold out of many plants and that continues with the second, third and fourth plantings of vegetables, herbs and annuals. Growers and wholesalers also are low on stock and have reduced availability, if not curtailing shipments altogether.

Most will likely have more stock to move in late summer and fall, which will be good for gardeners.

All of these sales have been spurred by newbie gardeners or gardeners who've been away from the dirt for a while. I, for one, took up sowing seed for the first time in years. So far, tomatoes, fragrant dianthus, Big Duck Orange marigolds, Clancy potatoes (All-America Selections) and dwarf morning glories have done great. The lettuces I sowed have been so delicious I eat some almost every day, sometimes twice a day.

Consulting and garden coaching work is virtual, or done with everyone maintaining safe distances and wearing masks. Planting clients' pots and gardens is also done following CDC or state recommendations.

I hope some of us have found the time to take up interests we've been putting aside. Maybe we learned a new technology, created newsletters, refreshed our logo and website messaging, wrote the book we always wanted to do, explored new topics and focused our efforts on improving our business.

Soon, GardenComm will announce virtual programs, beginning in August, that we hope will entice you to #GardenComm2020. These education sessions will be presented by several of the speakers we had lined up for Williamsburg, Virginia.

As you can imagine, GardenComm's finances are challenging and the income loss from the conference threatens our situation even more. The virtual programs are meant to provide educational opportunities to our members and bring in some income to help our cash flow. Of course, nonmembers may also sign up for the programs, so spread the word.

It's a time when it seems like every person is for her- or his self. But when I think about it, I know how much my GardenComm colleagues have helped me in many, many ways the last several months. 🌸

Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp
jemsharp46@gmail.com

—Executive Director's Message, continued from page 2

If there were a blank slate, what would you want GardenComm to be? What are the things we should start or stop? We would love to hear your thoughts, too. Please reach out to your [regional leaders](#) or any Committee chair and provide your feedback by July 15. A small task force will be named to review, consolidate and report findings to the Board for further discussion this summer.

In the meantime, I encourage you to "study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you." I will do the same. 🌸

All the best,

Marla Schrager, CAE
mschrager@kellencompany.com

Virtually You Can Be There

BY MARIA ZAMPINI



No doubt we're all a little sad and disappointed that GardenComm will not be visiting Colonial Williamsburg this summer. But, on the bright side we are looking forward to being there in 2021.

In the meantime, we're excited to announce the GardenComm 2020 Virtual Conference. This event will take place August 10-13, the same dates we would have been in Virginia.

Education Committee volunteers concentrated on developing a cohesive line-up of exceptional speakers whose topics and presentations will provide inspiration, business development and content possibilities.

The tentative schedule is outlined below with the presentations happening 3 to 5 p.m. EDT, daily. Events will be recorded and available for those unable to attend.

Conference registration is \$99 for GardenComm members and \$159 for nonmembers. The latter includes conference registration and GardenComm membership for the remainder of 2020. Registration is tentatively set to open July 1 at GardenComm.org.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Monday, August 10

- 3 to 3:15 p.m. – Welcome and introduction of opening speakers, **Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp**, GardenComm President
- 3:15 to 4:30 p.m. – Opening Session: **Finding Your Purpose, Forging Your Path: A Conversation with Abra Lee, Conquer the Soil, and Ellen Zachos, The Backyard Forager**

Description: Who are you and what makes you special? Why should people listen to you instead of the thousands of other voices out there? Each one of us has a well-developed specialty, a singular passion, a unique voice. Which means we each have something special to offer. But before we can reach our audience, before we can create our tribe, we have to understand our why.

The why is the compass that gives focus and meaning to everything we do. Each decision you make is filtered through the why, helping you cut through the clutter and design your path. This isn't a quick and easy fix. Finding your

purpose takes time and dedication. But once you've defined your why, once you've discovered your purpose, work is no longer work. The joy of doing what you love is priceless. And when you've figured out your why, when you've found your purpose, your people will find you. And isn't that why we all do what we do?

- 4:30 to 5 p.m. – Q&A

Tuesday, August 11

3 to 3:45 p.m. – **New Plants Showcase Diane Blazek, The National Garden Bureau and All-America Selections**

Description: National Garden Bureau (NGB) has been presenting new plant varieties from their members for the past 35 years. Now more than ever, it's important to stay up-to-date on the new products that various breeding programs are bringing to the market. This year, Diane Blazek, executive director of NGB, walks you through a array of new plants and points out their most appealing traits and the breeding trends they represent. These plants are scheduled to be introduced at 2021 spring and summer industry events for sale to consumers. So, you will be one of the first garden communicators to see these varieties by participating in this webinar.

- 3:45 to 4:15 p.m. – **Breakout Sessions (Q&A, Networking, Social)**
- 4:15 to 5 p.m. – **Mind Your Gaps: Your Digital Audit Action Plan with Katie Elzer-Peters, The Garden of Words**

Description: Fine-tuning your digital platform is more important now than ever before. Katie Elzer-Peters from Garden of Words will show you how to assess the current state of your business and teach you the steps needed to take it to the next level. This session will cover free tools to help you identify problem areas online, the best ways to close any gap and how to create content to convert your online audience into paying customers. Learn how to leverage the written word online, including long-form blogging, copywriting to "sell" through email and engaging Instagram captions. Audience members will get practical tips and actionable steps to implement immediately, so they can set up their businesses for long-term success.

Wednesday, August 12

- 3 to 3:45 p.m. – **New Products Showcase - Diane Blazek, National Garden Bureau and All-America Selections**



– Continues on page 9



Welcome **NEW** GARDENCOMM MEMBERS

Thanks to these GardenComm members for helping to grow the organization in this year. For every new member you bring in, you'll save \$20 on your 2021 membership dues.

ONE MEMBER

Kary Arimoto-Mercer
Kirk Ryan Brown
Natalie Carmoli
Carmen DeVito
Helen Newling Lawson
Kim Roman
Erin Schanen
Lawrence Sherk
David Ward

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C.L. Fornari
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Grace Hensley
Kathy Jentz
Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp

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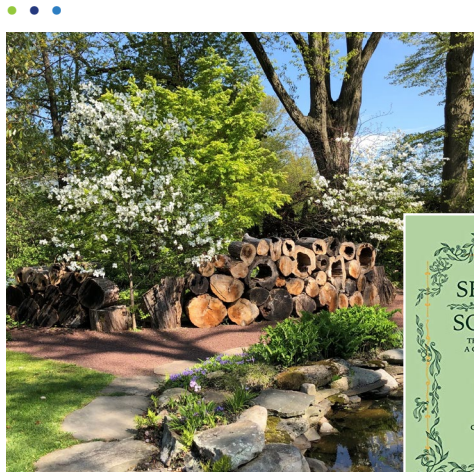
*** Student Membership**



NEW & Noteworthy

GardenComm's On the QT Places 2nd

On the QT was awarded a 2nd place by the National Federation of Press Women in the electronic newsletter category. The Woman's Press Club of Indiana awarded the newsletter 1st place, making eligible for national competition. In 2019, *On the QT* placed 1st nationally. Editor **Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp**, copy editor **Cathy Wilkinson Barash** and graphic designer **Paul Wilson** put the newsletter together. Our members write the articles.



Jenny Rose Carey's garden is featured in several programs.

Jenny Rose Carey has been working on webinars, podcasts, and videos during these unsettled times. See Jenny's garden at @Northviewgarden Instagram. She will be featured on a Montgomery County (Pennsylvania) Master Gardeners podcast, as well as one produced by Wyck House in Philadelphia's Germantown. Jenny's garden was the subject of a recent 40-minute [YouTube video](#).

Stations Pick Up Christopher's Radio Program

Thomas Christopher's *Growing Greener*, which has been broadcasting on WESU-FM in Middletown, Connecticut, since last May, has been picked up by three more public radio stations, and is now broadcasting as far afield as Ventura, California, and Taos, New Mexico. Each week the program features an interview with some leaders in environmentally informed gardening.

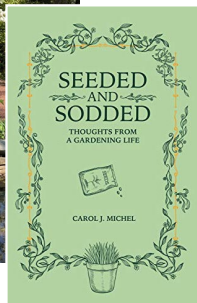
Dubow on Facebook Live

Katie Dubow, the new president of Garden Media Group, took up a new "hobby" during quarantine. She has interviewed more than 50 experts in our industry about various topics, from houseplants to hydroponics. The show airs daily on Facebook Live at 1 p.m. ET. She has interviewed many GardenComm colleagues and is always open to suggestions or nominations.

Jentz Busy During COVID-19 Stay-at Home

Kathy Jentz was featured in the "Life in the Time of Coronavirus" and online profile series created by portrait photographer [Jonna Michelle](#).

She launched a Seed Giveaway project at the start of the Covid-19 stay-at-home period to get seed packs into the hands of home gardeners through her SeedSwapDay.com initiative. Seed packs were mailed to individuals, garden clubs, community gardens, etc. The seeds were also placed in Little Free Libraries/Little Free Food Pantries throughout the Washington, D.C.-region.



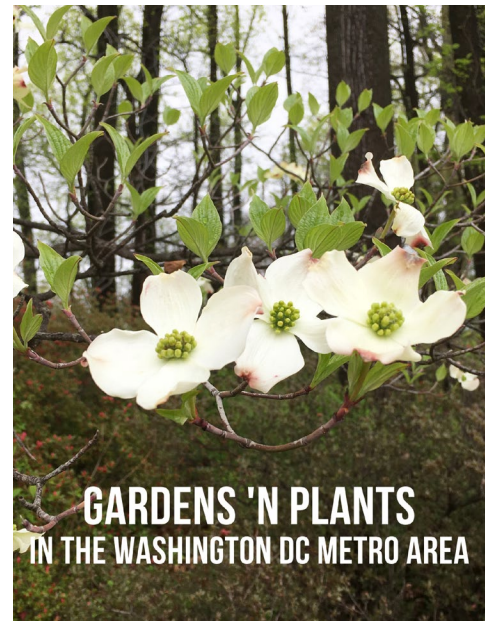
Michel's Latest Book Wins 1st Place

Seeded and Sodded: Thoughts from a Gardening Life by Carol J. Michel was recently awarded First Place for Non-Fiction Books for Adult Readers - Humor in the National Federation of Press Women's National (NFPW) Communications Contest. Entries in all categories, which cover all aspects of communications, are first judged at the state level. First place state winners are then eligible for entry in the national contest. *The Woman's Press Club of Indiana initially judged Seeded and Sodded.*

In addition, the podcast, *The Gardenangelists: Flowers, Veggies, and All the Best Dirt*, which Carol records with **Dee Nash** of Guthrie, Oklahoma, received an honorable mention from the Woman's Press Club of Indiana in the category of Web and Social Media – Podcasts.

Monheim Video Launch

Eva Monheim has launched videos on Instagram @evamonheim about trees and shrubs for horticulturists, arborists, and landscapers. The response to this information has been wonderful—especially for the arborist community. It also goes along with her new book *Shrubs & Hedges* that was released in March.



Riccio and Speight Start Podcast

Right after MANTS in January 2020, [Peggy Riccio](#), a horticulturist in Virginia, and [Teri Speight](#), a master gardener in Maryland created [Gardens 'n Plants](#), a biweekly gardening podcast. From their respective homes, they chat for about 30 minutes about the plants in their gardens, events and gardens they have visited as well as upcoming gardening events. They discuss all things plants and gardens in the Washington, D.C.-metro area. Since producing this podcast, Peggy and Teri have formed a Power Circle on Podcasts. Currently the Power Circle is meeting weekly. Peggy and Teri, along with other GardenComm members, are learning more about this exciting new medium.

Schreiber's Memorable Celebration

Denise Schreiber (Region 2) and her husband, Don Schreiber, celebrated 50 years of marriage on May 30. In the US Holiday History trivia category for \$500, that date was the last time Memorial Day was observed on its actual date. The next year it switched to Monday observance.

Sharp's Newsletter Wins 1st Place

Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp's personal newsletter, [The Hoosier Gardener](#), placed 1st in National Federation of Press Women's national competition. Started in August 2019, the free monthly newsletter has nearly 1,600 subscribers. It covers garden topics, tips, HortusScope calendar of garden- and nature-related activities and sometimes promotes her business services.

ELIZABETH (Betty) SCHOLTZ

April 29, 1921 – April 22, 2020

Betty Scholtz died on April 22 (a week before her 90th birthday) at her home in Brooklyn Heights, according to Diane H. Steinberg, chair of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's board of trustees. "Betty knew how to make an entrance and an exit," Ms. Steinberg said, pointing out that her death came on Earth Day.

With a distinctive South African accent that had been sharpened by Anglican boarding school, and with a flair for brightly colored clothes, Betty was a beguiling and beloved figure in the horticulture world.

"She was a rock star," said Scot Medbury, who led the garden until January, recalling how she inspired generations of horticulturists, including himself. "She was a skillful diplomat, able to disarm the toughest union negotiators by inviting leaders to tea. She made everybody happy."

PIONEERING LEADERSHIP

In 1972, when Ms. Elizabeth Scholtz became director of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the splendid 52-acre urban garden founded in 1910, she was not only the first female director of a major botanic garden in the United States, she was also one of the few women in charge of a large New York City cultural institution. This made for some awkward collisions.

At the time, members of the Cultural Institutions Group, which included the directors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum and the garden, met at the Century Club on West 43rd Street. To attend the meetings, Betty entered through the service door, so as not to upset the stodgy membership of the all-male club.

One day her arrival coincided with that of Thomas Hoving, director of the Met, and Thomas Nicholson, director of the Museum of Natural History, who linked arms with Ms. Scholtz and frog-marched her through the club's front door, causing many male jaws to drop. It did not, however, change policy at the club, which did not admit women until 1988."

Trained as a scientist in her native South Africa, Betty came to the United States on a yearlong medical fellowship in hematology at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston. There she met George Avery, then the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's director, who in 1960 offered her a job running the Adult Education Program. She accepted and served until 1971, when



Brooklyn Botanic Garden director Elizabeth Scholtz greets visitors at the first Sakura Matsuri in 1982.

the program expanded from 1,100 adult students to over 4,000 by 1971. Her work with dye plants led to the publication of the BBG handbook.

In 1966, she began leading garden tours around the world; by the time she stopped in 2008, she had led 100 tours through 46 countries. She became the BBG's director in 1972, guiding it through the city's near bankruptcy in 1975. "Half of the garden's operating costs came from city funding, which was wiped out during that fiscal crisis," Scot Medbury said. "Not only did Ms. Scholtz refill the garden's coffers, she also managed its three satellite properties: the 223-acre Kitchawan Research Station and 400-acre Teatown Lake Reservation, in Ossining, New York, and the 12-acre Clark Garden on Long Island." In 1980, she became director emeritus. Until last fall, she was a daily presence at the garden.

HONORED AND BELOVED

During her long horticultural career, Betty served on the boards of the American Public Gardens Association and the Horticultural Society of New York, and on committees for the Atlanta Botanical Garden, the Garden Conservancy, Longwood Gardens, Morris Arboretum and Old Westbury Gardens.

She received the honorary degrees Doctor of Human Letters from Pace University in New York and Doctor of Science from Long Island University.

Over the years, she received many awards, including Swarthmore College's distinguished Arthur Hoyt Scott Garden and Horticulture Medal in 1981 and American horticulture's highest award, the Liberty Hyde Bailey Medal in 1984 from the American Horticultural Society. New York governor Mario Cuomo recognized her as a "Woman of Distinction in the Field of Agriculture." Other awards include the American Horticulture Society's Professional Citation (1978), the Gold Veitch Memorial Medal of the Royal Horticultural Society (1990), the Garden Club of America's Medal of Honor (1990), the Hutchinson Medal of the Chicago Horticultural Society (1991), American Public Garden Association's Award of Merit (1992) and the Gold Medal of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society (1994).

Last month, an open-air walled garden, designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates and financed with a gift of \$5 million from an anonymous donor who asked that an area be named for Ms. Scholtz, was scheduled to open to the public. (The Brooklyn Botanic Garden has been closed because of the coronavirus.) 🌸

Cathy Wilkinson Barash from *The New York Times*, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 66 SQUARE FEET (PLUS), The Garden Club of America, Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Ellen Spector Platt January 20, 1935 – May 10, 2020

Ellen Spector Platt may have been the most accomplished woman I've ever known, both personally and professionally. She did things most of us never dream of doing. A young mother, she encouraged her husband to give up his career as a pharmaceutical salesman and apply to med school. She supported the family while Ben earned his degree, then sent him off to Viet Nam to work as a doctor for a year. Can you imagine being a single, working mother of three, while your husband was at war?

Ellen's first career was as a psychologist. When Ben finished his post-war, medical residency in California, they drove back to Pennsylvania where both of their families were. (Ellen hocked her engagement ring to buy the camper they drove cross-country. And no, she never got it back.) They settled in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, a small town that was perfect for raising kids and starting a medical practice.

PSYCHOLOGIST AND GARDENER

Ellen worked as a psychologist and garden-er as a hobby until the kids left home and she and Ben moved to an old farm in Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania. With more room to garden, Ellen made the transition from hobbyist to professional, becoming a flower farmer. At Meadowlark Flower and Herb Farm, she grew more than 500 kinds of flowers and herbs. She taught classes in flower crafts and sold both fresh and dried flowers, eventually becoming a regular vendor at the Philadelphia Flower Show. She wrote many best-selling books, including *The Ultimate Wreath Book and Flower Crafts* with Rodale Press, and *Lavender: How to Grow and Use the Fragrant Herb and Garlic, Onions, & Other Alliums* with Stackpole.

When Ben retired, it was Ellen's turn to choose where to live. That was the deal. Ellen chose New York City and she took the city by storm. Ellen became an expert rooftop and container gardener. She also became one of my best friends.

I met Ellen at a GWA connect meeting before we called them that. We talked briefly over bag lunches at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the next thing I knew she was asking me to room with her at the 2001 GWA Symposium. I had no idea how that invitation would change my life.

Ellen was a generous mentor, a hilarious companion and an expert networker. And not just to me. She took great pleasure in helping newcomers: Offering advice, assistance and



Ellen Spector Platt (left) and Ellen Zachos.

often a place to stay on the Upper East Side. I learned as much from her about how to live a good life as I did about being a garden communicator.

SHARED HER KNOWLEDGE

In New York City, Ellen taught at the New York Botanical Garden, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the New York Horticultural Society. She spoke at flower shows in Boston, Philadelphia and San Francisco and lectured at Longwood and Epcot. Ellen also co-wrote the website *Gardenbytes from the Big Apple*, because even in her 70s she wasn't about to stop learning or trying new things.

Ellen reinvented herself again when she took a class on collage. In short order she began teaching collage, selling her artwork and writing a book on the subject. Of course, many of her pieces include plants—both as photographs and dried specimens.

In 2014, Ellen and Ben moved to New Hampshire, where she continued to garden and to win acclaim for her collage art. There, she was close to her children, grandchildren and, fortunately for me, just two miles from my parents' home.

For those of you who never knew Ellen, I'm sorry. She was the kind of person we all want to be: Smart, loving, generous, funny, successful and kind. As a garden communicator, she was also all of those things, making her work accessible, timeless, accurate and a pleasure to read.

My last visit with Ellen was at the end of January, before this pandemic confined us all to quarters. The isolation now makes it difficult to celebrate the passing of a friend who leaves a huge hole in my heart. But I take consolation in knowing that in the end, Ben was by her side, holding her hand and telling her he loved her. I hope all of you will take some consolation in that, too. 🌱



Description: Similar to the New Plants program, National Garden Bureau will gather the newest of the new garden products and present them in a fun and fast-paced session presenting innovative and useful products for the garden. Join us for an early look at products that typically would have been presented at summer shows and that will be available for consumers next year.

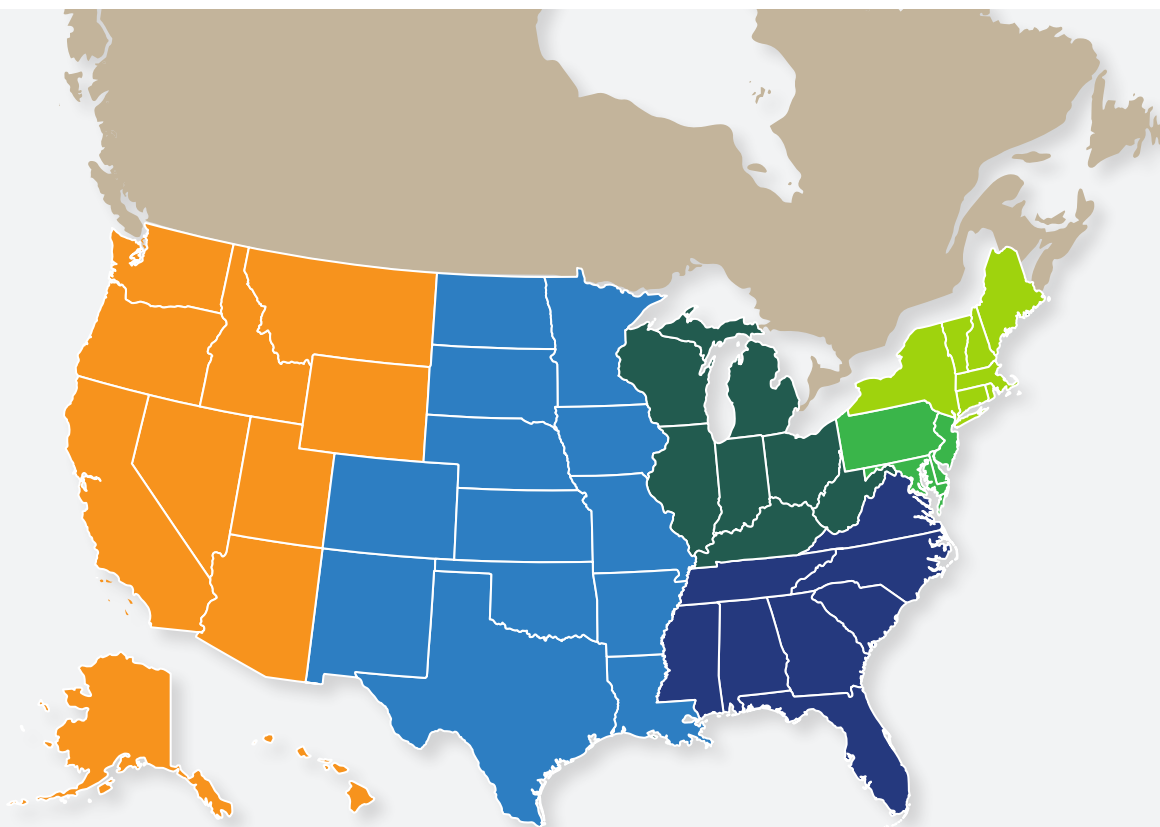
- 3:45 to 4:15 p.m. – Breakout Sessions (Q&A, Networking, Social)
- 4:15-5:00 – Market Segmentation: Communicating to Different Horticultural Audiences with April Thompson, Bloom Soil

Description: Part of being a great communicator is knowing your audience. This session, led by April Thompson from Bloom Marketing, will allow for a hands-on look at how to identify and appeal to audiences with different horticultural needs and levels of expertise, including landscapers, home gardeners, farmers, garden retailers and more. April will share tips and resources to help participants to identify segments within their general audience and ensure they are offering the right mix of content to appeal to the diversity in their midst.

Thursday, August 13 (Details to follow)

- 3 to 5 p.m. – GardenComm Media Awards and Honors
Carol Michel and Dee Nash, Media Awards co-chairs
Debra Prinzing, Honors Committee Chair
Debra Knapke, chair of the Sustainability Committee, will present the Green Medal Award 🌱

Maria Zampini is Vice President of GardenComm and owner of UpShoot, a boutique market business.



MEMBER NEWS

On July 12, **Louise Clarke** (Region 2) will conduct a leaf-casting workshop, using native leaves at [Mt. Cuba Center](#) in Hockessin, Delaware.

Ellen Zachos (Region 5) will speak about Backyard Foraging at the Northeast District Gathering of the Herb Society of America, Hancock, New Hampshire, 9:30 a.m., Friday, August 28.

REGIONAL EVENTS

Region 2 Goes Virtual

National Director **Kathy Jentz** invites GardenComm members and interested parties to a series of virtual gatherings for Region 2. "We might not be able to meet in person as a group, but at least we can do so online," she said.

They meet in a Zoom meeting room, 5 to 6 p.m., on the first Sunday of the month through the summer.

"We encourage you to grab a libation of choice and sit outside in your gardens, if

you can," Kathy said. The Zoom app on your smartphone is free to download and works quite well.

If this series is a success, Kathy said it might continue beyond the COVID-19 quarantine period. She welcomes suggestions for future topics.

Gardencomm members in other regions can also take part, as well as those folks serious about joining Gardencomm, those who want to learn a bit more about us, Kathy said.

Upcoming Dates and Topics

- July 5, 5 p.m. ET, "What Are You Working On?" Share your latest projects and plans. Do you have a challenge the group might help with?
- Aug 2, 5 p.m. ET, "Marketing and Social Media Tips" We need to let folks know "Gardening is NOT Canceled," but rather it is a growing trend and here to stay!
- Sep 6, 5 p.m. ET, "Show Us Your Garden!" Let's show-and-tell about new introductions, trial plants, our edible harvest, floral arrangements and more.

[Contact Kathy Jentz](#) for more information.



GardenComm's Blog

Want to learn more about GardenComm or do you have an interesting, timely topic to share with other members of GardenComm? Check out the [GardenComm blog](#) for weekly features by members. If you'd like to contribute a post, please contact Carol Michel at indygardener@gmail.com

CRISPR and the Future of Food



Zachary Lippman's research with CRISPR involved tomatoes.

PHOTO COURTESY DARCY KANE



The line was long while waiting for the cashier at the grocery store. Instead of scrolling through e-mails on my cell phone, I picked up an *Eating Well* magazine, drawn in by the cover title "The

Future of Food" by Rowan Jacobsen. A large red tomato announced Jacobsen's article, which was about the work of plant geneticist and MacArthur fellow Zachary Lippman, who works at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory on Long Island, New York. The scientists there specialize in genomics, plant biology, cancer, bioinformatics and neuroscience research.

Zachary Lippman uses a gene-editing molecular tool called CRISPR-Cas9, which stands for "clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats." He studies tomatoes, ground cherries and peppers belonging to the Solanaceae family.

Scientists using CRISPR make targeted changes to the DNA of plants (as well as animals and microbes) by adding or removing genes or gene sequences from *similar* species. GMO or transgenic technology is the DNA transfer between *different* species. In early 2018 the USDA announced that it would not regulate genetically edited CRISPR crops.

Though some European countries do not allow this technology, there are many advantages in letting research continue, including faster breeding, disease resistance, drought tolerance and increased yields.

FOCUSED ON TOMATOES

"My research uses tomatoes mainly because it has a very long history of very long genetics," Lippman said. Tomatoes also have reiterative flowering, which is another way of saying that they produce multiple flowers and fruits over a long period. This is especially important

since he and his lab partners have been able to grow tomatoes to flower and fruit earlier, produce shorter stems and be more compact.

Tomatoes that flower and fruit early would be especially suitable in northern areas like Canada or Norway that have long summer daylight, but very short summers. Compact tomatoes also lend themselves to vertical farming in both rural and urban areas. Warehouses and truck containers repurposed for vertical vegetable and fruit farming are increasingly important in urban settings, where population continues to grow. Producing food locally also lessens pollution from long-haul trucking and shipping.

Researchers at the University of California in Riverside have a special reason for developing a CRISPR gene-edited tiny tomato: Space gardening for the International Space Station

– Continues on page 12



DEBRA PRINZING

Slow Flowers Journal Volume One
Wildflower Media
128 pages, \$19.95, paperback
Published July 2020

Debra Prinzing's *Slow Flowers Journal Volume One* shines a light on the leaders, best practices, inventive floral artistry and creative experiences that are changing the floral marketplace while connecting people with the origin of local and sustainably-grown flowers. *Slow Flowers Journal* is produced in partnership with *Florists' Review* magazine, which launched its *Slow Flowers Journal* section in August 2017, with Prinzing as contributing editor.

This "best of" book draws from the past two years of the magazine's *Slow Flowers Journal* content, completely redesigned with fresh graphics, new photography selections and streamlined text, including 25% new content. Eighty *Slow Flowers* members from across the U.S. and Canada are featured in the book's pages, illustrated with more than 150 photographs that tell a visually compelling story of a lifestyle immersed in flowers. 🌿



and/or possible trips to Mars that would require higher-yielding, small plants.

Lippman also uses CRISPR on the difficult-to-domesticate ground cherry (*Physalis peruviana*), a prostrate spreading plant with marble-like fruits that are enveloped in a papery husk. When ripe these bright yellow, tasty and nutritious fruits fall to the ground, which makes them challenging to pick under sprawling leaves.

Lippman and Joyce Van Eck, a plant geneticist at Cornell University, have been working to increase the viability of these plants for larger agricultural distribution. By using CRISPR they removed a small portion of a self-pruning gene, which resulted in more compact bushes. They also experimented with genes that influenced flower number and fruit size. The resulting plants were more compact, had larger yields, and bigger fruit. The fact that ground cherries can be stored up to three months and are packed with vitamins A, C and B3 plus thiamin, niacin, iron and phosphorus make this plant especially favorable for larger production. Those who grow ground cherries at home should be aware that they are toxic if eaten when unripe.

THE ROSY WORLD OF CRISPR?

Although consumers in the US are able to buy tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables during the coronavirus epidemic, small farmers in East Africa, South Asia and parts of the Middle East are facing food scarcity due to swarms of desert locusts that are devastating crops. Scientists are studying how (or if) CRISPR could be used to control locusts as well as mosquitoes that carry malaria.

Using CRISPR to fight against fungi and viruses, especially in cacao trees may save the chocolate industry as well as aid doctors in curing diseases like sickle cell and certain cancers. However, there is a controversial side. When Chinese scientist He Jiankui created the first gene-edited babies, he was not hailed as a hero. Instead he was jailed for three years.

In her book, *A Crack in Creation*, biochemist Jennifer Doudna said "By the summer of 2015, the biotechnology that I'd helped establish only a few years before was growing at a pace that I could not have imagined. And its implications were seismic—not just for the life sciences, but for all life on earth." 🌿

Dency Kane is a Climate Reality Project Leader trained by former Vice President Al Gore. Here's her website: www.dencykanephoto.com

RESOURCES

["What Is Gene Editing and Why It Goes Beyond GMOs"](#)

["What Are Genome Editing and CRISPR-Cas-9?"](#)

[Desert Locust Situation Update](#)

[The CRISPR Baby Scandal Gets Worse by the Day](#)

Linda Yang February 20, 1937 – April 20, 2020

Linda Yang, garden writer and author, died on April 20 at her home in Manhattan of cardiovascular disease. She was 83.

Linda Gureasko was born on Feb. 20, 1937, in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Her father, Edward Gureasko, was an aviation mechanic; her mother, Esther Freden, was a schoolteacher.

In 1960, she married John Yang, an architect and landscape photographer, in Istanbul. The couple had met at the University of Pennsylvania, where both were studying architecture. Linda worked for the architect, Edward Durell Stone, before becoming a garden writer.

Just east of the busy streets of midtown Manhattan, Linda and John created what she called an "urban suburbia" at their four-story townhouse in Turtle Bay that was covered with Boston ivy. She had beautifully kept patches of green at the front and back of the approximately 3,420-square-foot home. She spent time in the back garden year-round, tending to the two-story witch-hazel tree, bamboo, mountain laurel, azaleas and rhododendrons that her husband pruned. I had the honor of photographing Linda and her garden several times. Despite its diminutive size, with its high fences, she had managed to create an urban oasis with several distinct garden rooms and four-season interest.



magazines. Her friendly, wise, and authoritative writing comes from a genuine love of gardening and from firsthand experiences that include "quite a bit of trial and more than one error."

Linda's readers were devoted to her columns. One, Ken Roman, recalled how he would write her regularly with questions, and she always responded, signing her letters

with "pots of love." One year, as a birthday present to him, Mr. Roman's wife asked Linda to come and consult on their roof garden. She agreed, with one caveat: "I won't jump out of a cake."

Her first book, *The Terrace Gardener's Handbook: Raising Plants on a Balcony, Terrace, Rooftop, Penthouse, or Patio*, came out in 1975. She is probably best known for *The City Gardener's Handbook*, published in 1990. It was published in paperback as *The City & Town Gardener, A Handbook for Planting Small Spaces and Containers*. Taylor's *Weekend Gardening Guide to Plants for Problem Places: How to Turn Any Difficult Site into a Beautiful Easy-Care Garden* was published in 1997. Taylor's *Weekend Gardening Guide to Topiaries and Espaliers: Plus Other Designs for Shaping Plants* came

out in 1999. 2002 saw the publication of *The New York Times 1000 Gardening Questions and Answers: Based on the New York Times Column Garden Q and A*, a compilation of questions and answers from Linda Yang, Leslie Land and Dora Galitzki.

After her husband, John, died in 2009, Linda moved to a high-rise apartment in Yorkville. There, she grew trees, flowers and herbs on her 19th-floor, windy terrace.

Linda was a longtime member of GWAA (now GardenComm). She served on the Library Committee of The Horticultural Society of New York for many years and was a member of the Green Guerillas since 1973, which cultivates partnerships between people who care about the earth and believe in the power of community gardening to transform neighborhoods.

Besides her son, David, who is the director of Chamber Music at the University of Pennsylvania, Linda is survived by her daughter, Naomi Yang, a video director, graphic designer and photographer who was a founder of the '90s-era indie band Galaxie 500, and two granddaughters. 🌱

Cathy Wilkinson Barash from *The New York Times*, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 66 SQUARE FEET (PLUS), The Garden Club of America, Brooklyn Botanic Garden

GARDENING AND WRITING CAREER

Consider the gardener who doesn't have enough land, or one who has a tiny city plot or no plot at all—just a balcony or a deck. Actually, such gardeners don't sing the blues so much; they make do with what they have, and happily.

Yang wrote with great sympathy for the gardener with limited space because she, too, had limited space around her Manhattan townhouse. "I like to say I have a 40th of an acre," she said, and that's what it was, a plot 19 feet wide and 50 feet long. And it was five blocks from Rockefeller Center.

In 1979, she began writing about gardening for the Home section of *The New York Times*, exploring community gardens, terrace farms like her own and other urban plots. She contributed to the section until 1995. Both her articles and her photographs have been published in numerous home and garden

A Reliable Resource for Garden Communicators

Founded in 1922, the **American Horticultural Society (AHS)** connects people with plants, and garden communicators with reliable information and valuable opportunities.

AHS member benefits include:

- Our well-respected bimonthly magazine, **THE AMERICAN GARDENER**, which is read and contributed to by leading garden writers
- Special admission privileges/discounts at over 320 participating gardens nationwide via our AHS Reciprocal Admissions Program
- Discounted admission to AHS programming, including our annual Great American Gardeners Award and Book Award ceremony & banquet
- The reward of knowing you're supporting AHS's mission to promote the people-plant connection and environmental stewardship



Join now: www.ahsgardening.org/join

Troy Marden: Gentleman Gardener



Garden designer and TV host Troy Marden is experiencing a climate-driven scourge. "In the past 15 years, armadillos have become so prevalent in Tennessee that they can turn up a 2,000-square-foot lawn

in a single night. A female armadillo gives birth to identical quadruplets in every litter. So, if you have one armadillo giving birth to four females, you can go from one pregnant female to 25 adults in two years."

As it turns out, these armored mammals are not just destructive to gardens, but to farms and ranching, as well. "They dig burrows in pastures, which cows then fall in, break their legs and have to be put down," he said. In Tennessee they can be shot on sight. Those critters don't stand a chance against this Midwest native!

SOUTH BY MIDWEST

Raised in the Flint Hills of northeastern Kansas, Troy got his start and a surprisingly broad education from the disappearing ecosystem that we call the American prairie. Everybody in his family gardened and put food by. "It was great growing up there, as I had an interest in plants from a young age. By the time I was 3 years old, I was poking seeds in the ground and helping my grandfather plant the vegetable garden." Troy admits he was painfully shy as a child and credits programs such as 4H and Future Farmers of America with bringing out his social side. "I could grow plants, exhibit them at the fair and win ribbons. It sort of instilled in me that I could excel."

After earning his degree in horticulture at Kansas State University, he got an internship at Cheekwood Botanical Garden in Nashville, Tennessee, a place he had envisioned himself living ever since his family's trip through the South when he was 12 years old. He had convinced his parents to stop in two places, the trial gardens for Park Seed Company in Greenwood, South Carolina, and Nashville, Tennessee. "I turned to my mother and I said this is where I'm gonna live." In 1993, his three-month internship at Cheekwood turned into a full-time job as head gardener. He called his mother to say that he's not coming back home



Troy Marden gets up close and personal with lions on one of his tours.

and she asked, "Do you mean tomorrow?" He said, "Never!"

MUSICAL TALENT

Troy played piano and alto sax, but he never wanted to be a professional musician. "I wanted to be somewhere where I could hear great music and 20 years ago some of the best recording studios were here in Nashville. Everyone from Cher to Etta James recorded here."

When asked about the challenges of gardening in Tennessee, he said, "It is hard to garden here. I grew up where the topsoil in some places was 6-feet deep and there were no rocks. Fast-forward to Tennessee where there is no topsoil anywhere and the clay soil is filled with rocks. I came down south because I wanted to have four distinct seasons, but be at least a zone and half warmer than where I grew up. I just didn't stick a shovel in the dirt before I decided to stay!"

NOT JUST ONE LANE

Troy credits what he calls his horticultural ADD for part of his success. "I learned early on that it is much better to be as diverse as possible rather than staying in one lane." Along the way he learned floral and event design and picked up garden writing and photography. The 1980s and '90s "rock stars" of English garden design heavily influenced Troy: Rosemary Verrey, Penelope Hobhouse and especially Christopher Lloyd. Troy created gardens in the English style but with plants adapted to the Tennessee climate and soil, substituting verbascums for delphiniums and growing foxgloves as annuals to achieve those iconic garden looks.

His depth and breadth of experiences opened the door for one of his longest-lasting gigs as one of the hosts for *The Volunteer Gardener*, now in its 27th season on Nashville's local public television. The show is as acces-

— Continues on page 14

sible and relaxed as Troy. "It is not a slick and highly produced show. We try to be down-to-earth and homegrown while doing our best to impart good, up-to-date gardening knowledge. It's essentially unscripted. When we show up to your garden, it's just me, the camera man and a producer."

HAS TRAVELING SHOES

After 22 years on the show, he said his favorite part of the job is meeting other gardeners. He connects with his audience online but it's not unusual for Troy to be stopped at the airport or at the local nurseries by fans. He thinks the show is so popular because, "We are not journalists. We are all dirt gardeners speaking about the things we love and are passionate about. We're not on the air because we bring in millions of dollars in ad revenue—our ratings are so high they can't get rid of us."

His love of travel inspired his latest venture, Troy B. Marden Travel, which he launched in 2017. Specializing in small groups (fewer than 20 people), his tours are not just for garden enthusiasts, they encompass all his other

loves: food, wine, art and architecture. His custom tours include private gardens, of course (some open to the public for the first time), but also wineries and art museums. His mission is simple, "I was a small-town boy. I want to expose people to the world."

Troy's long and diverse career in the gardening industry has given him a unique perspective on integrating all the different parts of his work life. "It's a balancing act. I try to work on design work only in winter and try to do most of the work on the TV show in just a few weeks so that I have flexibility to do other things."

TECHNOLOGY ADVANTAGE

His advice to GardenComm members is to take advantage of technology. "When I proposed a YouTube channel for *The Volunteer Gardener*, they looked at me like I had sprouted another head." The channel now has several million views. Not bad for a locally produced gardening show out of Tennessee. Troy is also bringing in younger hosts to attract a new audience to the show, which he believes is essential to engaging a younger demographic.

"Our industry needs to approach communications the way the food industry does. As communicators, it is a large part of our job to help consumers understand not just the aesthetic value of plants, but the amount of work that goes into producing something and why it has monetary value."

Troy credits his hero, iconic garden writer Christopher Lloyd, for inspiration. "My whole gardening and design career goes back to Christopher Lloyd. He engaged me at a very young age with his stories of gardening at Great Dixter. He was brilliant and knowledgeable, witty but not mean." Troy is paying his success forward now by supporting the student gardening programs at Great Dixter. "I can give back now to students who are as passionate and excited as I was. I feel that is part of my role." You can follow Troy's garden design, culinary and travel adventures on [his website](#) 🌿

Carmen DeVito is a principal of Groundworks in Brooklyn, New York, and co-host of the GardenComm Media Award winning *We Dig Plants* on [HeritageRadioNetwork.org](#).

Register Now!



Abra Lee



Ellen Zachos



Diane Blazek



Katie Elzer-Peters



April Thompson

OPENING SESSION: MONDAY, AUGUST 10 ● 3:15 to 4:30 p.m.

*Finding Your Purpose, Forging Your Path: A conversation with **Abra Lee**, *Conquer the Soil*, and **Ellen Zachos**, *The Backyard Forager**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11 AND WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12 ● 3 to 3:45 p.m.

*New Plants Showcase with **Diane Blazek**, *The National Garden Bureau* and *All-America Selections**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11 ● 4:15 to 5 p.m.

*Mind Your Gaps: Your Digital Audit Action Plan with **Katie Elzer-Peters**, *The Garden of Words**

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12 ● 4:15-5:00

*Market Segmentation: Communicating to Different Horticultural Audiences with **April Thompson**, *Bloom Soil**



GARDENCOMM

VIRTUAL
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AUGUST 10-13, 2020

Kissing The Career Goodbye

BY MARY B. GOOD



When the time comes to hang up the quill and trowel, you know it. You know it just like when you tear up your driver's license and junk the old 2005 Beetle.

People approach their retirement in many ways: Some with joy and anticipation, some with relief, some with regret, some without a clue and some kicking and scratching to hang on to what was.

I never considered retiring, since writing has been my life since forever. It hasn't been easy for me to call it quits. So much so, that I saw a shrink to assuage the pain of loss.

Retirement sounded like a dirty word. I was delusional assuming that someday they would find me, in crumbling decrepitude, slumped over my computer writing about the last rose of summer.

The closest I ever came to thinking about retirement was when I was in my late 30s and on the GWAA Board of Directors. I posed the wacky idea that we work on a retirement home for old garden writers, much like the Motion Picture and Television's glitter palace in Hollywood, where they take care of their own.

There we could sit in our rocking chairs, drink Long Island iced tea, like we used to, reminisce about our great moments in hort, out-knowledge each other (if dementia hasn't ravaged our memories) and spend morning, noon and night together. I was obviously consumed by GWAA. Of course the idea crashed and burned on launch. Thirty years later, not so funny.

Oh, if I could only round up my fellow ancients, many sadly pushing up daisies today, with whom I shared so many fun times at the Annual Meeting—the late night get-togethers, the karaoke carryings-on and the after-hours networking ops!

If a garden writer wanted to get anywhere, then as now, he/she went, to the Annual Meeting. I got my first big job that way when legendary '93 Fellow Mike Smith offered me a job writing the Ortho Garden News. And there was the networking that resulted with the late, great New Yorker, Ann Reilly, who brought me aboard the Time-Life Books stable of writers.

At some point, when work took me away from home a lot, I had to choose, as you may



have, between blinding ambition and preservation of my marriage and family life. I chose the latter over whatever I aspired to at that time.

Now manufacturer hubby has long passed on to greener pastures. Today the Queen of the Good garden is the same little girl I dragged with me through the Klehm Nursery peony fields when I was its advertising gal and to the Holland, Michigan Tulip Festival, kicking and screaming, "I hate flowers. I want to go home!" The apple doesn't fall far....

I started gardening when it was expedient that I make my own baby food. When my family life allowed, I went back to college to finish my bachelor's in journalism. When my daughter, now a broadcasting executive producer, went off to college, I went off to University of Wisconsin-Madison for my masters in horticulture.

Years before, when the features editor at the *Chicago Daily Herald* saw my stuff in print, she offered me a job as a feature writer and garden editor. (That would hardly happen today!). Creativity is the way we share our souls with the world, so I took the job, and "The Potting Shed" column lasted over two decades. So, here I am five books later, with enough newspaper and magazine articles to wallpaper my house, along with a solid record of eight years on the GWA Board of Directors in every slot except the presidency (because I developed viral encephalitis and couldn't serve)!

But I have been blessed. I got to do a lot of offbeat things like going to the Amazon with plant explorers to find nearly extinct floral

and fauna. What modicum of success and accolades I garnered in 53 years of garden writing was because I was able to write about stuff nobody else wrote about. I always asked myself, "If I didn't write this, would I read it?"

As a writer I've evolved from dinosaur to digital. Who even remembers typewriters, carbon paper, and Wite-Out? Tech develops at break-neck speed. Writers have to learn new ways of doing our work, and find new outlets when our old sources dry up. We progress until we realize it's time to quit. In my case, the eyes are shot.

The Coronavirus pandemic is a stark example of tech moving us forward, with Zoom and Google Drive, for example. GardenComm was way ahead of the COVID-19 curve when it started our e-publishing. The new normal will never revert to the old normal again. Instead it becomes the newer normal, and the newer, newer normal after that.

The bottom line is: Adapt and embrace change if still hale and hearty. Life is always changing. That's how we know we're alive!

I'll keep busy with hobbies that don't involve good eyes. I may knock off a little, short something now and then just to see if I still "have it," but the professional writing career is OVER. The run is DONE! And that's ok. The shrink said so. 🌱

Mary B. Good is an award-winning author whose books include a trilogy of gardening humor, one children's book, and *Creatures and Critters: Who's There in My Garden*, due out in this spring.