

MGA Messenger

Celebrating 75 years as the official source for direct marketing retailers, suppliers and professionals in the mail order gardening industry.



Summer 2009 Convention Wrap-up, Roberta Simpson-Dolbeare, Editor

MGA President Howard Kaplan Encourages Conference Attendance



MGA members who regularly attend the two conferences we hold each year, know the benefits this experience offers. The information gained in the educational programs and the networking opportunities to meet people, more than cover the cost of attending.

Conferences are also the place to build relationships with dedicated, hardworking business owners, managers and allied professionals. Developing strong connections today will benefit your sales results tomorrow.

Hope to see you at our winter meeting in Baltimore! Until then . . .

Howard Kaplan, Mantis, MGA President



Past Presidents Panel Shares Knowledge -- Experience may not count for everything, but it does prove to be a good teacher over time. Likewise, MGA past presidents bring to a discussion table many years of experience from a variety of industry segments.

At the recent Summer Conference in Minneapolis, a five-member panel, all MGA past presidents, shared how each of their respective companies is dealing with the volatile economy. Panel members also commented on what they expect for the coming market year and they fielded questions from the audience.

Members of the panel (shown at the top of the photo left to right) were Dick Zondag, J. W. Jung Seed Co., Jim Zuckerman, ZED Marketing, Bruce Frasier, Dixondale Farms, Dan Wells, New Growth, and Roberta Simpson-Dolbeare, Brookside Marketing. Michael Allan (top left), Gardeners Supply, moderated the panel discussion.

Mark your calendar!

MGA 2010 Winter Meeting

January 4-6

Baltimore Maryland

First-timers Find MGA Conference an Easy Fit



At left: Camille Cimino, MGA Executive Director, addresses the First Timers at a luncheon, sponsored by LENSER on their behalf. **At right:** Lisa Montez (right), Dripworks mentors co-worker and first-timer Cathie Nicolaus.



Mary Walters (left), Great Garden Plants, Inc., chats with her convention mentor Val Gosset, Evergreen Marketing. Gosset is currently serving as first vice president of the MGA.



Michael Garza (center), Dixondale Farms, and his wife Melissa converse with Dan Wells, New Growth. Wells served as immediate past president of MGA through the summer conference.

2009 Summer Convention Sponsors

~DIAMOND~

<i>Organic Gardening Magazine</i>	Tammy Hobar	610-967-7943	tammy.hobar@rodale.com
<i>Quad/Graphics</i>	Gary Meagher	414-566-2064	gary.meagher@qg.com

~PLATINUM~

<i>Arandell Corporation</i>	Jim Treis	800-558-8724	jftreis@arandell.com
<i>Fine Gardening Magazine</i>	Lisa Riebe	203-304-3532	lriebe@taunton.com

~GOLD~

<i>Cascade Manufacturing</i>	Ralph Rhoads	360-592-4285	elsie@cascadesales.com
<i>LENSER</i>	Geoff Wolf	970-247-4300	gwolf@lenser.com

~SILVER~

<i>Berkshire Direct</i>	Matt Storey	413-458-1721	matt@berkshiredirect.com
<i>CSI NutriCal</i>	Jerry Carpenter	515-967-4297	jerry@nutri-cal.com
<i>Growing Interactive</i>	Jeremy Dore	727-538-7734	info@growinginteractive.com
<i>Mantis</i>	Howard Kaplan	215-357-5710	hkaplan@schillergc.com
<i>Marketshare Publications</i>	Ellen Payne	913-338-3360	ellen@marketsharepubs.com
<i>Wiland Direct</i>	Brent Eskew	303-485-8686	beskew@wilanddirect.com
<i>ZED Marketing Group</i>	Jim Zuckerman	405-348-8145	jim@zedmktg.com

Thank you all for supporting the MGA!

Reese Gives "Heads Up" About Current Home Gardener Wants



Carol Reese (left), Ornamental Horticulture Specialist, University of Tennessee Extension Service with Clayton Beaty, Beaty Fertilizer.

She calls herself a "rough old gal", but other than her down-home-on-the-farm Southern accent, Carol Reese is anything but rough about understanding the wants of gardeners. She also tells her audiences that she has a touch of craziness to have been in the gardening industry as long as she has. In reality, she has a knack for making garden spots attractive using mundane objects in different ways.

Reese mentioned that home gardeners are attracted to the new and unusual; a moving target perhaps, but one marketers need to constantly be proactive to. Plant pots and other containers in landscapes, along with hot colors (she calls them "sex in the garden colors") are currently popular in home settings. She encourages marketers to always help gardeners visualize what they can do with their home landscapes to make them attractive and fresh.

Organic Gardening Hosts Welcome Reception



After the first day of educational sessions, the annual business meeting, and round-table discussions, conference attendees were able to network and relax at a reception hosted by Organic Gardening magazine. Members of the magazine staff attending the reception were (left-right) Steve Newman, Cheryl Kogut, Tammy Hobar and the magazine's new editor, Ethne Clarke. "Thank you, OG, for continuing to sponsor this event."

2009 Summer Convention Speaker Contact List

If you have questions regarding the presentation of any of the speakers, please contact the speaker directly.

Carol Reese, Ornamental Horticulture Specialist - Western District
University of Tennessee Extension Service
What Plants & Products Are Gardeners Looking for?
731-425-4767 - office
jreese5@utk.edu

Al Bessin, LENSER
Managing Your Way to Higher Profits -- How to Turn Financial Reporting Into a Useful Tool for Managers
512-351-8197 - office
al.bessin@lenser.com

Kathy Allen, Librarian, Andersen Horticultural Library, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
Growing an Information Source - the largest Depository of Garden Catalogs in the Country.
952-443-1405 - office
kallen@umn.edu

Sundeep Kapur, NCR eCommerce and
www.EmailYogi.com
How do you Create a Dialog With Your Customers Through Social Networking?
803-939-2524 - office
sk133069@ncr.com

John Kinsella, Managing Director, terrain
Urban Outfitters, Inc.
Top Trends in the Gardening Industry
215-454-3799 - office
jkinsella@terrainathome.com

Robyn Waters, RW Trend
Design With Heart-Go Deep Inside the Hearts & Minds of Your Customers
952-401-3353 - office
robynwaters@rwtrend.com

Tom Beddows, THB Direct
Review the Results of the MGA 2009 Secret Shopper Survey
616-676-0727 - office
beddows@triton.net

75 Years & Still Growing!

Congratulations to the MGA on its 75th anniversary this year!

The MGA is the only trade association to serve the professional needs of direct marketers of gardening products and services to home consumers.



Managing Your Way to Higher Profits



Al Bessin (left), LENSER, with Geoff Wolfe, LENSER. MGA would also like to thank LENSER for sponsoring the lunch for first-time attendees.

Even if financial numbers are not what you enjoy most about your direct marketing business, they are important to the company's bottom line. And with some simple tweaking, P&L statements can be an

extremely useful management tool. Al Bessin, consulting partner with LENSER, shared his knowledge of effective Profit & Loss statements, emphasizing that once you understand the fundamental information a P&L provides, there are ways managers can take that information and use it to monitor performance of and act on controllable parts of the business. Bessin also offered practical tips for making income statements more useful.

Attendees received a CD-ROM containing examples of P&L statements and income statements along with tools to easily gather information from these financial documents.

Small Group Discussions Bring 'Em to the Table



Sundeep Kapur (center at top of photo), online marketing strategist, www.EmailYogi.com, moderated the roundtable discussion group entitled: *Cultivating and Captivating the Young -- How the Power of Social Media Can Help Create New, Young Gardeners*.

Specific, timely discussion topics gets them there everytime. "There" are the roundtable discussion groups, which continue to be one of the most popular educational sessions at the MGA conferences. "Them" are the attendees who take advantage of these small group discussion opportunities. Industry experts facilitate the roundtable conversations. At the summer conference, all of the discussion groups, except one, were moderated by main speakers. "This is just another example of the great opportunity to learn from the experts that MGA conferences offer attendees," says MGA President Howard

Kaplan. "In addition to learning from our speakers during their main presentations, the roundtable discussions allow our members to chat with these people one-on-one. Many of our presenters stayed for and participated in most of the conference activities, so there was a lot of 'brain-picking' time," states Kaplan, adding that, "This is something I think is unique to our organization. I don't know of any other professional groups where the speakers are willing to interact with the convention attendees like they do at the MGA conferences. Our attendees can learn so much here."



Kathy Allen, Librarian, Anderson Horticultural Library, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

University Grows Information Source

Did you know there is a free consumer website that can answer gardening questions ranging from "Where can I find a source for Lilac Lights Azaleas?" to "How can I find out the name of the iris nursery in Minnesota?" **Plant Information Online** (<http://plantinfo.umn.edu>) is a free service of the University of Minnesota. Website coordinator Kathy Allen, Librarian for the Anderson Horticulture Library, which is affiliated with the University of Minnesota, shared photos of some of the library's collection of old nursery catalogs. The collection, she stated, dates back to the mid-1800s.

According to Allen, the free site is continually growing in popularity. She said the number of hits the site gets is up to about 5,000 per month. That's a lot of gardening questions!



Start the Day off with a Good Breakfast with Friends

Thanks to Fine Gardening Magazine for sponsoring the MGA Conference "Jump Start" Breakfast on Wednesday morning. Lisa Riebe (left), from Fine Gardening, hosted the breakfast for the magazine. With Riebe above is Alisa Keimel, Johnny's Select Seeds and Ross Lasley, Internet Educator. Lasley was a first-timer at the summer conference and Keimel, who also serves on the MGA Board of Directors, was Lasley's mentor.



Barbara Emerson (left), *Have Green Thumb*, and MGA Immediate Past President, chats with John Kinsella, managing director of terrain, Urban Outfitters' garden lifestyle center.

Top Trends in the Gardening Industry

The struggling economy is one reason interest in gardening is increasing. At the same time, more and more consumers are shifting towards environmentally responsible products. According to recent survey results provided in the Green Issue of *Grower Talks*, 88% of consumers are more interested in the environment than they were just a year ago, 63% would pay more for environmentally responsible products, 98% feel corporations are obligated to help preserve the environment, and consumers expect forward-looking brands to do the eco-work for them.

John Kinsella, managing director of terrain, shared with conference attendees a 'top 10' list of consumer garden trends direct marketing garden catalogers need to pay attention to in considering their future marketing plans. Among these trends is the consumers' desire to 'grow it yourself' -- gaining momentum due to the current economic state and people's personal desire to be socially responsible. This ties in with the consumers desire to buy locally-grown produce (sometimes called 'Locavore'). Consumers are more attentive to 'Water-wise gardening' to reduce their impact on the environment. 'Container gardening' is a garden stable because it allows consumers to garden in smaller spaces.

Communicating with your Customers through Social Networking

Social networking and direct marketing seem to go hand-in-hand these days. In fact, interactive dialogue across all marketing channels is an ideal approach for staying in touch with customers, says Sundeep Kapur, an online marketing strategist. "Marketers have to work towards creating attractive conversations," says Kapur. "With every message a marketer sends out, they should be trying engage in a dialogue with their particular market." It can be challenging to know how to talk correctly with each social network that is available, states Kapur, adding that, "Properly utilized, social networking can help marketers build their brand, grow their reach and create a bond with those they serve."

Kapur predicts that in 2010, 15% of all direct marketing sales will come as a result of social marketing.

Social networks are not, however, replacements for a marketer's website, says Kapur. He suggests garden



Sundeep Kapur, online marketing strategist and daily blogger at www.EmailYogi.com shares a humorous marketing story with Claire Watson, Thompson & Morgan.

catalogers look at incorporating their social media efforts with their existing email programs. One of the basic principals about social networking is it brings people together who have something in common, so it's important to find the commonality and offer accordingly, says Kapur. For more tips, check out Kapur's daily blogs on www.EmailYogi.com.

Bailey Nurseries Welcomes MGA Members



Above: Marc McCormick, sales manager region II, Bailey Nurseries, described the nursery's business before the field tour. **Right:** Field shot at Bailey Nurseries. Photo provided by Linda Reznik, Gardening How-To.

Bailey Nurseries, one of the largest wholesale nurseries in the U.S., whose headquarters are just outside Minneapolis, MN, graciously hosted MGA conference attendees for lunch and an indepth tour of its nursery and facilities.



Left: Patrick Bailey (center), vice president sales and marketing, Bailey Nurseries, visits with Dan Wells, New Growth and Michael Garza, Dixondale Farms following the field tour of Bailey Nurseries.



Secret Shopper Survey Results Shared

Direct marketers would be wise to frequently shop their own websites. Doing so, states Tom Beddows, THB Direct, would help them evaluate how easy (or difficult) the site is to use. He also encourages catalogers to shop their competition's sites as well.

Beddows recently conducted a secret shopping survey of MGA members, for the MGA. He presented the results of that survey at the MGA summer conference.

Among the first comments he made was "direct marketers need to put themselves in the mind of the consumer who may not know the company well when they first come to the website."

"You want the consumer to feel good about what they're doing while on your site," states Beddows, adding that "if a site is tedious or if it takes more than three pages for a customer to check out, they're very apt to leave the site and not come back."

Observations Beddows made about the websites he shopped, as part of the survey, included:

1. Keep your guarantee short and simple. A guarantee can't be over-emphasized, so feature it prominently and do not start it with "If".

2. Offer free shipping? If so, promote it. With prices charged for shipping, consumers view free shipping as a real plus.

3. Differentiate your company from your competition. There is no end to the type of offers you can make on your website.

4. Strive to communicate better with your customers. Tell them upfront what they're going to get, don't surprise them.

5. Don't forget to thank your customer for their order!

Working Together We Accomplish Great Things

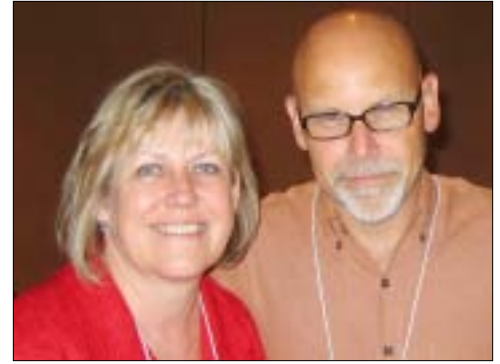
Thanks to the generosity of our conference sponsors, the MGA Board of Directors is able to secure industry experts, who are top-notch presenters, to speak at our twice-annual conferences. Topic suggestions for educational sessions are often generated from responses our members give us on the conference evaluation forms. Purpose of the educational sessions is to help us all become better direct marketers or to help us to do a better job servicing our catalog clients in the gardening industry.

The financial support of our sponsors also enables the organization to keep the conference fee at a reasonable price level for our attendees. In fact, the overall value a member gains from attending the conferences far outweighs the cost of the registration.

If you agree that the conference is of great benefit to you and your company, we hope you will extend a thank you to our sponsors. Likewise, we encourage you to share with friends and colleagues in the direct marketing garden industry your testimonial as to what they will gain from becoming a member of the MGA as well. Please refer them to the MGA website if they would like to know more about the organization and/or would like to print out an application for membership. The address is: www.mailordergardening.com.



Jim Zuckerman (right), ZED Marketing Group, was a Silver sponsor. Pictured with Zuckerman is Dick Zondag, J.W. Jung Seed Co. during the Past President's panel.



Ellen Payne (left), Marketshare Publications and Howard Kaplan, Schiller Grounds Care, were both Silver sponsors of the summer conference.



Jeremy Dore (left), Growing Interactive LLC, (shown with Jill Ruesch, Horticulture Magazine) was a first-time attendee and a Silver sponsor.



Gary Meagher (right), Quad/Graphics, Diamond sponsor, hosted the Networking Cocktail Reception Thursday evening. Representing Quad/Graphics with Meagher at the reception was Christine Tulgren,

If your firm is interested in sponsoring a social event or educational session at the Winter 2010 MGA Conference, please contact Camille Cimino.

**Phone: 410-540-9830
or email her at:
info@mailordergardening.com**

A Few Parting Shots from the MGA Conference



Sometimes MGA receptions are a good venue for co-workers to converse about business in a relaxed setting. Shown above are Laurie Lange (left), Tulips.com and Polly Welch, Washington Bulb Co. Tulips.com is a division of Washington Bulb Co.



Networking opportunities always abound at MGA conferences. Taking a moment from their conversation at a reception to smile for the camera are Shayna Lashway (left), Botanical Interests Online and Cathy Randolph, Beaty Fertilizer.



Dick Zondag (center), president J.W. Jung Seed Co., is making sure the next generation knows about the benefits of involvement in the MGA. With Zondag are his sons Marcus (left) and Nathan. Both work with their father in the family-owned business.

**See you in Baltimore, MD
January 4-6, 2010**

Trend Master Extraordinaire Shares Insight on Going Deep Inside Hearts & Mind of Customers

Ask Robyn Waters where good design comes from and she's apt to tell you about her 3H theory. Her 3H design is a basic part of her 'trend from the inside out' philosophy. She developed the theory while she was vice president of trend, design and product development for Target.

Waters says she used the theory to explain to young designers at Target the three reasons why a customer would come into the store to buy something they were designing. The first 'H' stands for head -- or need: "I'm out of toothpaste. It's time to buy." The second 'H' is for hand-bag. This has to do with price: "It's on sale, so I'd better stock up. The third 'H' is for heart: "I love that and I have to have it."

The founder and president of RW Trend, LLC, was the keynote speaker at the closing brunch of the MGA Summer Conference. She shared how Target grew from a small, regional discounter into a profitable upscale discounter. Much of its 'growing' success occurred during Waters' tenure with the retailer. "Designing with heart became the ultimate differentiator, ... in a simple formula that re-framed the discount retail landscape," states Waters, adding that direct marketers also have to find a way to look at what they're trying to accomplish from a designing with heart point of view.

"How well you connect on an emotional level with customers is important."

The trend-master pointed out that the state of the market today is a paradox of choice. Many consumers fear making the wrong choice about a purchasing decision, which causes them to decide not to decide. Plus, there are lots of contradictory consumers. They think "we want to belong" at the same time that they're thinking "we want to stand out".

Designing with heart is about creating desire, says Waters, adding that marketers need to have 'soul' to really put heart into their products. "Products designed with soul are easy to fall in love with."

After designing with soul, marketers then have to find ways to reach their customers' heart with their message. Again, this involves finding out what is really important to the customer. "These days, if you want to thrive, not just survive in the crowded marketplace, you need to find ways to put *heart* into your designs, and *soul* back into the dollar sign. That's what design with heart is all about," states Waters.



Robyn Waters, Founder & President, RW Trend, LLC.

Emerson Recognized for Dedication and Service to the MGA

Barbara Emerson (center), immediate past president of the MGA, was recognized at the summer conference, for her work as president of the organization in 2008-2009. She was also the recipient of the 2009 Distinguished Service Award. This honor was bestowed upon her for all her work in raising conference sponsorships and dues renewals this past year. Shown with Emerson are MGA Executive Director Camille Cimino and MGA President Howard Kaplan.

