

WINTER CONFERENCE WRAP UP

Phoenix, Arizona January 13-15, 2016



Is Your Customer Data Really Private?

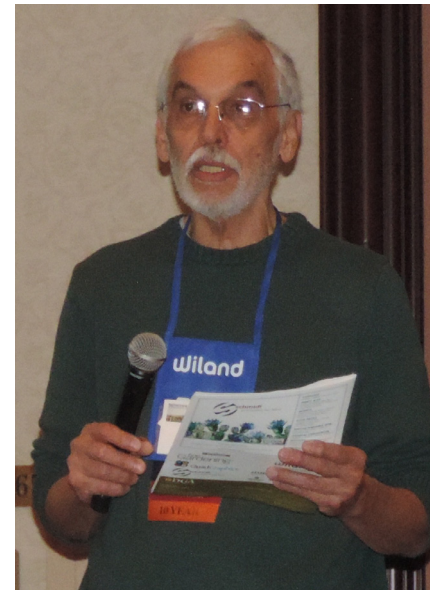
Jill Eastman Vidal (above left), owner, of Woodfield Marketing Consultants, led the first educational session at the winter conference. Vidal's presentation, "Privacy: Some Valuable Assistance on Navigating this Winding Road", focused on the key elements for constructing a privacy policy.

She stressed the importance of clearly understanding this timely topic so that you have a sound policy in place, maintain the trust of your customers and know what supporting documentation you need for overall data security.

Vidal is shown visiting with DGA First-Timer, Clark Greiner, Garden Tower Project, LLC, following her talk.

Missed the DGA Conference? You can Still Learn From Sessions

Even if you were unable to attend the DGA Winter Conference, you can still access information from the educational sessions. Presenters graciously provide their powerpoint programs, which are posted on the DGA website. If you have trouble accessing these, please contact the DGA office.



Valdez Welcomes DGAers to Scottsdale for Winter Meeting

DGA President Noel Valdez opened the 2016 Winter Conference, held recently in Scottsdale, AZ, by introducing the current board members and executive committee, plus DGA past presidents. He then asked first timers to stand and introduce themselves. Valdez also recognized Caitlin Hyatt as the new DGA Executive Director.



"This conference was excellent brain food! It was mentally stimulating and informative!"



Evening Social Receptions -- Networking Opportunity for old and new Acquaintances



Shown above are (left-right): Bill and Sarah Boonstra, Bluestone Perennials, Charley and Carol Yaw, Charley's Greenhouse & Garden, and Val Gosset, Evergreen Marketing.



Sharon and Tom Danner (left & center), New Haven Software, welcome first-time attendee Clint Lindell (right), Countryside Publications.



Longtime DGA members Roberta Simpson-Dolbear (left), Brookside Marketing and Bruce Frasier, Dixondale Farms.



Thomas Prata (left), Condor Seed Production, chats with Linda Delaney (right), Fine Gardening Magazine.



Dave Whiting (right), AllThingsPlants.com, discusses some of the challenges of social media with Ken Oakes (left), Oakes Daylilies, and Bill Boonstra (center), Bluestone Perennials, following his educational session on the topic.

Are You Reaching Real Gardeners Online?

Dave Whiting will tell you he has his dream job now. He gardens all he wants, he gets to work with technology and he lives a mostly self-sufficient life with his family on their 90-acre farm in East Texas. Plus, he has lots of opportunity to share his knowledge of both gardening and technology with others.

Whiting led an educational session at the recent DGA conference on the how-tos of connecting with real gardeners online. (Some may remember when Whiting spoke to DGA conference attendees when he was operating Dave's Garden, a business he sold in 2007.)

He started AllThingsPlants.com in 2011, which he claims is the largest gardening site online.

Whiting shared what he has learned, from his 20 years of experience in this field, about the online habits of serious gardeners. He offered tips on how DGA members can connect with and convert these gardeners into loyal customers who will help promote the companies they buy from, through their own word of mouth networks.

Whiting also moderated the consumer gardening panel session held on Thursday of the conference.



Greg Key, Hoss Tools (left), Brent Roozen (center) and Lauri Lange (right), both of Tulips.com, visited during one of the evening receptions.



Program Chair and 1st V.P. Polly Welch (left), Tulips.com chats with Ken Lane (right), Stark Bro's, about the company's 200th anniversary and plans for the Summer Post Conference Tour to Stark Bro's.



DGA Roundtable Discussions are Interactive on Purpose

The conference program accurately described the roundtable discussion format . . . “Come with questions, leave with answers!” All five roundtables were full of attendees wanting to gain more information about a timely topic of interest. Attendees had the opportunity to participate in two different table discussions for approximately 45 minutes each. An industry expert facilitated at each of the five tables, but the attendees are the ones who shape the discussion direction. Attendees are frequently heard saying they wish they could have had more time at a roundtable. They are encouraged to contact the moderator if they have additional questions.

The five discussion topics at the winter meeting were:

- **Google’s Algorithm Changes & What They Mean for Your Business** - Alisa Meggison, Green Sky Development.
- **Technical Website Advice From an Experienced Webmaster** - Dave Whiting, AllThingsPlants.com
- **Do You Have the Right Tools in Your Toolbox?** - Tom & Sharon Danner, NewHaven Software
- **Privacy: Some Valuable Assistance on Navigating this Winding Road** - Jill Eastman Vidal, Woodfield Marketing Consultants
- **Attribution - Where Do I Plant My Marketing Dollars for Next Season** - Geoff Wolf, J. Schmid & Associates.



Roundtables . . .

“Come with questions, leave with answers!”



Keep it Simple - Integrating Offline & Online Marketing

Geoff Wolf (above right), J. Schmid & Associates, moderated a roundtable discussion entitled “Attribution - Where do I Plant my Marketing Dollars for Next Season?” He also led an educational session about “Integrating Offline and Online Marketing”. Wolfe has more than 30 years of entrepreneurial, executive and consulting experience in the direct marketing industry.



Consumer Gardening Panel Provides Buying Habits Feedback

Three gardeners from the Scottsdale, AZ area served as a consumer panel for one of the group sessions at the winter conference. Dave Whiting, www.AllThingsPlants.com, moderated the informative question and answer discussion. Several DGA members then visited with the panelists one-on-one after the session.



The proof is in the brownie! Matt Bollinger, Stark Bro's samples a Fairytale Brownie brought by the company's owner David Kravetz.



David Kravetz (above) is the co-founder of Fairytale Brownies, a gourmet food catalog.



Hard Work, Perseverance and Mom's Family Recipe, Leads to a Fairytale Come True



Fairytale Brownies was started 23 years ago by two close childhood friends, a mom's favorite recipe and a mere \$14,000 investment. Today, Fairytale Brownies is still owned by its founders and has grown to a \$11 million company. Kravetz said more than 60% of its annual business comes in December.

Kravetz shared his company's story, and provided an array of innovative ideas Fairytale Brownies has utilized to help them grow. He emphasized that whether you're in the startup phase or ready for the next big push, planning for growth while controlling costs is no easy task. He mentioned that even when you strive to exceed customer expectations and maintain a healthy profit, there will always be challenges that may make them seem unattainable.

Making Succession Planning a Successful Venture



Dick Zondag (right), J. W. Jung Seed Co., speaks from experience when he talks about what is involved in successful succession planning. Zondag grew up in the family nursery business.

He has lived through Jung's being passed down from his grandfather (the founder) to his parents and his mother's siblings, and then to his generation. Now he's carefully planning how the business will pass on to his children. He'll tell you it's not an easy task. Proper succession planning is expensive to set up and it's time-intensive. But it's not a task you want to overlook.



Meggison Shares her Knowledge of Google's Algorithms and How to Prepare for Changes That Will Occur

Google's search engine rules, or algorithms, are constantly changing – changes that can drastically impact how your website will rank in organic search listings. Alisa Meggison, Green Sky Development, is an expert when it comes to understanding search engine rules and knowing what needs to be done to stay

on Google's good side. Meggison reviewed several of the rules that are in the process of changing or will be. If you have questions about algorithms and how they may be affecting your website ranking, get in touch with Meggison and/or review her presentation powerpoint.





Outgrown Your Software, Now What?

Members helping members is a common thread DGA conference attendees will often notice in the educational sessions. And the panel discussion moderated by Tom Danner (above left), NewHaven Software, was a good example of just that. Panelists Bruce Frasier (second from left), Dixondale Farms, Todd Miller (second from right), Wiland and Bill Boonstra (right), Bluestone Perennials, have all been involved in the direct marketing business for many years. They've experienced growth in their respective

businesses that have necessitated making changes in the software they use to manage their business. Each discussed what they look for when investigating new software, to be sure it has the capabilities to make management decisions on such topics as target marketing, growth, profitability and customer service decisions. Danner and the panelists are all willing to assist other DGA members who have questions on this topic.

Go Visual When Goal Setting; It may Help you Draw Better Solutions



Most people resist change because they fear change is going to be difficult. But according to author and consultant Patti Dobrowolski, who was the keynote speaker at the DGA closing brunch, the ease of working through change depends a lot on "how you look at it".

Dobrowolski shared visual techniques she uses to help her clients identify and stay focused

on their key goals so they can achieve them more easily. She demonstrated her signature process she calls "Snapshot of the Big Picture," to help clients develop their action plan. And according to Dobrowolski, you don't have to know how to draw to utilize this process.

For more information about visual goal setting, go to:

<http://pattidobrowolski.com>.



Patti Dobrowolski (above), is the author of *DRAWING SOLUTIONS: How Visual Goal Setting Will Change Your Life*, and founder of *Up Your Creative Genius*, a consulting firm that uses visuals and creative processes to help companies and individuals around the world accelerate growth.





DGA Presents 2016 Green Thumb Awards

Congratulations to all of the recipients of the 2016 Green Thumb Awards. The annual awards program, which is sponsored by the Direct Gardening Association, recognizes outstanding new garden products available by mail or online. This year's recipients are shown below. DGA President Noel Valdez presented the awards.

Press releases pertaining to the 2016 Green Thumb Awards (with photos) are available on the DGA website. Information concerning the 2017 Green Thumb Awards program is also available on the website.

CATEGORY 1: Plants, Bulbs & Seeds



David Salman, High Country Gardens, accepted the two awards that company received for its new *Sorghastrum nutans* 'Thin Man' PPAF and *Penstemon pinifolius* 'Luminous'.



Marilyn Barlow, Select Seeds, accepted the award presented to her company for its new *Silene* 'Ray's Golden Champion'.



Stacey Hirvela, Spring Meadow Nursery, Inc. accepted the two awards that company received for its new 'Miss Violet' *Buddleia* and *Happy Jack*® Purple *Clematis*.

CATEGORY 2: Tools, Supplies and Accessories



Clark Greiner (left), Garden Tower Project, LLC, designer and manufacturing firm for the Garden Tower 2, was on hand when the GTA was presented to recipient, Carol Yaw (right), Charley's Greenhouse & Garden.



Greg Key, Hoss Tools, accepted the award presented for the company's new Hoss Garden Seeder.



Julie Johns, Territorial Seed Co., accepted the award that company received for its *Snack Attack* Collection.

A representative from Gardens Alive! was not available to receive their awards for the new *Shield-All Plus*™ and *Bull's Eye*™ Outdoor Granular Ant Bait.

Thank You DGA Sponsors!

Once again, we want to thank our sponsors for their generous support. Your financial contributions enable our organization to continue providing conferences that offer top-notch programming and enjoyable networking events at affordable prices. If your business is interested in being a sponsor for the 2016 Summer Conference, please contact Caitlin at the DGA office chyatt@asginfo.net.

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Welcome, Newcomers!

We were pleased to welcome a number of newcomers who were attending their first DGA conference:

- * Katie Von Tersch, Botanical Interests
- * Thomas Prata, Condor Seed Production
- * Clint Lindell, Countryside Publications
- * Liz Brensinger, Green Heron Tools LLC
- * Geoff Wolf, J. Schmid & Assoc.
- * Clark Greiner, Garden Tower Project

We hope you enjoyed the conference, and look forward to seeing you at many more!



"Meet me in St. Louie, Louie, Meet me . . ." at the Next DGA Conference

The 2016 DGA Summer Conference is July 25-27, in St. Louis, MO. Arrive by Sunday morning, July 24, and attend Stark Bro's Bicentennial Day at the Ballpark, plus we hope you'll attend the Stark Bro's Post-Conference event in Louisiana, MO, July 27-29.

