

Summer Conference Wrap Up

St. Louis July 25-27, 2016



*"I enjoyed the networking aspects the most.
And the Stark Bro's activities, of course!"*

Midwest Heat and Humidity Didn't Keep Ball Fans Away

It was mighty hot and humid the night DGA members joined Stark Bro's employees, families, customers and business associates at Busch Stadium. Stark Bro's offered each DGA conference attendee and one guest a free ticket and Stark Bro's t-shirt commemorating the 200th Anniversary (in Cardinal Red, of course). Unfortunately, the Cardinals were not successful in pulling out a win that night.



A Hot Night at the Ballpark!

About 70 DGA members and guests braved the 90° plus temperatures, to kick-off the DGA Summer Conference at St. Louis Busch Stadium, Sunday, July 24. Those in attendance were there to help Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co. celebrate the start of "Stark Week", part of the company's 200th Anniversary celebration this year. Stark Bro's founder, Judge James H. Stark, second from left, (impersonated by historical actor Jim Waddell) threw out the first pitch of the game. Joining Judge Stark on the field for the pre-game ceremony were, from left to right, Fredbird (Cardinals mascot), and Stark Bro's Ken Lane, Chief Marketing Officer, center, Matt Brown, Manager of Special Projects and Terry Stark, Special Production Research Manager.



Are You Helping Our DGA Grow?

The viability of any organization comes from its members valuing and utilizing the benefits it offers. Another important aspect of a viable organization is its ability to attract new members. The executive committee of the Direct Gardening Association, the Board of Directors and several of the group's members are working diligently to keep the DGA growing and thriving.

As with any business, one of the best forms of advertising is positive word of mouth. Each of us probably knows another business that would benefit from being a part of the DGA. Be sure you're sharing information about the DGA whenever you have the opportunity. Do your part to help our organization grow. And think about bringing another employee or co-worker with you to the next DGA conference. It's a very economical way to give them the opportunity to learn from direct marketing experts and colleagues as well.



One of the first tasks conducted at the start of a DGA conference, is the self introduction of first-time attendees. Taking her turn is Lori Zimmerman (shown above standing), Lebanon Seaboard Corporation. "Welcome, Lori!"



Changing of the Guard

The DGA Summer Conference is the out-going president's swan song and then the incoming president takes the gavel. At the meeting in St. Louis recently, new DGA President Polly Welch, Tulips.com (on right in photo above), presents Immediate Past President Noel Valdes, CobraHead (on left), with a token of appreciation for his service to the organization. *Job well done, Noel, in leading the DGA the past year.*



"The conference provided the opportunity to meet new people and build relationships. I really enjoyed the "FirstTimers" lunch and the group going out for trivia."



Welcome, Newcomers!

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

* Jere Gettle	Baker Creek Seeds
* John Brazaitis	Baker Creek Seeds
* Denise Hutchins	Brent and Becky's
* Rose Hernandez	Dixondale Farms
* Abigail Lira	Dixondale Farms
* Janice Carrillo	Dixondale Farms
* Jessie James Jaime	Dixondale Farms
* Melissa Romo	Dixondale Farms
* Alicia Diaz	Dixondale Farms
* Joel Grant	Garden Tower Project, LLC
* Linda Ly	GardenBetty.com
* JP	Gardens Alive!
* Sarah Negley	Gardens Alive!
* Chris Simpson	Horticultural Alliance, Inc.
* Debbie Remblence	International Greenhouse Co
* Jordan Buchanan	JBM Packaging
* Lori Zimmerman	Lebanon Seaboard Corp.
* Robert Sieracki	Ox Optimal
* Jeff Kelley	Path2Response
* Jeremy White	Path2Response
* Mary Evans	Prairie Nursery
* Lisa M. Zeigler	The Gardener's Workshop
* Suzanne Mason Frye	The Gardener's Workshop
* Patsy Meile	Willand
* James Freed	Artic Dome Greenhouses
* Alexa Lutovsky	Irish Eyes Garden Seeds

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

Exhibitors Share Services and Knowledge

Whether you are a first-timer to a DGA conference or a more seasoned attendee, you are encouraged to visit with the vendors who exhibit at them. Several breaks are provided throughout the conferences to give attendees the opportunity to network with the sponsoring vendors. "This is an excellent time to learn about the products and services these members offer,"



First-timers Lisa Ziegler (left) and Suzanne Mason Frye (right) both with The Gardeners Workshop, visit with Sheryl Konz, Schmidt Printing, during a break between educational sessions. Schmidt Printing was a Platinum Sponsor at the summer conference.

said new DGA President Polly Welch, Tulips.com. "The financial support our DGA conference sponsors provide enables us to keep our registration cost affordable. We encourage all DGA members and prospective members to get to know these folks and to consider doing business with them. I personally tell all potential DGA vendors that I prefer to do business with DGA members."



Linda Delaney (left), Fine Gardening listens to James Freed (right), Arctic Dome Greenhouses, describe his new product. Fine Gardening Magazine was a Platinum Sponsor at the summer conference.

Creative Catalog Bootcamp

Gina Valentino Returns to DGA Stage

Proper catalog layout can encourage customer shopping as well help increase the average order value. According to Gina Valentino, Hemisphere Marketing, carefully planning out your catalog is essential in order for it to generate sales when it's in the customers' hands.

Valentino recommends a company have team talks before pagination on the catalog begins. She shared that "It's important for everyone to be on the same page when it comes to goals of the catalog." She also discussed that the catalog team needs to understand who the catalog audience is (customers vs. prospects), know how non-selling space will be used in the catalog (editorial comments, tips, history, etc.), be clear on the inventory available and even what versioning is going to be done.

Valentino emphasized that catalog pages such as front cover, back cover, inside front cover and inside back cover are still considered some of the "most valuable real estate". These are pages that need to get customers into the book



Clark Greiner (right), Garden Tower Project, LLC, asks Gina Valentino (left), Hemisphere Marketing, some catalog layout questions after her educational session at the summer conference in St. Louis.

(catalog), to grab their attention about key products and to whet their appetite to buy from you, she commented. Valentino also moderated the round-table discussion about catalog creative during Tuesday's sessions.



Stark Bro's Begins Third Century of Business



Stark Bro's, one of the longest time members of the DGA, is also the member that has been in business the longest. The fruit tree nursery, headquartered in

Louisiana, Missouri is celebrating its 200th anniversary in business this year. Ken Lane, Chief Marketing Officer presented a session at the recent summer conference, sharing some interesting facts about the history of the company. He also touched on its marketing approach.

Stark Bro's Nurseries was founded in 1816. Abraham Lincoln was 7 years old then and Missouri was not a state yet. The company founder, James Hart Stark, an orchardist from Kentucky, had brought his young family and a saddlebag full of apple scions to the western shores of the Mississippi River. Stark grafted those scions onto crab apple seedlings and the company got its start.

Today, Stark Bro's is the world's oldest fruit-tree nursery and it is also the world's largest online direct-to-consumer seller of fruit and nut trees and berry plants.

Lane mentioned that the company strives to continually acquire new customers and to get existing customers to become more frequent buyers. He described how they use a "concentric circles" approach to achieve those goals." Through channels, technology and the tools that are available to us, we pinpoint ways to squeeze the most out of each channel with a specific tactic or strategy," Lane stated. "When we use these tactics and strategies to move people into our 'circles', we can get some powerhouse results."

Stark Bro's was a gold level sponsor of the summer conference and they also hosted DGA members for a post-conference event at their headquarters in Louisiana, Missouri.



Stark Bro's CMO Ken Lane



Several of Stark Bro's management staff and IT personnel were able to attend the opening Mondays afternoon session of the summer conference so they could hear fellow colleague Ken Lane speak. Terry Stark (standing), Special Production Research Manager, introduces herself to the DGA group. Also shown above are Marty Gray (front) Accounting/Finance, Tera Raddatz (middle second row) Greenhouse Supervisor, Elmer Kidd (right second row) Chief Production Officer and Jack Lindsey (3rd row left) Director of Operations & Logistics. Stark (who is no relation to the nursery family) has been with the company nearly 40 years and Kidd has worked with Stark Bro's 50 years (45 consecutively).

Are You Collaborating With a Blogger or Other Influence Marketer?



Remember when brand marketing was a simple media buy? That alone will no longer get your business where it needs to be today. Your marketing efforts need to include “buzzier” strategies such as engagement, curation, blogger collaboration and influencer marketing.

Linda Ly, the voice behind the award-winning blog gardenbetty.com, shared several tips on how to work with professional bloggers and/or influence marketers. Ly also maintains a lifestyle website devoted to gardening, homesteading, backyard chicken-keeping and inspiring a meaningful and adventurous life. She began her blog in 2010 and is now considered a top resource for gardeners around the globe.

Ly commented that it’s important to select a blogger who is right for your brand. “Bloggers are who people turn to for information now, so you want to be sure the one you select will engage your customers and has the style, strengths and interests that will appeal to your audience,” Ly added.



In addition to presenting an educational session about the benefits of blogging, Linda Ly (third from left at far side of table) moderated a round-table discussion entitled “Tune Up Your Blog: Tips for Making Your Content Searchable, Shareable and Sticky”.



Are You Engaging Your Customers When You Talk to Them?

Consumers are getting hit from all angles with messages from businesses trying to sell them products and services. And these messages come from across a variety of marketing channels. It’s no wonder that catalogers have to continually evaluate and modify their messages. It can be difficult to keep your message in front of consumers more than someone else’s.

Sundeep Kapur, the author of *Email Yogi*, and a frequent presenter at DGA conferences, focused on the how-to’s of immersing or engaging customers in the campaigns you’re marketing to them. He touched on the fact that most marketers are trying to reach consumers through direct mail, email and social media, while also working to keep their name at the top of search lists. He also reiterated that more and more consumers are viewing these channels through mobile devices rather than computers, which presents other challenges for marketers.

Since the message has to grab the consumer quickly, Kapur stressed the following points: aways to the DGA audience:

- Content is critical - make sure it’s clear and concise.
- Infuse relevance and responsiveness.



*Sundeep Kapur (center far side of table), founder and author of *Email Yogi*, presented an educational session about how catalog marketers communicate with their customers and prospects. He also moderated a round-table discussion on the value of conducting a multi-channel audit of how your company is marketing to customers.*

- Use social media for branding, listening, finding, messaging and sharing.
- Be sure to have a strategic catalog circulation plan.
- Create consumer journeys. Make a story of how to do something.
- Most importantly, convey that you’re the expert, not just a discount offer.

DGA Conferences Provide Many Networking Opportunities to Get Together with Old Friends and Meet Some New Ones



Larry Hudson (left) and Ken Sanders (center) of Steele Plant Co., chat with DGA Executive Director Caitlin Hyatt.



Denise Wiscombe (left), Ogden Publications and Greg Key (center), Hoss Tools welcome first-timer Lisa Ziegler (right) The Gardener's Workshop.



Photobomb! Ken Lane, Stark Bro's and Stacey Haines, Green Sky E-Commerce Development joined the photo unexpectedly. From left to right in front row are Jordan Buchanan and Jessica Blank, JBM Packaging, John Beaty, Beaty Fertilizer Co. Inc, and Alisa Meggison, Green Sky E-Commerce Development.



Dick and Barb Zondag (left and center), J.W. Jung Seed Co. and Greg Lutovsky (right), Irish Eyes Garden Seeds discuss lakes in Wisconsin they are all familiar with.



Mary Ellen Kozak (left) and Joe Krawczyk (center) Field & Forest Products Inc. visit with DGA Immediate Past President Noel Valdes, CobraHead.



Rick Shultz (left) Aqia Agronomics converses with DGA President Polly Welch (right) Tulips.com.

Getting More Bang for Your Marketing Buck

Amy Africa has been in the forefront of web usability studies, web design improvement and successful e-commerce for more than 15 years. And whenever she speaks at DGA conferences, she always has new ideas she recommends testing. But you have to listen fast with Amy, because she packs in the information during her session.

"What's important to people today is speed," Africa says. "Performance of a website is one of the determining factors as to whether someone stays on the site. Most people decide within two to four seconds whether they'll stay and look around, so first impressions are very important."

Africa went on to say that 85-90% of the success of a site is determined by the ease of navigation. "The number



It was a full house, so to speak, at the round table discussion Amy Africa (first woman at left on far side of table), EightbyEight, moderated.

one reason consumers leave a mobile site is because of problems with navigation search," she added.

"Marketers need to remember that consumers want everything to be self-service."

Be sure and look through Africa's power point on the DGA website for a complete overview of her presentation.

Suprising Fundamentals of PPC Advertising



Rob Sieracki, Ox Optimal, presenting an educational session at the DGA Summer Conference.

PPC (pay per click) advertising remains a way of the future for online businesses and therefor an important aspect of direct marketing. According to Rob Sieracki, co-founder of Ox Optimal, a revenue-based online marketing consultancy, PPC is the traffic side of the direct marketing equation.

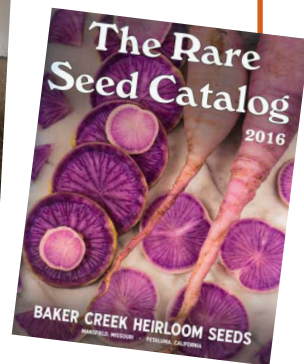
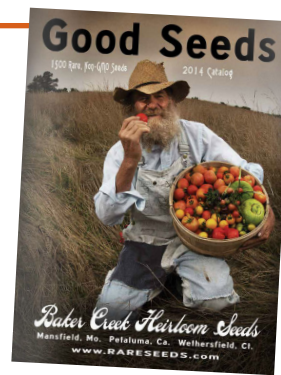
"Your web presence monetizes traffic, but you can't make informed choices without hard numbers," Sieracki said. Online businesses need to make their web presence make more business sense. "PPC delivers traffic and traffic comes from direct hits, email, search engine optimizations and referrals," Sieracki said. "Then businesses have to funnel this traffic. And the best traffic and funnel system can afford the highest bids."

Sieracki's power point presentation is on the DGA website. He may be contacted at sierackir@gmail.com.

Extra Activity Near Conference Hotel

Several DGA attendees heard an explosion outside the hotel Tuesday evening, which they soon found out came from the parking garage across the street. A parked car in the garage had exploded and burst into flames. Hotel guests were told a total of three cars burned, but fortunately, no one was hurt.





Catalogs of the Future for Businesses Built on Past



John Brazaitis (left), Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co. responds to questions James Freed (right), Arctic Dome Greenhouses LLC had following Brazaitis' educational session at the DGA summer conference.

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds

Some marketers say the printed catalog is a thing of the past, but the folks at Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company disagree. "Customers who receive our catalog order more than those who don't get the printed one," shared John Brazaitis, General Manager for Baker Creek. Brazaitis spoke at the DGA Summer Conference.

"The printed catalog still drives sales traffic," Brazaitis stated, adding that "People really like our catalog, because of its homespun feel." That being said, Baker Creek still strives to keep catalog production costs down. "We co-mail our catalogs, we purchase our catalog paper through a broker, we watch our page count and catalog weight and we get bids for printing the catalog," he added.

Brazaitis discussed other factors that help drive Baker Creek business. "We have younger customers than most seed companies do; we have a lot of 25-34 year olds," he mentioned. "We've automated our fulfillment process wherever possible; we discontinued taking orders over the phone, utilizing the phone for customer service; we strive for social media engagement across multiple channels; and we invest in quality IT people."

Growing Back to the Future

Jere Gettle, founder of Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company, has been fascinated by the genetics of old varieties almost as long as he has been gardening (he planted his first seeds when he was three years old). Today, Gettle and his wife Emilee spend a great deal of their time looking for heirloom (non-gmo) varieties from around the world. They also look for ways for their business to work with or collaborate with others with the same goals.

Gettle, who was the keynote speaker for the closing brunch at the DGA Summer Conference in St. Louis, shared some of the techniques Baker Creek uses in their search for heirloom varieties. "Consumers direct the trends and depending on publicity of a trend, demand can change very quickly," Gettle said, adding that "We look for varieties that grow in difficult soils and we're always studying lots of different varieties. Because we get seed from a lot of places around the world, we always trial everything before we offer it to our customers."



Jere Gettle (left), Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co. and Greg Baka (right), Easy Digging, chat following Gettle's presentation at the closing brunch of the DGA Summer Conference.

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 2017 Winter Conference, please contact Caitlin at the DGA office at chyatt@asginfo.net.

Platinum Sponsor

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Speaker Presentations Available on DGA Website

Sometimes business situations just make it impossible for DGA members to attend one of the two annual conferences. When this happens you don't have to miss out entirely on all of the information and knowledge that was shared. After the conferences, most of our presenters allow the DGA staff to post their power point presentations on the DGA website. Listed below are the presentation titles, along with the presenters name and email contact:

MONDAY --

- * 200 Years and Growing . . . The Story of Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co.
Ken Lane, Stark Bro's
ken.lane@starkbros.com
- * Creative Catalog Bootcamp
Gina Valentino, Hemisphere Marketing,
gina@hemispheremarketing.com
- * Reason, Season, Lifetime: Proven, Practical & Immersive Campaigns for Every Occasion!
Sundee Kapur, Email Yogi,
sundee.kapur@gmail.com

TUESDAY --

- * How to Get More Bang From Your Marketing Buck: 18 Sure-Fire Ideas You Can Implement Today!
Amy Africa, Eight-by-Eight,
amy@eightbyeight.com
- * The Suprising Fundamentals of PPC Advertising
Rob Sieracki, Ox Optimal,
sierackir@gmail.com

WEDNESDAY --

- * How to Make Blogger Collaborations and Influencer Marketing Work for Your Brand
Linda Ly, Garden Betty,
gardenbetty.com@gmail.com
- * Developing the Catalogs of the Future in a Business Built on the Past
John Brazaitis, Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co.,
media@rareseeds.com
- * Growing Back to the Future
Jere Gettle, Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co., media@rareseeds.com



Highlights of DGA's Post-conference Event Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co., Louisiana, MO.



Thanks to all DGA members and guests who participated in the post-conference event to visit Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co., Louisiana, MO. We appreciate you extending your time out of the office to help us celebrate our company's 200th Anniversary. All of us at Stark Bro's enjoyed having you as our guests and to have the opportunity to share our business and our community with you.



Dixondale Farms wins the DGA award for bringing the most employees to a conference. Way to go Team Dixondale!

Mark Twain Riverboat Dinner Cruise, Hannibal, Missouri



Jessie James, Dixondale Farms, couldn't resist trying on in this sailor's cap in the gift shop of the Mark Twain Riverboat.



Texas farmer Bruce Frasier (left), Dixondale Farms and Illinois farmer Eric Dolbeare (right) enjoy the opportunity to compare notes about their crops before boarding the Riverboat.



Stark Bro's founder, Judge James Hart, Stark shared with DGA members his story of how he started the company 200 years ago.



Feed them and they will come! DGA members enjoy a good meal.



Judge James Hart Stark impersonator, historical actor Jim Waddell, visits with Stark Bro's CMO Ken Lane and his wife Vicki after his performance on the Mark Twain Riverboat.



Bill and Sarah Boonstra, Bluestone Perennials, enjoy the scenic view of the Mississippi River.

Tours & Hospitality at Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co., Louisiana, Missouri



Post conference attendees enjoyed breakfast and lunch at Stark Bro's office before their morning and afternoon tours of the growing fields and warehouse facilities.



Roberta Simpson-Dolbeare, Brookside Marketing, has worn many hats as she has worked with Stark Bro's to prepare for its 200th Anniversary and hosting the DGA for the post-conference event.



Stark Bro's Chief Production Officer Elmer Kidd (third from left near top of photo) led the field tours for the DGA guests.



Stark Bro's CMO Ken Lane (far right) describes the shipping process for some of Stark Bro's hardgoods.



DGA guests got to see Stark trees in different stages of growth on their field tour.



Nikki Lee (facing camera near top of photo), Stark Bro's production prep supervisor, demonstrates how a bareroot tree is checked and pruned as it is prepared for shipping.

Tours & Hospitality at Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchards Co., Louisiana, Missouri



Jack Lindsey, Stark Bro's Director of Operations & Logistics, explains how the nursery stock is stored in temperature controlled settings until they are ready to be prepared for shipping.



Missouri Department of Agriculture Director Richard Fordyce visited Stark Bro's during the DGA tour day. He presented a Proclamation from the Department of Ag and Missouri Governor Jay Nixon in recognition of Stark Bro's 200 years of service to the horticulture industry in Missouri.



Budding and grafting of greenhouse grown products is done under the supervision of Terry Stark, special production research manager for the nursery company.



Sincere thanks to Stark Bro's President Cameron Brown for welcoming the DGA to his farm (right) for dinner during the post-conference event. Cameron is holding a historical map of the area where the farm is located.



Other highlights included a trip to Stark Bro's Garden Center (above) and the grand finale was complete with a spectacular fully choreographed fireworks display on the river front.

