

Gardening On The Air
Radio and Television for Garden Communicators
Panel presented at GWA Symposium 2007

- I. How The Panelists Got on the Air**
- II. Tips for Those Seeking Radio/TV Gigs**
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I. How I Got My Start

Joe Lamp'1:

My role in gardening media began with television. I received an email from a gardening magazine that I had just started contributing to. They had received an email from a production company that had just finalized a new series for DIY Network. All that was left to do was find the host. An all-out search for the new host ensued including emails to gardening media *in the know*. The magazine editor received one of these emails and forwarded it to me because the description of the person they were looking for reminded her of me. I contacted the producer, we had lunch and a week later I was doing a screen test. Long story short, six weeks later, I was selected as the new host. Everything else followed from this, including radio, the column, the book and more speaking. But, it didn't happen on its own. I formed the "joe gardener" brand during the first year of the series. Being proactive opened many doors but very little came to me initially.

Allan Storjohann:

Radio and T.V. spots are a common occurrence for university horticulturists if you welcome the media instead of putting them off or don't accommodate their often-inconvenient requests. I have always tried to be very accommodating and open to the T.V. and radio stations in our area, so as a result have been asked to give recommendations and tips on air for many years. It was during one of those spots that I caught the ear of a local radio station and received an offer to come up for a couple Saturdays in the spring to give advice and answer call-in

questions. That good deed turned into 18 years of fun. I started out doing the show as a promotional benefit for the university, but it evolved into a paying part time job with commercials and remote broadcasts. After giving some advice to the program manager of the Oklahoma News Network one winter, I found myself on his network answering questions statewide. And later, after giving some advise to the sales manager of a Tulsa station I was offered the spot in Tulsa that I currently have. I have done so many advise and gardening tip spots for television that I couldn't even venture to count them. But it was after doing one several years ago that I was invited to do weekly how-to stories for a local NBC affiliate. This lasted for over a year until I let them know that I was to busy to continue.

C.L. Fornari:

I heard through a GWA announcement (Q&T?) that George Homsey was working on an NPR radio program about gardening, to be produced in Boston, with GWA member Michael Weishan as the host. I found George's mailing address, and sent him a tape of a short piece that I'd written about gardening. The piece started with a story that illustrated a common gardening problem. George called me up and told me that he'd listened to the tape on his way home from work. He liked the story, and wondered if I would be willing to be a part of "The Cultivated Gardener." For almost two years I recorded weekly two-minute segments, called "In the Garden Center" for this NPR program. When the program ended I was hooked on radio, so I approached a local FM talk station in the spring of 2001. There was a new station manager at the local "news talk" station so I made an appointment with him. I took in a CD of several "In the Garden Center" segments along with a written proposal for the program I proposed to do, and two of my books. We met twice to negotiate about compensation (more about this in the panel discussion) and since then I've been hosting GardenLine, a live call-in program, on WXTK every Saturday morning from 8 to 10.

II. Tips For Getting On The Air

Joe Lamp'I:

- TV: Unless they come to you, a unique idea or angle is important. No network is looking for more of the same.
- Be prepared to hand over your idea, even if it means they do it without you.
- The PBS model is different than the rest. Review the guidelines, shoot a pilot and make it good. Then be ready to go find your sponsors.
- Approach your local network affiliates with an idea on providing 3 or 4 minute weekly tips that you will provide them. Stations are always looking for content and they don't have the personnel to write, produce and edit these. If you give them a turn-key package, you just might get their attention.
- Think about video distribution VIA the internet. It's the new television and it's how we will get our video programming on demand going forward. The best part is you own the content and control every aspect of it.
- Radio: Call the station manager or program director of a local AM radio station and tell them about your idea and your credentials. Be prepared to buy the radio time. You make your money by getting advertisers to fill your commercial slots.
- Hang in there. It takes time to build your listeners, ratings and credibility.
- Consider podcasting as a way to break into broadcasting. You control it all and if you're successful here, you may be able to take that to a radio station.

Allan Storjohann:

- The three essential ingredients to a successful remote broadcast have to be (1) a full week of promotions, (2) lots of freebies, door prizes and special drawings and (3) food and drink. People will drive a long way for a chance to get a free dinner coupon or free bags of compost or have a cup of coffee and a donut while they shop.

C.L. Fornari:

- Watch local media or on-line sources (example in the northeast: <http://www.fybush.com/nerw.html>) for announcements of a change in general or program manager at local stations...new station or program managers want to "make their mark" and are often open to new programs and schedules.
- Offer to be a guest on any local radio and TV programs – send the producer your book, resume and/or talking points that you think would be of interest. Ask for a CD/DVD of your appearance. (If you don't have a book to send, send talking points about something that is happening locally...current weather, pests, common seasonal information or garden problems etc.)
- When pitching a program manager, have an outline of exactly what you'd like to do. Length of program, whether you take live calls, remote broadcasts, in-studio or a combo. Even if the station does not want to do what you propose, it tells them that you have put thought and planning into your project.
- Record a demo CD, making it as close to what you'd like to do as possible by including samples of regular features. Sound enthusiastic – amp it up when you speak. If you read your text, do not *sound* like you're reading. Edit out "ums" or other false starts.
- Make a presentation package/media kit that includes your resume, a one-sheet with your photo and highlights of your proposal, and your CD/DVD. Include a list of possible advertisers in the broadcast area – whether it's a commercial or non-commercial station, it's all about the bottom line: funding.

III. Bios of Panelists

Joe Lamp'l:

Joe Lamp'l is the founder and President of The Joe Gardener® Company and joegardener.com. The company and website were founded on the premise of "providing smart resources

for better gardening". Joe is the host of two national television shows; Fresh from the Garden on the DIY Network and Garden Smart on PBS and makes regular appearances on The Today Show. In addition, he is an author of Over the Fence with Joe Gardener, a syndicated columnist, host of The Joe Gardener Radio Show and frequent presenter.

Allan Storjohann:

Allan Storjohann is the Manager of the Myriad Botanical Gardens and Crystal Bridge Tropical Conservatory in downtown Oklahoma City. Prior to this Mr. Storjohann was the head of the horticulture department at Oklahoma State University in Oklahoma City. Each Saturday morning Mr. Storjohann uses his experiences, background and education as the host of the gardening show on Newstalk 740 KRMG in Tulsa. He has been on the air since 1984. Mr. Storjohann and his wife Marsha live on a 15 acre mini-farm just west of Oklahoma City. He is a third generation nurseryman who has worked for seven nursery companies and three professional grounds maintenance businesses and was a tenured Associate Professor at Oklahoma State University in Oklahoma City where he coordinated the horticulture program and teaching facilities. He has a masters degree in ornamental horticulture from Oklahoma State University.

C.L. Fornari:

C.L. Fornari is a writer, photographer, professional speaker and host of GardenLine on WXTK, 95.1 FM. She is the author of *The Cape Cod Garden*, *Your Garden Shouldn't Make You Crazy*, and *A Garden Lover's Cape Cod*, and many articles for magazines including *The Traditional Gardener*, *Cape Cod Life* and *American Nurseryman*. She writes a monthly column for *Prime Time Magazine* and is working on *A Garden Lover's Martha's Vineyard*, which will be published by Commonwealth Editions in May of 2008. C.L. is a regular speaker to garden clubs, civic associations, green industry conferences, women's groups, churches, corporate meetings and other gatherings. Her website is: www.gardenlady.com