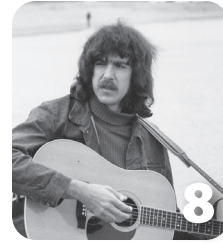


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GARDENCOMM

Garden Communicators International



National Federation of Press Women
2022 Honorable Mention Award for
On the QT

Pitch Sessions: Back and Bigger than Ever

BY KIM TOSCANO

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Get ready to pitch your work at GardenComm's Pitch Sessions 2022. As part of our Virtual Conference, we are once again providing a platform for you to meet one-on-one with participating book, magazine, trade, and digital editors. And this year's Pitch Sessions are bigger than ever—with 15 editors eager to hear your story ideas.

MAKE A NEW CONNECTION

Pitch Sessions are all about making connections. The editors involved are seeking fresh new talent to expand their networks and find that next great project. For writers, photographers, podcasters and other talented story tellers, Pitch Sessions provide an opportunity to discover new outlets for their work.

Ellen Zachos landed a successful pitch at GardenComm's first ever Pitch Session in Salt Lake City. "I pitched Katie Killebrew at Gibbs-Smith publishing and we quickly went to contract for *The Forager's Pantry*," Zachos said. "It was an excellent experience from beginning to end, and I never would have met Katie (or anyone else from Gibbs-Smith) if it hadn't been for the pitch sessions at our symposium. So grateful for the connection!" Whether you have a story idea, portfolio to share or something entirely unique, go ahead and make that pitch. You never know where it might lead.

MEET THE EDITORS

This year's Pitch Sessions will feature familiar faces and several new participants. Our goal is to expand the number and variety of editors involved with our organization and increase awareness among the publishing industry as to the enormous talent of GardenComm members. We've actively sought out editors who are new to GardenComm as we grow our network. This year, we welcome editors from Fox Chapel Publishing, Insight Editions and Chronicle Books as well as *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine among our participants. We also have GardenComm members with publishing ventures of their own who will be joining us for the first time this year, including **Deb Prinzing** and Robin Avni of Bloom Imprint, and Beverly Hurley representing Garden Destinations.

The organizing team aims to rotate participating editors each year to keep things fresh. As such, we have a few returning book publishers that you haven't had the chance to pitch in a couple years including Timber Press, Storey Publishing and Cool Springs Press. Among returning magazine editors are **David Ellis** from *The American Gardener* and Kirsten Schrader from *Birds & Blooms*.

– Continues on page 2



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

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PUBLISHER

GardenComm

9825 Magnolia Avenue, Suite B-415
Riverside, CA 92503
951-899-5015 info@gardencomm.org

EDITORIAL

Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp, Editor
jemsharp@sbcglobal.net

Cathy Wilkinson Barash, Copy Editor
thebloominggourmet@gmail.com

Paul Wilson, Graphic Designer
paul@paulwilsondesign.com

ADVERTISING/CIRCULATION

info@gardencomm.org

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Secretary Kathy Jentz • Washington Gardener Magazine

Past President Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp • Write for You! LLC

Executive Director Chris Sabbarese • Infusion Management Services

DIRECTORS

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

REGION 1

Cris Blackstone (2022 N)

Make Scents NH,
New Hampshire Landscape
Association

Sally Cunningham (2022 R)

Garden Tourism

Charlie Nardozi (2023 R)

Gardening with Charlie Nardozi

REGION 2

Jenny Rose Carey (2024 N)

North View Garden

Kim Roman (2022 R)

Square Foot Gardening 4 You

Phyllis Gricus (2023 R)

Landscape Design Studio LLC

REGION 3

Diane Blazek (2022 N)

All-America Selections/
National Garden Bureau

Pam Bennet (2022 R)

Ohio State University Extension

Alicia Rittenhouse (2023 R)

HyR BRIX Fertilizer

REGION 4

Barbara Wise (2024 N)

Freelancer

Peggy Riccio (2022 R)

pegplant.com

Teresa Watkins (2023 R)

she-consulting.com

REGION 5

Bill Johnson (2022 N)

Bill Johnson Nature Stock
Photography Inc.

James Baggett (2022 R-North)

Freelance

Randy Schultz (2022 R-South)

Schultz Communications

Carolyn Hestand Kennedy

(2023 R-South)

REGION 6

Erica Browne Grivas (2023 N)

Grace Hensley (2022 R-North)

Fashion Plants

Noelle Johnson (2022 R-South)

AZ Plant Lady, LLC

Toni Gattone (2023 R-South)

REGION 7

Helen Battersby (2024 N)

Toronto Gardens

Andrea Whitely (2022 R)

Andrea Whitely Garden Consultant

Perla Sofia Curbelo (2023 R)

Agrochic

Graduation = Opportunity



In May 2022, Virginia and I celebrated our daughter, Isabella's, high school graduation. The Class of 2022. For all of you who have experienced graduation and a commencement ceremony, you know it can be a pretty emotional event. As parents, we've seen Isabella grow from a bright-eyed newborn to a capable young lady ready to take on the world in what to us seems like only the blink of an eye. In our case, it wasn't just our daughter graduating, but we knew most of the kids in her graduating class as well—all her friends who we had also watched grow up, many that she went to school with since she was in kindergarten from the age of five. When you're in the midst of graduation, you can't help but be proud of all your child's accomplishments, the gold sashes, honors and awards, but at the same time, you realize that a big milestone in your child's life is coming to an end and that's when the emotion hits you. Things are changing and it will never be the same.

In reality, it's one chapter closing and a new one beginning. One that is full of promise, with a bit of anxiety about the unknown, but also one that is filled with excitement about the endless possibilities and life-changing experiences yet to come. While I was reflecting on this milestone, I realized that GardenComm experienced its own "graduation" of sorts this year. Yes, I'm going to make the over-used reference to Webster's dictionary here, but according to Webster, the verb *graduate* is to *pass from one stage of experience, proficiency or prestige to usually a higher one*. In 2022 that's exactly what we've done.

GardenComm has a future that is filled with opportunity for our members and the industry we serve. Change can bring anxiety and fear of the unknown, but from what I have seen, in the few short months that I have been sitting in the Executive Director's seat, there is also tremendous promise on the horizon. Piece by piece, the vision for GardenComm is starting to fall into place. For those who are ready to graduate from where we used to be, move outside their comfort zone and embrace the world of communications in 2022, they will be rewarded with opportunity.

Graduation is emotional, scary, hopeful and exciting and I, for one, think what's next is going to be amazing. For GardenComm, Isabella and the Class of 2022.

Chris

— Pitch Sessions: Back and Bigger than Ever, continued from page 1

In addition to print publications, we know there are countless digital story outlets. As we continue to expand our network, we welcome first-time Pitch Session participants Kelly Smith Trimble representing HGTV/Warner Bros. Discovery and John Kennedy from *Agritourism.Life* (Digital) Magazine. And finally, our trade partners, longtime GardenComm supporters Kelli Rodda of GIE Media and Jen Polanz of Ball Publishing will be taking pitches.

SIGN UP TODAY!

Pitch session time slots are limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis for registered conference attendees only—so register early. Individuals may sign up for ONE pitch session using our online registration form. If available, we will open additional time slots (on a first come, first served basis) the week prior to the conference via an email announcement. Profiles for each professional are available online so you can research participating editors to find the perfect match for your project. Then, sign-up online and start practicing that pitch! 🌱

Excited for Fall



Dear Gardening Friends,

As I write this column, I'm in "Super Mom" mode, helping prepare for my son's wedding. His big day has been postponed twice due to Covid, so fingers crossed the third time is the charm. The reception is at my condo so I'm also in "Super Gardener" mode hoping all my containers look as perfect as possible. I'm so focused on his July 3 wedding that I know when it is over I'm going to get that same feeling I do every year on the Fourth of July, where I feel like summer is on the downhill slide already. Sigh.

BUT, while I don't want summer to go by too quickly, I can't lie that I am excited for fall. Why? Because we will have a chance to gather with friends both old and new for our Virtual Conference. I'm looking forward to learning from our speakers, visiting vendor booths, networking in the lounge, watching colleagues win awards or receiving well-deserved honors and having some plain, good-old gardening fun.

The Virtual Conference is definitely an investment in you and your business, but I feel it will provide you a superb ROI. There are 18 education sessions (up from 12 last year), three panel discussions and the always popular new plant and product session by **Diane Blazek** of the **National Garden Bureau**.

Member registration is \$149 so if you look at just those sessions, the cost ends up being about \$7 per session! That doesn't include the fact that you'll receive the recordings afterwards to rewatch at your convenience. It also doesn't account for the pitch sessions with editors, the trade show, story slam, lounge networking, the new preview day and more!

I'm wondering who I will connect with this year. Last year, a highlight was meeting the husband and wife duo **Sean and Allison McManus** of Spoken Garden. In following them on social media I notice they are talking about some plants from a client of mine. Making this connection allowed me to give them and the plant a shout-out on my client's Facebook page and feature them in the client's enews. A win-win for all! And this is the

exact type of interaction you hope to make at a conference whether in person or virtually.

A huge shout-out and thank you to the Virtual Conference and Education Committees for all their hard work. The Conference Committee meets on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, depending on the time of the year in an effort to improve upon past virtual conferences and bring you a superior quality event. I hope you'll consider joining us. And recommend it to your gardening friends, too!

Thanks much for your support of GardenComm. Take care and if I can be of any assistance, shoot me an email to maria@upshoothort.com.

Maria



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

GardenComm Virtual Conference Amplifies Education

Registration is open for the 2022 Virtual GardenComm Conference and Expo, October 12-15

FEES: Members/\$149 Nonmembers/\$199

info.gardencomm.org/gardencomm-virtual-22

The event of the year for international garden communication professionals and green industry businesses returns in 2022 with more education sessions than ever.

Attendees can choose from 18 virtual educational programs, including two Spanish sessions with live English translation. All will be recorded for live or post-session viewing. Add this to the winning combination of information, entertainment and, yes, networking. In the words of a 2021 attendee, "Wow! I had no idea how much networking I'd be able to do at this virtual conference. I re-connected with people and met great new people too."

FOUR AFTERNOONS AND EVENINGS, THE SCHEDULE INCLUDES:

- **Wednesday, October 12:** Regional meetings that bring together members from around the world, three educational sessions and the popular Plant & Garden Story Slam.
- **Thursday, October 13:** Three educational sessions, the Virtual Product Expo, a platform for businesses and communicators to network online—one-on-one or in small groups plus the What's New plant preview from the **National Garden Bureau/AAS Winners**.
- **Friday, October 14:** Three educational sessions, more chances to visit the Virtual Product Expo and connect with communicators or green businesses, opportunities to pitch book or story ideas to garden publishers as well as tips from panels of PR reps, influencers and podcasters.

- **Saturday, October 15:** Six educational sessions, virtual garden tours (a hit in 2021), more chances to network, GardenComm Honors presentations and the Garden Media Awards (with over 50 categories in seven disciplines for all types of garden communicators) plus a preview of our 75th Anniversary Conference in 2023.

2022 OFFERS EXPERT ONLINE LEARNING ON A RANGE OF USEFUL TOPICS

It takes two years to organize a major in-person conference, so 2022 will be our third virtual event before we meet again in person at GardenComm's 75th Anniversary next year. But 2021 attendee feedback proves that adversity continues to make us stronger:

- *I got something useful from every single session. In terms of professional development, it was among the best GWA/GardenComm conferences I've attended.*
- *The tips I learned from both the Instagram and photography sessions changed my life!*

Explore our 2022 educational sessions:



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Helen Battersby

MARKETING AND GROWING YOUR BUSINESS:

Personal Branding: Standing Out from the Crowd – presented by **Helen Battersby**. Learn what a personal brand is and how to map yours out in a way that sticks with your audience.

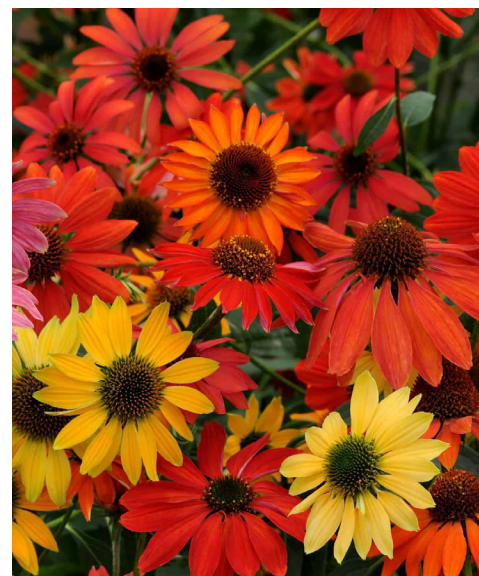


PHOTO COURTESY ALL-AMERICASELECTIONS.ORG

Cheyenne Spirit coneflower.

Travel and Garden Writing for Professionals – presented by **Patterson Webster**.

Enlarge your market and learn tips and tools to make each garden you visit benefit you professionally.

Show Me the Money! Increase Revenue from Online Content – presented by **Nan Sterman** and **Noelle Johnson**.

Veteran garden communicators share a three-pronged approach to re-envisioning their businesses to better meet audience needs and create new revenue streams.

Marketing Magic for Freelance Garden Writers – presented by Ruth E. Thaler-Carter.

This long-time, award-winning, freelance writer shares practical, effective tips for growing your garden writing (or editing, proofreading, photography, illustration or other communication) business.

GARDENING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT:

Sustainability Isn't Scary! Using the Power of Your Platform to Lure People to the Greener Side – presented by **Amy Mullen**.

How to communicate about sustainability with those who are skeptical, dismissive or feel overwhelmed by climate change.

– Continues on page 5

Climate Resilient Gardens: Options and Solutions – presented by **Debra Knapke**. Discover ideas, practices and techniques for creating resilient landscapes in this time of climate change.

Something Wicked This Way Comes – presented by Margery Daughtery. A lighthearted but science-based session in which everyone from newbies to seasoned gardeners can learn to identify and control plant diseases as well as how to communicate this with the public—emphasizing non-chemical methods.

Lessons from a Green Roof: Creating Habitats for Pollinators – presented by **Louise Clarke**.

From insect/plant interactions to construction requirements, find out how well-designed green roof habitats and related techniques can replace areas lost to human development of land.

SOIL MATTERS:

Underground Information: The Rhizophagy Cycle and Endophytic Bacteria – presented by **Jeff Lowenfels**.

Hear the latest dirt about how the soil food web works. Discover what the future has in store for using biologics instead of synthetics in fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.

Soil Fungi as Biofertilizers for Houseplants – presented by **Sarah Emery**.

Learn about potential benefits for foliage plants of relatively unknown arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF). Professor Emery explains how AMF might lower maintenance costs and synthetic fertilizer use and help owners be happier houseplant parents of plants like *Aglaonema*, *Sedum* and *Coleus*.

THE WRITE STUFF:

Word Play: How to Write Engaging Headlines and Captions – presented by **Teresa Woodard**.

Break down the elements of a magnetic headline, explore some winning examples and discover steps to writing catchy headlines that will make readers want to read on.



CAPITALIZING ON GARDEN NEWS AND TRENDS:

How Gardens Heal and Other Recent Trends in Youth Gardening – presented by Em Shipman.

From blog topics to social media, learn how to share the critical importance of youth gardening programs in communities as a way to heal, learn, and grow.

Translating Trends: Content Creator Tips for Taking 2023 Trends from Buzz to Blogosphere... and Beyond! – presented by Becky Paxton (**Garden Media Group**) and Laura Boissonnault, *How's It Growing?* Deep dive into the top takeaways beneath the trends.

Roadmap to Plant Introductions – presented by **Ryan McEnaney** and David Roberts. From conception to introduction, gain an all-encompassing understanding of what it takes to bring truly different and better plants to market from the people at Bailey Innovations.

GARDEN PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY:

An Immersive Experience in Horticultural Videography – presented by Adriana Robinson (**Spring Meadow Nursery**). Learn what's on the horizon for video, what'll be the next big thing and how to prepare. Find out what kinds of videos are most-watched, and how to create them.



Cris Blackstone

Photos with Thought & Emotion: Going Beyond Clichés

– presented by **Cris Blackstone**. Become a more confident, successful photographer as you learn why some photos grab attention and deliver the real story

you want to tell with your nature, landscape and flower photos.

TWO ADDITIONAL SPANISH LANGUAGE PANELS – ORGANIZED BY PERLA SOFÍA CURBELO

AND A BONUS

New Plant Introductions: Direct from the Breeders – presented by **Diane Blazek**, **National Garden Bureau**

Get an exclusive peek at the newest of the new plants NGB breeders are introducing for the 2023 garden season.

Whether you would like to be an exhibitor, a sponsor for our educational sessions or an attendee, you won't want to miss the GardenComm action this fall.

[GardenComm: Garden Communicators International](#) provides opportunities for education, recognition, and career development as well as a forum for wide-ranging interactions and collaborations for professionals in all media within the field of gardening communication. **Contact us for information, including details on exhibiting or sponsorship:**

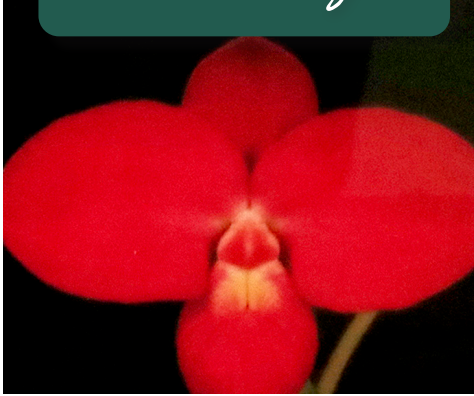
E: info@gardencomm.org **T:** 951.899.5015
W: <https://gardencomm.org>

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Members on the Virtual Conference Planning Committee and related activities:

Noelle Johnson, **Helen Battersby**, **Perla Sofia Curbelo**, **Jana Milbocker**, **Kim Toscano Holmes**, **Carol Michel**, **Katie Elzer-Peters**, and **Randy Schultz**, with leadership provided by **Maria Zampini**, **C.L. Fornari**, and **Chris Sabbarese**.

NEW & Noteworthy



Bill Johnson Receives Distinguished Award for Orchid Photo

Back in March, **Bill Johnson** found out he was to receive a prestigious award from the American Orchid Society, the W. W. Wilson Award, which he wasn't familiar with.

Every year, AOS has more than 30 juried orchid shows around the country, resulting in thousands of images taken of winning orchids. Turns out this award has been given annually to the grower (Orchids Limited in Plymouth, Minneapolis) of the highest scoring orchid in its respective category, in this case the *Cypripedium* group, the slipper orchids.

"Several years ago, they decided to give the same award to the photographer of that orchid," Bill said. "The last public show was in 2020 a few weeks before Covid shut down the world. For over 20 years I've been photographing the winning orchids for the Minnesota Orchid Society, which then go to AOS in Florida. I'm very honored to receive this award as this orchid was the last one shot that day and since then, changes in my health have stopped me from doing that again. What a way to end my career in orchid photography!"

Jean Thomas Part of Master Gardener's Podcast

Jean Thomas, Linda Aydtlett, Teresa Golden and Timothy Kennelty have released a weekly podcast, *Nature Calls, Conversations from the Hudson Valley*. It is a Master Gardener Volunteer project of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties in New York State. The [podcast](#) is designed to entertain and educate gardeners, gardener wannabes and anyone curious about nature in New York's beautiful Hudson River Valley.

National Federation of Press Women Announces National Winners

Several GardenComm members received national awards from the National Federation of Press Women.

Carol Michel won a first-place award in the category of "Blog - Personal" for a post she wrote for her blog *May Dreams Gardens* titled "My Garden Admiring Service." In addition, **Carol Michel** and **Dee Nash** shared a second-place award for their podcast in the category of "Web and Social Media - Podcast."

They submitted an episode of their podcast *The Gardenangelists* titled "We Almost Became a Math Podcast! Kidding." Carol, a volunteer on GardenComm's Finance and Conference committees, is a GardenComm Fellow.

Cris Blackstone, National Director for Region 1, earned a NFPW First Place Award in the category "Web and Social Media" for her website's (*Make Scents*) written material. She also earned Honorable Mention in the category "Writer/Photographer" for her article "New Zealand's Bird of the Year is... a BAT!" In the qualifying rounds announced this Spring, she earned five awards in the "At Large" membership category, where work from 29 states or territories compete against one another. Those are the places that don't have their own branch or affiliate of NFPW. In that contest, she earned three first place awards: "Editorial/Opinion," "Web Copy," and "Writer/Photographer," a second place in the "Specialty Articles Category Green/Environmental," and an Honorable Mention for a "Personality Profile."

Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp, immediate Past President of GardenComm and editor of *On the QT*, received honorable mentions for *On the QT* and *The Hoosier Gardener Newsletter*.

Each of the members' entries had to win first place awards at the local or qualifying round to compete at the national level.

Communicators from throughout the United States were honored on June 25 during the National Federation of Press Women communications contest ceremony in Fargo, North Dakota.

NFPW is a nationwide organization of women and men pursuing careers across the communications spectrum, including print and electronic journalism, freelancing, new media, books, public relations, marketing, graphic design, photography, advertising, radio and television.

A distinguished group of professional journalists, communications specialists and educators judged nearly 2,000 entries in a wide variety of categories. Only first-place winning entries at the state level are eligible to enter the national contest. All entries were published or broadcast between Jan. 1, 2021 and Dec. 31, 2021.



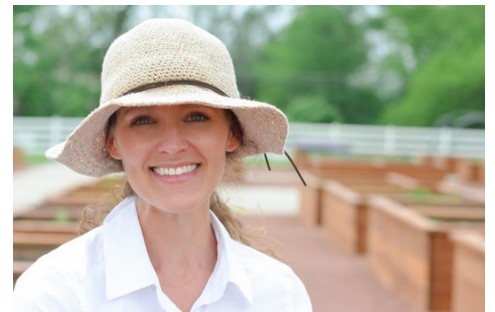
New Scene for Here She Grows!

From **Heather Blackmore**: "I'm in the midst of the greatest gardening challenge of my life! Ninety-two raised beds and five acres for corn, pumpkins, watermelon and sunflowers. I'm learning at warp speed, challenged every day and thrilled to watch the growth of a garden I started planning in January. I'm learning to manage staff, both experienced gardeners and novices, work with special needs farmers and

be patient with myself as I navigate it all. My coworker and social media manager [@navarrofarm](#)

snapped this photo of me in the garden yesterday as I was working the beds. If you're ever in the Frankfort, Illinois, area, pop in and say Hey! I'd love to show you around!" [#letsgrow](#)

[#hereshesgrows](#) [#specialneeds](#) [#heatherblackmore](#) 🌻



Upcoming GardenComm EVENTS

August 6 & 7

[Super Regional Event after PPA](#)

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

If you are headed to PPA and want to connect with other GardenComm members, don't miss out on this opportunity in Philadelphia. There are plenty of amazing gardens and tours lined up for this 2-day event. There is also an option to attend for a single day. It's a great way to relax after attending PPA and tour some spectacular gardens, enjoy good food and great networking opportunities.

Fee: Members and Non-Members – \$95 for 2 days, \$60 for 1 day



August 7

[Region 6 Event](#)

Seattle area, Washington

Spend a summer day exploring the joy of color in the garden, art, and fresh flowers at destination nursery Old Goat Farm in Ortig, Washington, known for rare plants and luscious display gardens. In addition to the tour, GardenComm member **Grace Hensley** shares her secrets for making magical garden photos using your phone. Plus, there will be a floral arranging and demonstration session with GardenComm member **Debra Prinzing**. There will be raffle prizes, lunch and snacks and more. The garden is located approximately 1.5 hours south of Seattle and is a great day trip for locals. Whether or not you're a GardenComm member, this event is open to anyone planning to be in the Seattle area.

Fee: \$85 for members and non-members. Space is limited. Don't wait to reserve your seat to this tremendous event, organized by Region 6.



Region 7 members gathered at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington, Ontario, Canada, in June.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

September 10

[Region 1 Event](#)

Greenwich, Connecticut and Yonkers, New York

Tour gardens and dine with fellow plant geeks, garden bloggers, social media influencers and GardenComm members. Tour two unique garden locations: Sleepy Cat Farm in Greenwich, Connecticut, and Untermeyer Gardens Conservatory in Yonkers, New York. Whether or not you're a GardenComm member, you owe it to yourself to attend this one day event.

Fee: \$80 for members and non-members. Space is limited. Reserve your space now.

September 29

[GardenComm Virtual Conference](#)
[Free Preview](#)

It's no secret that this year's GardenComm Virtual Conference is our biggest and best virtual event to date. This year we have added a special free preview day for editors, freelance writers, social media content creators and, of course, GardenComm members. Attendees will have access to sessions from top industry brands discussing challenges we face in the green industry and what we can do to overcome them, access to the Virtual Trade Show and much more. Look for special announcements in the coming weeks about the sessions.

Fee: FREE to all members and non-members.

The Storied Life of Bill Johnson



Bill Johnson has stories.

Just ask about his career as a self-taught guitarist and singer who performed as a professional musician around the country, once opening for country-folk legend John Prine.

Or about the two guitar manuals he wrote and self-published that sold copies around the world.

Maybe you'd like to hear about his years as a woodworker, when he designed and built a deck in Minnesota that won a national award. (The two fingertips he lopped off in the saw didn't slow him down.)

Then there was an until-dawn chat with Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary about their mutual love of sociobiology and the work of their common idol, the late Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson, a conversation Bill many years later shared with Wilson himself.

And much, much more.

There's just one thing Bill might tell you that's simply not true. "I'm not a writer," he insists.

Many in Garden Communicators International know Bill primarily as a preeminent photographer of insects, but his own statistics tell another story. Since joining the organization in 2008, Bill has won 14 Silvers from the annual media awards: four for writing and 10 for photography. He's won one Gold: For writing.

He may not consider himself a writer, but when you ask about his life, boy, is he a storyteller.

THE BEST ADVICE

Bill and his wife, Rachel Dabill, are seated in their comfy three-season screened porch on the back of their 1913 Minneapolis bungalow. Outside is a bustling Certified Wildlife Habitat that often serves as a photo location for his business, Bill Johnson Nature Stock Photography, Inc. We're there to review the many chapters of his story.

Insects buzzed in and out of his life a lot. When he was about 4, Bill saw something fly into a hollyhock flower. "Being curious, I walked over and stuck my finger in the flower.



HOLLY ENGLISH PAYNE

Bill Johnson with his Martin D-35S guitar in 1972. He sewed all the patches on the jeans himself.

Well, to my shock and surprise, the flower bit me," he says. "At least, initially that's what I thought until something flew back out of it. I realized it was a bumble bee. I realized I had to find out why it stung me and what it was.

My lifelong journey had begun."

Born July 12, 1948, Bill couldn't have known it as a boy growing up in Excelsior, Minnesota, but along his eclectic life's path, he took to

— Continues on page 9



Bill Johnson, budding gardener at age 3 or 4.

heart this excellent advice from his paternal grandmother, Francis Marion Schroder Johnson: "Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something. Get as many areas of interest as you can because if you get tired of one, then you can do something else you love."

TRIOBADOUR YEARS

Music was always part of his story. Bill, who sang bass so beautifully he was the first student from his high school to make All-State Choir, grew up listening to the Beatles, fellow Minnesotan Bob Dylan, and the folk singers of the day. "I was just entranced," he said. "I asked for a guitar when I was 10 years old." He taught himself how to play his Sears Silver-tone and eventually landed a gig playing at 10 O'Clock Scholar, a now-defunct Minneapolis coffeehouse.

He enrolled at the University of Minnesota to get an entomology degree, but after 2½ years realized he couldn't handle the biochemistry requirements and dropped out, losing his student deferment from the Vietnam War draft. However, Bill, who was against the war, had "hayfever like you wouldn't believe," and tests confirmed his 4-F deferment status.

"That led me to peruse music for the next 15 years or so," Bill says. He toured around the country, playing with many of his musical idols—Eric Andersen, Michael Johnson and



Bill Johnson, right, shows kids how to shoot nature photos at The Brenton Arboretum, July 2015.

more—who became friends. He taught for four years at the now-closed West Bank School of Music in Minneapolis and played guitar as the only non-indigenous person as a touring quartet of Native American musicians.

TIME TO GET A JOB—AND GET MARRIED

There comes a point when things aren't much fun anymore. Luckily, Bill had taken his grandmother's words to heart. "After all that touring, I realized I was sort of done with music and teaching. I decided I had to move on to something else, which meant I had to get a job."

He had crafted his two books, *Guide to Open Tuning for Guitar, Vol. 1 and 2* in 1978 and 1980 using press-on lettering. (His publishing company, Morpho Publications, was named for the butterfly.) This experience, and his ability to talk with anyone, led him to a job in 1979 in with former Aldy Graphic Supply in Minneapolis.

It was there he happened to notice a good-looking blonde colleague. "We became good friends," says Rachel. "But he didn't want to date a co-worker."

Luckily, being friends was an excellent basis for their marriage on July 17, 1982. They bought the house where they were married and still live. Forty years later, they're still working together.

"Bill and Rachel are a production team," says former GCI president and Hall of Famer **Kirk Brown**. "They get the correct details of their images. They work gardens like many people shop libraries or visit museums. Being with them on a photo tour gives you the opportunity to fundamentally change how you see the world."

Bill's love of photography mutated into a job as a printer at National Camera Exchange before becoming a manager, "because none of the printers were photographers." Bill trained them how to understand photographers' needs, and later did the same for a one-hour photo company.

He also accompanied Smithsonian Institute/Earthwatch entomology teams as a photographer on expeditions to places like Belize and Guyana, getting to know some of the top biologists and entomologists in the country.

"I can't say that there are single families of insects I like best, I just find them all to be amazing," Bill says. "Most of us once fell in love with dinosaurs when we were kids, but none of us has ever seen one alive. However, the world of insects through close-up photography reveals insects are our dinosaurs of today."

FINDING HIS WAY TO GCI

Bill's work remodeling their home, paired with a chance meeting with a friend, led him

— Continues on page 10

to designing an intricate three-level deck that took first place in a national contest. He loved the work and the creativity of design, but after about four years of woodworking noticed his right elbow developing problems. “That’s when I realized I couldn’t do it much longer.”

In 1989, he was hired by the Minnesota Historical Society as photo lab printer—his first job with full medical coverage—eventually becoming the head printer. “I loved doing it and having access to a stock of historical images was incredible,” he says.

He ran his nature stock photography business at nights and weekends, getting busier and busier. Then, the recession of 2008 hit when he was 61, and he was out of a job.

“When I got laid off, I was pissed for about 10 minutes, but then I thought, wait a minute, this could be the opportunity of a lifetime,” Bill says. “It opened everything up. I decided to find out if I could do it full time, if it would make a difference. And it did.”

His nature stock images have appeared in over 1,000 national and regional publications. This year, he reaches 100 issues featuring his images in both *Fine Gardening* and *The American Gardener* magazines.

Joining what was then named Garden Writers Association and getting to his first conference in Portland, Oregon in 2008, Bill found his people, putting faces to names of photo and writing credits he’d seen for years. “It’s a real honor to be part of that group. I’ve gained a lot of friendships and a lot of contacts and work with editors and publishing people,” he says.

DEALING WITH CHANGE

The problem with stories is that they always have an ending, and Bill’s next chapter is a doozy. In late February 2020, he was diagnosed with hemi-dystonia, a neurological disease that affected the left side of his body. He had to use auto-focus since he couldn’t grip his camera’s focus ring with his left hand.

This summer, there’s worse news. An early diagnosis indicates Bill likely has a neuron motor disease, a family of neurodegenerative disorders. His body, once robust at 230 pounds, is down to 160. Speech and swallowing are affected. It’s harder for his right hand, to grip his Canon cameras. There’s no treatment and generally a two- to five-year lifespan after diagnosis. “My gut is telling me this is spot on,” Bill says.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIRK BROWN

Bill Johnson and Rachel Dabill hold Bill’s award-winning articles at the 2018 GardenComm conference.

“ I can’t say that there are single families of insects I like best, I just find them all to be amazing,” Bill says. “Most of us once fell in love with dinosaurs when we were kids, but none of us has ever seen one alive. However, the world of insects through close-up photography reveals insects are our dinosaurs of today.”

Nevertheless, he persists, continuing to digitize the 150,000 slides that augment his collection of 160,000 digital insect and plant images. He learned this year he won the 2020 W.W. Wilson award from the American Orchid Society for photographing the winning orchid. “What a way to end my 22-year run of orchid photography,” he posted on Facebook.

Bill takes comfort that younger members of GCI, including **Jessica Walliser** and **Danae Wolfe**, will continue to speak on behalf of the insect world they all admire. He leaves the GCI board this year after two years as a regional director and three as a national director, with many friends and colleagues cheering him on.

Award-winning photographer and Hall of Fame honoree **Rob Cardillo** appreciates Bill’s “friendly nature, generous spirit and willingness to share his broad photographic knowledge with everyone. His talents behind the lens are estimable and his garden images have always shown a great balance of beauty and science.

“But his insect photography is what I really find marvelous. Photographing tiny fast-moving bugs is not an easily acquired skill; it takes years of practice to find them and get them to cooperate while fiddling with focus and flash. Bill has not only mastered this craft, he’s coupled it with a serious study of entomology and horticulture, so his photos tell stories that go far beyond what we see in the frame. He is a true garden communicator.”

And as for that one-on-one with Timothy Leary? Well, just ask Bill. He has stories.

CONTACT BILL JOHNSON

Learn more about Bill and see his work at billjohnsonbeyondbutterflies.com. He’d love to hear from you by email: billjohnson@usinternet.com. 🌱

Deb Wiley, a 23-year member and a Fellow of GCI, gardens, writes, and edits in Des Moines, Iowa.



Bloomin' Easy New Website

Bloomin' Easy has launched a new and improved bloomineasyplants.com, complete with direct-to-consumer purchasing of the brand's exclusive, improved, low-maintenance cultivars.

"We're on a mission to make gardening easier and more inviting for young homeowners," says founder DeVonne Friesen. "Making it easy to purchase our plants online anytime fits our mission and will lift up the entire Bloomin' Easy network as we generate demand through a variety of digital strategies over the next few years."

The new site allows consumers to learn about and purchase Bloomin' Easy plants and also offers DIY support, such as easy to follow how-to videos. Consumers can sign up for free, plant-specific Care Reminders, receiving tailored tips on how to plant, water, fertilize, mulch and prune throughout the season. Many Bloomin' Easy varieties are available for purchase now, with the full line available in multiple sizes in 2023.

Pacific Horticulture's California Tours offer discount

Pacific Horticulture is offering a \$100 discount to members of GardenComm who register for its upcoming California tours. Each tour includes four nights in a wonderful hotel and five days of gardens, nurseries, farms and special horticultural experiences. These tours are organized by a volunteer and Pacific Horticulture board members, so the pricing is set at the wholesale level. The ticket includes a \$300 tax-deductible contribution to Pacific Horticulture—a non-profit working to advocate for

gardens and their power to enrich lives and heal the environment.

Since each tour uses a central hotel for the five days, people who want some independent time or partners of gardeners can do independent activities if they choose. There are tons for nongardeners to do in all three locations. Pacific Horticulture has many surprises, experts, local guides and horticulture celebrities joining the groups throughout the tours.

[San Francisco / Berkeley - Wednesday, Aug 24 to Sunday, Aug 28](#)

Maximum 14 participants

[Monterey / Santa Cruz - Wednesday, Sept 14 to Sunday Sept 18](#)

Maximum 14 participants

[San Diego County - Thursday, Oct 6 to Monday, Oct 10](#)

Maximum 24 participants

Mention the code GCOMM anywhere in the registration and you will receive a \$100 discount. Have fun, learn, travel, and explore while supporting [Pacific Horticulture](#).

Phipps Earns Accreditation

[Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens](#) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has been accredited by [Botanic Gardens Conservation International](#) for its achievements in plant conservation. This accreditation assesses and places a high value on unique skills, knowledge and data, driving botanic gardens worldwide to set new standards of excellence.

Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) is the world's largest plant conservation network, comprising more than 650 botanical institutions in over 100 countries. Established in 1987, BGCI is a registered charity with offices in the UK, US, Singapore, China and Kenya. BGCI leverages the expertise at botanic gardens worldwide for tree conservation with Global Tree Assessment, Tree Conservation Fund and Global Trees Campaign.

To achieve accreditation, Phipps provided evidence to demonstrate that it meets criteria encompassing leadership, collections management, horticulture, public education, community/cultural activities, conservation actions, scientific research, staff, networking and sustainability. Each of these components are essential to managing and conserving rare and threatened plant diversity. Phipps is now one of 56 botanic gardens worldwide certified for conforming to BGCI's international standards.

Phipps' BGCI accreditation is the latest in a

series of accreditations and certifications that Phipps has recently pursued. Earlier this year, Phipps achieved Level III Arbnet Arboretum Accreditation in recognition of its tree collection. In 2021 it received accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, the highest national recognition afforded the nation's museums.

Year of the Garden Année du jardin



Year of the Garden in Canada

The [Canadian Garden Council](#) has proclaimed 2022 as the "Year of the Garden." It is an important year for the public to be inspired, entertained and informed by Canada's Garden-Family—the thousands of plant growers, product manufacturers, retailers, landscape service providers, horticulture societies, garden clubs and public gardens from across the nation.

"We encouraged everyone in the Garden-Family, from horticulture professionals to horticulture societies and public gardens, to embrace 2022 as an opportunity to share our passion and knowledge to help more Canadians enjoy the benefits of gardens and gardening," says Michel Gauthier, Executive Director of the Canadian Garden Council.

"We want people to 'live the garden life' and think about gardens indoors, on their balconies, in their yards, in schools, at work and in their communities. We want them to appreciate gardens while cooking on their barbecues, traveling on trips and shopping in their downtowns. We will commemorate Canada's rich garden heritage, celebrate today's vibrant garden culture and create legacies for a sustainable future—and in doing so, nurture a nation of gardeners." 🌻

Virginia Beatty

March 8, 1930 – October 21, 2021

Virginia Lewis Beatty died of pneumonia on October 21, 2021 at the age of 91, her devoted daughter Carol reported.

Born in Quirigua, Guatemala of equally-auspicious, scientific parents, Ginny was destined to make a name for herself. A long-time GardenComm member and Fellow, will be remembered as brilliant, witty and sparkling.

A scholar and archivist, Ginny held a BS from Purdue, a Masters from Columbia and did post-graduate work at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She made her home there with husband, Bill, partnering in their consulting firm, Beatty and Beatty. Bill, a Harvard- and Columbia-educated medical archivist, was friendly and likable and some of us got to know him when he joined Ginny at annual meetings.

Ginny was THE Chicago Urban Horticulturist

and recipient of the Illinois Governor's Award for her contributions to the Windy City. Her animated style lent itself to 25 years as the plant expert on WBBM radio. Ginny spent nearly two decades of volunteer gardening mentorship with the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Housing Authority as well as giving her horticultural expertise to the Field Museum and the Chicago World Flower and Garden Show.

Her notable accomplishments were varied. Ginny authored the library must-haves *Rating and Raising Vegetables* and *Rating and Raising Indoor Plants*. She worked for the Atomic Energy Commission—yes THAT Atomic Energy Commission. She was an American librarian, environmental education and urban horticulture consultant, Certified Judge for America in Bloom (2008) and medical library archivist—a woman of many talents!



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Although Ginny was an icon, she was not one to toot her own horn. I called her a friend and mentor. As one of the garden writers to whom she gave a leg up in the business, I will always think of Ginny as my forever superstar!



— Mary B Good

New GardenComm Members

Julie Thompson-Adolf • 864-325-3355

Garden Delights

jule@gardendelights-sc.com
Moore, SC

Paul Lee Cannon • 415-290-0751

paulleecannon@gmail.com
Oakland, CA

Jessica Ford • 505-920-1232

jwood.nm@gmail.com
Colorado Springs, CO

Brenda Goins • 440-823-0476

bgoinspcf@sbcglobal.net
Richfield, OH

Lisa Hinzman Howard • 319-360-9893

Midwest Garden Gal

lisa@midwestgardengal.com
midwestgardengal.com
Cedar Rapids, IA

Jared Hughes • 740-815-8920

Groovy Plants Ranch

groovyplantsranch@gmail.com
Marengo, OH

Liz Hughes • 330-806-5418

Groovy Plants Ranch

liz@groovyplantsranch.com
Marengo, OH

**** Karen Kennedy** • 440-487-4234

Herb Society of America

educator@herbsociety.org
Concord, OH

Laura Kunkle • 614-580-9039

Second Wind Management

laura@secondwindmanagement.com
secondwindmanagement.com
Huntsville, OH

Kelly Lorenz • 614-735-5914

Groovy Plants Ranch

kelly@groovyplantsranch.com
Marengo, OH

Cynthia Porter • 507-313-9937

Northerngardener

cynthyaporter@gmail.com
Winona, MN

**** Richard Restuccia** • 858-952-6038

Jain Irrigation

rrestuccia@jainsusa.com
Fresno, CA

**** Samuel Thayer** • 863-439-3200

Misterlandscaper

sam@misterlandscaper.com
Dundee, FL

****Allied Trade Member,**



Thanks to these GardenComm members for helping to grow the organization this year. For every new member you bring, you'll save \$20 on your 2023 membership dues.

ONE MEMBER

Diane Blazek

C.L. Fornari

Kathy Jentz

Kathy Purdy

Chris Sabbarese

Randy Schultz

THREE MEMBERS

Teresa Woodard

Maria Zampini

David Salman

January 18, 1957 – June 5, 2022

David Salman, a pioneer of waterwise gardening, passionate plant explorer, and charismatic storyteller, passed away on Sunday June 5, 2022. His commitment to cultivating a palette of beautiful waterwise plants transformed gardening in the American West.

Founder of Santa Fe Greenhouses, High Country Gardens and Waterwise Gardening, David Salman was an expert in the field of waterwise gardening and xeriscaping. For decades, he encouraged environmentally conscious gardening practices, long before “organic” became a household word.

LIFE-LONG PLANT NERD AND EXPLORER

A self-described “off-the-wall plant nerd” and “plant explorer with a gift for talking to plants,” David’s passion started at an early age. Growing up in Houston, Texas, and La Cueva, New Mexico, his playground included bayous, mountains and arroyos. He observed as development encroached on butterflies, insects and the plants that support them, and he became determined to make a difference.

In 1979, he graduated from Colorado State University with a degree in Horticultural Science. Armed with his degree, a shovel and a spirit of adventure, David set out on a mission. In 1984, with a single greenhouse, he brought his revolutionary vision for the future of gardening—a focus on cold-hardy, drought-tolerant plants—to the community of Santa Fe, New Mexico, when he started Santa Fe Greenhouses. The business quickly became a legendary destination for gardeners. Over time, through a commitment to waterwise, native and habitat-friendly plants, his business grew into a brand that inspired millions of Americans to consider sustainability in their own yards.

David was a founding member of Plant Select, a collaboration between Colorado State University and Denver Botanic Gardens. Founded in 1992, the organization has united renowned horticulturists, plant breeders, landscapers and commercial plant growers with the goal of introducing plants that thrive in the Great Plains and Intermountain states.

In response to ever-increasing demand for his plants, David and his wife, Ava, launched High Country Gardens in 1993. David focused on plant development while Ava spearheaded



SUBMITTED PHOTO

the print catalog and website. The catalog won four Silver Awards and one Gold Award for Best Gardening Catalog by *Catalog Age Magazine* and inspired many loyal fans.

David had a gift for seeking out and propagating unique plant species native to the wild landscapes of the Southwest. His many years of intrepid explorations collecting seeds and specimens around the world led to the introduction of more than 60 plants to the horticulture trade. In 1996, his introduction of *Agastache rupestris* caught the attention of gardeners and plant breeders across the country; the rare species with showy sunset-colored blooms and a delicious aroma became an instant garden sensation. *Bouteloua gracilis* ‘Blonde Ambition’ P.P. #22048, a selection of native blue grama grass with distinctive horizontal seed heads, was patented in 2010 and remains a mainstream staple for landscape designers.

FOCUSING HIS ENERGY

After nearly 30 years in business, David was ready to dedicate more time to plant breeding, his home gardens, and exploring the increasingly scarce wild landscapes of the Southwest. In 2012, the Salmans closed their garden centers and sold their mail-order division to like-minded online retailer

American Meadows. David stayed on as High Country Gardens’ Chief Horticulturist, where he played an integral, highly respected role in product development and education. David’s passion for plants persisted, and in 2013 he returned to the Santa Fe market with a new wholesale business, Waterwise Gardens. There, and in his ongoing role at High Country Gardens, David focused on the art of plant propagation, inspiring gardeners, and furthering his vision for sustainable gardening.

He was a distinguished recipient of the 2008 American Horticultural Society Great American Gardeners Award. David was also an enthusiastic, highly sought-after speaker on waterwise plants, xeriscaping and environmentally responsible conscious gardening practices. Gardeners who were fortunate enough to speak with David or hear his presentations were sure to be captivated by his knowledge, experience and passion.

Though he sometimes claimed he was better at talking to plants than people, he was an avid storyteller and spent countless hours mentoring the next generations of horticulturists and plant lovers. David’s legacy will live on in the many gardens he inspired that grow more beautiful every year. 🌿

—Randy Schultz

The Effect of Connections—Link by Link (What GardenComm can do for us)

BY SALLY CUNNINGHAM



In a time of association turmoil, as we have changed management, chosen new systems and learned to communicate in new ways, one of the best things about GardenComm membership

has not changed: The value of networking.

Imagine a Venn Diagram (an illustration that uses circles to show relationships), wall-sized, showing the threads that connect us. From board members to industry sponsors, from authors to podcasters, from those we influence to those who influence us, the spiderweb of threads would be thick and tangled—beyond what any of us has time to analyze.

Instead of the gigantic picture, then, let me illustrate how my single spool of connecting threads led to the pictures shared here. This example may help any of us ask a prospective joiner's question, "What could GardenComm membership do for me?"

Among many, I was once one of the new members greatly influenced by the presidencies and friendliness of **Kirk Brown** and **Becky Heath**, who caused me to attend conferences. Leaders, such as **Maria Zampini**, **C.L. Fornari**, **Dan Heims**, **Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp**, **Denise Schreiber** and **Ellen Zachos**, reached out in fun and friendship. That's what live conferences did (and virtual ones can do, although differently), at least for those who jumped into the social pool. At the time I didn't perceive benefits from direct connections—just liked the learning and tours—but Kirk twisted my arm (gently but firmly) to develop a Buffalo conference, and eventually to agree to a Regional Director post. Connections came thick and fast whether I sought them or not.

Then **Sylvia Gordon** masterfully instigated and coordinated an invitation from the Florida Nursery & Landscape folks to host members (then called the Garden Writers Association) at the TPIE (Tropical Plant Industry Expo). She introduced us to **Teresa Watkins**—among many others on the stunning landscape tours—and Sylvia and Teresa both spoke at the Buffalo conference, causing me to write



Sally Cunningham, Region 1 Regional Director.

— Continues on page 15

PHOTO COURTESY TERESA WATKINS



Garden author and Region 2 National Director Jenny Rose Carey provides design details of a secluded portion of her Northview Gardens.



Jenny Rose Carey signs her book *Glorious Shade* for attendees on the tour of her Northview Gardens in Ambler, Pennsylvania.

news and magazine articles about tropical plants.

Subsequent conferences and board meetings produced other opportunities (and I already regret those of you I'm leaving out): **Thomas Mickey** drove me to the airport, leading me to write an article about his book for *Buffalo Spree* magazine. Other members

(**Susan Martin** and **Stephanie Cohen** for example) became keynote speakers in New York State regional landscape industry conferences. Even regional Zoom meet ups led me to write about **Dwayne Pancoast's** book, *The Geriatric Gardener*, and **Marianne Wilburn's** *Tropical Plants and How to Love Them*. As a regional director, my life is richer for working with **Cris**



PHOTO COURTESY TERESA WATKINS

Benjamin Franklin (aka Garden Comm member **Kirk Brown**) makes an important point on a historical walk at a meeting in Pennsylvania.

Blackstone and **Charlie Nardozi**, and we have developed programs and a live meet up to bring in more people. After the Buffalo inspiration, Teresa Watkins brought a Florida following to join my Best of Buffalo Gardens tour.

Then I introduced her to another travel company I was working for, and she hosted a Brandywine Valley Extravaganza. Kirk Brown was a highlight on that trip, as on past Philadelphia trips, when he portrayed John Bartram. The other highlight was the breathtaking visit with Regional Director **Jenny Rose Carey** at her garden, Northview.

My connections story is just one small circle in the great Venn Diagram, as I have played a very small role as a garden communicator—nothing like the overwhelming contribution of board members and regional leaders, past and present. But I write my story to say, see how it works?

Go out there in the next years to connect, and when you meet one of our members, remember to tell their stories, write about their work, and tell GardenComm about it. Connect!



Regional Director **Sally Cunningham** is an author (*Great Garden Companions*, Rodale Books, and *Buffalo Style Gardens* with **Jim Charlier** and **St. Lynn's Press**). She is a travel director and TV, newspaper, and magazine garden expert, with a background in Cooperative Extension and Master Gardener leadership.

PHOTOS COURTESY TERESA WATKINS



JULY

ENTIRE MONTH OF JULY

Smart Irrigation Month – #WaterSmart
– National Blueberry Month

JUNE 28 TO JULY 4, 2020

[American Flowers Week](#) – Celebrating American
Grown Flowers in All 50 States

- 1 National U.S. Postage Stamp Day
- 3 National Eat your Beans Day
- 4 Independence Day
- 5 National Apple Turnover Day
- 11 National Mojito Day (harvest your mint!)
- 15 Give something Away Day (Share perennials?
Share your harvest?)
- 22 National Hammock Day
- 24 National Tequila Day
- 28 National Dance Day (Dance in your garden!)
- 29 National Lasagna Day
- 30 National Father-in-Law Day

On the QT partners with the **National Garden Bureau** to promote all the “days of” that relate to gardening or nature. [Garden365](#) gives us a heads-up on celebrations, special events and community activities that we can share with our audiences. The National Garden Bureau presents ideas for articles, promotions, Instagram, and other social media outlets.



July 11
National Mojito Day



August 13
Left-Hander's Day

PHOTO BY KSENIYA MAKAGONOVA/UNSPLASH

AUGUST

3RD SATURDAY IN AUGUST

– World Honey Bee Day

- 1 National Girlfriends Day and National Night Out
- 3 National Watermelon Day
- 6 National Wiggle Your Toes Day
- 8 Porch Day
- 10 National Lazy Day
- 12 National Garage Sale Day
- 13 Left-Hander's Day
- 14 National Relaxation Day
- 17 National Non-profit Day ([Support GardenComm](#))
- 18 National Fajita Day and Mail Order Catalog Day
- 21 National Senior Citizens Day
- 24 National Peach Pie Day
- 31 National Diatomaceous Earth Day



September 4
National Wildlife Day

PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA

SEPTEMBER

3RD WEEK – [National Indoor Plant Week](#)

- 1 National Food Bank Day
- 2 National College Colors Day
- 4 National Wildlife Day
- 7 National Acorn Squash Day
- 9 National Swap Ideas Day
- 25-26 National Public Lands Day
- 26 National Johnny Appleseed Day
- 28 National Good Neighbor Day
- 30 National Family Health & Fitness Day

PHOTO BY TATA ZAREMBA ON UNSPLASH