

President's message

As we sit squarely between winter and spring, I hope this newsletter finds you healthy and busy.

Winter has thrown a few curve balls this year, but then again,



WVNLA President
Norman Cole

when has it not. The Winter Symposium was coincidentally during the worst snow storm of the winter. Attendance was down and one speaker could not make it to the venue.

WVNLA refunded all monies to members that registered but could not attend due to the weather. Mother Nature reminded us, again, that in our industry, we are not in control of all the factors. That being said, I have put in an order on behalf of all of us for rain on Saturdays and Sundays after 7 p.m., only through the fall. We will see how that goes.

Winter can cause both problems and opportunities in our line of work, but it always melts away to a new season of production. And installation. And shipping. And delivery. And fertilizing. And pruning. And watering. And doing office work. And. And. And. Spring hasn't started yet and we can feel overwhelmed if we think too long about what is to come. It could be said that those of us in the nursery

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Snowstorm takes the wind out of the Winter Symposium's sails

The phrase "timing is everything" certainly rang true for WVNLA's 2016 Winter Symposium. The lure of a fantastic line-up of speakers, a recently renovated conference facility and a revamped format that encouraged interaction couldn't hold up to weather at its worst, in the form of Winter Storm Jonas. Because they were traveling on Jan. 21 when skies were clear and sunny, all but one of the out-of-town speakers arrived without incident. Returning home was another story. Most of them settled in for a stay that lasted throughout the snowbound weekend.

Many out-of-town attendees cancelled in advance of the Jan. 22 storm. Understandably, the number of people who made it to the symposium dwindled steadily during the morning, as the snow piled up outside. By lunchtime, it was clear that even local travel was rapidly approaching the ill-advised stage, and the 2016 Symposium came to an abrupt close.

The speakers who gamely gave their presentations during the morning included Bryce Lane of North Carolina State University; Debra Knapke, aka The Garden Sage; Tres Fromme of

3.Fromme Design; Jody Shilan of FromDesign2Build; and Kerry Scott of MASLabor.

Jody Shilan on "Avoiding Site Analysis Paralysis"

Longtime landscape design company owner and industry consultant Jody Shilan asked attendees to answer some key questions about how they approached potential clients: Are you compensated for your experience and/or education? Do you have a business card available at all times? Are you prepared for site analysis when you arrive at a potential job site? Do you take pictures of a job site?

Based on his experiences with his own company and his 40 years in the industry, Shilan recommended the following:

- Charge for your site visits and designs. No fees paid, no work done.

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Carya ovata
shagbark hickory

Debra Knapke
discussed the use of
edible plants in the
landscape.

SYMPOSIUM (continued from page 1)

- Have your business card handy at all times. This demonstrates your preplanning skills and could lead to another job.
- Be sure to have all your tools and supplies packed when you arrive for site analysis. Lacking some key item will result in lost time and delays in preparing proposals.
- Take many pictures, at all angles, of the job site, both before and after installation. "Before" pictures help in design detail and "After" pictures help develop a portfolio for presentations to new clients.

Kerry Scott on "*Finding Labor: H-2A and H-2B*"

Kerry Scott provided an overview of the challenges of finding legal H-2A and H-2B guest workers. As the system continually evolves and the rules change, his company, MASLabor, works with clients to navigate crucial hiring issues, including timing, filing, fees and more. Although he admitted that the system is complex and frustrating, Scott said that his clients usually find the effort to use H-2A and H-2B employees worthwhile. In his experience, these workers have shown an outstanding aptitude, desire and work ethic. "Employers will tell me they wish they'd done this 10 years ago," Scott said.

The small number of people in his session allowed Scott to address their individual concerns.



Tres Fromme often doesn't use color in his drawings because details are clearer in black and white.

Bryce Lane on "*Understanding Garden Soils*"

In his informative and entertaining workshop, North Carolina State University professor and garden talk show host Bryce Lane explained the chemistry and physics of soil composition and the roles of healthy soils. With memorable visuals (a basketball, tennis ball, and grains of rice), Lane stressed the importance of soil texture to water and nutrient retention. He also emphasized that

adjusting pH can significantly improve soil fertility. "Proper bed prep is the key," he told participants, advising them to (1) cultivate and (2) incorporate, or if these aren't possible, (3) invigorate with two to three inches of mulch over a three- to five-year period.

Debra Knapke on "*Edible Ornamentals*"

"I'm asking you to consider the world as you design," garden designer and lecturer Debra Knapke of central Ohio told symposium attendees. Knapke named a seemingly endless array of trees and shrubs that offer food perennially, and she discussed the uses of their barks and berries, as well as their other appealing features. For example, Knapke said, the shag bark hickory is a gorgeous tree and the nut meats are edible. Crabapples are great for jams and jellies, staghorn sumac berries make a tasty lemonade, and chokeberries make a delicious wine. Knapke also distributed a list of edible ornamentals that included their functions, characteristics, and edible parts.

Tres Fromme on "*On-Site Drawing*"

Fromme, who is a skilled artist as well as a landscape designer, shared the many uses he finds for drawing, especially in his design work for the Atlanta Botanical Garden. He prefers not to use color in his drawings because, he said, details emerge more clearly in black and white. He uses his drawings to communicate with both clients and other artists. He illustrated this point by showing an artful sculpture of a spitting fish an artist produced from one of his sketches. Words alone could not have conveyed the concept to the artist as well as his drawing, Fromme said.

Drawing is also a conduit for thinking for Fromme, whose doodles crystallize into a solid plan, often before he's thought the plan through. He also evokes sensory experiences with his drawings. His illustrations for a public cactus garden in the Southwest are one example.

"Keep every drawing. You never know when you'll want to go back and steal your own idea," he advised.

Bryce Lane on "*Landscaping on the Edge*"

In this workshop, Lane led his listeners through trending topics in horticulture. In today's market, he said, you have to consider that properties are getting smaller, baby boomers are getting older, and empty nesters are downsizing. Gardening is going green, with a push toward sustainable practices and gardening with a purpose. Edible landscaping, greening of urban areas and community gardens are hot topics.

(Continued on next page)

SYMPOSIUM (continued from page 2)

Many people who fall in the Gen X and Gen Y categories often find the *idea* of gardening more appealing than the actual gardening. They are less Do-It-Yourself and more Do-It-For Me, an obvious boon for landscapers.

Marketers for the garden industry encourage the promotion of the health and well-being benefits of gardening, its back-to-nature elements and “petscaping.” That’s right, landscape design around the family pet. The market is huge, Lane said. About 65 percent of American households have at least one pet. Americans spend \$60 billion dollars a year on them.

Lane covered a lot of territory, showing colorful photos to illustrate layered landscapes featuring native plants, wildlife attractors and ecosystem restoration, all of which appeal to “Save the World” gardeners. In addition, plants placed for shading and heating have practical appeal. He showed examples of plant and rock gardens that can replace turf in landscapes to reduce the need to water.



Lane showed a multilayered landscape that provides protection and cover for birds to nest and rest. The staggered heights of perennials, shrubs and trees are attractive as well as functional.

After hearing these impressive presentations, it was especially disappointing to learn that the afternoon speakers would not be heard. Tom Vasale’s wisdom on “Specialty Pruning,” Jan Bills’s thought-provoking ideas on “How to Make Social Media Work for You,” and Jody Shilan’s answers to the key question “Are Your Proposals Saying, ‘Please Don’t Work with Us?’” would have to wait for another day.

Article by Julie Robinson, with contributions from Bud Cottrill (on Shilan’s presentation) and Sheila McEntee (on Lane’s soil and Knapke’s presentations)

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE (continued from page 1)

industry have the winter break from the craziness of the busy season so we may forget how overwhelmed we feel during the season and don’t give it up completely. I hope your biggest problem this year is how to get everything accomplished – that’s a good problem to have.

There are a couple bits of news regarding the WVNLA. First, we are pleased to announce and welcome two new board members, **David Hill** of Three Trees Design and Landscaping, Inc. in South Charleston and **Jason Testman** of Terra Care, Inc. of Charleston. Second, our summer employee training event, which is held at a different location each year to better serve our members, will be in Morgantown this year at a to-be-determined date in July.

As we move closer to another spring season, remember that the WVNLA is here for any questions you may have or ideas you wish to share. Please don’t hesitate to contact myself or Julie Robinson.

Norman Cole III
WVNLA President

Welcome new member

We welcome a new WVNLA member. Site Tech, LLC in Philippi was approved for membership at a recent board meeting. Site Tech offers landscape construction and maintenance. Contact owner **Brett Robinson** at 304-703-7625 or brobinson@sitetechwv.com.

We are also pleased to have Crede Lawn and Landscaping in Scott Depot return as an active member. Contact owner **Dennis Crede** at 304-757-2567.

Certified Professional Horticulturist program news

Best wishes to **Eamon Barker** of Flowerscape who recently received his Certified Professional Horticulturist after achieving a passing score on the exam and plant identification.

A makeup exam for anyone who was unable to take the Jan. 21 exam due to inclement weather will be given on at 3 p.m. March 15 in Charleston. For more information, email wvnlassoc@gmail.com or call 304-553-1234.

WVU Hort program on the rise with staff and student increases

By Dr. Sven Verlinden

Associate Professor of Horticulture, WVU

WVU Horticulture is growing!

We hit an all-time high enrollment of 40 undergraduate students in the fall semester and are teaching a dozen or so horticulture courses every year. We now have five horticulturists on staff that are involved in research and teaching: Dr. Sven Verlinden, Dr. Nicole Waterland, Dr. Dave Davis, Dr. Michael Gutensohn, and Dr. Kang Mo Ku. Both Gutensohn and Ku joined the faculty last summer with research and teaching appointments. WVU also employs two more horticulturists through extension, Dr. Lewis Jett and Dr. Mira Bulatovic-Danilovich.

Division Director Dr. Matthew Jenks, who joined the staff in 2014, also has a horticulture background and has a keen interest in waxes on plant leaf and stem surfaces. The Horticulture program has come a long way from 2002 when we had only two faculty members. We appreciate the support of our division director for this growth. Inquiries into the horticulture major are up and everything points to continued growth. We hope to continue on this positive trajectory in the future.

As always, I would like to thank WVNLA for its support of our research and teaching missions. Our participation in PLANET student career days, now renamed NALP (National Association of Landscape Professionals) could not happen without your support. We again have a team of 20 students signed up to participate in this event held at Mississippi State University in March. This year we hope to again improve our standings and to break into the top 15 ranking. Davis and Verlinden are faculty advisors not only for this event, but also for the WVU Horticulture Club.

Other programs supported by WVNLA are also going strong. Our Western Europe study trip, organized by Dr. Peter Butler (Landscape Architecture) and Verlinden (Horticulture) has attracted more than 20 students this year. With WVNLA's support, we offer an affordable educational and international experience to Davis College students and others. The trip is a three-week tour of the landscapes and gardens of Belgium, The Netherlands, France, and new this year, Great Britain. The cost to the students is \$5,000 including airfare. Perhaps a trip like this could be offered to the WVNLA membership!

We are very proud of our students that have won scholarships from WVNLA in the past and this year is no exception. Amanda Hamilton is a stellar student with interests in landscaping and public

garden management and will undoubtedly make both the university and WVNLA proud to have supported her in her career. Thank you again for your support of the students in the horticulture and landscape architecture programs at WVU.

Unfortunately, Verlinden and Davis were not able to travel with the students in a garden center management course to the WVNLA Winter Symposium due to the inclement weather that day. However, the horticulture program and students would like to share and present on all our activities at a future WVNLA meeting. We would also like to continue our participation in WVNLA educational events, which are always a treat for our students!

In short, these are exciting times for WVU Horticulture and we hope to carry on and strengthen our ongoing relationship with the WVNLA.

Meet Dr. Kang Mo Ku

Dr. Ku joined the Division of Plant and Soil Sciences in August. He started teaching fall semester last year and will be teaching Principles of Plant Sciences every fall semester. Ku is developing a new graduate student level course (tentatively Plant Research Methods) which will cover basic plant science research skills such as chromatography, colorimetric assay, scanning electron microscopy and other research methods.



Dr. Kang Mo Ku

His current research includes the study of bioactivity of glucosinolates, especially as anti-insect herbivory compounds. He is also working to enhance the biosafety of produce. His work has suggested that the attachment of foodborne pathogens is associated with epicuticular wax on the produce leaf and stem surfaces. Dr. Ku is trying to understand these food pathogen contamination mechanisms thereby developing better agricultural practices and improving public health and safety.

Longtime WVNLA and MANTS board member honored

President Norman Cole recognized **Mark Springer** as West Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association's "Outstanding Member of the Year" at WVNLA's annual meeting Jan. 22. Springer accepted the award and said he was surprised that no members of the board had slipped to tip him off in advance. The award reads as follows:

"It is with gratitude that we acknowledge Mark's many years of service as a board member and as WVNLA's treasurer. As a long-term board member, Mark has exhibited great judgment, insight, thoughtful consideration and strong leadership. The organization achieved secure financial footing during his term as treasurer. Mark has also served as a longtime MANTS board member, representing WVNLA."

Springer graduated in 1978 from West Virginia University with a bachelor of science degree in landscape architecture. He immediately went to work for Lavalette Nursery in Lavalette, which was then owned by his father, Bill Springer.

His father and a partner started the business in 1947 as a landscape nursery with field-grown plants. In 1955, the partners opened a garden center in Huntington. Mark Springer sold the garden center in 2012 and now runs Lavalette Nursery as a landscape business on the original site in Lavalette.

Springer joined WVNLA shortly after he graduated from WVU, and he has been a



Mark Springer - Outstanding WVNLA Member

member ever since. Over the years, he found many mentors in the organization besides his father, including Carson Turner, Jim Monroe Sr., Norman Cole Jr., Bill Beckett and many others. Those relationships are just one of the many benefits he counts as a member of WVNLA.

"A few minutes talking to an experienced professional who has been there and done that can save you hours of mistakes. Most everybody in our industry is very open to helping others in the business," he said. "It's great to be a part of an organization that has a common goal to better the members' businesses. We are a small group but we have accomplished a lot."

For nearly 20 years, Springer has been one of three WVNLA members who serve on the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) board. WVNLA co-owns the show along with the nursery and landscape associations of Maryland and Virginia. The profits from the successful show provide the bulk of WVNLA's funding.

"WVNLA has been blessed with our involvement with MANTS. We have been good stewards of the financial rewards and used them for many worthwhile projects. We have to make sure we keep doing that in the future," he said.

Springer is a Certified Professional Horticulturist who also passed the WVNLA perennial plants exam, which is not currently being offered. He and his wife, Diane, have been married since 1982 and have two adult children. Their daughter, Emily, is married to Patrick Hagan and their son, Eric, is married to Amanda Springer.

Introducing Michael Gutensohn

Dr. Gutensohn joined the ranks of the faculty in the Division of Plant and Soil Sciences in August and will be teaching Principles of Plant Sciences in spring semesters and graduate level horticulture courses throughout the academic year.

Gutensohn's research centers on the



Dr. Michael Gutensohn

biosynthesis, biological function and application of plant volatiles. Plant volatiles are not only important in the scent of flowers or the flavor of fruits, but also for the attraction of pollinators (which in many crops determines the yield and quality of fruits). They also play a role in the

defense of plants against pests, either by repelling the pest or by attracting enemies of the pest. In his research he is studying how these plant volatiles are formed by plants and how we can improve these volatiles in plants so that we obtain for example good tasting fruits of high quality, as well as crop plants that are better protected against pests and thus can be grown in more sustainable ways.

Member spotlight: Businesses are family affairs at Highland

Are Highland Landscaping and Highland Nursery in Buckhannon owned by the same family? Yes, Bobby Gompers opened Highland Landscaping, LLC in 2001 and is the sole proprietor. His wife Susanne, who has an art and design background, produced computerized design for customers at a time when that technology was still relatively new. Bobby and his mother Brenda Lilly share ownership of Highland Nursery, LLC, which opened in 2011.

What is the scope of both businesses?

Highland Landscaping has a solid reputation for providing quality service and expert knowledge in full-service landscape design, installation, and maintenance for residential and commercial properties. The company also offers hardscape design and installation, such as natural stone



Highland Nursery's garden center entrance

and will offer those services in the near future. Highland Landscaping offices are located in Tennerton.

Highland Nursery is a retail garden center located on a five-acre farm in Buckhannon co-owned by Jim Gompers and Brenda Lilly and their son Bobby Gompers. In the beginning Highland Nursery offered bulk mulch products, top soil, trees and shrubs. Today we have one of the area's largest selections of annuals, perennials, trees and shrubs and offer a relaxing experience for customers looking for design ideas and for the perfect tree or plants to fit their landscape needs. Highland Nursery will soon offer workshops on planting tips, basic tree and shrub care, how to select, plant and care for fruit trees and how to incorporate edibles into garden plantings.

What do you like about working together in related family businesses? We love working together in both of our businesses. We have always been a close family, but working together has brought us even closer, because we spend more

time together doing things that we all enjoy.

Because we live and work in a rural community, our customers to get to know all of our family. They enjoy coming in and seeing the dynamics in our relationships. It's not unusual to find one of the grandchildren helping out with watering on a warm summer day. Our customers also know they can reach any of us if they have a need, whether it be for a landscaping questions or for something they are interested in picking up from the nursery.

What are challenges for growers and landscapers in Buckhannon?

Starting and running a successful business is always a challenge. One of our biggest challenges in this region is the extreme weather conditions which dictate the window of opportunity to get many things accomplished, from growing to maintaining top quality products. Our winters are brutal, with heavy snow and winds. We experience intense heat in the summer as well as high winds, drought and flooding. This means we have to be mindful of plant selections when designing a landscape for sustainability.

Pest management is another challenge. Landscaping is an investment of time and money, and there is nothing more frustrating than seeing it get eaten or destroyed by wildlife. We are always searching for new plants and trees to help our customers select plant varieties that are less appealing to deer.

How have your customers/ market changed in last ten years?

Customers are looking for ways to expand their outdoor living space. Today, homeowners have more information available to them via social media networks such as landscape web sites, HGTV,

Pinterest, DIY and more, that provides them with basic understanding and ideas of what their homes with a new landscape design could look like. Tastes vary greatly with every customer, so we have become better listeners to help them achieve the end result they desire.

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Bobby Gompers and Brenda Lilly

Amanda Hamilton chosen to receive 2016 WVNLA scholarship

Congratulations to Amanda Hamilton, who was recently selected as the 2016 recipient of the Marcus W. Rennix Memorial Scholarship. A junior horticulture major at West Virginia University,



Amanda Hamilton enjoyed this view in Paris when she visited as part of WVU's Western Europe Study Trip in 2015.

HIGHLAND (continued from previous page)

What trends in gardening and landscaping do you think will be popular this year? With so many new varieties in annuals and perennials, people are excited again about planting and gardening. Customers are looking to add more hardscape projects and destinations to their landscape, so that they can extend the season with more outdoor living spaces. This year, customers like the idea of designing a landscape with a theme, something that matches their personalities and life styles, yet keeping in mind a design they can add to over the years. Because lighting technology has improved so much through the years, many folks are adding more lighting into their landscape projects. Lastly, people want to get back into gardening with a purpose – wanting to make a homesteaders garden in addition to an ornamental garden.

Any additional information you would like to include? We have learned a lot over the last 15 years, there is nothing easy about this industry and there are challenges around every corner. But with hard work, continuing education and good partnerships in the industry, success can be achieved. We are having a great time and are looking forward to a prosperous spring – not only our businesses, but for everyone in the WVNLA.

Hamilton grew up in Raleigh County and graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School. She was chosen for the award based on her excellent grades, involvement in student activities and glowing teacher and employer recommendations.

Hamilton's interest in plants started when she was a child. She loved playing outdoors and in her family's gardens, where they grew lots of vegetables, herbs and flowers. In high school, Hamilton excelled in biology. Her teacher, Ms. Clark, encouraged students to excel and to consider careers in the sciences. For Hamilton, she recommended agronomy or horticulture.

"After some investigation of what the field of horticulture included, I fell in love. It was the perfect mix of biology, chemistry, art and hands-on work," she said.

Hamilton encourages other students to consider careers in the green industry. "Any student who doesn't want to spend their working career in a cubicle from 9 to 5 should consider horticulture or the green industry," she said. She finds cultivation particularly rewarding.

In addition to succeeding in her course work and being involved in activities such as the Horticulture Club at WVU, Hamilton has held two enriching internships. At The Greenbrier resort, she developed an interest in public grounds maintenance. She credits her employers there with giving her both hands-on skills and lessons about management.

"I learned that every garden had a history and a value to cherish. I learned how to cherish it through my coworkers and the guests at the resort, who would approach us just to tell us how beautiful the grounds were," Hamilton said.

Her second internship was with Bob's Market and Greenhouses in Mason County. This large-scale production facility gave her a new perspective on the industry's demands and challenges. After working there, she saw "what it takes to produce the petunias, and all the hands required to grow and harvest the seeds we buy in paper envelopes each year. We saw why the costs keep rising and all of the sacrifices our very own planet makes just so we can enjoy these delicate delights."

After she graduates in 2017, Hamilton hopes to land a job maintaining public or historic grounds, or a botanic garden. She is interested in helping people understand a garden's history and how plants connect to the past, the environment and to people.

WVNLA NEWS

P. O. Box 20284

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Dates to Note

- March 15** CPH exam, Charleston.
- March 12-20** Chicago Flower & Garden Show.
www.chicagoflower.com
- March 17** Sustainable Landscape Conference,
University of Connecticut.
www.2016slc.uconn.edu
- April 8** Production Green House Tour,
Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square,
PA. www.longwoodgardens.org
- April 20-21** Interior Plantscape Symposium,
Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square,
PA. www.landscapeprofessionals.org
- June 14-15** National Lawn & Garden Show,
Bloomington, IL. www.nlgshow.com
- June 22** WVNLA Board of Directors meeting,
Sutton.
- July 9-12** Cultivate'16, Columbus, OH.
www.cultivate16.org
- Aug. 2-4** Independent Garden Center Show
(East), King of Prussia, PA.
www.igcshow.com

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