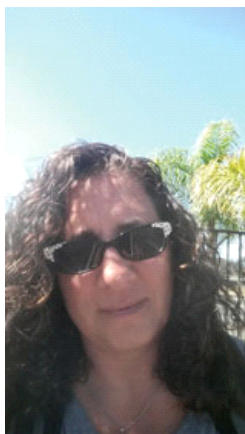


Features

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Communications Specialists

Maria Zampini



Confucius said, “Study the past if you would define the future.” Let us go back in time before *Green Profit*, before *GrowerTalks* magazine, to the early years of Ball Horticultural Company and its founder George J. Ball.

A seedsman and flower grower, as described on the Ball Publishing website, he was a prolific writer, too. He authored several books, his best known being the Ball RedBook, the bible for the greenhouse industry. He also began *GrowerTalks* in 1937. Therefore, we can say Ball was a garden writer.

I think garden writers today are an under-utilized link to green industry success and I suspect Mr. Ball just might agree with me. I feel this industry segment has potential unbeknownst to many and as such, we’re missing out on an opportunity to help our businesses reap increased green profits.

Together with Diane Blazek of the National Garden Bureau, we co-chair the Association Outreach Task Force for the Garden Writers Association (GWA). We’re charged with expanding GWA’s awareness of other green industry associations nationally and internationally, and to have those same organizations be aware of GWA, its members and their services.

My goal today is to introduce you to garden writers. Yes, yes, I’m talking about those nerdy plant people, some of whom may not have degrees in horticulture or decades of experience in the industry. However, members are no doubt some of the most passionate plant and gardening people you’ll ever meet. Most are ready and willing to learn more; be their mentor! Many have some level of direct connection to the end consumer, including master gardeners, garden club members and novice gardeners; that exact demographic our industry wants to reach!

What can they do for you? How about being an extraordinary seasonal employee? Let me give you two examples. Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp has her own business, Write for You, and has authored two books: “Indiana Gardener’s Guide” and “The Guide to American Gardens.” She’s the editor of Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan State-by-State Gardening magazines. Plus, for 16 years, she’s worked at Sullivan Hardware and Garden in Indianapolis, Indiana. Besides sales, she teaches classes and conducts programs.

Readers may be familiar with Christina Salwitz, “The Personal Garden Coach” and co-author of “Fine Foliage,” as she’s penned articles for this publication. But what you may not know is she’s been working at IGCs for almost 25 years and currently is part-time for Newcastle Fruit and Produce in Newcastle, Washington. Christina grows their business, helping with social media, and provides customers with sound landscape advice from experience, while they sell her book and she creates magazine-worthy specialty container designs at the nursery.

Garden writers can be your partner in communication as well; all you have to do is reach out. Quite often the green industry lags behind in technology and marketing prowess. As an owner, if you know these areas are key to the future of your business, yet they aren’t your personal strong suit or you find them simply overwhelming, garden writers can help de-mystify social media and can fill the marketing void on a “by-project” or part- or full-time basis.

Members of the GWA are experienced in crafting messages that support gardening and landscaping. They reach customers, be it consumer or trade, who buy your goods and services, through newspapers, magazines, website, television, radio, blogs and social media. They’re the ones who write about new plants they trial, tools they try and share what they learn from professional development programs, trade shows and gardens they visit.

Find one today. You have nothing to lose and the gold standard of communication to gain. **GP**

Find garden writers in your area by visiting gardenwriters.org. Click on the “Find” tab to locate a writer, photographer or speaker. You’ll find them at trade events by looking for the green garden writer badge ribbons. Visit us in person at our Cultivate’15 and MANTS’16 booths.

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