

IT HAPPENED IN VEGAS

Last month, Tim and I spent a week in Las Vegas at the National Hardware Show, where *Lawn & Garden Retailer* was a sponsor of the Lawn, Garden & Outdoor Living segment of the show. We saw some new products, visited with advertisers and took in a few sessions. But the best parts of the show, if I do say so myself, were the presentations Tim and I put together.

Creating Inspiration

The panel discussion Tim facilitated on creating inspiration in the garden center was on Tuesday. The panelists were Faith Savage of Syngenta Flowers, Chris Sexton of Fafard and Ron Greening of Dramm Corporation. They all offered a unique perspective on how to inspire customers and got the conversation going up on stage about how color, cleanliness and other important techniques combine for a stellar in-store experience.



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Calloway's in the Spotlight

On Wednesday, Kim Bird was the star of the Lawn, Garden & Outdoor Living stage. Kim is vice president of marketing for Calloway's Nursery, the 2010 Merchandiser of the Year.

(Look back at our February issue for the feature we wrote on them.) We were thrilled to invite her along to the show with us, and she really wowed the crowd!

Kim presented first on social media at Calloway's — you might recognize her name from our Tech Talk series, too — followed by a case study on merchandising. There were two especially great concepts in her presentations that I loved. The first was how social media works to narrow the "E-gap," the distance between what shoppers expect and what they experience. And the second was the idea of "Apollo 13 merchandising," that each store gets a plan from corporate for what they need to do each season, but they use their creativity and whatever materials they have on hand to create the displays beautifully and cost effectively.



Generation Y

Finally, on Thursday morning, we stashed our suitcases in the booth and hunkered down in our seats for Kelly Norris' presentation on getting Gen Y into the garden. I could go on and on about his presentation. He was energetic and passionate and challenged so many of the assumptions that retailers make about younger shoppers, especially where gardening is concerned. If you don't know Kelly, you will. At 23, he's already a published author and does speaking engagements all over the country; he's working on his master's degree in horticulture and manages the Rainbow Iris Farm in Bedford, Iowa. In his spare time ("spare time"), he recently created a "bookazine" called Dig This! aimed at showing the sexier side of gardening. Check it out at www.digthismag.com for more information.

The PowerPoint slideshows for all three presentations will be available on SlideShare.net in the coming weeks for you to view and comment on. I'll provide links in future issues of the Retail Report — stay tuned!



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