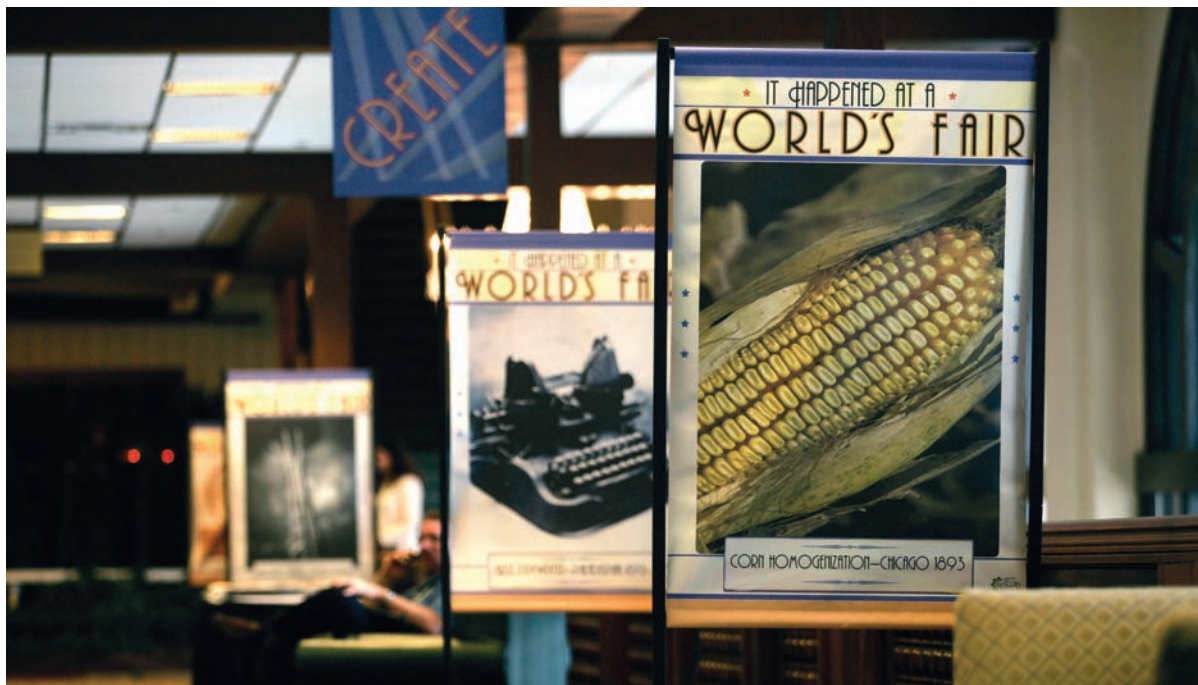


# EXPERIENCING A WORLD OF IDEAS

ANLA provided attendees with “A World of Ideas” at the 2007 Management Clinic, which bundled networking opportunities, educational sessions and a lot of fun all into one event.

By Meghan Boyer



**D**edicated to providing industry owners and managers with marketing, financial, inventory control and leadership skills, the American Nursery and Landscape Association’s (ANLA) Management Clinic is an intense 3-day event that takes place each year in Louisville, Ky., at the end of January. This year’s theme — A World of Ideas — encompassed much of what the Management Clinic experience is all about: growers, distributors, landscapers and retailers coming together to share ideas, trends and concerns through networking events and educational sessions. In all, 1,200 people attended this year’s event.

The *Lawn & Garden Retailer* staff attended the event both to take in knowledge and produce the Management Clinic *Daily Reader*, a newsletter that highlights events and key sessions for attendees each day during the clinic. You can read the *Daily Reader* on our Web site at [www.lgrmag.com](http://www.lgrmag.com).

In our dual roles as attendees and newsletter producers, we participated in sessions, attended speaking events and talked with attendees about their experiences at Clinic and at home. Here is a sampling of what we learned, heard and saw at this year’s ANLA Management Clinic.

## Sustainability’s Hold On Attendees

The first keynote speaker at Clinic introduced a topic that remained on the tips of everyone’s tongues during the entire event: sustainability. William McDonough, founder of William McDonough + Partners, Architecture and Community Design and McDonough Braungart and coauthor of the book *Cradle to Cradle*, spoke about the sustainable design and development movement.

Speaking to a standing-room-only crowd, McDonough relayed the experiences he has had, the people he has met and the developments he has created throughout the past 30 years in his quest to create a unified sustainability philosophy. He encouraged floriculture industry members to embrace sustainability and be active members in its promotion.

Perhaps even more interesting than McDonough’s talk were the attendees’ reactions to it. The audience warmed to what he had to say so much that they gave him a standing ovation at the end of his speech and bought every single copy of his book from the Clinic bookstore (in less than an hour). The sustainability buzz continued each day of Management Clinic as large and small groups of attendees stopped in the halls to share thoughts on the topic.

I talked with one attendee who was particularly moved and motivated by McDonough’s ideas. An employee at a West Coast garden center, this man’s duties included putting together consumer events for his store. He said he couldn’t stop brainstorming about different ways to bring the sustainability message to consumers through an event, such as a presentation on varieties that are native to the area. Other attendees echoed his preoccupation with the topic in their own ways.

## Swapping Good Ideas

An idea swap takes place each year at Management Clinic; growers, landscapers, distributors and retailers each gather in different rooms and discuss ideas and concerns of importance to their respective fields. Some attendees prepare presentations in advance to show others what they have implemented in



**Above:** “A World of Ideas” was the theme of this year’s ANLA Management Clinic. **Bottom:** William McDonough, one of Management Clinic’s keynote speakers, talked to a standing-room-only crowd about sustainability.





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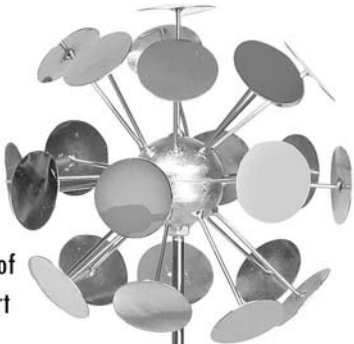
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their businesses while others ask discussion questions to get feedback from the group. Here is a sampling of what was discussed at each idea swap shop:

**Landscape.** Charging for design services was one topic discussed among attendees, and there were strong feelings on both sides of the debate. One attendee said he gives clients a 50-percent discount on the design service if they choose his company for installation. Others argued that designing is an artistic endeavor and clients should pay for design expertise always.

**Grower.** Some discussion focused on protecting employees from lightning strikes, which was a problem for one attendee, who had a strike occur on his property and injure a person. He suggested everyone visit [www.lightningsafety.com](http://www.lightningsafety.com) to learn more about protection.

**Retail.** Events and promotions were the main discussion topic. Attendees discussed community possibilities, such as working with local societies or Girl Scout troops, catering to the elderly and so much more.

**Distribution.** Focusing mainly on sales, many attendees asked questions such as, "Who is your customer?" and "What does a good order look like?" Attendees also discussed different ways to motivate employees.

## Talking With The Industry

Starting with an internationally themed opening reception and continuing with two nights of Muggets (a meet-and-greet event with proceeds going to the Horticultural Research Institute), the networking opportunities kept attendees busy when they weren't in sessions. We had conversations about labor issues (keeping good employees), business matters (people are generally optimistic about the year) and worries about the industry's consumer perception (the release of the book *Flower Confidential*).

To have great industry-related conversations of your own and attend three days worth of educational sessions, mark your calendars for next year's ANLA Management Clinic: Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 2008, in Louisville, Ky. You can also visit [www.managementclinic.org](http://www.managementclinic.org) for more information on this year's and next year's Clinic. ✎

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