



Slow Flowers Summit 2018 speakers, from left: Mary Kate Kinnane, Kelly Shore, conference founder Debra Prinzing, Jonathan Weber, Jessica Hall, Walker Marsh, Christina Stembel, Kit Wertz and Casey Schwartz (not pictured, Mud Baron).

Progressive People and Sustainable Flowers

Slow Flowers Summit proves informational and inspiring for attendees.

When progressive and curious flower people come together, it's no surprise that innovative ideas develop, align and reemerge with a new focus. That's exactly what took place at the second annual **Slow Flowers Summit** on June 29, which drew a sold-out attendance at the Marriott Wardman Park in Washington, D.C.

Designed to serve professionals in the Slow Flowers community, including floral designers, farmer-florists and vendors who supply them (flower farmers, wholesale florists, soft and hard goods suppliers), as well as members of the media and educators, the one-day conference examined new models of floristry.

As an interactive LIVE element of **American Flowers Week** (June 28-July 4), the Summit drew more than 100 attendees. Of those in attendance, 60 percent self-identify as florists and floral designers while 20 percent describe themselves as farmers

and farmer-florists. The top reasons people attended included connecting with other attendees followed by learning about new resources and connecting with speakers.

Taking our cue from the many topics and experts featured in the pages of the "Slow Flowers Journal" and in other channels, such as the "Slow Flowers Podcast," the Summit presented speakers and subjects on floral business, design and technology – with the goal of stimulating attendees to think about their own ventures in a new way.

Keynote presenter **Christina Stembel**, of **Farmgirl Flowers** in San Francisco, Calif., shared her advice on scaling any floral business with goal setting and critical analysis of one's core brand.

Two floral design presentations were geared toward business models, as well. **Kelly Shore**, of **Petals by the Shore**

in Olney, Md., and Mary Kate Kinnane, of *The Local Bouquet* in Little Compton, R.I., teamed up to share their approach to sourcing from local flower farms as part of their branding model. The sister team of Casey Schwartz and Kit Wertz, of *Flower Duet* in Los Angeles, Calif., revealed their multifaceted studio's key income channels, including teaching floral design to professionals and enthusiasts in Southern California.

We rounded out the day with two panels. First, the *Flowers & Technology* panel featured Jonathan Weber, of *greenSinner* in Pittsburgh, Pa.; Jessica Hall, of *Harmony Harvest Farm* in Weyers Cave, Va.; and Christina Stembel. Their comments opened the possibilities of expanding markets and the many ways to sell and transport flowers. Finally, there was a heartfelt presentation by two cause-related flower farmers, Walker Marsh, of *The Flower Factory* in Baltimore, Md., and Mud Baron, of *Flowers on Your Head* in Los Angeles, Calif.

The diversity of topics and speakers reflects the character of *Slow Flowers*, which is a community of like-minded professionals pursuing and supporting the mission to save domestic, local and seasonal floral agriculture, from the farm to the studio.

Dana O'Sullivan, of *Della Blooms* in Bethesda, Md., shared her reaction to the event: "The *Slow Flowers Summit* should be on every floral designer's or flower farmer's bucket list. If you're curious about how a relationship can be cultivated with local flower farmers or floral designers and others in the business, the Summit is for you. As a floral designer, learning about intentional sourcing from farms, with farmers who can tell me how the blooms were grown, versus habitually relying on bloom brokers was a breath of fresh air. My designs improve with fresh product and inspirational varieties whenever I can source locally."

As we wrapped up the Summit 2018, it was time to reveal the third *Slow Flowers Summit*, which will take place on July 1-2, 2019, in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn. Save the dates! I'm so pleased that we have a cohost in Christine Hoffman, founder of *Twin Cities Flower Exchange*, a floral wholesale hub located in St. Paul that represents local flower farmers and chemical-free practices, now in its second season.

Learn more about the *Slow Flowers Summit* at slowflowerssummit.com. Check the video tab to watch past presentations from 2017 and to find subscription details for the 2018 presentations. ■



Christina Stembel, of *Farmgirl Flowers*, was the Summit keynote speaker.



The *Slow Flowers Summit* drew inquisitive and broad-minded floral designers, growers, wholesalers, educators and members of the media seeking new ideas for their practices.



Melanie Spilbeler and Anne Graves from *Syndicate Sales* attended the Summit and donated vases and mechanics for speakers' use.



Kelly Shore and Mary Kate Kinnane revealed their intentional approaches to sourcing botanicals from domestic and U.S. growers while also showcasing their design techniques.