
Member Profile - Dan Gregg, Grelen Nursery, Grelen Tree Care, & The Market at Grelen



“In 1990, Dan Gregg founded Grelen Nursery, Inc. on a corner of a cattle farm owned by his family for three generations. The operation commenced as a wholesale field nursery; however, over the years, local demand grew to such a great extent that Gregg shifted the focus to retail sales and landscape installation and in 1997, hired Zeke Galvin as a partner to manage the landscaping business.



As the demand for Grelen’s trees and services grew, Gregg and Galvin realized a need to expand its operation, and in 2003, purchased a 200-acre farm located in Somerset, Virginia. Approximately four years later, the operations of the nursery were moved to the Somerset farm, which provided the much-needed space for the growing business. During the past seven years, Grelen has acquired two adjoining properties. Today, Grelen Nursery is one of the largest agricultural businesses in Orange County and one of the largest tree nurseries in the state of Virginia. The farm is almost 600 acres in size offering hundreds of types of trees, shrubs and plants and a full range of landscaping, hardscaping and maintenance services. With seven crews, two large tree

spade trucks to transplant mature trees and a team of master stonemasons, craftsmen and gardeners, Grelen Nursery caters to clients who demand, and receive, the highest quality products and services.

Dan describes Orange County: "This is a wonderful community, full of beauty, history and opportunity. The local economy has changed, and manufacturing type industries are no longer the bedrock, or the future, of our economy. I believe agriculture and tourism will play a much more vital role in Virginia’s economic battle to be sustainable. With Grelen Nursery, I want to combine the two into a potent local economic engine. I want to do my part as a citizen and business owner to bring as much to the community’s economic table as possible. I want to keep my land agricultural and protect its open space. I want to prove that agri-businesses can be sustainable and economically viable, and that agriculture can actually stimulate tourism and, in turn, stimulate the local economy.”



It was with these strong principles guiding them, that Dan and Zeke decided to found The Market at Grelen in April, 2013.

The Market at Grelen's Mission Statement is *“To create a family friendly environment which celebrates open space, agriculture and the farm-to-table philosophy while successfully marketing our products and services to our visitors resulting in a successful and sustainable business model.”* This wonderful destination farm market and garden shop is like no other in the area and meets, if not exceeds, these goals.



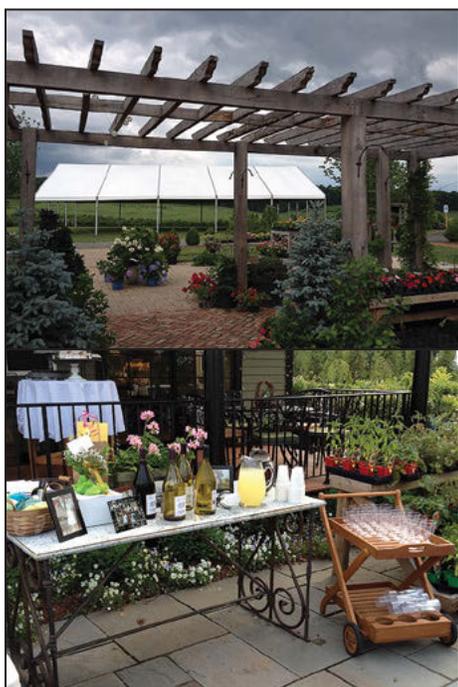
Set on Grelen Nursery's 600 acres in Somerset Virginia, The Market at Grelen boasts breathtaking 360 degree mountain views. You can go shopping any day, but a trip to Grelen is about the experience. Head out on a

pick-your-own adventure, stroll through the lovely display garden, choose from an ever-changing array of premium fruits and vegetables or enjoy a casual cafe lunch or a Thursday night concert on the patio

In the cafe, it's all about local. Grelen's very own Chef Mel Daniels makes unforgettable goodies with Grelen grown vegetables, fruits and herbs as well as other locally sourced items. The Menu...Homemade Pastries, Fresh Dips, Soups, Salads, & Cheese Plates...is simplicity at its most luxurious. Also available are local Virginia cheese, peanuts, snacks, grape juice, jams, beer & wine.



And for garden lovers it's a little bit of heaven! The Garden Shop offerings include: Bird Houses & Feeders, Gardening Tools & Supplies, Indoor & Outdoor Plants and Flowers, Lighting & Lanterns, Mixed Pots, Statuary, Urns & Garden Furniture and Unique Gifts.



Last, but certainly not least, The Market at Grelen is the perfect place to launch memories! As a new local event venue for weddings and more, the property offers endless possibilities for celebrations of all types and sizes. In only its second year of operation, it is quickly becoming one of the hot new destinations in the area.

OTHER BACKGROUND:

Allen Dandridge (Dan) Gregg attended High School at Cincinnati Country Day School and graduated in 1982. He then attended Duke University in Durham, North Carolina and graduated in 1986 with an AB in Economics.

He is President of Grelen Nursery, Inc., The Market at Grelen, Inc., and Grelen Tree Care, Inc.

Grelen Nursery's Market Niche: Growing unusual ornamentals to specimen size. The Market at Grelen focuses on providing a memorable "experience" to sophisticated gardeners and families drawing from all of Central VA and DC. Grelen Tree Care's Market Niche is plant health care management.



Business Philosophy: Grow a product and provide a service of excellent quality. Expand through vertical integration allowing control of product quality from time seedling is planted in ground at nursery until installed in client's yard

Some of the Associations and groups that Dan has belonged to: Piedmont Landscape Association: Charlottesville, VA: Officer - Year, Vice-President- two years (mid 1990s), Orange Downtown Alliance; (VA Mainstreet

Program in Orange, VA) Board Member for 8+ years: President 2009, 2010, Chair, Design Committee 2002 till 2014, Orange Rotary: 1991 to 1996, Orange Chamber of Commerce 1991 to present

Awards that Dan Gregg has received: Agribusiness of the Year - 2008, Orange Chamber of Commerce, Business Person of the Year - 2011, Orange County Chamber of Commerce



Best Idea He Ever Stole: Designing the nursery layout following contours of land rather than in straight rows. (Taken from Dick Irven

of TDH Nursery in Phoenix, MD). This concept provided a means to protect against erosion while creating breathtaking views of the nursery for our clients to admire while touring the nursery operation and visiting The Market.

Favorite Plant: Japanese Maple (There are so many cultivars providing different sizes, shapes and colors, and most are relatively easy to grow.) Favorite Native: Sourwood

Favorite Flower Color: Blue

Dislikes: Franklinia--It is a beautiful tree with incredible characteristics (flower, fall color, overall habit), but it is almost impossible to grow for any length of time.

Best Habit: Kentucky Coffee Tree-- Pretty sparse when young, but the mature habit and structure can't be matched

Worst Habit: Weeping Blue Atlas Cedar--Way too pendulous and leggy. It requires too much pruning to establish a satisfactory form

Hobbies: Fishing, Hiking, Mushroom Hunting, Traveling and gardening (when there is time)

Dream Vacation: Alaska

Hero: My Wife, Leslie. She has mastered the art of juggling family and business.

Hardest Part of Your Workday: Trying to explain to a client why a plant died or is struggling through the transplanting process...so often, there isn't an easy/obvious reason as to why.

Best Part of Your Workday: Watching guests at the Market enjoy their visit, and visiting customers' properties a couple of years after completion of a large landscaping project and sharing the sense of pride for the end result.

Helpful Hint: When working with employees keep things positive. My favorite management book: The One Minute Manager

Hottest Upcoming Trend: I would say succulents are really hot at the Market and Natives continue to be hot at the nursery

Best Advice Ever Received: From Dick Irvin at TDH Nursery: "Don't stress about the weather as you have zero control over it; focus on the issues you can influence."

How or Why Your Company Managed to Stay in Business So Long? I give most credit to the hiring of Zeke Galvin; he is a workaholic who cares most about client satisfaction. He has made Grelen Nursery what it is today.

Biggest Challenge, Obstacle or Disaster in Business History: Wet spring snows and exceptionally cold winters

Who is your most significant mentor and why: Dick Irvin, TDH Nursery (explained above). I worked at his nursery for two years while considering opening my own business.

Future Plans: Zeke and I have many dreams including expanding into propagation and, in the more distant future, opening a camp for inner-city children. Our goal with the camp is to create a setting where children can learn and get excited about agriculture and open space.

How has the industry changed since you started in business? The internet is the biggest change. Plant sourcing and marketing are so much easier which allows for a more efficient and competitive market.

What do you know now, that you would have liked to know when you started in business? Nursery trends and how to stay ahead. Such as: 1) what is in demand today, may not be in demand in four years when current plantings are available for sale (and even if they are still in demand, there is likely to be plenty of supply and maybe over-supply) and 2) don't be scared-off by big box low prices as it is pretty easy to differentiate our products from theirs.

Where do you think the green industry is going in the next 10 years? From a retail perspective, I think clients are looking for an "experience" while shopping. The Market creates that experience through our incredible setting, the product mix, excellent service and activities. The "experience" is what will motivate clients to return to a store.

Edited by Sandy Miller

