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Local gardener's TV show to debut Saturday

by Mondee Tilley
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Local Master Gardener Joe Lamp'1 is ready to release his new show "Growing a Greener World" that launches nationwide on PBS today, however, local viewers will only be able to view the show via the Internet.

After spending six years hosting TV shows for other people, Lamp'1 had a concept for a show and is in the process of finishing up work on the 17th show. Production began in

January, right here in Mount Airy at Lamp'1's home, when Chef Nathan Lyon flew in from California to film 26 cooking episodes.

Since then, Lamp'1 has been on a breakneck schedule flying from city to city and from garden to garden filming episode for his new series.

"We've been everywhere already and we have a lot more places to go. We've been to the west coast, the east coast — from Pittsburgh to Florida, to Brooklyn to San Francisco to Texas to St. Louis to Atlanta. We go where we need to, to get the story," Lamp'1 said.

Something that really concerns Lamp'1 is that the PBS carrier in North Carolina, UNC-TV hasn't picked up the show to be aired locally.

"It's disappointing to hear that a hometown guy isn't getting picked up right away when there are lots of stations around the country like Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles, Dallas, all of New Jersey, that are picking it up. You work really hard and to think of all the places, you'd get support from your home state," Lamp'1 said.

"We put our heart and soul into this and we break our necks to produce a really impressive, quality product and of all the places that you think you are going to get great support, but you don't, it's kind of disheartening," Lamp'1 said. "We've been shooting in the state, supporting the state and it's nationally recognized, then they don't pick it up."

The first episode of "Growing a Greener World" will be able to be viewed locally via the Internet today.

He hopes that local citizens call UNC-TV to let them know that they want to have it broadcast on their local station.

Lamp'1 produced a pilot show with his own money in October of last year. He utilized his contacts in the industry and got some well-known sponsors such as Subaru, Burpee home garden, Fiskars and Liquid Fence Company.

"So we've got major companies behind this series — they believed so much in what in we are doing that they invested with major dollar amounts, a new series that hasn't even aired yet. That's how much they believed in the message of our

show and what we are about," he said.

Lamp'1 said those sponsors enabled him to build a team of support staff, make travel plans, hire the associate producers and getting everyone together in order to make the show a reality. Lamp'1's team started filming in earnest in January, when Chef Lyon came to Mount Airy to film 26 cooking segments.

"We wanted to teach people how to cook with local ingredients. We wanted to teach them how to use the food that is coming from their garden, or that they purchased locally and make great meals with them," he said.

Also during the month of January, Lamp'1 flew to Florida to shoot in the dead of winter and still have good footage.

"When you are doing a gardening show that is in production all year, you've got to find some places that are ideally suited for January weather," Lamp'1 said.

He said the idea behind the show and the manner in which it is being filmed is different from anything now on TV.

"We are really investing in the show to make it different from anything that has been done so far. I believe if you are different in a good way, people will embrace that. So that's what I'm trying to do with this series is be different in a good way," Lamp'1 said. "Wherever we go we feature people, places or organizations that are doing good things for the planet with an emphasis on gardening."

Lamp'1 said the show is about more than just gardening, there is also a heavy emphasis on living in more environmentally responsible ways.

"If you are into gardening, you are going to love the show. But you don't have to be into gardening to love the show. This is a show that is about people who care to do environmentally responsible things and they are curious at what those things are, not only people, but companies who are doing more environmentally responsible things. We go there, we learn the story and then we tell it in a fun and exciting way. We think we have a good product," Lamp'1 said.

The show is being distributed by American Public Television, which is the largest distributor for content for public television in the category of weekend, lifestyle shows.

"We are in very good company and we are a brand new series. We are honored to be in their library," he said.

Lamp'1 said he chose the route of public television over cable TV because he wanted to be able to own and control the content of the show. He gave PBS an exclusive three-year contract on the show, but he still owns the rights to it, so in three years, if a cable network wants to pick up the show and run it in syndication, he said he would consider that option.

Lamp'1 hosted shows on cable TV for six years prior to his latest undertaking. He said they were gardening shows, but they weren't getting the message across in a way that he felt the story needed to be told. He said that was because they were produced by people who weren't gardeners, they were producers.

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Lamp'l started hosting a show on the Do-it-Yourself (DIY) network in 2003. He was the host of a show called "Fresh from the garden." He said that show was all about how to grow a garden from seed to harvest.

"What was amazing about that show is that we were ahead of our time. In 2009, there were more people growing their own food than ever before," he said.

When the show on DIY retired, Lamp'l took over the host position on a show called "GardenSMART" on PBS. He worked on that show for three years. He left that show in 2008, and in 2009 started working on his own series.

"With the background in hosting, my knowledge and passion for sustainability, I felt like I needed to put those two together and create this show."

Off-camera, Joe runs The Joe Gardener Company, devoted to eco-friendly gardening and sustainable outdoor living.

Lamp'l is deeply committed to growing a greener world through his acclaimed books, his well-liked blog and podcasts, a nationally syndicated newspaper column and regular contributions to popular magazines and social media networks. His knowledge and passion for gardening and sustainability combined with his down-to-earth approachability have earned him a large and loyal following.

He said the episodes will be available online on his Web site, www.growingagreenerworld.com, on today.

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