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The **Cut Flower**

Q U A R T E R L Y

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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No-till Flower Farming

Jennie Love



Here we are. The height of summer. Wait, how the heck did we get here already?!?

The 14+ hour days make everything a blur, don't they? How are you holding up? If you're a new grower, know that now is the hardest part of the season. August is BRUTAL! Everyone wants to quit in August! Chin up. Keep trucking! The rich floral rewards in autumn will make you recall why you decided to start this crazy gig.

I remember my first dog days of summer as a very new flower "farmer". It was ten years ago. I was growing on a 20' x 40' plot, and I probably had about 200 varieties jammed in that tiny space. My market bouquets were interesting, to say the least. "No Two Alike" was my sales pitch! Literally, I had two stems of each variety and that was it. Oh, brother...

If I hadn't joined the ASCFG that year, I don't think I could respectfully call myself an actual flower farmer back then. But everyone starts somewhere and fortunately I had this amazing professional organization to help guide my very first steps.

Fast forward ten long, hot summers and my farm has expanded to over three acres in intensive production currently, and another to be added this fall, and another next spring. Still a tiny operation to many, but large scale to some. I like this size. Room to stretch but still very manageable for me and a small farm crew without any big equipment to bloat the company overhead.

This scale has allowed me a lot of freedom to experiment, too. This season in particular I've been undertaking an intentional overhaul of many of the farm's elements, from crop lists, to sales outlets, to building infrastructure, to planting systems, and more. Attempting all along to not throw the baby out with

the bathwater, which has been both an invigorating and stressful endeavor thus far. There are heaps of fodder for many articles to come in what I've recently learned. But for now I'll focus on no-till farming as I suspect it may be helpful to many who are "water-challenged", be it too much or too little.

No-till farming probably needs little explanation among this crowd, but for the sake of being crystal clear: no-till is a system of farming that (nearly, if not entirely) eliminates the turning over of the soil, be it with machinery or by hand.

Many reasons may spur a farmer to decide to go with no-till farming practices. Mine specifically were a notable decrease in yields due to soil compaction, continual above-average loss of organic matter, and a very wet growing season in 2018. That last bit is what really catapulted me into going wholly no-till in 2019.

I'm by no means an expert in no-till farming at this point. I'm barely a beginner. I leaned heavily on my winter reading to get me going. Andrew Mefferd's book *The Organic No-Till Farming Revolution: High Production Methods for Small-Scale Farmers* has been the foundation for what I decided to implement this season. I highly recommend giving it a read for the numerous case studies that it contains from diversified farms, including a few other ASCFG members!

The system for no-till that I've currently settled on at my farm is as follows:

1. Cover crop (a mix of rye, vetch, and clover) that was sown last fall and growing vigorously this spring was maintained with biweekly mowings until a given bed was ready to bring into production, at which point, the cover crop was "scalped" with a push mower.

2. A single layer of large cardboard pieces was placed on top of the bed. Cardboard was 4' wide and beds are 200' to 250' long*.



3. A deep layer (3-4") of well-aged compost was spread on top of the cardboard the full length and width of the bed. I was very careful to source a high-quality, aged compost for this.

4. Guide strings were used to keep straight lines as we transplanted four rows per bed, spacing between plants has been 4" to 6", depending on the crop. A soil knife has been the best tool for planting, as we have been able to puncture the cardboard with it to ensure the transplant root systems can reach the soil below as they spread out. The transplants do not initially reach the soil, though; their root balls are surrounded by the compost only. We have not attempted any direct seeding into this system.

5. Three lines of drip tape are placed on top of the bed after planting is finished. We had originally put the tape on first but we were hitting it too much under the compost and had a bevy of leaks so putting it on top seems to be prudent with this system.

(*A quick note about cardboard, as I've fielded a lot of questions about it from folks who have seen this new system in action at our farm: we are using mostly cardboard that a local appliance store puts out for recycling. We've also been using some shipping boxes that a retail florist occasionally brings us. The key is it needs to be big pieces of corrugated, brown (not colored) cardboard so that it's pretty easy to manage as we lay it out along the rows. Little pieces of cardboard would blow around in the breeze. Basic corrugated cardboard is made from all-organic materials (soy-based ink, animal hide glue, paper) so it is completely safe to use in your growing operations. The

cardboard in the beds here at my farm has been noticeably broken down about 3 weeks after planting so it doesn't stick around too long, but long enough to suppress the cover crop and any weeds that would want to pop up among the young transplants.)

So far, I give this system a big thumbs up. It's not perfect by any means, but it's working well. The downside has been the extra labor of hauling all that cardboard and compost around. Also, plants initially are sluggish to get growing until the cardboard starts breaking down. But, in terms of labor, our weeding time has gone WAY down so far this season. And the plants started growing vigorously as soon as they got settled and now seem to be outpacing where they would normally be at this point in the season. I believe I'll forego using cardboard in another season or two. First, I need to master the art of stale-bedding with tarps in a more timely fashion so that the cover crop is truly dead before we start planting in a bed. For now, the cardboard has been essential.

Ultimately, what I had hoped for with this pivot to a no-till farming system has indeed happened: we've been able to plant right on schedule even throughout a stormy, wet spring. If I was still relying on my tractor and tiller, we'd be weeks behind. So even if the plants are a little sluggish after planting, I'll still take it. Because, HEY, they got planted!

*Jennie Love is owner of Love 'n Fresh Flowers.
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The Mother of All Flower Holidays: Mother's Day

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick



Mother's Day is a huge floral opportunity in the United States. One-fourth of the flower and plant purchases made for holidays occur at Mother's Day, according to the Society of American Florists. If you're in the flower business, the first question about Mother's Day is: should you participate?

Farmers are limited by their climate. Zones 8 and above may be warm enough for field flowers on Mother's Day, while zones 7 and under could experience spring frosts through May. Most Mother's Day crops will need careful attention during the off season: finicky crops such as ranunculus, stock, and delphinium need greenhouses or tunnels in cooler climates. Many farmers must work through the winter months to produce Mother's Day flowers, and invest in tunnels and greenhouses.

For farmer-florists and designers, the question about whether to provide flowers for Mother's Day is all about logistics. Many small designers are not set up to take Mother's Day orders, which usually involves setting up an online order process, doing a large number of deliveries in a short time period, and hiring extra help. One way to participate in Mother's Day without much infrastructure is to try a partnership. Popping up at a local business is a great way to sell flowers and increase your brand recognition. Be sure to work with a small business that aligns with your mission and has high foot traffic on spring weekends.

If you decide that Mother's Day is not for you (you can't make money, you want to lie on the couch, local flowers are not available), don't stress! Decisions that are best for your business and your life are always the best decisions.

If you decide to jump in to Mother's Day (you can make money, logistically it works, you're a little nuts) get ready for a wild ride! This article is all about the logistics of Mother's Day. What we don't talk about as much is the heart behind it. Mother's Day is a great opportunity to share locally-grown flowers with a huge audience. It's a joy and a privilege, and we're grateful that we do this work.

Planning One Year Out

Laura Beth

In Zone 7, most of our Mother's Day flowers are under cover in heated and unheated hoopouses. A warm spring this year meant we had field flowers too! Each season is entirely different—we've had years when the field and unheated hoops were too cold for blooms come Mother's Day.

I plan next year's Mother's Day just a few weeks after this year's. That way, all the lessons learned are fresh in my mind. First, I look at what we sold, and then decide whether to grow more or less of each item next year. Then, I do a little market research: what did other people have blooming around Mother's Day that I want to try?

This year, our biggest sellers were

- Ranunculus: soaked and pre-sprouted week 47, then planted in the unheated hoops
- Dianthus, Chantilly snapdragons, and Foxy foxglove: seeded week 32, then planted in the field and covered with remay through winter
- Bachelors' buttons and orlaya: direct seeded in the field week 39
- Deutzia: perennial
- Ninebark blooms: perennial
- Autumn olive and Japanese maple: foraged
- Icelandic poppies: plugs ordered through Gloeckner, planted week 45 in the unheated hoop
- Delphinium 'Cliveden Beauty': plugs ordered through Gloeckner, planted week 45 in the heated hoop

Next season, we'll do more Chantilly snapdragons and foxglove of different varieties. We'll add ornithogalum to our crop plan in the heated house. We'll overwinter dusty miller and eucalyptus in the heated house, in hopes that it will look nice for Mother's Day. Last year, we planted *Viburnum roseum*, so hopefully that will start producing next season around early May. We forgot to sow chamomile (whoops!), so we'll definitely remember to do that this August for field planting and overwintering. We'll try some campanula for fall planting in the unheated hoop. We'll also try some late anemones in the unheated hoops. And, we'll start a last succession of stock for the heated hoop, timed for early May.



Planning One Month Out

Laura Beth

About a month before the big day, florists start to reach out about pre-orders. They want to know if peonies will be blooming, what foliage we'll have, and how much will be available. It is hard to say "I don't know," but that's mostly what I do. The weather in the spring is just too variable to predict a month out.

Instead of promising specific varieties to florists, I prefer to commit to general amounts of flowers and foliage. For example, I can tell Ellen I'll have at least 40 bunches of flowers, and it will probably be a mix of ranunculus, dianthus, bachelors' buttons, and poppies, but I'm not sure exactly how much of each. That gives her a sense of how much she will need to order elsewhere.

We get lots of requests from new florists or really small-scale florists for Mother's Day, and we say no to most. I'm sure it doesn't sit too well with those who want to order from us, but we have to show our appreciation for our best customers by giving them all we've got on Mother's Day.

I've learned the hard way not to schedule anything in my life the entire month of May, when flowers need cutting constantly and exhaustion starts to creep in. It's best to have a clear schedule that whole month, so I can focus on getting quality blooms out the door and taking naps as often as is reasonable! Another lesson: in the future, I'll hire extra help for the month of May so that the farm can stay clean and weeded while my full time crew and I are busy cutting and delivering.

Ellen

A month out from Mother's Day, we start marketing our Mother's Day offerings. We use social media, direct email marketing, and word of mouth. I want everyone to order EARLY, as in a month before, because the earlier people order, the better I can plan. Unfortunately that is not how it works. No one, not even the most diligent of flower gift givers thinks of Mother's Day until two weeks before at the earliest. This means we must do our best at guessing how many flowers we'll need for the number of arrangements we hope to sell. We use historical data to help us, as well as that current year's sales goals.

This is also the time when we start reaching out to the growers to inquire about flower availability. I know that it's too early to get an accurate count of flowers that far out, but what I want is to get a sense of what flowers are available and let the growers know that we want them! Flowers this early in the season are coveted. In our zone, 7a/7b, tulips are mostly done by Mother's Day and peonies are usually not ready yet. This leaves many field growers without much to offer. Growers who have flowers available are inundated with requests and we want to be first or at least close to first to getting on their radar with our needs.

But, the reality is that if the weather is chilly as it often is here in Maryland through May, we'll get all of these lovely blooms just AFTER Mother's Day. But that's okay, because then it's wedding season! My strategy is to do my very best, and then let Mother Nature have her say about it without complaint.

Ellen

We don't really start thinking about Mother's Day until about 3 months out. At this time, we start to figure out what vases we want to use, what arrangements we want to offer, and what our staff's availability is. We'll start to mock up arrangements for marketing as well as put together our online order form.

In the early days of LoCoFlo we ignored Mother's Day because we didn't have access to enough locally-grown flowers, and we didn't want to break with our values and use non-local flowers for the holiday. After a few years, when we had more growers, we offered a limited number of deliveries and did a few pop-ups during the few days leading up to the holiday. Now we offer a Mother's Day Open Studio on the Wednesday of Mother's day week. We are also open for walk-in sales on Saturday and Sunday. Finally, we offer delivery of individual arrangements all week including on Mother's Day.



The Week of Mother's Day

Laura Beth

Our work is done after frenzied cutting Sunday through Sunday. We delivered to Ellen almost every day of the week! I don't remember what I did on that last Sunday night, but I'm pretty sure it involved "The Office" and a 7:30 bedtime.

Ellen

This is when the real fun starts! The key to having a successful Mother's Day week is to be organized yet flexible, have donuts on hand every morning, have all hands on deck, and make it fun! Orders start coming in by the dozens starting on Monday of Mother's Day week. We are prepping vases, writing cards, and making arrangements each day leading up

to Mother's Day. Flowers are delivered every day; as more orders come in, we ask our growers to deliver more flowers. It's tricky because we don't want to over or under buy. Over buying means we're left with flowers we can't use. Under buying—which is what happens most of the time for Mother's Day—means we're ordering more flowers from growers every day of the week.

As you can imagine, it's a fast-paced week. Most of our growers were totally out of flowers by Sunday afternoon. Laura Beth cut her last harvest for us in the rain and delivered to us before 7:00 on Mother's Day morning! That day, we were open until noon and made deliveries until noon as well. By then, we were totally out of flowers and treated ourselves to a big brunch and went to bed (no joke) at 4:00 p.m!

So, what do you think? Do you want in on Mother's Day or will you be happy to pass? Let us know your thoughts and questions at ellen@locoflo.com and butterbeefarm@gmail.com

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Sonata Dallison, Serenada

Jodi Helmer



Locally Grown—in Lithuania



Sonata Dallison

Sonata Dallison fell in love with English cutting gardens while pursuing a math degree in Britain, and dreamed of her own fields filled with colorful blooms like dahlias, peonies and snapdragons. In 2016, her dream came true.

After 20 years of living and working in the UK, Dallison moved back home to Lithuania where she planted 250 dahlias and several annual flower varieties. The landscape was beautiful but it didn't take long for the realities of flower farming to set in.

"They all bloomed at once," she recalls. "My mother said to me, 'What are you going to do with all of these flowers? They're going to go to waste!'"

Dallison did what all entrepreneurial growers do: She took the flowers to the local market and sold out.

"We received great feedback about the quality of our blooms and that's when we started planning beds for next year to formally start a flower farm," she says.

Since launching Serenada Flower Farm two years ago, Dallison has established a thriving farm that includes 1,000 peonies, 2,500 dahlias, and flowering annuals and perennials ranging from asters and amaranths to larkspur and fritillaria, altering her plantings each season to coincide with local demand. She started planting woodyies this season and looks forward to adding them to her cut flower bouquets.

Dallison farms with her mother. The pair take a "divide and conquer" approach to farming: Dallison uses her analytical mind (and background in finance) to plan production. "I have a spreadsheet for (almost) everything," she says.

Dallison also manages sales and accounting in addition to tackling a host of farm chores; her mom sows seeds, waters and tends to the plants, and delivers all the cut flowers; a seasonal worker helps with harvesting.

Lithuania might seem a world away but the growing conditions are similar to the U.S. The central part of the country (where Serenada Flower Farm is located) is considered USDA hardiness zone 6a, which means Dallison is growing in conditions similar to flower farmers in parts of Missouri, Indiana, Kansas, and Ohio where the growing season runs from April through October.

Until this season, she grew all her crops in the field but a new high tunnel will help Dallison get a jumpstart on the growing season and allow her to continue producing fresh, local flowers later into the fall.

In addition to struggling with late May frosts, topography is a challenge on the farm: Much of the 30-acre farm is on a slope, which makes it difficult to use tractors or other machinery.

Dallison has three acres in production and opted to plant perennials on the slopes and annuals on the flatter parts of the farm—and she tries to focus on the benefits of the uneven ground, noting, “It isn’t very steep, but even a small slope is difficult when one needs to push a full wheelbarrow up that slope. It’s amazing as a workout!”

Dallison has a background in finance, not farming, so the learning curve has been steep—she is the first to admit that patience is not one of her better virtues—so she set out to learn from experienced growers to minimize mistakes and maximize her success. Classes in flower farming and operating a farm business have helped Dallison turn a dream into a successful farm.



At the markets, shoppers love seeing new varieties like double narcissus and cerinthe, which are unknown crops in the region; florists also prefer purchasing flowers from Serenada Flower Farm over imported blooms, and brides have embraced the idea of local and DIY bouquets and arrangements for their weddings.

Joining the ASCFG was also a turning point for the fledgling flower farmer. Dallison hesitated to join because she believed the information might not be applicable to non-U.S. growers. Now, she says, “This small, sustainable flower farm in eastern Europe has taken so much inspiration and advice from the ASCFG community. Having access to so many wonderful, experienced and knowledgeable people in the ASCFG has given me a lot of confidence, even when growing new crops.”

The small number of flower farms in Lithuania means Dallison is at the forefront of a trend and experiences little competition.

While Lithuanians generally support locally-grown produce over supermarket varieties, flower farming is not big business in the small Baltic nation (yet) so Dallison spends a great deal of time educating customers and battling stereotypes.

“The biggest challenge for us is the perception that locally grown equals cheap,” she explains. “I try to educate people about why [flowers] cost what they cost, and the reasons local is so much better than imported. I use social media platforms to educate people about the benefits of local blooms, their freshness and longevity... and make sure that every stem that leaves our farm is of the highest quality. I strive to improve every year, to be more productive and profitable.”

The efforts are starting to pay off. At the markets, shoppers love seeing new varieties like double narcissus and cerinthe, which are unknown crops in the region; florists also prefer purchasing flowers from Serenada Flower Farm over imported blooms, and brides have embraced the idea of local and DIY bouquets and arrangements for their weddings.

“The majority of our colors are tailored to the wedding market with lots of whites, blushes, and burgundies,” Dallison says. “We sell color-coordinated buckets to DIY brides.”

Dallison also hopes that concepts that are popular in the U.S. like community supported agriculture shares will catch on overseas. Right now, she explains, the CSA concept is unfamiliar to Lithuanians, and Dallison hopes to introduce them to the idea of weekly flower deliveries. In the meantime, she continues learning and growing as a flower farmer and embraces all that her new business adds to her life.

“It’s the best job in the world for me; so challenging but so rewarding,” she says. “The opportunity to spend so much time outdoors and see the process of a tiny seed becoming a beautiful crop and to be able to light up people’s faces when they see what you have grown is amazing.”

Jodi Helmer is a freelance writer in North Carolina. Contact her at jodi@jodihelmer.com

Stanton Gill



Caterpillars Active in Cut Flowers

Earlier this season, a commercial cut flower grower sent in a picture of a caterpillar feeding on cut flowers. It was a geometrid caterpillar, commonly called a looper. If you just find one or two caterpillars active in your cut flowers, I would not get really concerned. If the population is much higher than you like, try using either *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) or Spinosad (Conserve is one of the trade names). Both are bacteria that control caterpillars, but have minimal impact on beneficial organisms in your cut flower plots.



Geometrid caterpillar

Fighting Fungus

With the unprecedented amounts of rainfall growers across North America are experiencing, likely as a result of human-caused climate change, plant diseases such as botrytis are increasingly common. A bio-fungicide called BotryStop was recently introduced by BioWorks and seems to be showing great promise when rotated with standard fungicides. This is an organic formulation developed specifically for the control of pathogens such as *Botrytis cinerea*, *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*, and *Monilinia* spp. BioWorks claims that BotryStop provides protection to blossoms, fruit, and plant tissues. The active ingredient is *Ulocladium oudemansii* strain U3. If you are using this material, we would love to hear what you think on how efficacious it has been in your operation.

Speaking of Botrytis

Cool and wet weather sets the stage for botrytis blight in cut flower production. Lilies can be especially vulnerable to leaf spot and leaf blight caused by two botrytis species, *B. elliptica* and *B. cinerea*. These fungi are excellent saprophytes, meaning they survive on colonized dead plant debris, and produce masses of gray spores which can easily move through air currents. Cultural practices that make the environment unsuitable for infection are critical for managing botrytis diseases. Keeping leaf surfaces as dry as possible is key to disease management. Increasing plant spacing and keeping weeds under control both serve to increase air circulation around the plant canopy and encourage quick drying of wet foliage. If plants



Botrytis on lilies

are irrigated, using drip irrigation reduces leaf wetness. If overhead irrigation must be used, watering early in the day allows for rapid drying of foliage after an irrigation event. Removing old fallen leaves, dead stems, and other plant debris around the lily planting will help reduce the stockpile of fungal spores near the planting. For more detailed information on managing botrytis blight in cut flower production, refer to this fact sheet from the University of Massachusetts: <https://ag.umass.edu/greenhouse-floriculture/fact-sheets/botrytisblight-of-cut-flowers>

Four-lined Plant Bug

We have received reports of four-lined plant bug nymphs feeding on ornamental plants such as native pussytoes (*Antennaria sp.*), lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*), new foliage of panicle hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata*), Japanese anemone (*Anemone x hybrida*), and catmint. As they feed, the insects inject a toxin into the plant that causes the tissue to collapse and go necrotic. You end up with a series of small

roundish dead spots on the foliage. Once the damage is present, there is not a lot to do about it. There is one generation per year early in the season. Some other host plants include herbaceous perennials like chrysanthemum, Chinese lantern, liatris, and Shasta daisy; herbs like mint and basil; woody ornamentals including azalea, dogwood, forsythia, viburnum; and flowering annuals such as zinnia and marigold.

This four-lined plant bug nymph is causing damage to catmint (top right) Photo: Marie Rojas, IPM Scout, Four-lined plant feeding causes necrotic spots on leaves of pussytoes (bottom right) Photo: Christa Carignan, UME-HGIC.



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The Future's So Bright*

How Shading Cut Flowers Makes a Big Difference

Ralph Thurston

The Sun Valley Group

Much cut flower research concentrates on the effect of providing supplemental heat and light, via greenhouses, to crops in order to expand a species list, marketing window, or climate. Less work has been done on shading crops, but the same principles that apply to stretching seasons and the number and type of species grown with heat work equally well, if inversely, by cooling and shading cut flower species to improve their quality, lengthen their stems, or delay their bloom period.

Here at Bindweed we learned quite early that the cut flower species list shrinks considerably in our hot, intense light climate at a relatively high altitude of 4300 feet. As we perused the horticultural bibles and wrote down those species that tolerate our zone 5 temperatures, we found our list much shorter than those of farmers in warmer climates, and when we struck from that list those that preferred either shade or dappled shade, we found

it shrinking further. To add insult to injury, even when we grew those remaining species we discovered many grew in our climate but didn't reach a suitable height to use as a cut. It seems they just didn't feel the need to stretch toward the sun, it already being closer to them than it would be in other climes.

More Profit in Darkness Than in Light

We quickly experimented with a shade structure, buying the same skeletal framework used for greenhouses but covering it with 50% shade cloth rather than plastic. We figured if our experiment failed, we could always convert the unit to a greenhouse. Fifteen years later, we wish we'd have erected three or four more, or even, in days of more magical thinking, covered the entire farm with shade. There's more profit, it turns out, in darkness than in light—at least here.

There are four reasons to shade plants. Shade, while it diminishes ambient temperature minimally, does lower leaf temperature a great deal. Without direct light on leaf surfaces, foliage transpiration lessens and you'll never see leaves curl up as if wilted, as many plants do at temperatures over 90 degrees. This means the foliage can keep collecting energy rather than shutting down the plant completely, making for a healthier specimen over time. Plants never get the tired look they display in arid climates.

Shade also protects flowers prone to damage from hot, searing winds, lessening those effects, and it keeps the hot sun from browning flowers after rains or heavy dews, when strong light passing through water droplets acts as if coming through a magnifying glass. Some snowball viburnum or hydrangea growers use shade to protect their entire crop—one season under shade can pay for a structure if you

weigh your success against the loss that might occur from a lost crop of browned or seared flowers.

More importantly for most cut flower growers, shade elongates stems, making them more marketable in most instances, though elongation often also weakens stems. Hence, it's important to choose species whose stems don't start out with minimal strength, like nigella or bupleurum, as shade will only exacerbate that tendency. Choose strong-stemmed plants like monkshood and phlox. Be prepared, too, to net many crops under shade, as the added height makes toppling more likely.

Shade can also delay bloom time considerably, so a crop that sells well when grown in the field can continue to be marketed by growing a later, shaded plot to follow it. We've grown phlox under shade that far surpassed the outdoor crop in bloom size and height, and it started to bloom almost immediately after the normal crop finished, giving us six weeks of sales instead of three.

Double-duty Selections

We've tried a number of crops under shade but have narrowed our list due to space constraints, with profitability and ease of care determining our final choices. We devote much of the house to lysimachias, which grow poorly here in the high desert of Idaho. *Lysimachia clethroides*, gooseneck loosestrife (please don't confuse it with purple loosestrife, a nasty invasive more properly known as *Lythrum*), barely reaches a foot tall in the field here, but under shade we get 24 to 30-inch stems and a widened harvest window. Being white and having a spiked flower gives gooseneck two unbeatable qualities that go along with a remarkable vase life.

Another lysimachia, the hard-to-find variety 'Firecracker' (if you know a source, please share with the flower farming community), likewise reaches only unmarketable heights when we attempt to grow it in the field, but under shade we get thirty-inch stems—and it's one of those rare crops that can be cut as foliage all summer long, beginning in May, and then as flower later in the year



(it also grows vigorously enough to get a second cutting if you're so inclined). The foliage of 'Firecracker', reminiscent of *Physocarpus* 'Diabolo', makes it an easy sale, and its electric yellow blooms, set against that burgundy, create a stunning display. Designers sometimes just remove these blooms if yellow doesn't fit with their palette.

Lysimachia punctata 'Golden Alexander', a variegated form with yellow spikes, inevitably not only stays short but gets chlorotic when grown outdoors for us, but lessening the weather's effects with shade makes it a marketable crop as both foliage and flower.

These lysimachias grow via rhizomes so fill in a bed relatively quickly and can be invasive, it's said, in some climates. Our fifteen-year-old beds have yet to get out of control, however. Their rhizomatous nature allows them to be mulched to assist in weed control, another plus, and results in many stems—it wouldn't be unusual to garner ten dollars a square foot from a lysimachia bed.

The Possibilities May Be Endless

Some species that prefer mild climates nonetheless accede to living under shade in harsh ones. We grow Icelandic poppies in the shade house to get longer stems, and to save them from the sun for a longer harvest period, and sweet peas, impossible to grow as a marketable crop outside here, suddenly become valuable when grown under shade. A favorite foliage, 'Berggarten' sage, when grown outdoors is barely tall enough to sell, but under shade gains six to twelve inches, adding to our sales. *Campanula glomerata*, tall enough

to market only in years of mild weather, becomes predictably salable under shade. Lobelia, which sometimes blooms at eight inches when we grow it outdoors, under a shade cloth suddenly gets two feet tall, and many other crops we've not grown—lacking sufficient space—no doubt follow suit. Foxglove, hostas, heuchera, ligularia, gentian—the wish list is a long one! No doubt all those landscaping varieties listed as "compact" also quite possibly become cuts with the assistance of shade.

The only failure shade ever induced for us: a lisianthus crop, its harvest delayed into mid-August, met our high humidity nights of late summer. Its blooms succumbed to botrytis as we've never seen in any other instance in the field or greenhouse.

Even climates with plenty of cloudy days have a list of plants needing even more shade than already exists, so while arid, high-light areas no doubt gain the most from utilizing shade, likely even the mildest climate can benefit in some way from adding shade to the repertoire of growing techniques. If the threat of snow exists in your area, it's best to either be prepared to remove shade cloth, or refrain from putting it up until that threat is gone, as snow doesn't shed but collects and could easily collapse your structure. Those without snow threat can leave their shade on and likely need very minimal, inexpensive support systems to apply cloth, which breathes well and allows wind through without threat of damage. In any case, if you've been aching to grow something that needs more shade than your climate provides, give a shade structure a try.

*You know the next line.

Ralph Thurston, along with Jeriann Sabin, is owner of Bindweed Farm in Blackfoot, Idaho, as well as co-author of *Deadhead: The Bindweed Way to Grow Flowers and All Pollen, No Petal: Behind the Flower Farming Dream*. Contact him at bindweedfarm@aol.com

Improving production schedules for high-value perennial flowers in Utah: Peony

Melanie Stock, Brent Black, Daniel Drost, Utah State University

Peony (*Paeonia spp.*) production is important to early-season cut flower markets (Kamenetsky and Dole, 2012), and particularly as a high-value crop in local, smaller-scale operations. Peonies are well suited to temperate zones, where winter chilling followed by warming is sufficient for flower development (i.e. at least 70 days of chilling at 2-6°C) (Halevy *et al.*, 2002). Much research to improve production has focused on chilling requirements for warm climates outside of the U.S (Fulton *et al.*, 2001; Halevy *et al.*, 2002). In the high-elevation and semi-arid state of Utah, however, growers face long winters that delay the growing season and amplify challenges to meeting early market demands. Therefore, understanding post-chill air and soil warming, as well as the effectiveness of season extenders to advance development, will help Utah growers meet key holiday market demands, such as Mother’s Day, and increase farm profitability.

Purpose

- Evaluate high tunnel and outdoor field production of peonies with yield timing and quality.
- Compare low tunnels, low tunnels with soil heating, and unheated controls within the high tunnel and field with yield timing and quality.
- Develop flowering prediction models to schedule flower production that meets a specific marketing window and optimized flower yields in peony.
- Disseminate research findings from peony studies to growers, industry partners, and the wider horticultural community through journal articles, fact sheets, and workshops.

Procedures

The field study is located at the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station - Greenville in North Logan, UT (41° 77' N, -111° 8' W) at an elevation of 4,780 ft. In 2011, 60 peonies (*Paeonia lactiflora* ‘Coral Charm’) were planted in an outdoor field and 60 peonies were planted in an adjacent high tunnel. We subdivided



Coral Charm peony just before harvestable “marshmallow” stage.

the field and high tunnel into a total of 18 plots (Figure 1). From these 18 plots, we evaluated six heating treatments in triplicate:

- 1) field (F) plus low tunnel (F: +LT -H)
- 2) field plus low tunnel and soil heating (F: +LT +H)
- 3) unheated field control (F: -LT -H)
- 4) high tunnel (HT) plus low tunnel (HT: +LT -H)
- 5) high tunnel plus low tunnel and soil heating (HT: +LT +H)
- 6) unheated high tunnel control (HT: -LT -H)

Preliminary Results and Discussion

Temperature Conditions

The 2019 peony harvest is complete within the high tunnel (HT) and in-progress in the field (F). Therefore, the reported preliminary results reflect only the high tunnel treatments. Because of the intensity of field work during this time, data presented are from only April—May 2019.

Overall, the near-surface soil temperature and canopy air temperature fluctuated less and were warmer in the HT versus F. Within the HT, the use of a LT and soil heating helped maintain nighttime temperature lows above freezing. Air temperature



Dr. Stock (center), graduate student Maegen Lewis (right), and undergraduate Trevor Christensen (left) prepare instrumentation during spring break.

between the field treatments followed a similar pattern to the high tunnel. Soil temperature between the control and unheated LT treatments was more pronounced in the F than in the HT, particularly during the cool April weather.

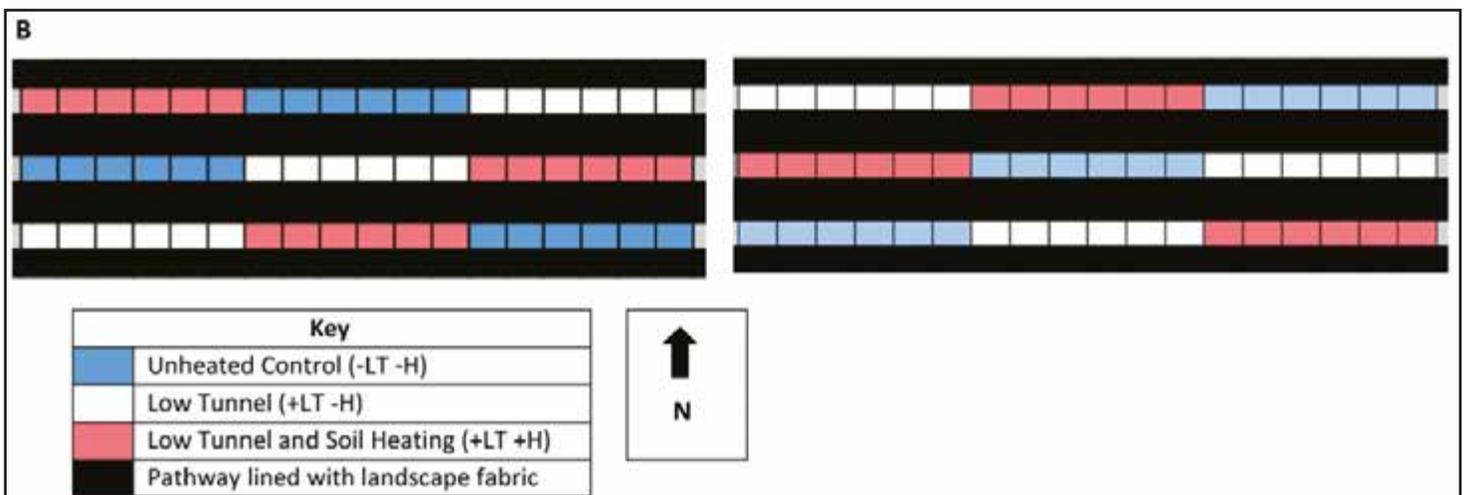
Yield

The high tunnel advanced peony bloom by nearly one month and made it possible to meet the key Mother’s Day market window. The first peony harvest in the high tunnel began on 26 Apr. 2019, and ended on 17 May 2019. Conversely, the first peony harvest in the field began on 20 May 2019 and is near completion as of 10 Jun. 2019. Therefore, only the HT results are reported here.

Within the HT, peak production lasted from 26 Apr.—04 May 2019 with soil heating, 29 Apr.—06 May with only a LT, and from 02—12 May in the HT control (Figure 2). However, the number of culls increased with use of low tunnels and soil heating. We observed that any contact between the plant and low tunnel material resulted in a culled stem. Soil heating advanced plant maturity into late April, a time when LT are generally needed to avoid night-



Figure 1. A) Google Earth view of the Utah Agriculture Experiment Station – Greenville in North Logan, UT. The peony trials in the field and high tunnel are highlighted with a black box. B) Layout of the field (left) and high tunnel (right) plots. Each plot consists of six peony plants. Three heating treatments (unheated control, addition of a low tunnel, and addition of a low tunnel and soil heating) were evaluated in triplicate in both the field and high tunnel, yielding a total of six temperature treatments and 18 plots.



time frosts in northern Utah. Therefore, a new challenge has emerged to create larger low tunnels that still effectively capture heat, while providing sufficient space for the plants. We are excited to trial new LT designs next year to reduce the number of culls, isolate whether the increase in culls resulted from heating effects or low tunnel contact, and begin modeling crop production schedules.

Lastly, we have begun to explore the economic markets in Northern Utah through collaboration with a local flower farmer coop that primarily sells to florists. In 2019, we sold Grade 1 and 2 peonies for \$3/stem for purchases of 50 or more, and \$5/stem for purchases of <50. All of our peonies sold out at these prices. As we repeat the trials in 2020, we expect to charge \$4/stem for 100+ stems, \$6/stem for <100 stems, and begin selling culls at a reduced price. Growing peonies is a promising new crop to diversify farms in Northern Utah.

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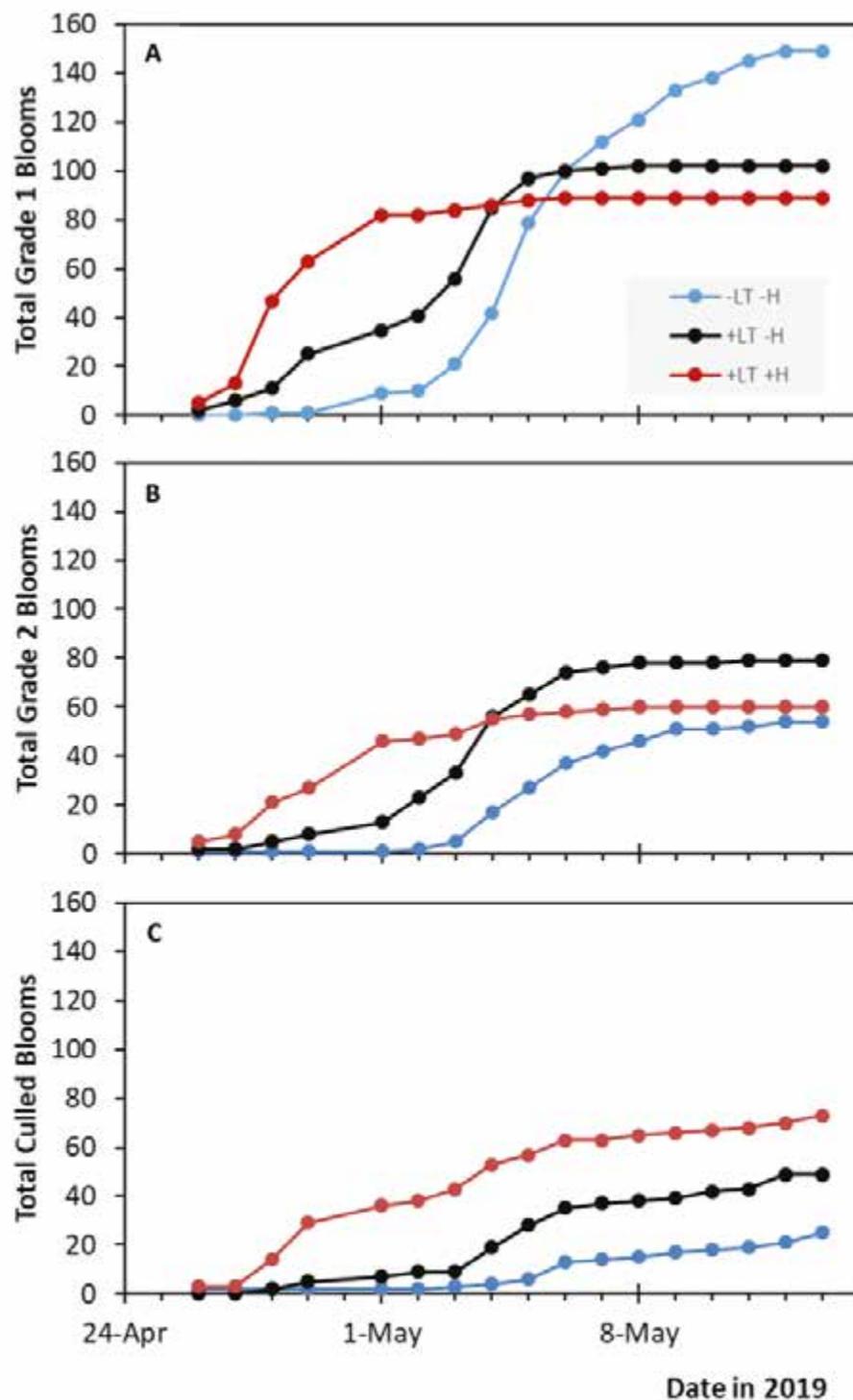


Figure 2. 2019 Peony yields in the high tunnel by heating treatment: the unheated control (-LT -H) in blue, the addition of a low tunnel and no soil heating (+LT -H) in black, and the addition of a low tunnel and soil heating (+LT +H) in red. A) The cumulative number of USDA Grade 1 blooms by date; B) the cumulative number of USDA Grade 2 blooms by date; and C) the cumulative number of culled (unmarketable) blooms by date.



LEFT: High Tunnel peonies on 4/26/2019.



RIGHT: Field peonies on 5/21/2019.



Uncovered high tunnel (ABOVE) and field (BELOW) peonies in late May in North Logan, UT.

Can Bacteria Be Beneficial for Cut Flowers?

Michelle L. Jones, Professor and D.C. Kiplinger Floriculture Chair
The Ohio State University

A gram of soil can contain billions of microorganisms. Many of these microorganisms are bacteria that live in the rhizosphere, the region of the soil near the plant roots. The bacteria feed on sugars, amino acids, and organic acids in plant root exudates, and the relationship is either beneficial, harmful (e.g. pathogens), or neutral to the plants. Beneficial bacteria can promote plant growth and enhance tolerance to both abiotic and biotic stresses. This is a dynamic relationship that is influenced by many other environmental and biotic factors. In soils where nutrients are limiting, bacteria can increase the availability of macro- and micronutrients and improve uptake efficiency. In the presence of these bacteria, plants can thrive with lower fertilizer inputs.

While the culturable bacteria in the soil are only around 1% of the population, beneficial bacteria available in both commercial products and research collections have been shown to promote plant growth and/or enhance stress tolerance. In the



Grants Available for Cut Flower Research

The ASCFG Research Foundation is pleased to announce the continuation of its Competitive Research Grant program.

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D.C. Kiplinger Floriculture Crop Improvement Program at The Ohio State University, we are investigating the use of beneficial bacteria to improve the production and postproduction quality of greenhouse crops. The objective of this research is to determine if beneficial bacteria applications during production can enhance vase life and flower quality of zinnias grown at reduced fertilizer levels compared to those grown with optimal fertility.

We are testing both commercial biostimulant products, and bacteria from an OSU collection. Growing media is drenched weekly with the bacterial treatments and plants are fertilized with either 1X or 0.5X fertilizer (150 or 75 ppm N) from 15N-2.2P-12.5K-2.9Ca-1.2Mg water soluble fertilizer (Jack’s Professional LX, J.R. Peters). Flower vase life and quality are assessed for all treatments. Biostimulants that contain beneficial bacteria provide cut flower growers with a tool to increase flower quality, while reducing fertilizer inputs.

We hypothesize that the improved plant health and stress tolerance we have observed with containerized plants will translate into improved flower quality and vase life for cut flowers.

Use of beneficial bacteria in cut flower production systems to enhance flower longevity when plants are grown at lower fertility levels

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To Cut or Not to Cut

Nathan Jahnke and John Dole
Department of Horticultural Science
North Carolina State University



Have you ever wished you could save tulips for an event, or have flowers available weeks after your production ended? If you have dug around online, you may have found decades of literature and grower reports stating tulips could be stored in a cooler for weeks at a time. The catch: there are little to no data presented to support these claims. For that reason, our program sought an ASCFG Research Foundation Grant to provide data on how long tulips could be reliably stored.

We implemented two studies. The first compared flowers stored with or without the bulb still attached, at either 31 or 33°F. The 31°F temperature was used to explore the option of storing flowers colder than generally recommended. Tulips often sprout and flower well before frost-free dates, so we wanted to test their ability to handle storage temperatures below freezing. The second study's objective was to see if commercial preservatives could be used to either maintain or increase vase life when used as a pulse prior to storage.

Experiment 1: Bulb attached vs cut stored at 31 or 33°F.

Tulips 'Golden Oxford' and 'Renown' were harvested by uprooting stems with buds that had reached 50% color. Half of the stems for each cultivar were cut to a set length. The bulb was left attached on the other half. Stems were then wrapped in newspaper and placed in cardboard boxes held at either 31 or 33°F.

Experiment 2: Pulse solutions prior to storage at 31°F.

Tulips 'Golden Oxford', 'Menton', and 'Piste' were cut and pulsed for 8 hours with one of 3 pulse solutions: tap water, Floralife Bulb 100 (2ml/L), or Chrysal CBVB (2ml/L). All stems were held at 31°F.

We removed stems from storage after 3 and 6 weeks. We recut one inch off of the base of the cut stems; stems with the bulb attached were cut to the same length as the cut stems. All flowers were rehydrated in tap water with support to promote straightness before vase life evaluation. Stems were individually placed in mason jars filled with tap water. The following responses were recorded to assess cut flower quality: vase life (days), length gained in vase by termination, percent weight lost after storage. Flowers were terminated when petals and tepals were 50% discolored or petals and tepals abscised.

Tulips stored for multiple weeks will likely be less wilted and have a longer vase life when the bulb is kept attached. Our results show that in most cases, 31°F better preserved vase life than 33°F. Most growers will not be able to achieve this temperature, but as with most cuts, the lower the storage temperature, the better preservation of quality.

Results

Experiment 1. ‘Golden Oxford’ stems stored with the bulb attached had a longer vase life than those stored cut, at both temperatures and every duration of storage (Fig. 1). The 31°F temperature preserved vase life better for both bulb-attached and cut stems. After 6 weeks at 31°F, stems with the bulb attached lost 1.0 day of vase life compared to 3.0 days of vase life at 33°F. Cut stems held at 31°F lost 2.3 days of vase life compared to 3.8 days when held at 33°F. Neither storage method nor storage temperature affected vase life of ‘Renown’. Non-stored stems lasted 5.5 days. After 3 and 6 weeks, vase life was 4.1 and 2.8 days, respectively.

Tulips are known to stretch after being cut. Storage method, with or without the bulb, did not influence the stretching of ‘Golden Oxford’. However, stems stored at 31°F gained 4.7 inches by termination, while stems stored at 33°F gained 3.8 inches. Stems stored for 6 weeks were shorter than those stored for 3 weeks by approximately 0.7 inches. Stem length of ‘Renown’ was not affected.

Stems with the bulb attached were less wilted following storage and took less time to rehydrate. Figure 2 shows the condition of bulb-attached and cut stems following 6 weeks of storage. While cut stems appeared more wilted, both cut and bulb attached stems lost a similar percentage of weight following storage. Stems with the bulb attached likely used water reserves in the bulb to keep stems, leaves, and buds better hydrated during storage than the cut stems. All stems rehydrated regardless of weight loss.

Experiment 2. Pulsing stems of ‘Golden Oxford’ with Bulb 100 and CBVB increased vase life by 0.5 days for non-stored stems, 0.7 to 0.9 days for those stored for 3 weeks, and 1.7 days for those stored for 6 weeks. Stems treated with Bulb 100 and CBVB had a vase life of 5.6 days after 6 weeks of storage, which was only 1.0 day shorter than non-stored stems. Similarly, Bulb 100 and CBVB equally improved vase life of ‘Menton’ and ‘Piste’ (Fig. 3). After storage, ‘Menton’ and ‘Piste’ stems pulsed with a preservative lasted 1.6 or 2.0 days, respectively, longer than water pulsed stems. Bulb 100 and CBVB increased vase life of stored stems to a time similar to that of the non-stored control for both ‘Menton’ and ‘Piste’. On average both cultivars lost one day of vase life for every 3 weeks of storage regardless of treatment.

Stored ‘Golden Oxford’ stems pulsed with water increased in stem length by 3.7 inches. Bulb 100 and CBVB pulsed stems gained approximately 0.5 to 1 inch more in length. ‘Menton’ and ‘Piste’ stems increased in stem length by 4.5 and 3.7 inches, respectively. After 6 weeks of storage, ‘Golden Oxford’, ‘Menton’, and ‘Piste’ had lost 29, 22, and 32% of their weight, respectively. Some stems did fail to rehydrate.

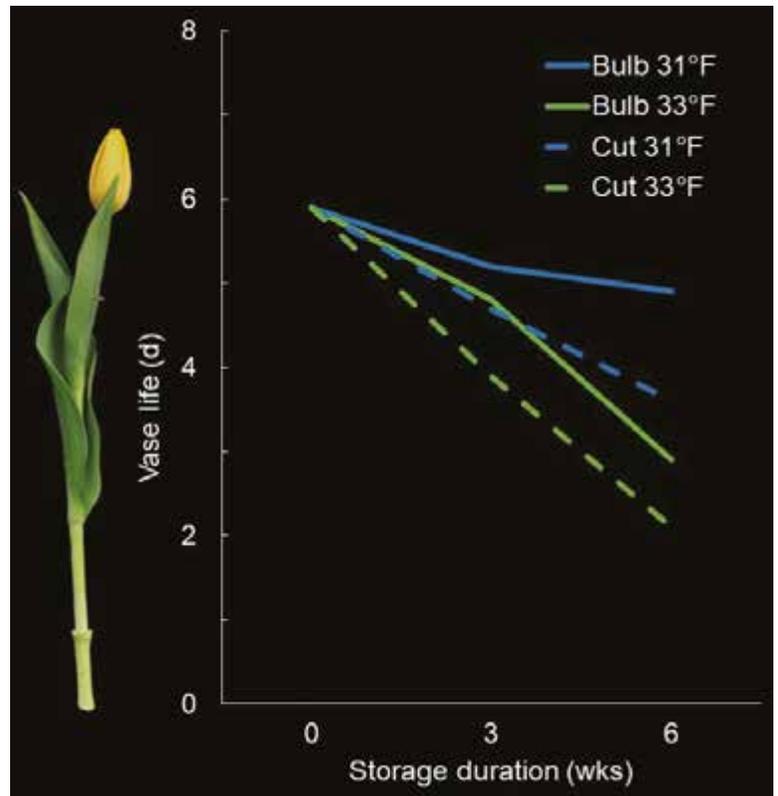


Figure 1. Vase life of ‘Golden Oxford’ stored with or without the bulb attached at two temperatures.



Figure 2. Condition of ‘Renown’ following 6 weeks storage at two temperatures.

Grower Recommendations

Tulips stored for multiple weeks will likely be less wilted and have a longer vase life when the bulb is kept attached. Our results show that in most cases, 31°F better preserved vase life than 33°F. Most growers will not be able to achieve this temperature, but as with most cuts, the lower the storage temperature, the better preservation of quality.

Preservative pulses will likely be beneficial when storing most cut tulips. Pulses of Floralife's Bulb 100 and Chrysal's CBVB increased vase life of both fresh-cut and stored tulips. We did not test preservative pulses following storage, but this may be an alternative option for improving vase life of cut tulips, especially those stored with the bulb attached.

Keep in mind that many factors will influence vase life, such as the time of year, cultivar, and the relative humidity and temperature of your storage facility. With future research, we plan to evaluate additional tulip cultivars and test below-freezing temperatures on other cut flower species.

The authors would like to thank Ingram McCall for assisting with growing and harvesting cut flowers, and Dave Dowling at Ednie Flower Bulb for the tulip bulbs.

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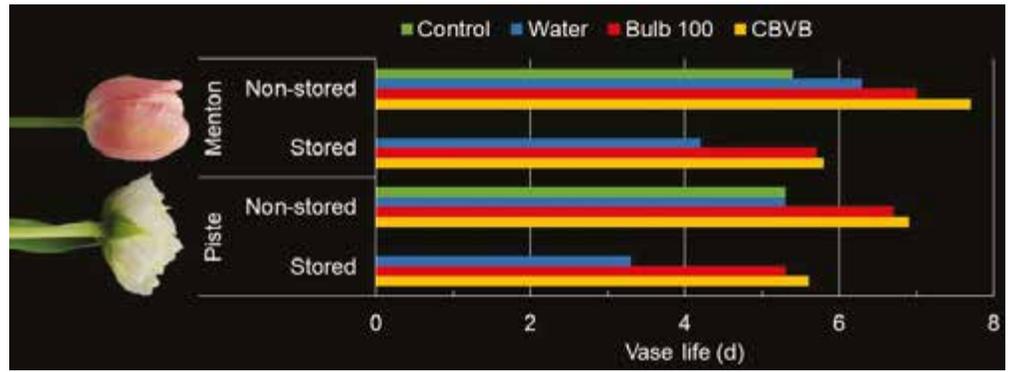


Figure 3. Vase life of 'Menton' and 'Piste' with and without storage after receiving one of three pulse treatments for 8 hours.



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Hurry Up and Wait: Meditations on Patience

We farmers sure are an optimistic lot. We order seeds and plants sometimes before we have sold the current year's crop. We work on ongoing projects and to-do lists that are rarely caught up on or finished. We often must literally do believe that the sun will come out tomorrow.

A popular internet image among gardening groups during March snowstorms shows a person working among flower beds despite a blanket of snow. A paraphrased caption reads that she wanted to garden regardless of the late snowstorm. I appreciate the determination and admire her enthusiasm, but the frustrating truth is of course that it's better to just wait. Wait until the days are longer and the time is right to work the soil. Find another way to use your energy and enthusiasm.

Patience is so important. Working a field that hasn't dried out enough can be extremely destructive to the soil, as well as a waste of time.

Much of our work is time sensitive. We cannot delay our seeding schedule without suffering a gap in production and at the same time, most crops don't allow us to "preplant" which is to say, we can't sow too early either, no matter how much we want to. We also can't close up the greenhouses earlier in the day if it's still sunny, we must wait until it cools a bit for fear of cooking our plugs.

I remember hearing Grace Lam from Five Forks Farm describe soaking anemone and ranunculus corms as "pulling the pin on the grenade," and she is so right. Once you start the growth in motion you need to be ready with a place to plant and weather that cooperates.

By the same token, maybe we want our flowers to bloom earlier, so we sow our zinnias two weeks earlier than normal. I have played this game, and rather than early and abundant blooms I yield overgrown plants suffering as they languished in the trays because the overnight lows are too cold to plant those babies out. Caring for overgrown plants is frustrating, and takes up valuable bench space.

This past winter and spring sure have required both our optimism and our patience. Cold temperatures and lack of sunshine delayed spring crops in our area by about 10 to 20 days, especially notable around the Mother's Day holiday when very little had started to bloom. I had enthusiastically written to new designer customers with projections based on last year's harvest dates and volumes, but our lack of sunny days leading to delayed bloom forced me to cancel their orders. Those are humbling messages to write.

I'm looking around my farm and at other operations as we each evolve, expand, or adjust our investments and trajectories. I see some plantings of shrubs and peonies I established about 8 years ago and they are really taking off because I prepared the soil properly and bought the correct number of plants for my space. I see some other plantings I made hastily (yet enthusiastically) 3 or 4 years ago and I see that I planted too soon. I hadn't taken the time to grow a cover crop to improve the soil and/or tarp to kill the grass. I should have waited and instead I will abandon some beds of perennials and move some peonies and clematis, all at great expense.

By the same token, maybe we want our flowers to bloom earlier, so we sow our zinnias two weeks earlier than normal. I have played this game, and rather than early and abundant blooms I yield overgrown plants suffering as they languished in the trays because the overnight lows are too cold to plant those babies out. Caring for overgrown plants is frustrating, and takes up valuable bench space.

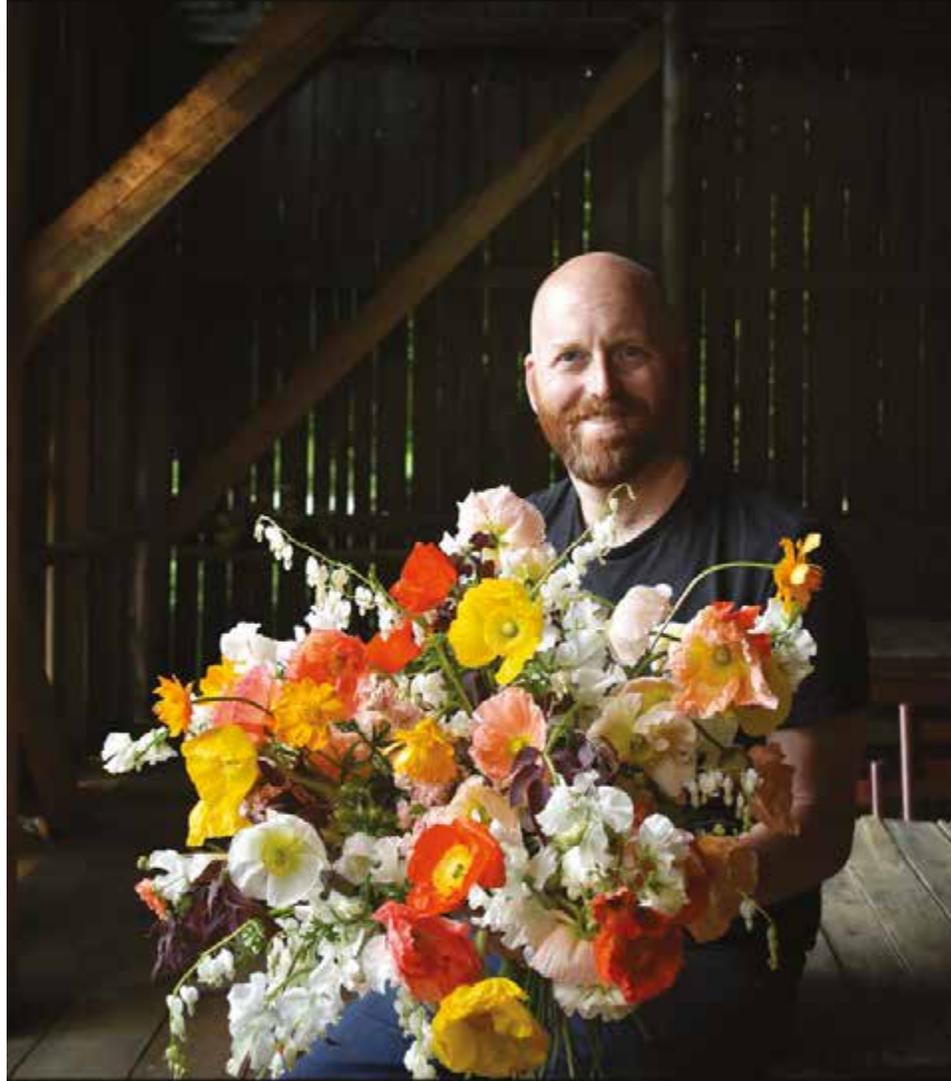
I think sometimes we tell ourselves we just need to get something (anything!) in the ground so we can get started. And then we plan to make some adjustments later. I have told myself that I will weed and then mulch really well to reclaim patches I was losing to weeds. Realistically that doesn't seem to move from the to-do list to the done list. I heard a presenter at a conference once speak about growing blueberries, and common mistakes folks

make. People often tend to get so excited to order plants and put them in the ground that they tell themselves they will adjust the soil pH later. Sound familiar?

I so wish I had waited to buy my plants until I knew I had space prepared. I am learning the same lessons many of you have already learned. My wise mother says that readiness must go hand in hand with patience. When the field is prepared and weather window is right, you must be ready to plant.

By now, of course, most of you have planted most of your main crops and are hopefully harvesting like mad. Wishing you an abundant summer from our farm to yours!

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Lisa Ziegler

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The goal for my Regional Report is often to cover a seasonal issue facing folks at the time the *Quarterly* comes out. To do this, it helps to look back at a year from the publishing timeline at the questions and comments submitted to me via email, on social media, and those I hear in person. What was the obvious topic this time? By far the interest in knowing more about growing cool-season hardy annuals.

These submissions are so insightful for me. I've gleaned that there are folks who have nailed the right planting timeline for hardy annuals on their farms and are reaping abundance and quality like never before. Then there are the misconceptions related to growing them. The most common one I read over and over is "My winters are too cold to fall plant so I can't grow hardy annuals." This misconception is not that their winters are too cold, it's in thinking that fall is the only planting option. Fall planting is only one of two planting strategies I rekindled in my book *Cool Flowers*.

I initially learned about cool-season hardy annuals from Lynn Byszynski's book *The Flower Farmer*. From there I went deep researching for more cut flower hardy annuals and how to grow them. While fall-planting hardy annuals was big news for many, including me, there was an equally significant second planting strategy offered that didn't get as much attention: early spring planting. What did I learn about early spring



stock is not winter hardy in my zone 7 field, so I plant it in early spring. It takes the freezing weather well, so I plant it a full 8 weeks before my last spring frost.

planting? The key is to plant as early as 6-8 weeks before the last expected spring frost, and the earlier the better.

The truth is most everyone can grow hardy annuals; we all may just have different planting times. It is true that if you are growing in some of the most northern winter hardiness zones, fall planting may not be possible. However, early spring planting can be a big boost to your crop list. Cool-season hardy annuals can be planted long before it's time to plant warm-season tender annuals in the field.

I'm going to offer some suggestions I have gathered from growers all over the world, and some of my own for planting hardy annuals in early spring successfully. This information is based on growing outdoors in the field.

- Early spring planting is up to 6-8 weeks before your last expected spring frost.
- To be able to plant in this window of time, *prepare the planting bed in fall when the ground is workable*. Cover the prepared and empty bed to prevent cool-season weed growth.
- Some bed cover options: biodegradable or plastic film, organic type mulches, landscape cloth, and silage tarps. Film, cloth, and tarps prevent weed growth plus the black color warms the soil. Cloth and tarps are beneficial to help remove low snow loads when uncovering the bed. Your choice of covering will depend on your early spring conditions.
- Direct seed or transplant in early spring? Planting transplants in early spring delivers the most rewards. Hardy annuals that become established and grow in cooler conditions produce the best results. Direct seeding into the often below-freezing condition of early spring delays sprouting. Delayed sprouting pushes the plants growing deeper into the warm-to-hot weather and humidity which is when many hardy annuals begin to struggle.
- Southern regions don't have as much success with early spring plantings of those plants that are winter hardy in their regions. This is because in the South we typically don't experience springlike weather, going straight from winter into summer heat and humidity. The best window to plant is in fall to grow a well-established plant through winter that is ready to perform as soon as it begins to warm.
- One of the benefits northern growers have is plants can produce longer into summer. The cooler summer conditions can keep these plants going strong beyond what is possible in the South. I have reports of early spring plantings producing heavily in the spring and early summer and to go on to regain strength in late summer to produce until the first frost. Not the case in hot and humid southern regions.



Lisianthus, treated as a hardy annual, takes the cold like a champ. I've fall and early spring planted with excellent results and amazing stem length.

I hope this will clear the way for you to have a better understanding of field growing hardy annuals and all their possibilities. Once you are tuned into this group and how to give them what they need on your farm, you'll wonder how you did without them. Remember, even if you can't plant hardy annuals in the fall, you have a fall job to do, preparing the beds for early spring plantings. Give hardy annuals a try.

SOUTHEAST

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee



Val Schirmer
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Postharvest Handling of Cut Flowers and Greens— a cheat sheet from the BEST resource on earth

The same thing happens every year. Right after I get my seeds and plugs ordered and mostly planted, I start going through postharvest information to refresh my brain on best practices in harvesting florals in top-notch condition and maximize vase life for our customers.

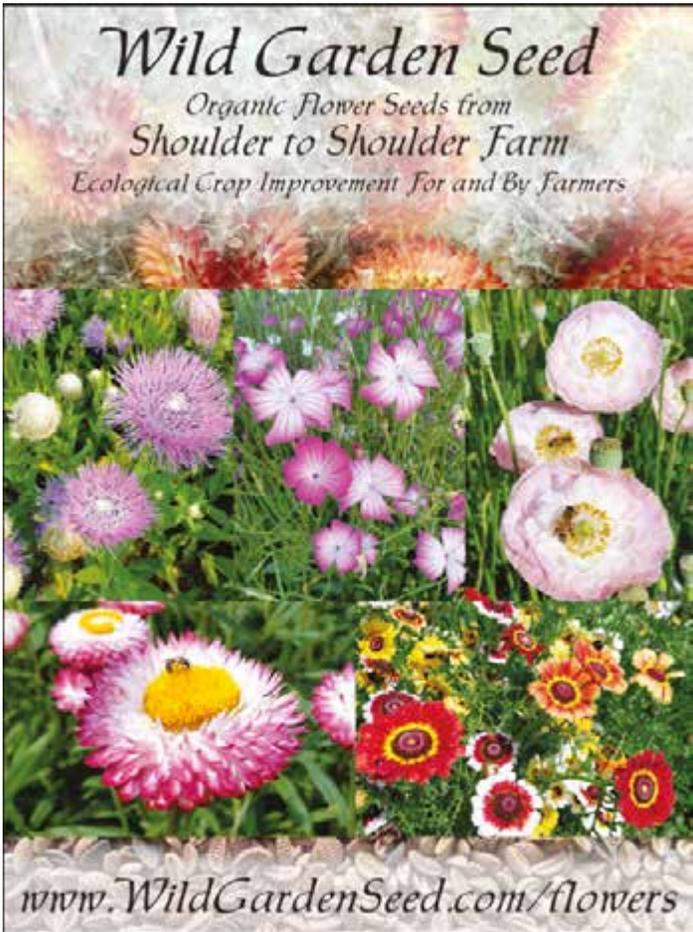
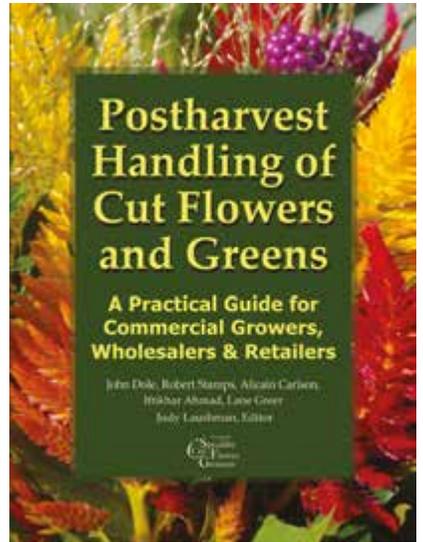
If you've invested in the ASCFG's *Postharvest Handling of Cut Flowers and Greens*, you have the best advice in the world at your fingertips. If not, let me whet your appetite with this "cheat sheet" of postharvest highlights for my Top 10 summertime florals (and it was SO hard to choose from the 246 flowers and foliages covered in the book) now that we're on the verge of summer's high-harvest season.

1. Cosmos Thanks to the newer varieties available (apricot lemonade shades and those Cupcakes!) I'm all-in on cosmos this year. This advice also applies to chocolate cosmos.

- Harvest flowers that are open, with petals that aren't yet flat. Old flowers have a much shorter vase life so it's important to harvest or deadhead those every day so you don't cut too-old flowers for bouquets. Buds just about to open can also be harvested.

- Expected vase life is 5-9 days, depending on cultivar (test just the varieties you're growing).

- Holding preservative is essential and will add 2-3 days to vase life. Stems can be stored for up to a week in water at 36F, but vase life will decline if they're stored at temps closer to 44F.



2. Dahlias Last summer's *Quarterly* had two articles with post-harvest research information: "Extending Postharvest Vase Life of Dahlias: the Struggle Continues" by Holly Scoggins, Leslie Peck, and Margaret Aiken; and my Regional Report about all things dahlias, including the latest postharvest research from Ben Bergmann, PhD, who works in John Dole's research program at NCSU. Ben also shared his full postharvest research results at last year's Raleigh conference during John Dole's presentation (available on the ASCFG members only site).

- Harvest most cultivars when the outer rows of petals are fully open. Some varieties can be cut when the first petals are lifting off the bud and showing colors. If properly treated with commercial flower foods containing sugar, these buds will keep opening and have a longer total postharvest life than those harvested fully open. You'll need to test the cultivars you're growing to see which ones can be harvested as buds.

- Double-flowered dahlias have the longest vase life, which generally averages 4-5 days, but can be up to 11 days for some cultivars with proper harvest and handling. Buds need 3-4 days to open after harvesting.

- Commercial holding preservatives increase vase life by up to 3 days. One week of cold storage (whether stems were held in water or stored dry), reduces vase life by 2 days.



3. Dianthus (carnations) I bit pretty hard on all the gorgeous varieties of French carnations this year, which are new to me. I can't wait to see them blooming!

- For wholesale, harvest flowers when petals are straight up; for local use, harvest when the outer petals are open but not yet horizontal. Buds can be harvested for long-term storage when petal color just starts to appear; spray cultivars should be harvested with 1-3 open flowers.

- Expected vase life is 6-9 days for untreated flowers in water, 12-15 days in

sugar solutions and 21-28 days for stems treated with STS and a flower food solution. I don't use STS so it looks like I can expect a two-week vase life using flower food.

- There's a lot of information on various postharvest treatments in the book, but I found this most helpful: in NC trials, stems placed in commercial flower foods lasted longer than those in organic flower foods. Carnations can be stored longer than

any other flower and can be opened from tight buds. Flowers can be stored dry at 32-34F for 2-4 weeks or wet at 40F for 1-2 weeks. Note: Carnations are highly sensitive to ethylene.

4. Eustoma (lisianthus)

After Linda Doan's lisianthus presentation at the Raleigh conference, I was so excited to go beyond our usual farmers' market varieties and jumped at the chance to grow the super lush and ruffled pale blush, light apricot, buttercream, and deep brown cultivars. I'm also using Jennie Love's advice from her blog and growing without netting this year.



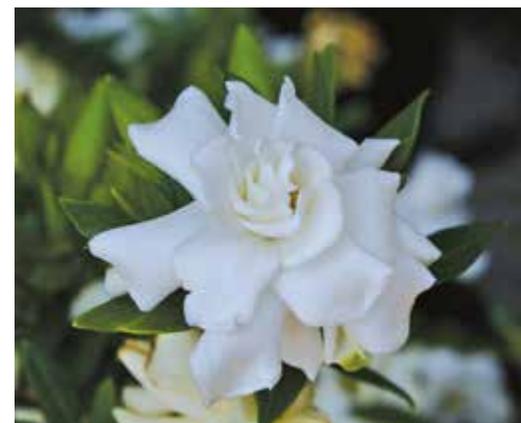
- For wholesale use, harvest stems when one flower is fully open and another starting to open. For retail, allow up to three buds to open and show good color. If the first open flower looks too old, just snip it off. Most buds on the stem continue to open if properly treated after harvest.

- Expected vase life is 10-14 days with proper postharvest solutions.

- Holding solutions should be used by wholesalers and retailers for maximum vase life and improved bud opening and coloring. Note: Lisianthus is sensitive to ethylene. Be sure flowers heads are dry when they're put in the cooler as lisianthus is particularly susceptible to botrytis.

5. Gardenia I love gardenias, both in big pots on the patio (which I move to the greenhouse during our zone 6b winters) and as a special, wonderfully fragrant cut flower.

- Harvest when petals start unfolding, as flowers harvested too early in bud stage fail to open, and flowers cut with fully open petals easily bruise and turn brown. Harvest opening buds in the morning and open buds in the afternoon, always using sharp cutters.



- Expected vase life is 2-3 days in water and 5-7 days in commercial preservative.

- Using the commercial preservative Floralife Rose Food or Chrysal Clear for 48 hours at 68F increases vase life and flower opening. Stems can be stored dry at 33-35F for up to a week. Mist flowers and pack in tight boxes with shredded wax paper or wet paper towel before storage. Buds are sensitive to chilling injury.

6. *Helianthus* (sunflowers) Pollenless varieties dominate and for good reason: they tend to have a longer vase life, don't make a mess on tablecloths and countertops, and they're less likely to irritate allergies. Sunflowers perennial in zones 4-9 are also excellent cut flowers, blooming late summer to late fall.

- Cut flowers when 1-2 petals have lifted off the center disk. If cut later, the center of the disk should still be tight with very few rings of the tiny disk flowers starting to open. Remove most of the foliage since it fades quickly and rarely looks good.

- Expect a vase life of 7-9 days with a holding solution or acidified water. Pollenless varieties typically have longer vase lives.

- Cut stems into commercial holding solution or acidified water. They are prone to water stress problems, so be sure stems stay hydrated. Flowers can be stored at 36-41F for up to a week. High storage temperatures decrease vase life, so be sure to store sunflowers where it's as cool as possible if you don't have a cooler.



7. *Physocarpus* (ninebark)

One of my very favorite foliage, regardless of the variety and when it's harvested. This workhorse should be a staple for all field cut operations. Cultivars with yellow, bronze or purplish foliage are the most distinctive.

- The foliage is the real point of interest, and can be harvested any time after it's hardened off in midsummer. Stems can also be harvested in bud or with their red fruit capsules.

- While vase life varies by cultivar, it's typically from 10-12 days to 18-22 days.

- Commercial holding solutions increase vase life of most cultivars. Commercial hydrators also increase the vase life of 'Coppertina.'

8. *Rosa* (rose) I just can't stop myself from trying (and trying again) to grow fragrant garden roses successfully in our hot, humid 6b summers.

- For local markets, cut flowers at the loose bud stage, just as they begin to open. Harvest yellow cultivars slightly earlier than red and pink, and white varieties slightly later.

- While vase life varies greatly with cultivar and production conditions, the majority of modern varieties have 5-7 days of vase life in water and 7-10 days in preservative solutions. Garden roses typically have a shorter vase life than standard cut roses.

- In warm weather, flowers may need to be harvested several times a day to get them at the optimum stage. Recut stems every time they're out of water. Cut roses are prone to bacterial plugging and should be kept in preservative solution containing a germicide. Commercial hydrators and holding solutions specifically designed for roses are effective. Cut roses can be stored dry at 32-34F for up to 2 weeks.

9. *Scabiosa* (pincushion flower)

This year I'm trying the hybrid Scoop™ series from plugs and the annual blush/buttercream 'Fata Morgana' from seed. Postharvest information is for the annual cultivars.

- Harvest flowers as soon as good color shows. Deadhead any unused or unsalable flowers to keep the plant blooming. Scabiosa is a good nectar plant for pollinators, which might be good to keep in mind when you're harvesting.

- Expected vase life of annual cultivars is 6-9 days.

- Generally, commercial holding solutions increase vase life by 1 to 3 days.

- Flowers can be cold stored for up to a week.



10. *Zinnia* This quintessential garden flower has steadily increased in popularity to become one of the most important field-grown cut flowers.

- To reduce broken heads, harvest full flowers as soon as the stem below the flower head is rigid. (We cut stems long to encourage branching, and deadhead old blooms.)

- Cut zinnias are sensitive to bacterial stem rot, microbial growth in the vase, and overdosing of floral preservatives. While any of these factors reduces vase life, commercial holding

solutions increase vase life and should be used. In NCSU trials, vase life for most cultivars was 7-14 days.

- During harvest, buckets and clippers must be clean and fresh solutions used. Commercial hydrators can be used immediately after harvest for a few hours only. Slow-release chlorine tablets are particularly effective and stems can stay in the solution longer. After hydration, stems should be placed in commercial holding solutions, which increase vase life by 1-5 days for most cultivars. Zinnias should not be held for more than a week in water and never stored dry. There are many reports of zinnias being sensitive to cold storage so to be safe, store them at 40-45F.

- “Zinnia meltdown” is a postharvest problem where the lower part of the stems rot and collapse within a few days of harvest. While it’s sporadic from year to year and location to location, it’s most common in the humid eastern U.S. The cause is unknown and investigations continue. Some growers say it can be reduced by rigorous sanitation practices.

See? Isn’t this book the BEST resource for postharvest advice? If you don’t have yours, jump onto the ASCFG website and order it — I bet you’ll recoup your investment this year!

NORTH AND CENTRAL

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming



Jamie Rohda

Harvest Home

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Hello all, and happy summer! Hope this finds you in the full swing of a successful season. As flower farmers new and old we’ve gone to conferences over the winter, researched endless varieties of plants and seeds, questioned more experienced growers, and laid out meticulous plans on how to space our plants, but until we actually get out there and do it, all the learning and planning are just part of the dream. I love learning and researching but I’m never so happy as when my hands are actually in the soil, planting, weeding, mulching, and eventually harvesting. I love the rhythm of the seasons and the ever-changing weather that makes this business such a challenge. I pray you are all blessed this year with a strong back, lots of sun, and just enough rain!

For this issue’s Regional Report I was inspired by social media postings. A recurring theme I keep seeing on Facebook pages is newer growers wanting feedback on their floral de-

signs. Although full of beautiful flowers, the ingredient that I most often see missing is the foliage. I know, foliage isn’t often the first thing we think of when we decide to become a flower farmer but it really is so important. And because the designers we sell to know the importance of it, foliage is one of the most consistent crops we sell. Just this week I met with a potential new client and the first thing she wanted to know was what types of foliage we grow.

Because of the demand we are trying to close all the supply gaps so that we have a good offering of foliages every week of our season. We’re able to start our season off in May with cress and Solomon’s seal, followed shortly by dusty miller that we grow in our hoopouses, and the first cuts of our clematis vine. Last year we added thornless raspberry and we started cutting it mid May this year. Bupleurum, which we plant in the fall or late winter, usually comes around the first of June, although this year it was a complete fail because of our hard winter. Physocarpus and baptisia foliage follow closely and are available for weeks. Our first mountain mint usually starts around mid June, followed by the second and third varieties the beginning of July. Next come various grasses, starting in July and running through the end of the season. Spirea, viburnum, rosemary, sage, and lavender are also available mid to late summer. Our eucalyptus is an anxiously awaited element for us which we start cutting about mid August, and ‘Mahogany Splendor’ hibiscus is the perfect fall-colored foliage that we start harvesting in September.

One of the first foliages that we started growing years ago was mountain mint. I’m not sure we even got the name of them when we acquired them, and the first one to bloom is still a bit of a mystery to us. Some folks have told us that it’s *Pycnanthemum incanum*, or hoary mountain mint, but after Googling pictures of that species I’m not convinced that’s what it is. The second to bloom for us is *Pycnanthemum muticum*, and this past year we started some of the *Pycnanthemum pilosum* that Johnny’s carries and we’re loving it. While the first two mints are grown for their lovely foliage, the third, *pilosum*, has white flowers that make it more of a filler flower crop than a foliage crop. So far we’ve found only the *muticum* to be a bit invasive. We use 2’ or 3’ wide strips of plastic landscape cloth in the walkway between the beds and the *muticum* had no problem going under it to establish another bed for itself! Because of its vigorous growth habit we are going to try cutting some of it back soon in hopes that it will then regrow and be ready to use a bit later than any that we don’t cut back.

If you decide to grow some mint I do recommend you establish it in an area where it has a bit of room to roam, and not too close to any other perennial beds where it will be tempted to invade. We have found that running a line of twine around the patch is helpful to keep the mint upright in the event of wind or heavy rains.

Go plant some foliage and have a great summer!



SOUTH AND CENTRAL

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah

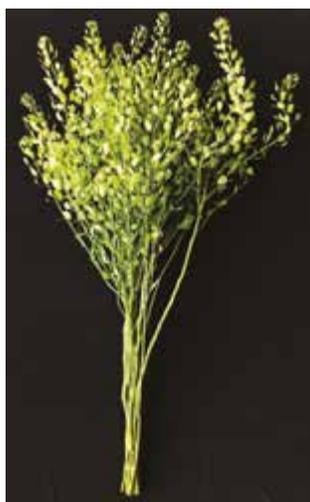


Shanti Rade

Whipstone Farm
info@whipstone.com



Solomon's seal



Cress



'Mahogany Splendor'



Mountain mint



Pycnanthemum pilosum



Bupleurum

Branching Out

It is easy to get stuck in our ways. As business owners, once we have something figured out and it is making us money, it feels safe and easy just to stick with it.

Way back in the day, the first year I grew any flowers to sell, I used to bring a hodgepodge of blooms to the farmers' market and make bouquets on site. I didn't really have enough of each ingredient to make lots of bouquets at home, and I didn't really have the time either. We already had a thriving vegetable booth and the flowers were a recent add-on. I had no clue what I was doing growing wise, design wise or sales wise. But I brought what I had to market, and as I took customers' requests, the line started backing up. Eventually I had to write down orders and ask people to come back.

I quickly realized that making custom bouquets on site was not working for the booth staffed by just my husband and me. I also didn't know how to charge accordingly when people would ask for more of this or that in each bouquet, as I had only one price. It was messy and nerve wracking to do all this bouquet making in front of customers' watchful eyes. So, I threw that initial idea out the window.

We started pre-making all bouquets before market. We also sold straight bunches of flowers. This worked out pretty well for us. As our flower-growing ability improved, we just kept expanding this part of the business. Flowers quickly became a large portion of our farm's income with a crew of dedicated staff who only harvest and process flowers. With perennials, biennials, bulbs, and greenhouses, we now have blooms 10-plus months of the year. We have added flower CSA shares, wholesale, added (and dropped) weddings, and now do year-round farmers' markets.

Farmers' markets are still our number one income generator for both vegetables and flowers. And we still sell our flowers the same way at the market—mixed bouquets and straight bunches. I never wanted to go back to the hassle of making bouquets on site, or letting customers rifle through and damage all our hard-won blooms. We are also one of the few vendors selling flowers



A customer contemplating flowers at the flower bar, Flagstaff Community Market.

in our area. With very little competition, sometimes there is no pressure to change up what you do.

But during a presentation last year at the ASCFG conference in Raleigh, I was inspired to branch out. I was presenting on selling at farmers' markets with two of my fellow ASCFG board members (check the archives on the website if you want to replay this conference session). I was really surprised to learn that these very established and amazing growers and marketers made bouquets on site at market. I also had several other conversations with ASCFG members who do similar style selling at markets. They had a cadre of bouquet makers at market each week whipping out custom bouquets. They reported that they could charge a lot more for these than they could for pre-made bouquets and that people really loved the individual attention, ability to choose colors and flowers, and the flair that went along with making bouquets in front of a crowd.

I tucked all this information into the back of my mind. Coming home after an ASCFG conference, where your mind is stuffed so full of new information, can be challenging. It usually takes me a couple weeks before I am ready to pore over

my notebooks. At that point, I like to make lists of the things I actually want to try to implement from what I have learned. And switching up how we sell at market went on my list.

Even though our market booth is now well staffed with 4-6 people on a given day, I still wasn't quite ready to do custom bouquet making. But I did want to try something new. It started with tulip season. We had so many tulips I wanted to try to sell them in every way, shape, and form. While we mostly sold them in 10-stem prewrapped bunches, we decided it might be worth selling some by the stem; that way people could mix and match colors and styles to their little hearts' desires. We created a tulip bar. Buckets of loose stems of every color we had. Some people bought just 2 or 3 stems, others loaded up. And we were charging more per stem than our pre-wrapped bouquets, obviously. And it was a hit!



One of our staff members wrapping a bouquet I would never make myself.



Sometimes when I don't have enough of a specialty flower to do anything else with, sloughing it off to the flower bar is a great use of it.

With the success of the tulip bar, our flower production taking off for the season, and Mother's Day just around the corner, we decided to take this concept to the next level. We started a weekly flower bar. I washed up a bunch of large vases and brought bunches of extra of whatever we had with us to market. So far, it has felt like practically zero extra work. For some things, we actually pick extra for the flower bar, but for the most part we are just bringing the leftovers from bouquet making. We let shoppers

custom-make their own bouquet, then we wrap the blooms in some craft paper for them (if they want) at checkout. It takes up some of our booth space for sure, and requires a little staff time to set up and restock the bar and wrap the flowers, but it is minimal. Of course there are some broken or wilted stems to deal with (but not many). I have learned that people will rarely pick out or want to pay for foliage, so I keep a bucket at the wrap station and throw in a few stems of filler for free.

Mixed bouquets are our best-selling flower item by far. Since we use Square to track our sales at market, we know exactly what we sell in every category. Each week at our staff meetings, I tell the crew what our top five sellers at market were. When flowers are mixed in with all the vegetable sales, sometimes flowers don't even make it into the top five. It usually takes peony season or a ranunculus sale to get flowers in the #1 sales position. The most surprising thing so far is that the flower bar is consistently coming in at the top five. When I see the volume of flowers that go out, I would never have believed this, but the numbers don't lie.

Next to the high sales, the other surprising factor is the social experiment I get to witness. Some people buy just a few dainty little stems. When I wrap up their purchase, I think "What a pathetic little bunch, I would never sell this in a million years". Or they pick (what in my mind) is the most hideous color combination. But they leave supremely happy. Other people can't quite control themselves and grab large vases of one flower and say "I will take it all—including the vase." but because they are paying by the stem they pay a whole lot more than they would otherwise. But, they want what they want.

I have actually come to really enjoy watching how people interact with the flower bar. I love that people can get into flowers for a really low price, so college students or little kids might buy just a few stems. Other people want something for a special occasion. They might grab a mixed bouquet or a few straight bunches and then bulk it up with

something from the flower bar, leaving with a price in the end way higher than anything we offer otherwise. While some customers really revel in picking out each and every stem, there are others who want me to do it for them. They lack confidence or they are lazy—I'm not sure which. I've been roped into this quite a few times already and I can see the writing on the wall. If we have loose ingredients already at market, eventually I will need to offer custom-made bouquets. I am not quite ready to take that on yet, but I see it coming. It means training my market staff to be floral designers, but I feel like I am almost ready to take that on.

I know I still have a lot to learn on pricing, display and marketing. But so far, it's been a high return for very little investment. And it has been a good reminder to branch out and not stagnate in my business.

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WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington



Erin McMullen

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As I'm writing the season is starting to ramp up. The plants are mostly planted, the tubers are all in, the irrigation is almost set—the freight train has left the station and any moment it will be barreling full force at us. Once flowers start rolling in I feel like the only thing to do is hold on and try to enjoy the ride.

For us, that ride encompasses a vast range of markets, and I thought it may be helpful to break it down as to where local flowers are being sold in our region. Keep in mind that our markets may vary greatly from where you are growing and marketing, in terms of product demand, price point, venues, and overall interest.

Once we decided to embrace flowers as our main crop it became very clear that we wouldn't be able to make a living selling flowers at our local farmers' markets, so we started looking for other opportunities.

So, where else do we (and can you) sell those beauties that you've got planted?

Grocery Stores

So many grocery stores sell flowers, from the biggest chain stores down to the mom and pop corner store. But, how to get your foot in the door? Though it is awkward and uncomfortable, that's exactly what you should do—get your foot in the door! Go into the store and check it out, do some recon. Do they have a stand-alone floral department? Is there a manager? Do they sell wrapped bouquets or straight bunches of single varieties? Where are they getting flowers from now? What are their price points? Finding out all of these things before you make contact can give you time to form a plan of attack, allowing you to go in armed with price points and bouquet or bunch size.

Setting up for a successful grocery season starts in the winter planning. Making sure you have sufficient flowers that fall into the three categories of focals, fillers, and foliage can mean the difference between success and failure when it comes to providing consistent bouquets to grocery (or at farmers' markets for that matter). It's so easy to get caught up in the excitement of thousands of sunflowers and dahlias, and forget to plant that statice to put around them!

Wholesale/Designers

This is a hugely varied avenue and people are successful with a great range of tactics to sell through. Bucket trucks are a popular way to sell your flowers to florists and we started driving from store to store with a car full of beautiful blooms. It's a great way to make connections, show off your product, and get an understanding about what your local florists are looking for. Doing research about pricing and bunch size is imperative for success in selling directly to florists. As is having the right product going in the door. We find that our event designers lean towards blush, pinks, whites, and saturated colors (think deep jewel tones). Brick and mortar stores tend towards a little more color. Being able to provide unique flowers or colors to our designers and florists helps to set us, as local growers, apart from the product that is flown in and can help to bridge the gap in pricing that you will inevitably hear about.

While the bucket truck is a great way to get your product out there, it is time consuming. Sending out availability ahead of time is useful, and there are some great platforms to help with online ordering (like Shopify). We also found that as we established relationships with florists in our area we shifted many to on-farm pickup, and were able to eliminate that bucket truck and the time that it took off farm.

The wholesale avenue has been the game changer for us. We are fortunate to be part of a thriving farmer-owned cooperative in Seattle, and we're incredibly grateful to those hard-working farmers who put in the blood, sweat, and tears to get the market going. We also have a stall at the Portland wholesale market that allows us to control our product and connect directly with designers. Once we increased our volume and output we started looking at larger, more conventional wholesalers to sell direct to. Mayesh has been a great connection for us, allowing us to



What we have found success with is bulk buckets and direct sales, aimed at the DIY crowd. Our bulk bucket sales made up 80% of our direct wedding or event sales last year, and they're easy!

sell large quantities of product as flushes come on. As with all other sales channels, knowing the functionality of a market is key to being able to navigate it successfully, so go to your local wholesaler. Get a day pass and check it out!

Bulk Buckets/Weddings

We do some design, and it's fun, but generally more stressful than I'm up for. So I'll leave that discussion to the pros, and just say that there's plenty of work if you're interested.

What we have found success with is bulk buckets and direct sales, aimed at the DIY crowd. Our bulk bucket sales made up 80% of our direct wedding or event sales last year, and they're easy! We offer "farmers' choice" buckets for a base rate of \$85 each. These include ample focals, fillers, and foliage to create 5-7 bouquets per bucket. We allow for one color exclusion. The beauty of this system is that we can glean through our coolers for things that we have lots of, things that we won't sell through our wholesale channels, and still provide high quality product that brides wouldn't have access to otherwise. We do offer color palette buckets as well: brides can give us a color range and we'll build buckets for them in those colors—those buckets are closer to the \$115-125 range. We also sell straight bunches of product for a 2.5% mark up over our wholesale pricing.

The majority of our bulk bucket brides come to us through our social media, farmers' market, and word of mouth.



Farmers' Markets

The first place we sold flowers is still one of my favorites. Although it is not the most profitable avenue for sales, it is the most fun. Nothing beats spending the morning chatting with customers and slinging flowers. We've found that for our market having 2-3 price points is perfect. We try to always offer a mixed bouquet, a posy, and a few straight bunches. As I mentioned above, we get great exposure and word of mouth through our farmers' markets and continue to attend (this year marks our 20th season!), to build and maintain those relationships with our community.

Flower Share

Offering some sort of a flower share is a great way to build clientele and get the word out about your flowers. We partner with a local coffee shop to drop bouquets for our members once a week, at two different locations. In exchange, we provide their shops with fresh flowers throughout the season. It ends up being a win-win. We get to have a pleasant central location for people to pick up our bouquets, they get beautiful flowers, and we get our flowers in front of hundreds of people, every day.

Lastly...

There are a few miscellaneous places that we sell/use our flowers that are worth mentioning.

About 10 years ago we put out a roadside stand—really just our old chicken coop with a cash box attached. We diligently stock it throughout the summer as we have overflow and sell hundreds of bouquets every week.



CANADA

Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan



Janis Harris

Harris Flower Farm

janisandmarkharris@hotmail.com

Business subscriptions are a bit of a hustle for us, since we aren't a "florist", but we deliver alongside our flower shares, and have flowers in offices all over town.

Flower workshops and pop-up shops are fun, and for us, fairly easy with a built-in venue at our partner coffee shops, but we have also partnered with yoga studios, vineyards, and non-profits to bring flowers to the people.

Trades. Okay, while technically not selling our flowers, trading with other local businesses lets us attend a great gym, take yoga classes, eat out at our favorite brewery ('cause who has time to cook in the season, am I right?), and have fresh, local, organic produce all summer long.

So many places to sell your flowers. Where do you sell them? Where are your successes, and failures? I'd love to hear about other people's creative outlets for their flowers!

In the meantime, happy growing!



Are you tired yet? Is this flower farming thing all you expected it to be? It's hard, right?

I am not the type of person to ask for help. I would rather do things on my own and know that it is done and done right. But at this point in my business, I can't be everything and have found that there are parts that someone else is better at than me! I have learned to ask and seek out help, and to delegate.

If there is a task that you're putting off or is falling behind, find someone to take it on. For me, expense sheets and income tax stuff makes me want to dig out my eyeballs with a box cutter. Just thinking of it now makes me blood pressure rise. But my virtual assistant Scott absolutely loves numbers and Excel and can make up a chart for just about anything. He is a virtual assistant but he is a person in my town. We met at a winter networking meeting two years ago. He was just starting out in his business and did a quick elevator pitch to the group. The light bulb went off in my head: I need Scott on my team. After our first meeting I felt much more at ease. Scott handles our bank reconciliation, HST filing, payroll remittance, and he does our payroll. He also can pull up any spreadsheet I ask about. He is a great resource and he also is a huge cheerleader for us. I see him around town wearing his Harris Flower Farm t-shirt!

As a mom of three young kiddos, the home front is also somewhere that I needed to relinquish some control. We have a cleaner come once a week to keep our house in livable condition. A nine-, six- and four-year-old can wreak havoc on a room in a very short time. This isn't a huge expense. But it definitely helps my morale and sanity. In the winter I am able to stay more on top of it. It is very nice to come into the house after a long hard Thursday and smell the fresh scents of a clean house.

On the day-to-day farm tasks I have been lucky to find some awesome #harrisflowerfarmteam members. They do have their own hashtag. Our customers know them as part of the team. I want them to be the face of our business, too. I can't be at every

market or deliver every bouquet, so they have to be replacement me. They are super excited about all that we do and I always make sure to end the day with a “Thanks for your help today.” I don’t call them workers; they are helpers. No job they have to do is below me. They just know that sometimes it’s more important for me to be doing a specific job instead of weeding or other jobs.

The florist who is part of our team contacted me asking to work for us. She had moved to the province and was working in a garden centre but she wanted to get back into cut flowers. She had been following us on Instagram and said “I want to be a part of that”.

At first, I was apprehensive. I didn’t think I could afford a florist and was worried that my lack of formal training would make me feel inferior. I made her jump through hoops. She sent me a photo portfolio and responded to numerous emails. I first limited her hours to just wedding help on certain days. I think that it was more me who needed to be pushed into realizing how great this relationship would be. Within one week I knew I needed her here more than just Fridays. I had her start coming every afternoon to make market and wholesale bouquets. This way my field helper and I didn’t have to stop picking buckets to make the bouquets. We were able to just keep hauling in buckets to Kathy. We were able to get so much more done! She is definitely my right-hand person. She is still working at the garden centre part time. But eventually the goal is to have her full time with us.



white running shoes. Lexi wore hunter boots. Our interviews are walking on the farm and talking. I took the others on their interviews, white running shoes and all. Lexi also introduced us to Brooke. She is my new full-time helper this year. I trusted Lexi’s character reference and hired Brooke at her interview. She has been wonderful and is a major asset on our team.

My main field helper has been with me for three summers. She has gone back to school and her availability is becoming more limited, but she is still eager to come any time she can. I can trust her to know what to do and she makes sure things are done right. When I was originally interviewing for her position, the other candidates showed up to the farm, one in leather desert boots and one in



We also have a couple other helpers, a high school guy and a new part-time field helper. My husband is a major helper! He is the main sunflower picker and the Saturday morning market guy. (The market lady customers love him!) My parents are a HUGE help on our farm. They are retiring organic vegetable farmers. But farmers never retire. The access to their farm land, equipment, and infrastructure is a priceless addition to what we have at our farm. My mom is a great seed starter and is learning the leap from veggie starts to flower starts. My dad’s title is “Structural Designer”. Anything that needs to be built is his fun!

The point of this article is that it is okay to delegate, to relinquish some power, and to know your worth in the business. Always keep an eye out for a keen or eager person— he or she may turn out to be your superstar. Above all, make sure to thank them and show them that you appreciate them. Give them pride in their position and make sure that they know you are all part of the team.

“A person who feels appreciated will do more than is expected.”

Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

Kelsey Adams, West Lane, Winooski, VT
Heidi Anderson, Brick Road Lavender, Ellensburg, WA
Janet Anderson, Petal & Stem Flower Farm, Fort Lawn, SC
Sarah Armstrong, Roseneath Flower Farm, Toronto, ON
Kelly Austin, The Little Plant Company, Pine Beach, NJ
Dan Barry, Billings, MT
Janna Bastian, Hickory View Flowers, Millmont, PA
Marlon Bates, Bates Cut Foliage, Pierson, FL
Julie Beaulieu, East Kingston, RI
Carmen Becker, A Bit of Earth, Halstead, KS
Renae Beegle, Tilmor, Orrville, OH
John Beiler, Inspirational Blossoms, Bird in Hand, PA
Stephanie Bennett, Echo Rock Flowers, Westerly, RI
Lauren Bloomer, Wild Berry Farm, Sadler, TX
Sarah Bond, Bond Hill Flowers, Indianola, IA
Christine Brancheau, Gran's Gardens, Selma, NC
Jonathan Bruderlein, Ferme Melilot, Montreal, QC
Tacy Call, Evermore Forest Farm, Harris, MN
Lisa Cohn, Zannier Flora, Bedford Corners, NY
Claire Collie, Buffalo, NY
Sarah Collins, A Fiddler's Farm, Church Hill, TN
Peggy Condon, Graceful Acres Farm, Pittsboro, NC
Shelley Deimler, Chesterfield, VA
Erin Dobbin, Green Gardens, Vancouver, BC
Monica Drazba, Pennington, NJ
Kate Duinkerken, Love Handle Farm, Alexander, NC
Andrea Durst, Bloom Flower Farm, Medical Lake, WA
Kate Edwards, Flower Box Farm, Prunedale, CA
Stacey and Russell Emmott, Chandelier Grove, Tomball, TX
Jessica Fickett, Ranch Hand Flowers, Gainesville, FL
Aishah Flower, Patagonia Flower Farm, Patagonia, AZ
Megan Fuller, Blooms & Stems Farm, Beaver creek, OR
Heidi Garrett, Eifel Blooms, Sedalia, MO
Erin Gathright, Perfect Little Farm, Junction City, AR
Catherine Gatlin, Lollie Flowers, Conway, AR
Kristy Genis, Lowens Flower Farm, Homer Glen, IL
Heather Gibson, Needwood Farm Flowers, Harpers Ferry, WV
Laurie Gift, Hill Crest Flower Farm, Fulton, MD
Christi Gilliland, Euforia Flower Farms, Goodlettsville, TN
Charles Griffin, Hepzibah Farms, Talladega, AL
Beth Grollmes, Perennial City, St. Louis, MO
Lana Guardo, Kennett Square, PA
Danielle Guzzetta, Country Song Farm, Lithia, FL
Grant Hamil, Plume & Furrow, Lyons, CO
Sandy Hauser, Valley Petals Flower Farm, Tobaccoville, NC

Carrie Herzog, Barn Blooms, Wolcott, NY
Lillian D. Holland, Jennings Creek Farm, Ridgeway, VA
Carol Kennedy, Home Sweet Home Country Farms, Rockwell, NC
Amy Kermociev, Orchard Green Farms, Vernon, BC
Katy King, Hidden Springs Flowers, Thomasville, PA
Mary Kluz, Black Caps Farm, Wausau, WI
Nina Koch, Philadelphia, PA
Claudia Konkus, Lil' Holler Farm, Westminster, MD
Susan Laidlaw-McCreery, Birdsong Flower Fields, Belmont, MI
Lisa Lanni, Lanni Orchards, Inc., Lunenburg, MA
Brittany Lefebvre, Damascus, MD
Jennifer LeMaster, Forested Acres, Duvall, WA
Phil & Nan Leonard, Hudson Valley Garlic Growers, Germantown, NY
Jennifer Lieb, Evanston, IL
Susanna Lohmar, The Roof Crop, Chicago, IL
Teresa Loo, Olympia, WA
Natalie and Seth Lyons, Millwood Flower Farm, Reddick, FL
Joyeeta Majumdar, Blooming Beauties, Sacramento, CA
Richard Maldaner, The Rose Solution, Deerfield Beach, FL
Valerie Mankus, Portland, ME
Stacy Marshall, Petal & Pitchfork, Poulsbo, WA
Violet Maston, Sweet Violet Farm, LeRoy, WV
Celia Max, Covington, TN
Alisa McCorquodale, Bride & Bloom, Montgomery, TX
Christine McCracken, Joe's Farm, Brockport, NY
Sarah McGee, TwigAcres, Hodges, SC
Savannah McGuire, GreenHouse17, Lexington, KY
Karen McHatton, McHatton Family Farm, Garden Valley, CA
Abigail McNamara, Bagel's Florals, Albuquerque, NM
Tara Megos, Weaving Roots Farm, McSherrystown, PA
Christine Meshell, Lecompte, LA
Andrea Milne, The Petaled Branch, Goshen, IN
Angela Moeller, Honeybloom Farms, Chilhowee, MO
Dan and Bronwyn Mund, The Wandering Bee, Thorndale, ON
Nga Nguyen, Texas Nature Sunshine Farm, Humble, TX
Clara Osborne, Pasture Song Farm, Pottstown, PA
Naomi Pinckney, The Good Earth, Cedar Rapids, IA
Beth Poggioli, Celadon Hill Farm, Baldwin, MD
Ingrid Pulecio, Florencia Farm, Alexandria, VA
Mandy Purvis, Organic Blooms NZ, Warkworth, Auckland, New Zealand
Ryan Ravenscroft, C & R Farm Services, Brunswick, ME
Jacob Reiss, Potomac Floral Wholesale, Inc., Silver Spring, MD
Tina Riley, Barboursville, VA
Hayley Roberts, Harpeth Moon Farm, Kingston Springs, TN

Growers Supporting Growers

Sarah Roberts, Parker, CO
Christopher Rouse, Beech Ridge Peonies,
Belhaven, NC
Christopher Ruigrok, A.D.R. Bulbs, Inc.,
Chester, NY
Jaclyn Rutigliano, Hometown Flower Co.,
Huntington, NY
Julie Sarff, Blossom and Bee, Louviers, CO
Dawn Schauer, Milkhouse Flowers, Glencoe, MN
Katherine Schuttler, Freehold Flower Farm,
Unionville, IN
Hannah Silvey, Simpsonville, SC
Pam Simpson, Curlew Flower Farm, Barriere, BC
Meghan Skea, Primitive House Farm, Saco, ME
Kenneth Sloane, Smithfield Farm and Garden,
Smithfield, VA
Aaron Stierle, Solitude Springs Farm & Vineyard,
Fairbanks, AK
Maegan Struppeck, Greenwell Springs, LA
Lani Talbot, Talbot Farm, Camano Island, WA
Abby Tappendorf, Tappendorf Flower Co.,
Louisville, KY
Katie Tauscher, Frankie's Backyard, Green Bay, WI
Meara Cassidy & Travis Cox, Kokoro Flowers,
Belgrade, MT
Rebekah Ulsaker, The Little Flower Garden,
Douglasville, GA
Kristine Wells, The Grove Flower Farm,
Deerfield, WI
Randy Yeager, Corydon, IN
Violet Zerbe, Belfast Blooms, Belfast, ME



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Ask an Expert!



Our Facebook live events have become popular and useful exchanges of information. Take advantage of these opportunities to ask questions of cut flower growers in real time, and connect with other members as well.

Log on at 8:00 p.m. eastern time to learn from these Experts:

July 8	John Dole—postharvest
August 12	Ellen Frost—selling to florists
September 9	Dave Dowling—WWDD?
October 14	Brenda Smith—on-farm research
November 11	Meghan McHugh and Denise Richter—urban farming
December 10	Janis Harris—winterscaping and wreaths

These Members Have Been with the ASCFG for Ten Years!



Gretel and Steve Adams



Mary Frances Brosemer



Carolyn Chapin



Dennis DeBaltzo



Ellen Frost



Nell Gardner



Jan Hanscom



Jim Kelly



Jennie Love



Joy Macy



Madie McGaughan



Heidi Ong



Brian Stern
(photo unavailable)



Jennifer Syme



Marcia Tice
(photo unavailable)

Mentors and Mentees Paired for Upcoming Years



The ASCFG Mentor Program application process was moved up this year, and the Committee was able to make matches earlier than in the past. These growers will be working together during in 2020 and 2021.

Mentor Renee Clayton, Wild Scallions Farm, Timberlake, North Carolina, and Mentee Noma Brueckner, Elk Creek Flower Farm, Lawsonville, North Carolina

Mentor Rita Anders, Cuts of Color, Weimar, Texas, and Mentee Christin Campbell, Clementine Botanical Art, Austin, Texas

Mentor Jeanie McKewan, Brightflower Farm, Stockton, Illinois, and Mentee Linda Dwyer, Andorfer Acres West, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Mentor Brenda Smith, Smith & Smith Farm, Hines, Oregon, and Mentee Kelly Gregory, Fiddlin' Frog Flowers, Marysville, California

Mentor Janet Foss, J. Foss Garden Flowers, Chehalis, Washington, and Mentee Kimberly Lango, Prairie Sky Farms, Cheney, Washington

Mentor Dave Rubino, Plumb Farms Nursery & Flowers, Prospect, Connecticut, and Mentee Kelci McIntosh, Island Time Farm, Shelter Island Heights, New York

Mentor Tanis Clifton, Happy Trails Flower Farm, Dennis, Mississippi, and Mentee Andrew Moman, Twin Rose Farm, Murfreesboro, Tennessee



Bold Blooms, Long Stems!

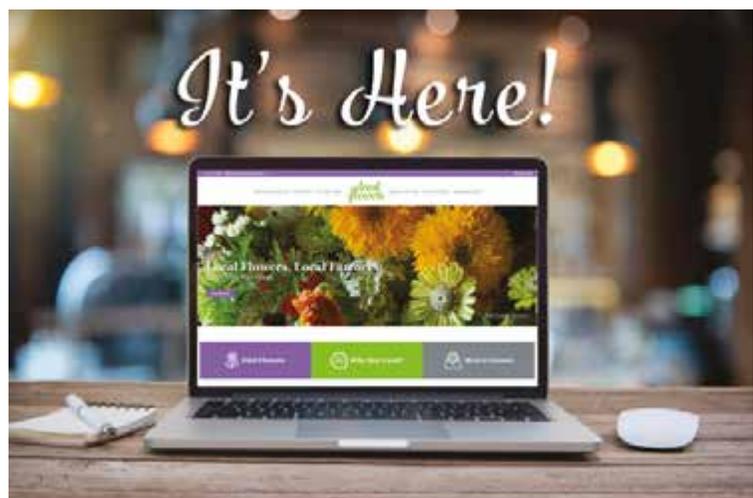
It's always a fiesta with COCO™ cut flower marigold! With COCO, expect uniform earliness, long stem length and fully double blooms. This beauty is best suited for tighter space production, especially when disbudded, and offers three colors, including the deepest orange on the market!

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Making a Profit Selling Cut Flowers

November 4-5, 2019

Green Door Gourmet

Nashville, Tennessee

Monday, November 4

7:30 a.m. Registration - Coffee and light refreshments

8:30 a.m. Welcome

8:45 a.m. Finding Your Own Niche in Crowded Market
Lennie Larkin, B-Side Farm, Sebastopol, CA

Are tales of a saturated market stopping you from starting a thriving business? Lennie will take you through the ins and outs of her evolving business model in the crowded flower space of sunny California, and impart tips on everything from how to find new customers, to knowing when to step up or step back in a crowded market, to handling competition with grace and finding your competitive advantage, to a warning against undercutting other growers or designers. Get ready for anecdotes, tangible take-homes, and perhaps a graph or two as we revisit some supply and demand curves straight out of an economics textbook.

9:50 a.m. Listen to Your Heart. And Your Head. And Your Accountant.

Bailey Hale, Ardelia Farm and Farmer Bailey Plugs, Irasburg, VA
 Bailey will explain how he and his partner fell into farming, their MANY failures, and they've reinvented themselves several times to focus on sanity and profitability. We'll learn worked for them, and why it may not work for everyone, including some context about how we all fit into the global flower industry.

10:55 a.m. If You Build It, They Will Come
Linda Doan, Aunt Willie's Wildflowers, Blountville, TN

Don't sell just your flowers, sell your farm experience as well. Farm tours, photography workshops, design workshops, cut and carry—Linda will consider how these options are available to add income to your business by bringing dollars to your property.

Noon Lunch (included with registration) with Green Door Gourmet Chef. Here's an opportunity to stretch your legs and visit Green Door Gourmet's farm store.

1:30 p.m. Rethinking On-farm Sales
Lisa Ziegler, The Gardener's Workshop, Newport News, VA

On-farm sales can be so much more than a farm stand. Lisa will share how she over-came some of the challenges facing urban farmers and city ordinances to sell flowers from her farm. Learn about her Members-Only Flower Market model that is going into its 15th year, bouquet subscription program, and other methods that will make a profit.

2:30 p.m. Extreme Marketing: How to Attract Your Champagne Clients on a Beer Budget

Julio Freitas, The Flower Hat, Bozeman, MT

Learn how The Flower Hat made six figures on virtually no budget.

3:40 p.m. Forcing Glorious Blooms for Holiday Sales—and Beyond
Val Schirmer, Three Toads Farm, Winchester, KY

In this "show and tell" presentation, Val will share how she chooses, forces, stages, and sells specialty bulbs—namely, big bold beautiful amaryllis and paperwhites—for holiday sales. And the good news? For anyone who hasn't tried it yet, or is thinking about doing it again, there's still time to give it a go this year.

4:45 p.m. Live Auction to benefit the ASCFG Research Foundation

Tuesday, November 5

8:00 a.m. Coffee and light refreshments

8:30 a.m. Making a Profit with Dried Material (or #whattodowithdeadstuff)

Emily Daniel, Basil & Bergamot Flower Farm, Whites Creek, TN
 Dried flowers are making a comeback! Emily will discuss old and new drying processes, and share new trends in dried materials, as well as marketing strategies and results from the new varieties she's trialing. She'll show us how to use dried flowers in fresh arrangements as she demonstrates design techniques. After Emily's presentation, everyone is invited to try their hands at a dried hand-tied bouquet. Instead of bringing fresh flowers to this event, we're asking for any type of dried material you can gather and share. We'll have rubber bands and ribbon available to tie up your creations, and will take a group photo.

10:00 a.m. Farm Tour

We probably won't cover all 350 acres of Green Door Gourmet, but we may see their cut flower and vegetable greenhouses, hoopouses, packing sheds, and retail shop.

Thank you, sponsors!



Back to Basics for Cut Flower Nerds

February 18-19, 2020
The Hotel at Oberlin
Oberlin, Ohio



Who remembers what parenchyma is? What happens inside a plant when it's pinched? How do you know asters are related to sunflowers? Where do breeders come up with their ideas for new cut flower varieties? Get ready to learn some of the basics: plant taxonomy and anatomy; how climate change is affecting agriculture; propagation and breeding; and more.

This event is limited to 170 attendees. Watch the ASCFG site for program and registration details.



ASCFG Conference and Trade Show

NOVEMBER 9-11, 2020
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2020

Meet the ASCFG members who have stepped forward to run for positions open on the ASCFG Board of Directors. Please review their information, and take just a few minutes to cast your vote when you receive an electronic ballot later this summer. Your participation is vital!

Secretary

Kristiana Coutu

Farmers Bloom, Kalamazoo, Michigan

I have been farming or helping farmers my entire adult life. Raised a fourth-generation New England dairy farmer, agriculture has been my passion for as long as I can remember. I farmed full time on the family dairy for many years, milking cows, raising calves, doing fieldwork, and running the books. Soon after I met my husband,



we started *Liberty Hill Harvest*, a small, sustainable vegetable farm selling mostly at farmers' markets in Connecticut. This is when I caught the bug of small-scale farming and found the empowerment of selling directly to customers. What I did not know then was that these early farming experiences were setting the base to become a flower farmer in Michigan many years later.

For close to a decade, I reluctantly took a break from farming, but not from agriculture. I worked with farmers in many roles—as a loan officer for Farm Credit, then as a certified public accountant with a niche agricultural practice, and finally as an agricultural attorney. My goal in all these professional roles was simple: to help fill a void of professionals who actually understand and care about the complexities and unique qualities of agriculture. While I love working with other farmers in a support role and have learned so much from each farmer I work with, I am truly happy only if I am farming myself.

After too many years of being a farmer without a farm, we bought our farm in Michigan and revived *Liberty Hill Harvest*. We started back up, this time with 3 kids in tow, growing vegetables and a few flowers. Soon after, I learned about an organization called the ASCFG. Fortuitously the next conference was held in Grand Rapids, not far from us. Thankfully, I convinced myself it was okay to spend the money for the registration, which was very uncharacteristic of me. That conference was a game changer! Very rarely am I this decisive, but about an hour into it I sent my husband a text, "Forget the veggies, we need to grow flowers." And just like that, the flower part of

our farm was born. I joined the ASCFG immediately after and spent countless hours watching videos of prior conferences and reading listserv discussions. I refer to it as my master's degree from the ASCFG in cut flower farming. A few months later I was walking into my first florist with buckets of flowers.

During the three short years since we shifted to flowers, that part of the farm has grown exponentially. We sell mostly to florists and designers and have a small, seasonal roadside stand. We grow in the field and in a hoophouse and this year started greenhouse growing to expand the growing season year round. Along the way we rebranded, from *Liberty Hill Harvest* to *Farmers Bloom* to reflect the new direction of the farm. Like so many of us, I'm passionate about bringing awareness to the importance of local flowers and providing a reliable source to our community.

I am truly honored to be considered for Secretary of ASCFG. Without this organization, our farm would not be where it is today. The ASCFG gave me the confidence to shift our business to cut flowers after seeing that other people were doing it successfully, and wow, has it been a wild ride. More importantly, the ASCFG gave me the tools to succeed with its invaluable resources and members who give time and guidance without reservation. The ASCFG is by far the best professional organization I have been involved with, and I would love to give back any way I can.

Laura Beth Resnick

Butterbee Farm, Pikesville, Maryland

Hello, farmers! My name is Laura Beth Resnick, and I own Butterbee Farm in Baltimore, Maryland. We cultivate four active acres of perennials, high tunnels, and annuals. Most of our work is with florists, but we also offer a CSA, host events on the farm, and sell to DIY wedding couples. I also mentor new farmers for Future Harvest Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, and I have spoken at regional and national grower



venues including the ASCFG, Cylburn Arboretum, and the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention on topics such as crop planning and growing great dahlias.

I'm passionate about connecting people to each other. I co-founded two small annual conferences at the farm: one for women entrepreneurs, and another for flower farmers. I also served as President of the Maryland Cut Flower Growers Association for over two years; during my tenure, we launched a web site, created a listserv so Chesapeake area growers can easily contact each other, and coordinated a farmer and florist meetup.

On a more personal note, I was a Secretary once before—of the Student Government Association in seventh grade! (I promise to use less glitter if I am lucky to be Secretary of the ASCFG board.) After learning how to grow my farm sustainably and profitably, in large part thanks to ASCFG, it's time to give back. My work is made better and more meaningful by all of you; we lean on each other, we inspire each other, we learn from and challenge each other. I want all growers, from newcomers to veterans, to feel that ASCFG has concrete and valuable information to offer them. As our community grows, it's important to continue our strong history of welcoming new growers while maintaining the high, professional standards for which we're known. I want to do my part on the ASCFG board to make this floral world an even better place to be great farmers, businesspeople, and neighbors.

Treasurer

**Lennie Larkin, B-Side Farm
Petaluma, California**

Hi everyone! I'm Lennie Larkin, and I would love to be your treasurer. Being an active member and then the West and Northwest Regional Director of the ASCFG has had a profound impact on my life and career. I honestly feel so lucky to be a part of this community of hard working, generous, joyful, nutty people. My involvement



has of course helped me grow my own business and further refine my model. But more than anything it's made me want to get to know all of your farms, follow along with your trials and successes, and start thinking about the kind of help small flower farmers need that we aren't getting. Throughout my three-year term, without realizing it I began cataloguing challenges and solutions, questions that needed answering, insights from other industries that we as farmers could learn from, and business knowledge that could help our farmers succeed in running the businesses that they love. The focus had started to shift from my own farm (a tiny acre in a sea of huge, highly successful California flower farms), to my place in the industry and how I can play a support role to the rest of you. There's no hiding the fact that farmers are too busy, too attached to the details of production, and too worn down to take a step back and focus on building their businesses for long-term sustainability. My evolving goal has been to keep my business small and manageable, and maintain the bandwidth necessary to help other farms prepare for long-term growth.

With this goal in mind, this winter I planned the content and speakers for our business conference in Denver, trying to help grow leaders in our own industry. I've taken a business management course and now a farm coaching course, learning the skills to help farmers understand and improve their finances and planning. Now that I'm knee-deep in profit and loss statements, I'd love to bring this skillset to the role of ASCFG treasurer, and help our rapidly expanding organization make decisions on how to manage this growth.

I'm no stranger to non-profit management, having started B-Side Farm & Floral Design in 2014 after three seasons of running a non-profit educational farm in Petaluma, California. Prior to that I moved through a number of other educational and non-profit organizations, as an assistant instructor at the UCSC farm, a refugee resettlement manager in the Massachusetts social services network, and an ESL teacher for the city of Cambridge, MA. These days in addition to running my little farm, I teach horticulture at Santa Rosa JC, consult with people looking to start flower farms ("Run! Run away!...ok that'll be \$150, please.") and keep trying to find ways to be a better educator and advocate in our community. I'd love to be back on the board, helping our community grow and strengthen. Thank you.

**Paula Rice, Beehaven Farm
Bonners Ferry, Idaho**

I am super excited to have been nominated to serve the ASCFG members as Treasurer. I loved being the West and Northwest Regional Director a few years ago and doing the work it involved. I can talk about growing and selling flowers all day long as well as dream up a hundred ideas to be a better, more profitable grower. It isn't easy work but it sure is satisfying. Absolutely every facet of being a flower farmer gets my blood pumping and inspires me to try harder and be better.



I would love to be part of the ASCFG team that supports and connects its members in a way that helps them be long-time, successful flower growers. I have been doing accounting for our small businesses my whole life and feel qualified to serve you as Treasurer. Your confidence in me and vote would be greatly appreciated.

Northeast Regional Director

**Bailey Hale, Ardelia Farm & Co.
Irasburg, Vermont**

I planted my first garden at age six and never quit planting. My real growing (i.e. plant hoarding) started in high school, so it was only natural that I study horticulture in college. After receiving my B.S. in horticulture I found myself living in downtown Philadelphia with few job opportunities available. Not willing to admit horticultural defeat I started working in flower shops, which agreed with me, and I went on to open my own floral and event design business. I had the great fortune of designing several-award winning exhibits for the Philadelphia Flower Show, which opened doors for me to visit major cut flower op-



erations throughout Europe and Asia. I learned where to source the best flowers from all over the world, and I imported them weekly with little concern for their origin.

In 2011 I caught the farming bug, and we packed our bags for the country. Our focus was primarily on livestock in the early years, but I knew that I wanted to do something with flowers. I knew how to grow things, and I knew the quality and variety of flowers available internationally. I was just missing the knowledge of how to grow flowers to look like the ones I used to buy. The ASCFG provided this missing piece. My first meeting lit a fire under me, and I recall not being able to sleep the entire weekend. I had found my people and my calling. We were going to have a full-fledged flower farm!

My husband Thomas and I founded Ardelia Farm & Co in 2014. We have found our niche producing sweet peas for the wholesale market, as well as a wide variety of perennials and cool season annuals for our local market. Northeastern Vermont is not a particularly favorable climate for most cut flowers, but if we can succeed, anyone can. I believe that growers can produce exceptional quality flowers here in the U.S. that rival the finest imports. I love flowers, growing flowers, talking about flowers, and I would be honored to serve as the Northeast Regional Director.

Mid-Atlantic Regional Director

**Lisa Ziegler, Gardener's Workshop Farm
Newport News, Virginia**

With each passing year, my need and respect for this organization grows. I began growing in 1998 and have continued to branch out in many directions, all grounded in farming and the love of growing plants and relationships. My membership has proven to provide friendships that will last a lifetime and has advanced my business in ways that I never expected. Serving on the board these past 4 years has been an honor and my opportunity to give back to those who have given me much. I continue to be amazed and surprised with the volume of behind-the-scenes work going on in this organization to provide more tools and opportunities to the membership. I would appreciate the opportunity to continue serving as the ASCFG Mid-Atlantic Director.



Southeast Regional Director _____

**Val Schirmer, Three Toads Farm
Winchester, Kentucky**

Hello, everyone! My name's Val Schirmer and I'm a specialty cut flower farmer near Lexington, Kentucky. I first joined the ASCFG around 2001 after starting our little flower farm with a great family friend and then floundering around for two years, until joining this amazing organization and our farm began to take off.



Today there are three of us Toads. We grow on just over two acres on two small farms, and sell at our local farmers' market, to floral designers and florists, and deliver our flowers weekly to businesses and homes. We do select weddings and events, and it's now our sixth year doing on-the-farm workshops. Even though we are tiny, in everything we do we try to live up to being named one of *Martha Stewart Wedding's* Top 10 Farmer-Florists five years ago.

None of what we've worked to accomplish would have been possible without the ASCFG. My role on our farm has always been to go, to see in person, and try out new ideas. In 2012 I retired from the corporate world, only to return in the summer of 2016 for what was supposed to be no more than three months. In January I re-retired (permanently this time) from my job leading global corporate communications. What I learned and put into practice at work has helped us grow our flower business.

I've been so lucky to serve as your Southeast Regional Director during the past two and a half years. In this short time, we've seen our global organization grow from fewer than 1,000 members to more than 1,700 and I'm so excited that we now have 277 members in the Southeast region—double the 138 we had in the summer of 2016.

As Southeast Regional Director and active board member I've tried to uncover and bring together great ideas, share best practices, help put together great conferences and events, and have found it exhilarating (to say to least!) to represent and connect our Region, so we can all keep learning and growing, getting better and better every year. No matter the size of your business or how long you've been at it, it's a GREAT time to be part of the flower farming and farmer-florist movement!

Canada Regional Director _____

**Janis Harris, Harris Flower Farm
St. Thomas, Ontario**

I have enjoyed my first term as the Canadian Regional Director. The time flew by so fast that I didn't even realize that it was time to have an election for my position. I am proud to be a full-time flower farmer, long-time ASCFG member representing the members from Canada, a wife and mother of three, and a Canadian! Since the Canadian Regional Director position was created in 2017, the ASCFG has had a more international input in planning events and conferences, and the Canadian membership has grown.



I hope I am chosen to serve another term on the board. It is a very hard-working group of thoughtful, passionate, and fun people—people I have come to know well enough to consider close friends. The Region is very large; it's the whole country. I have had the pleasure of meeting so many of our members. I hope to be able to visit and meet many more in the coming years!

Cut Flowers of the Year _____

Fresh

- Lisianthus 'Corelli Light Pink'
- Lisianthus 'Voyage Apricot'
- Dahlia 'Diva'

Woody

- Philadelphus*
- Spirea 'Bridal Veil'
- Cotinus* 'Royal Purple'

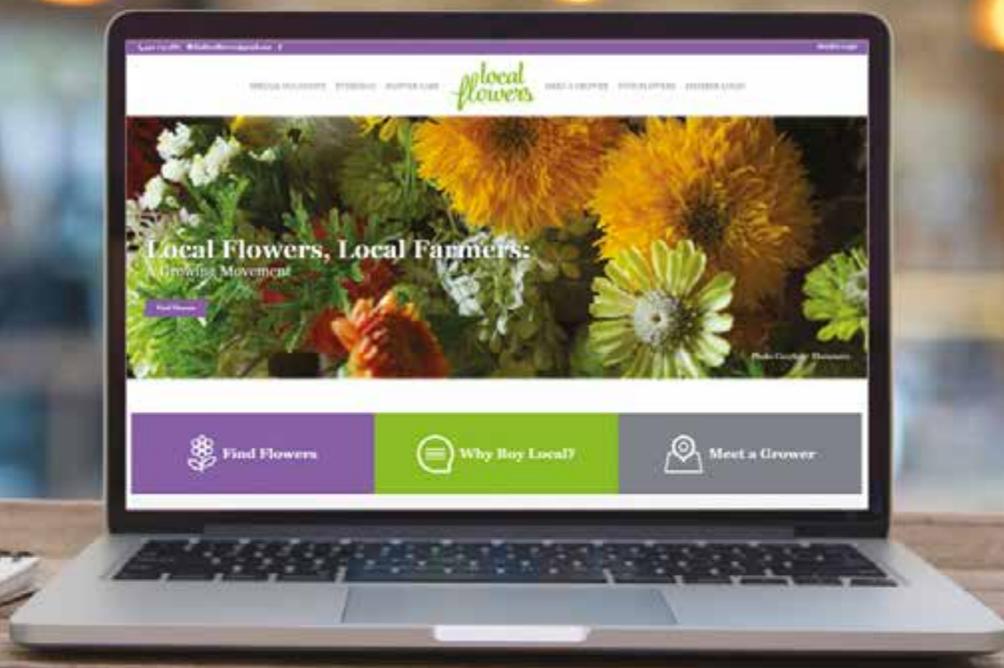
Foliage

- Pycnanthemum muticum*
- Baptisia australis*
- Lemon basil 'Miss Burns'

Bulb

- Tulip 'Menton'
- Ranunculus 'Elegance Salmon'
- Ranunculus 'Hanoi'

It's Here!



The redesign of *localflowers.org* is finished, and it's

GORGEOUS!

We know you'll like it, and now it's easier than ever for buyers to find you and your florals and services.

But it needs one more thing—for you to log in and update your personalized Member Page. Did we say “update”? We meant

EMBELLISH!

This is your chance to make your ad-free Member Page an effective marketing tool to promote you and your business. You'll be able to easily add photos and logos, expand your business description, and include the list of cut flowers you sell and services you offer.

Where to begin?

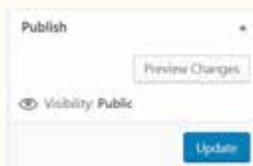
First-time log in:

- Go to the Member Login at localflowers.org.
- Click the lost password link.
- Enter email address as username.
- A reset password link will be sent.

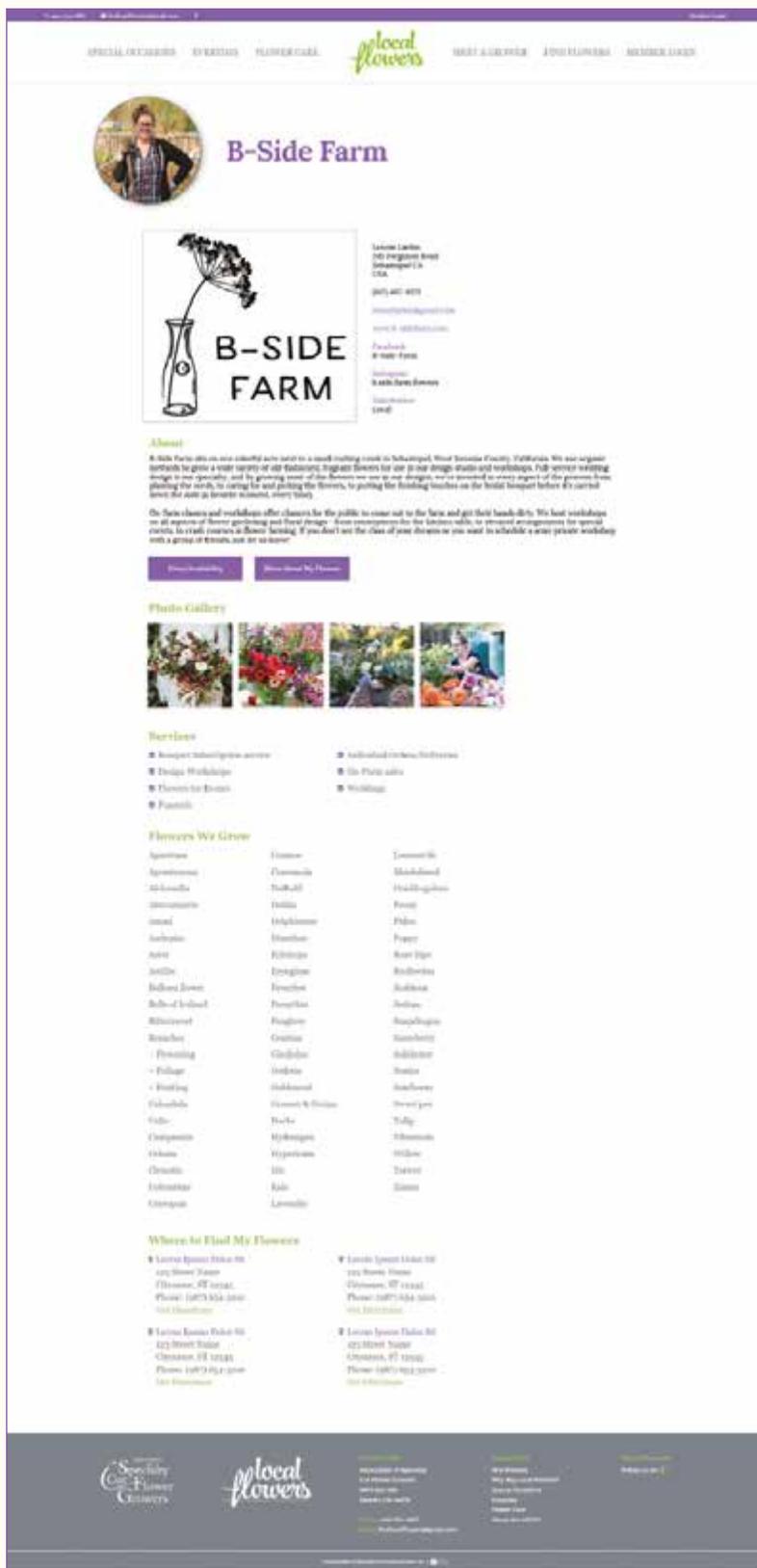


Embellish and inform!

- Go to the “Members” tab and click “edit” under your company name.
- Download instruction manual on this page.
- Your contact information has already been entered. Make any necessary changes.
- Replace default images with your logo and and your favorite photos that tell your story.
- Enter a business description that clearly defines you and your company.
- Share links to your website and social media.
- Include links for a price list, catalog, online store, or product availability.
- Let buyers know if you supply locally, regionally, or nationally.
- Highlight services offered.
- Mark check boxes for flowers that you grow.
- Add locations where your flowers may be purchased.
- Be sure to click the “Update” button to save.



Sample Member Page



Guest Editorial by Sten Crissey, AAF

Judy M. Laushman



In Lieu of Love?

Interesting, isn't it? When society hurts the most, people turn to flowers.

Our deeply felt need for flowers to soften pain came to mind recently with the unfathomable massacre of Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand, and Christians on Easter in Sri Lanka. Immediately and spontaneously, flowers appeared at the sites where the tragedies occurred. The common motivation among people was the simple desire to say, "I hurt. This is wrong. This must stop."

In fact, with virtually all tragic events, the same script plays out. Think of 9/11, the shootings at Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook Elementary, Las Vegas, Parkland, the Pittsburgh synagogue... and the list of mass tragedies goes on. In all those cases, flowers served as salve to soothe the collective souls of a grieving public.

And it is not just tragedies on this scale, either. When dignitaries' lives end, tragically or not, impromptu floral memorials appear as if from the ether. John Lennon, Princess Diana, Prince, John McCain, and more recently, community activist and rapper Nipsey Hussle comprise a partial list illustrating the point.

Even in our local communities, unexpected deaths inspire floral tributes. Bouquets dot our highways, where accidents claimed lives of motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

So why is it that with the deaths of those we love the most—our wives, husbands, children, and grandparents—today's social norms insist on the phrase "in lieu of flowers"?

There was a time when families would not think of a funeral service for a loved one without flowers. Likewise, friends and business associates of the deceased or the family expressed their love by sending flowers. For most florists, the result meant that through the 1960s, into the 1970s and beyond, funeral flowers were a significant, and in many cases, the majority of a flower shop's business.

Circumstances changed, however, with the advent of the fundraiser. People began sending donations to charities in the name of the deceased. This gesture left the impression that something good, and of lasting value, had been done in their memory.

Over time, however, another reality has developed. With the commonplace "in lieu of flowers" directive, people have realized they can make very modest gifts to charities named by families. Their gifts will be acknowledged by the charity, the family will be informed of the gift—though not the dollar amount—and their obligation to the deceased has been satisfied.

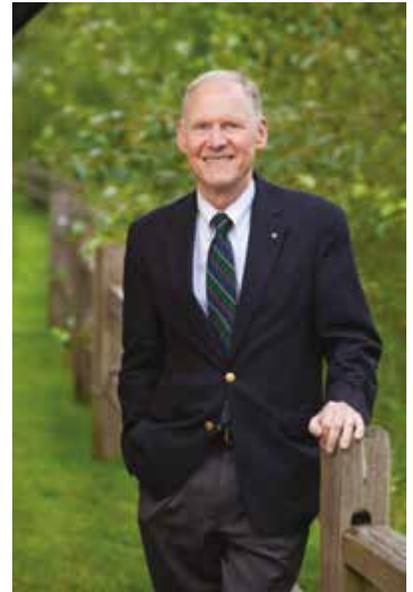
Often sacrificed in this modern ritual, unfortunately, is a visible token of love. The perfunctory pattern of sending small checks to charities has evolved into a rote exercise with little thought or meaning for either the deceased or their family. How sad!

But what if we could change the pattern? What if we could draw on people's impulsive desire to turn to flowers in times of mourning and use this same need to express their love with flowers when the death of a loved one occurs?

Suppose, for example, a new tradition called for mourners to arrive at funeral services with a single flower, or a small cluster of flowers?

No, it likely wouldn't equate to a lot of money for florists. But wouldn't it go a long way to re-establish flowers to their rightful and natural place as the primary vehicle for expressions of love at times of grief?

There was an era when industry ads said, "Say it with flowers." It worked magnificently because the buying public knew, at its core, it spoke the truth. Funeral services without flowers create another, rather sad and distressing message. It reads "In lieu of love."



J. Sten Crissey, AAF, is a second-general retail florist from Seattle who sold his family's business and retired in 2006. He is a former Society of American Florists president and member of the Floriculture Hall of Fame. Contact him at stencrissey@gmail.com

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