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The Cut Flower

QUARTERLY

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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Cover photo - 'Cafe au Lait'

*Courtesy of
Kathy Wirtala,
Virginia Floral*

The advertisement features a large image of a sunflower arrangement with the text "SEEDS" at the top. Below it, the word "Cuts" is written in a stylized font, followed by "from Harris Seeds". A red banner across the middle says "Let us help your business bloom!". To the right, there's a cart holding several potted plants, with "PLUGS & LINERS" and "GROWING SUPPLIES" banners above it. Below the cart are four smaller images of flower arrangements: "ZINNIA - BENARY'S GIANT MIX", "SUNFLOWER GREENBURST", "LISIANTHUS ABC F1-MISTY BLUE", and "CLOTHIUM BOMBAY MIX". At the bottom, there's a paragraph about Harris Seeds' offerings and their contact information: 800-544-7938 and www.harrisseeds.com. Logos for "PARTNER FOR PROFIT" and "HARRIS SEEDS A Grower Friendly Company" are also present.

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Pulling Together for the Common Good

Frank Arnosky

Historian T.R. Ferhrenbach once wrote that Texas is “a primordial land with a Pleistocene climate”. Those of us who live here understand how true this can be, and we deal with it on a regular basis. The joke about the climate here is that we have perpetual drought with intermittent flooding. But last May, over the Memorial Day weekend, that joke turned into a nightmare when torrential rains filled our otherwise slow and placid Blanco River with a wall of water that went crashing downstream for miles. Hundreds of homes were flooded or swept away, giant pecan and cypress trees were stripped of their bark and uprooted, and many lives were lost. Two major bridges were destroyed. One of our neighbors who lives well above the river had four feet of water in her home. After the river went down, she measured the high water mark with GPS and found that the river had risen fifty-three feet from its normal level. Usually the Blanco River is only a couple of feet deep.

Even if you weren’t affected directly, you knew someone who was. As you would expect, the community pulled together and went to work getting things cleaned up. Pamela and I were out the next morning with sandwiches and shovels helping friends clean out their flooded home. But it was a staggering level of destruction. There were (and still are) major appliances and building materials stuck 20 feet high in trees. Tour busses and RVs were wrapped around trees downstream from the RV park in Blanco, and they stayed there for weeks as other, more pressing issues took precedence. The bridge to town is gone, and although it’s being worked on, it won’t be repaired for a long time.

Our farm is two miles from the river, so the flooding didn’t affect us directly, but the rain did. We figure that nearly twelve inches of rain fell on the farm in just a few hours. (The rain gauges all overflowed, but we estimated from buckets.) That’s a lot of rain! Most of our harvest for June was lost, and many of the young plants were damaged beyond recovery. The wet soils kept us from being able to replant, so our production was affected well into the summer. Overall, we estimate that we lost around \$70,000 in production. That’s quite a hit, but nothing compared to people who lost homes and family members.

Watching the community pull together, I was reminded of something I had heard on the radio years ago. Bill Moyers was speaking on the NPR show Fresh Air. Host Terry Gross asked Mr. Moyers if he considered himself to be a liberal. After a few moments, he answered, “Well, if you define liberal as meaning that you believe we can accomplish more together than we can by ourselves, then yes, I’m a liberal.”

I have, in the past, considered myself a liberal, and although I have come to temper my views somewhat in the past few years, I still believe strongly in Bill Moyers’ definition.



Pamela Arnosky surveys damage done during May floods in Texas

That is why I am a member of the ASCFG. I believe that together we can accomplish more than we can by ourselves. As members of this organization, we are able to pool our resources and strengths to put together conferences and growers’ schools that benefit all of us. We can print a quarterly publication to share information and news, and we can run a web site that hosts an active bulletin board and allows potential customers to find us with just a few clicks. We have a research foundation, new variety trials for both annuals and perennials, and a Cut Flower of the Year program. These are things that we do together for ourselves that we couldn’t do alone.

In addition to all the great things that come from our talented staff in the Oberlin office, this has been a big year for new projects. We have a very active Board of Directors, with good ideas and great involvement and follow-through. As President of the organization I can proudly point to what we've accomplished, but to be sure, it is through the hard work of the board and staff that this is possible. They make it happen. Some of the things I can point to include:

- A mentor program that will bring new growers together with seasoned flower farmers.
- The Flower Bucket Challenge.
- A local flowers project video to promote the value of locally-grown flowers.
- A Shopify-based online marketing program for selling your flowers. (Details available soon.)
- Increased social media and other networking presence.

But the ASCFG also has a leadership role to play in the floral industry at large. We are but one part of a bigger picture, and once again Bill Moyers' definition comes into play. We can accomplish more together than we can by ourselves. I believe it is in the best interest of our members and the industry at large for the ASCFG to continue to work with and complement the efforts of other groups and associations. Some of the projects and associations we have been involved with are:

- American Society for Horticultural Science's education program to promote education to the public and encourage students to choose careers in horticulture.
- Cooperation with the CalFlowers group to provide significant shipping discounts to members.
- Working with the American Grown Flowers program to educate the public about imported flowers and the choices they have to buy locally.
- Supporting the Congressional Cut Flower Caucus to educate our lawmakers in Washington about the importance of our domestic cut flower industry.
- The Land Connection's cut flower workshop in Illinois, North Carolina State Extension's two cut flower meetings, and ACORN'S "Grow a Farmer" program.

As I have said in the past, the ASCFG is an educational organization for growing better growers. To that end, we have had an exceptionally active year. We have had four excellent

This is why I am a member of the ASCFG: I believe that together we can accomplish more than we can by ourselves.

know of has a publication of this quality.

We'll continue this pace into 2016. We have a Growers' School scheduled for March 5-7 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and we'll be organizing a national conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan November 6-8.

But it takes you to keep it going. Get involved. Sign up to be a grower for the New Variety trials. Contribute an article to the *Quarterly*. Attend conferences and consider being a speaker if you have something to share. (We all do!) Add your voice by running for a position on the board. Together we can accomplish more!

Back in Blanco, things are getting back to normal, but you can tell that at the same time, everything is changed. After the flood, it quit raining completely, and we haven't had a drop for three months. Typical! But when rain is mentioned now, there is a sense of trepidation, of unspoken concern. Will this happen again?

A week after the flood, the river was still running well above normal. Our power was finally back on, and that Saturday I drove over to Home Depot and bought a couple hundred dollars worth of supplies for the relief center in Blanco. I dropped them off and walked across the square and had a beer out on the porch of the café owned by some good friends. People came and went, and we all talked about what we had seen.

A young couple was sitting at the next table. They were from Austin, and had come out to help some friends clean up. Their friends, and many others, hadn't been able to cross the river to get out all week. It was the first day that anyone could get into that part of the river where an oxbow prevented access from either side.

As we were sitting there, a state truck pulled up and two strapping guys from the search and rescue program came in for supper. The young couple asked the waitress something and she went inside. Soon another state truck pulled up, and then another, all filled with big, hungry guys. The waitress came back out and cautiously asked the young man, "There are twelve of them now. Do you still want to pay for their bill?"

"Absolutely." The guy said. I tipped my beer at him and told him "Thanks."

meetings in four area of the country. We are also constantly updating the Members Only section of the web site, where (among many things) you can see and hear videos of the talented speakers at past conferences. And of course there is *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, which I think should be in the running for a National Magazine Award, if not a Pulitzer! No other floral or farming industry group that I

Succulents

What are Succulents?

Succulents are a wide-ranging group of distinctive plants noted for their thick, fleshy leaves and/or stems, which are designed to store water. These trendy, unusual botanicals are generally slow growing, have interesting forms and can produce showy blooms.

How do Succulents Differ from Cacti?

Nearly all cacti are succulents, but not all succulents are cacti. Succulents are defined by their moisture-storing capabilities, which cacti have, but succulents do not grow spines, branches, hair or leaves, which cacti do. In addition, cacti are members of the cactus (*Cactaceae*) family while succulents belong to any of many other families (not including *Cactaceae*). Horticulturally, the term “succulent” generally excludes cacti, as it does for this article.

Decorative Life

With proper care and environmental conditions, succulents can live indoors for many years.

Availability

Succulents are available year-round.

Care and Propagation

Water Because of their ability to store water in their leaves and/or stems, succulents typically need less water than many other houseplants. Each type of succulent has a different moisture requirement, but, in general, the key to watering is restraint. From spring through fall, these plants prefer only lightly moist soil, so water only when the soil begins to dry out. During the winter, water even less frequently. When in doubt, remember that under watering is less detrimental than over watering. Succulents should be

plump and filled with water. Withered, puckered or wrinkled leaves are signs these plants need water; however, try not to let them get that dry. Always remove any standing water following watering, and use only pots and potting medium that provide good drainage to avoid root rot. (See “Challenges.”)

Light Succulents require bright light and even some exposure to direct sunlight. A location in or near a south-facing window is ideal; however, during the summer, it may be necessary to protect these plants from too much direct sunlight.

Temperature Although succulents are native to arid semidesert and desert locales and can withstand outdoor temperatures as high as 125 F, indoors they tolerate average room temperatures from spring through fall, but they do like a marked difference between day and night temperatures, if possible. During the winter, lower temperatures—as low as 50 F to 55 F—are ideal.

Humidity These plants are accustomed to low humidity levels, so there is no need to mist them; however, they do like fresh circulating air, so open windows occasionally or whenever possible.

Fertilizer Feed succulents every two or three weeks from spring through early fall with a cactus/succulent fertilizer or an all-purpose plant food. Do not feed these plants during the winter.

Repotting Repot succulents during the spring but only when necessary (e.g., if soil dries out rapidly). These plants typically have small root systems, so when repotting, use only slightly larger-diameter pots, and choose shallow pots rather than deep ones.

Propagation Take stem cuttings, leaf cuttings or offsets in spring or summer, and allow them to dry for a few days before placing them into potting medium. You also can grow succulents from seed.



Photo and design by
Jennie Love, Love 'n Fresh Flowers

Challenges

Pests Nematodes (microscopic worms) can attack the roots of these plants. Using a sterilized potting medium should prevent this problem or eliminate infestations.

Elongated and Misshapen Stems The cause is usually too much water in the winter or too little light, especially during the summer.

Brown Spots on Leaves If the spots are soft, the leaves have a disease. Water plants with a systemic fungicide, and improve ventilation in the room. If the spots are dry, under watering is typically the cause.

Wilted and Discolored Leaves This is caused by over watering, especially during the winter.

Sudden Leaf Loss Use of cold water when watering plants is the likely cause, but under watering during the summer can also cause this problem.

Rot at the Base of the Plant Followed by Stem Collapse Over watering during the winter is probably the cause. Propagate plants using upper stem cuttings.

Reprinted with permission from
Super Floral October 2015.

Glenwood Farms

Hillsboro, Oregon

By Jodi Helmer

A Journalist Comes Back to the Farm

After graduating from college with a degree in journalism, Kendra Neveln landed a job in banking and planned to spend her career climbing the corporate ladder. Being stuck in an office from 9:00 to 5:00 made Neveln eager to return to her family farm.

"Even though I grew up on a farm, I wasn't interested in farming growing up," she recalls.

Her parents, Deke and Molly Tietze, balanced full-time jobs while raising livestock, berries, and garlic on Glenwood Farms in Hillsboro, Oregon. In 2001, the couple built a shade house and planted a 1 ½ acre plot of hydrangeas—their first foray into flower farming. Their wholesale flower business was small but successful.

"My parents were both working full time jobs and the business plateaued," Neveln explains. In 2011, Neveln left her banking job to work on the farm and help her parents tap into new markets.

Not long after she returned to the farm, Neveln lost her mother to cancer. Together with her dad, who works in agricultural finance but, as Neveln explains, "has the heart of a farmer," she pushed forward, taking solace in the flowers and dreams of what Glenwood Farms could become.

A Successful Father-Daughter Team

Although hydrangea varieties like 'Limelight', 'Pink Diamonds' and the iconic mophead remain popular with wholesale customers, Neveln has worked tirelessly to expand the flower farm to include bulbs and herbaceous perennials such as red twig dogwood, caryopteris, vitex, *Ilex verticillata*, lavender, and cotinus, expanding to six acres of production.

"I'm always looking for new things and willing to try anything," Kendra says. "I tend to be attracted to more unusual things."



Kendra Neveln and father Deke Tietze

She cites trumpet vine, beautyberry, witch hazel, deutzia, hellebore, coreopsis, and winter honeysuckle as her favorite experiments.

Neveln splits the farm chores with her dad. Deke Tietze handles pruning, irrigation, and equipment maintenance while Neveln oversees planting, cutting and sales. The father-daughter duo collaborates on long-term planning.

"I'm always looking for new things and willing to try anything," Kendra says. "I tend to be attracted to more unusual things."

"The farm Dad and I envision offers a little bit of a lot of different stuff," she says. "It's great to be doing this together."

Since she earned a degree in journalism and had no experience growing flowers, Neveln had to do a lot of homework to get up to speed. She continues spending time researching new varieties and growing techniques online, reading books, and asking other growers for advice.

"Because I like it so much, I'm able to spend a lot of my free time working and learning and it doesn't feel like a chore," she says.

Rather than considering the farmers' market foray a failure, Neveln chalked it up to the kind of trial and error required to build a business, the same way she views experimenting with new varieties: there are hits and misses.



As part of the education process (and to exemplify the farm's commitment to the environment), Neveln took a workshop through the Seattle Wholesale Growers Market to earn Salmon Safe Certification, a designation that endorses cut flower growers that use environmentally sustainable methods of production.

Exploring Market Options

Even though Neveln loves growing cut flowers, she's also the first to admit that building the business is not without its challenges.

In an effort to expand the family company, Neveln experimented with direct-to-consumer sales, setting up a booth at local farmers' markets in 2013 and 2014. While she liked interacting with customers and witnessing their joy at picking out a bouquet, the business model didn't make sense.

"At the end of the day, we were getting better prices selling wholesale," she explains. "People weren't willing to pay what florists were willing to pay."

Rather than considering the farmers' market foray a failure, Neveln chalked it up to the kind of trial and error required to build a business, the same way she views experimenting with new varieties: there are hits and misses. For Glenwood Farms, wholesale sales are a hit.

After finding success at the Seattle Wholesale Growers Market, Glenwood Farms established a booth at the Portland Wholesale Growers Market in 2014 and Neveln has gone to great lengths to develop relationships with local florists and designers which happens to be one of her favorite parts of the job.

"Over the past year, we've been able to develop great relationships with florists and designers in Portland," says Neveln. "We rely on them for feedback on what's working and, as long as we're selling them our grade A product, we know they'll keep coming back."

Both father and daughter want to expand the farm, putting additional acres into production, growing several more acres of popular cut flowers like armeria, quince, witch hazel, and flowering dogwood. But, with Tietze working fulltime and Neveln juggling farming and family, raising two small children with her husband, expansion plans are on hold.

"In the future, I hope to have more time to spend at the farm and the market but, for our current lives, we're at the threshold," she says.

For now, Neveln enjoys every minute she's working on the farm. "I like to be outside getting my hands dirty," she muses. "Every day I'm out there picking, it feels like what I'm supposed to be doing."



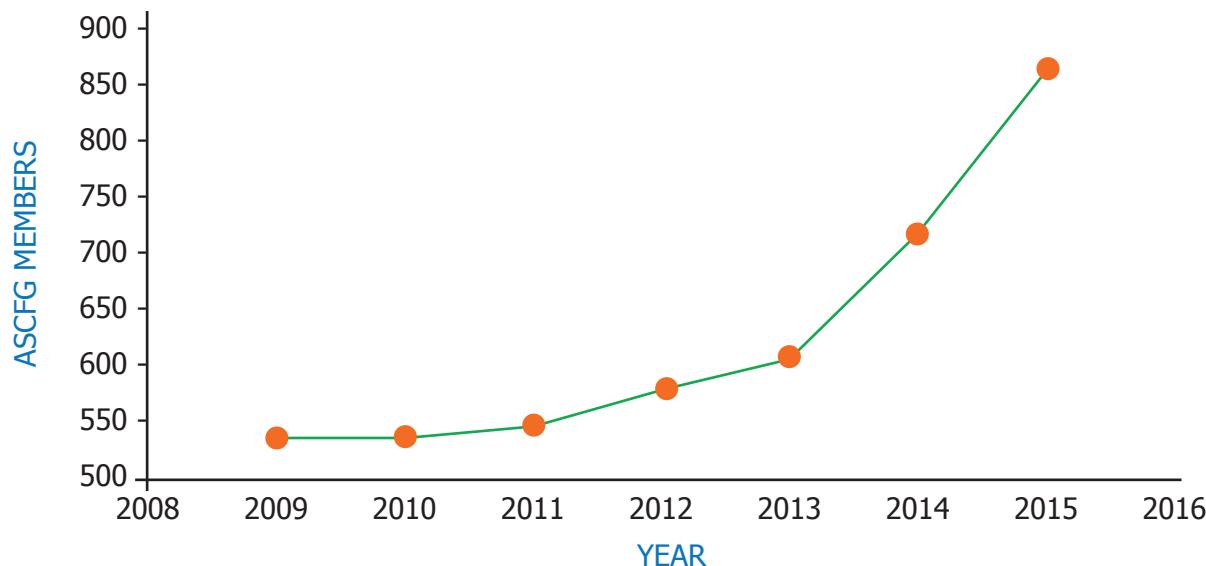
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About the ASCFG, and Little Bit About Me

Chris Wien

As we cross into autumn, and begin to breathe easier as the flowers go past their productive peak, there is time to take stock, and wonder about the way ahead. For a talk I was giving earlier this summer on growing cut flowers, Judy Laushman supplied me with the ASCFG average membership numbers for the last 7 years, and these were quite startling:



After resting at about 530 members for several years, membership has shot up in the recent past, and shows no signs of slowing down. Chief among the reasons for this is the excellent leadership by Judy and her team, and the current trend toward buying local, and wish to minimize our carbon footprint. The implications of this trend for the organization will I am sure be actively discussed by our directors, but for me personally, it brings an opportunity.

After 36 years on the horticulture faculty at Cornell University, I am retiring at the end of September, and moving to Annapolis, Maryland. Not to a flower farm, just a house with a garden, so the experimentation with cut flowers that we have done here will stop. Ideally, Bill Miller will continue to supply the ASCFG with useful information on bulbs grown for cut flowers, but at present there are no plans at Cornell to hire someone to continue my work.

Too bad, but there may be another way to stimulate cut flower research more broadly across the U.S. I have agreed to take on the directorship of the ASCFG Research Foundation, to help generate funds to get more cut flower research done, by members as well as institutions of research and education. I will be looking for research sponsors, and asking you, the members of ASCFG, for suggestions of research topics that need to be addressed. I look forward to working with you in this endeavor, and welcome your suggestions. I will retain my e-mail address (hcw2@cornell.edu); please feel free to get in touch.



Chris Wien is recently retired Professor of Horticulture at Cornell University. Contact him at hcw2@cornell.edu



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Flower Trends Change Every Year, Kind of

Gay Smith

As production winds down and Indian summer unrelentingly moves into autumn, weddings flourish. In fact, October rivals June as the most important month for weddings, so it's a good idea to check the trends featured in bridal magazines, web sites, and Pinterest. What colors are requested and what design style of flower adornment is hot? Clothing designers choose colors to define the seasons, but "it colors" come and go in fashion. For example, last spring the hot shade in fashion was yellow, and this winter, the "it" color is purple.

When it comes to flower colors the life span of trendy colors persists for a minimum of two to three years, and often much longer. A mentor of mine told me years ago that rose breeders (and rose growers) make varietal selections today trying to forecast trends five years out. Choosing the "right" color varieties is not about what is popular at the moment, but what is and will remain popular for at least the next few years.

Paint with a Broad Brush

Annual flower crops grant growers more flexibility to shift variety choices to satisfy the latest color and/or texture trends, yellow being a good example. In the past decade, popular shades of strong, clear golden yellow were the rage, but the past few years, butter yellow is the shade preferred. The color blue seems to prevail in any color trend discussions so perhaps consider adding ageratum, centaurea (cornflower), campanula, nigella, anemones or echinops to your 2016 product mix. Orange flowers are now accepted as (almost) a year-round color. Deep purple tones and anything in shades of coral are very hip with trend experts this year.

Color trends are fickle. There are no absolute dictates. The Pantone Color group (CMG) gives guidelines waxing poetic rather than dogmatic: "This season (2015) displays an umbrella of

The color blue seems to prevail in any color trend discussions so perhaps consider adding ageratum, centaurea (cornflower), campanula, nigella, anemones, or echinops to your 2016 product mix.



accord that weaves earthy neutrals with a range of bold color statements...to reflect a landscape of hope, fun, fantasy and all things natural." No doubt, color preferences vary across the nation--even neighborhood to neighborhood. I see lots less purple hair when I travel in the metro Dallas area compared to strolling my Portland neighborhood.

Another good example is CMG citing India, an important rising world player, as influencing color trends: "...people are finding themselves drawn to colors associated with that country, soothing oranges and yellows and warm, rich reds." Joan Thorndike's Bulletin Board posts concerning requests for marigold blooms is a great example of melting pot awareness. When it comes to color, paint with a broad brush.

What about trends in bouquet styles? There are lots of interesting commentaries and design insights all over the web, in floral trade magazines, and on television. David Tutulo's site Your Wedding Experience (yourweddingexperience.com) was noted in a recent SAF email newsletter which means SAF florists will follow his comments. "Rather than building arrangements around one flower or one color, florists select blooms that look like they were plucked from the same wild garden. The finished look is unstructured but magical". I like it! His comments sound closer to curricula vitae of ASCFG growers than to flower factories in Latin America.

How to Treat the Favorites

Some of the most popular flowers in 2015 included hydrangeas (no surprise there!), dahlias, and peonies. Hydrangeas love aluminum and are best hydrated in Chrysal Professional #1. Dahlias fare best with a first drink of slow-release chlorine at the farm level. Peonies love sugar. Sell food packets to consumers with the flowers to ensure maximum vase life.

All kinds of cut foliage continue to top the hit parade of wedding designs and captured attention, but the interest of herbs as foliage in mixed bouquets and wedding work has soared. If you can hydrate it, you can include it as a bouquet ingredient. Keep in mind that often cut foliage needs hydration—clean water with an antimicrobial element, but not necessarily sugar. Try using slow-release gerbera pills as first drink solution rather than flower food. The Dutch use copious amounts of cotinus in autumn designs and find that Chrysal OVB plus a surfactant gives best postharvest results. An ASCFG Bulletin Board post indicated mountain mint hydrates well in Chrysal Professional #2.

Ethylene sensitivity is another consideration when planting herbs for cut use. Sage, thyme, basil, and rosemary are minimally affected, but marjoram, mint, parsley, and oregano suffer leaf yellowing and leaf abscission when exposed to ethylene. Avoid exposure to rotting green trash, fruits, smoke of any kind, and combustion engine exhaust.

Staying up on color trends is as easy as buying a copy of Real Simple magazine every few months at the grocery checkout, and Googling “bridal trends” to see what’s featured. Almost, but not quite as enjoyable as thumbing through seed and bulb catalogues!

*Gay Smith
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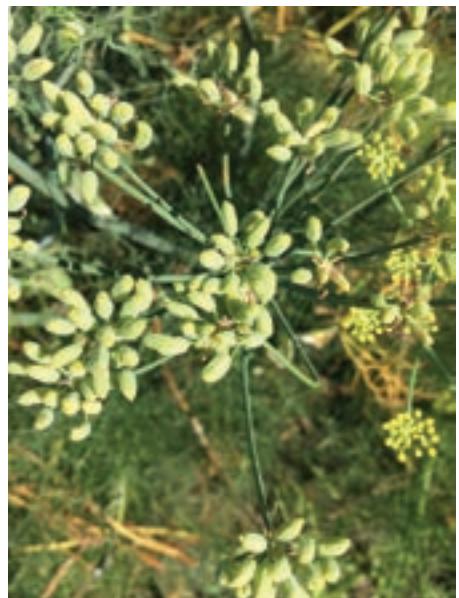
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fennel blooms



basil



fennel seeded



rosemary



artemisia

What's New in Pest Control in Cut Flowers?



Pest control using the newest, safest material is something cut flower growers want to stay on top of. Several new products are being introduced by chemical companies; my job is to provide you with a fair evaluation of their effectiveness.

Dow Chemical recently introduced an insecticide called XXpire™ WG which, has two new active ingredients for ornamental use, spinetoram and Isoclast™ (sulfoxaflor). The two active ingredients complement each other in their control of both chewing and sap-feeding insects. Spinosad (Conserve and spinosad organic) has been available for the cut flower industry for several years now but this new one is an interesting new mix.

Stanton Gill

Spinetoram is different from spinosad and has greater efficacy at lower rates, with increased photostability. It provides control of Lepidoptera and Hymenoptera species (caterpillars of moths and sawfly) and other chewing pests. Isoclast is systemic, and active on sap feeders such as aphids, whitefly, and lace bugs. XXpire is labeled only for foliar applications at this time.

The product was tested as "GF-2860" by a number of researchers for the past several years as well as through IR-4. Brian Kunkel of the University of Delaware Extension and I are testing out XXpire on root mealybug, root aphid, miscanthus mealybug, and thrips. XXpire was registered with the EPA this spring, but became available for sale in September. So far, this product is providing good control level in our trials.

In 2014 Syngenta introduced Acelepryn for the nursery trade. It had originally been labeled for turfgrass grub control in 2014 but was expanded in 2015 to include ornamental plant pests. Acelepryn is an anthranilic diamide insecticide in the form of a suspension concentrate. It knocks calcium off the insects' muscles, causing them to cramp and stop feeding. They die in two or three days from starvation. Acelepryn is a true systemic insecticide; as a foliar spray it travels into foliage and provides control for two to three weeks.

This material is considered very pollinator friendly, with very low mammalian toxicity. It is also very expensive, but its safety and efficacy should be weighed when considering control of pests.

We are just finishing up trials in Maryland on controlling Japanese beetles with this product, and found that it has given 10-14 days of perfect control applied at the mid-range label rate of 8 oz. /100 gallons of water.

These two new products should be kept in mind as you develop your IPM insect control program for your cut flower operation in 2016.

Stanton Gill

is Extension Specialist in IPM and Entomology for Greenhouses and Nurseries, Central Maryland Research and Education Center, University of Maryland. Contact him at sgill@umd.edu

Winter Growing: Not for the Faint of Heart

Dave Dowling, Ednie Flower Bulb

Every three months I need to write something thoughtful, witty, and timely for this little column. Sometimes it just flows out effortlessly, and sometimes I struggle to find a topic to cover. This is starting out as one of those “struggle” columns.

As the growing season comes to an end for some members, year-round growers are busy planning for the winter months. Months with long cold nights, and cloudy, snowy days. Nights when greenhouse heaters run nonstop, burning money as fast as it can be made selling flowers in the winter. Winter days spent in a warm sunny greenhouse, working in the dirt or picking flowers, can be a great cure for the winter blahs. And having a greenhouse or tunnel allows a grower to get quite a jump on early spring sales.

The first year I grew all winter, my farmers’ market sales in April and May doubled from the year before. I attributed this to having more product early, and to having customers already in the habit of going to the market each weekend. There wasn’t that customer at the end of May saying “Oh, I didn’t know the market was open, I missed the last four weeks...” The good customers had been attending the market all winter, and just continued to buy, and, buy, and buy.

Growing over the winter certainly has challenges. With snow piled deep on fields of perennials sleeping through the winter, and seed and plug catalogs spread across your desk (or bed), it’s easy to forget that greenhouses and tunnels need to be monitored and protected in the winter. The snow that can be good for plants in the ground can be a menace to the metal frames of growing structures. No matter how many times growers are reminded to monitor their greenhouses and tunnels in the winter, every year we hear of some, both small and large, who have had a greenhouse or tunnel go down in a snowstorm. It’s much better to spend a few hours pushing snow off the roof in February than rebuilding a tunnel in May, when you should be planting and harvesting flowers instead.

If you’re thinking of building a tunnel or greenhouse, get one that can handle the weight of snow and high winds. You’ll still need to monitor them in a big storm or blizzard, but you’ll be able to sleep through a night of light snowstorms. And remember that shade structures will collect snow and they will collapse under the added weight. Don’t



forget to take down the shade cloth before it gets hit with an early snow.

Fall is also the time to look back on the past year, and really look at what was worked, and what didn’t. I’m not just talking flower colors and varieties. Was that employee who didn’t fit in with the crew really worth it? Was that florist who bought only three bunches of flowers worth the time spent dealing with her special requests? Does that slow farmers’ market in your little town that barely made gas money have potential? Or is it time to drive an extra hour to the big city and sell a truckload of flowers instead of a few bucks of flowers? Do you need to do a better

job at succession planting? Does your web site need to be overhauled? I could go on forever.

These questions and many others should be addressed in the coming weeks. You’ll have those nights in autumn and winter, when the sun goes down before dinner, and you have time to sit and really think about what you need to do different to make next year The Year that everything works as planned and you have a great, successful season.

*Dave Dowling is a
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NORTHEAST

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritime Provinces



Diana Doll

StrayCat Flower Farm

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Greetings, fellow flower farmers. Ah, autumn. Best time to walk the field and fill in the blank “notes” section of your sowing schedule from this past spring. You know what I’m talking about: prioritizing just a couple hours to walk the beds, to jot down reminders now, while memory’s fresh and crop residues are right there in plain view.

The field walk is devoted to recording, on the sowing schedule and crop map, various things we’ve noticed that we really want to be sure we remember, so next year’s crew doesn’t find itself re-inventing that wheel all over again. In agriculture, it’s inevitable that every year each crop fares differently than others, plus the school of trial and error often comes into play as well. I read somewhere “A mistake is a mistake only if you make it twice.” To ideally avoid those frustrating repeat scenarios, this is the right time to record, in the right place, things like:

- Support mesh over tall, wiry crops (pincushion, ammi, gomphocarpus, snaps, lissies) one week after first cultivation, because in just two weeks the plants will be sprawling into the path. Super-inefficient to be reining in crops gone sprawly!
- Prune soon-dwindling crops that produce a strong second bloom (annual dianthus, annual delphinium, ageratum, pincushion) or chop them down (we use a machete) and scuffle in a quick cover crop that produces either cuttable material (oats, grains) or fixes nitrogen (field peas, whose mature foliage holds up well once cut—bonus!).
- Harvest one-third of anything that you can sell dried while it’s still coming on strong in the field (nigella pods, celosia, sea holly, statice, gomphrena, grains, grasses) because tired field flowers equals brittle, dull dried flowers.
- Adjust your sowing schedule and transplant numbers to fill in any gaps in production, or to avoid over-production. This is tough for me, since I don’t like composting living transplants. Better to sell them as “cutting garden six-packs” at the farmers’ market or farm stand. I believe that’s called “creating a niche” in marketing lingo.

This Summer’s Farm Hop Was Great!

Nothing like touring farms to learn about farming, eh? (except for actually farming, perhaps). Or in the off season, getting together with other growers to jaw about whatever comes up (planting a seed here for winter road trips and fireside chats).

In early August, a bunch of folks from the ASCFG’s Northeast Region gathered in Ontario, about an hour west of Toronto, to tour three ASCFG member farms. I would like to acknowledge the host farms for accommodating the Hop: Green Park Nurseries, William Dam Seeds, and La Primavera Farm. Thank you all for taking time to show us your farms, introduce us to your crew, answer all sorts of questions, and provide snacks and beverages! Plus shelter when the heavy rain came—precisely at 5:30 after an afternoon of looming thunder and lightning.



Green Park Nursery.

The first stop on the hop was Green Park Nurseries, where the Vahrmeier family produces cut ornamental branches for the wholesale market. Some of you may have seen Karl Vahrmeier’s presentation at the Rhode Island conference. What a pleasure to stroll acres of well-maintained shrubs, just prior to their busy autumn harvest season when all that material is cut and trucked to the Toronto Flower Exchange!

After lunch we stopped at William Dam Seeds, where the William Dam family trials seed and plant performance, maintains display gardens for Fleuroselect and All-America



Curly Willow branches at Green Park Nursery.



Ornamental Kale at La Primavera Farm.



La Primavera Farm design.



Sunflower production line at La Primavera Farm.



Seed trials at William Dam Seeds.



Japanese beetle catcher at William Dam Seeds.

Selections, and packages and ships seed. Their website tells the interesting history of this family business, and of the seed importing industry as well. The photo on the left shows a quick way to trap Japanese beetles—no climbing out of that sippy cup full of soapy water!

Our last tour was at La Primavera Farm, where father Juan Feddes and daughter Joanne Feddes produce cut flowers for five farmers' markets and for wholesale to the Toronto Exchange. Joanne also designs for weddings and events. La Primavera was fascinating to me because of their extensive experience in several different ag businesses; a farming family for sure!

All these businesses keep active Facebook pages, worth checking out to get a glimpse of their commitment to both quality and community. I love it that all three farms are run by generations of family; that to me is something special.

MID-ATLANTIC

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania,
Virginia, and West Virginia



Jennie Love

Love 'n Fresh Flowers
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Five Tricks to Growing Fantastic Lisianthus in the Field

When I first started designing for weddings, nearly every couple asked me for roses. My first season, I stuttered a good bit, trying to explain how I didn't have them because they are very challenging to grow organically in our climate. I didn't mention that I also happen to strongly dislike roses, even the beloved garden rose. Too much fuss, and I hate those thorns! I realized pretty quickly that I needed to have a good alternative to offer if I was going to be successful as a wedding florist. Enter lisianthus—a far superior rose!

I remember my first ASCFG conference and listening to experienced growers debate the merits and shortcomings of lisianthus. I got the decided impression that they were hard to grow. So when I started growing them myself, I was so surprised at how easy they were. Lisianthus are now one of our top crops in terms of quantities and sales, second only to the dahlias. Realizing that there are currently a lot of new growers, especially farmer florists, in our membership, I thought it might be a great time to demystify this crop that really is ridiculously easy to grow with a few tried-and-true tricks up your sleeve.

It is important to note that all our lisianthus at Love 'n Fresh Flowers are grown in the field. You do not need a greenhouse or hoophouse to grow beautiful lisianthus.

Plant Early

Just about everyone knows how slow growing lisianthus are. If you don't, you'll soon find out with your first crop. What is maybe less common knowledge is how cold/frost tolerant lisianthus are since these blooms are most often associated with the high heat of summer. While the plants love the heat to throw up their flouncy blooms, they actually also love cool temperatures for putting on root growth, which is what ultimately supports tall and bountiful harvests.

As such, we are religious about putting our lisianthus in the ground, out in the field, on April 1st each year, regardless of the spring conditions. The tiny rosettes hug the ground and therefore are well protected against freezing and frost.

If the weather is particularly nasty, we will cover them with a layer of frost blanket, but that's rare.

To get them in the ground April 1st, we make sure to talk to our plug broker in November so the plug grower(s) have enough time to get our plugs going. While we grow 99% of what we have at the farm from seed ourselves, lisianthus is the one crop that I will never bother to grow from seed again. Instead, we get our plugs from our supplier(s) the last week of February or the first week of March in 210s and typically bump them up to two-inch soil blocks as soon as we get them and grow on in those for a month until planting out.

This early planting date gives the plants plenty of time to put on growth before the heat of summer and gives them a bit of an edge over those tenacious summer weeds.

When I started growing lisianthus myself, I was so surprised at how easy they were. Lisianthus are now one of our top crops in terms of quantities and sales, second only to the dahlias.



Weed Management

Speaking of weeds, if you're going to grow lisianthus, you need to have a serious weed management game plan in place for them. Because these plants stay small for several months and most of the leaves are at the base as a rosette, aggressive weeds, especially creepers like crabgrass, will quickly overtake plants and smother them. This is a high value crop worth investing in so I gladly pay for a plastic mat system called FloraFlow (www.floraflow.com) that comes with pre-punched holes that are only two inches in diameter, leaving very little room for weeds to grow up through the holes. It also keeps the lisianthus cropping system very tidy and efficiently spaced as a whole so we can fit a lot of plants into a small amount of space.

But plastic is not a silver bullet for weeds. We make weeding the lisianthus top priority around the farm. It's much easier on us and better for the crop if we weed early and often, rather than waiting until the situation is dire and we pull up as many young lisianthus as we do weeds. So put some reminders on your calendar to get those lisianthus weeded at least every two weeks if you have decent weed pressure at your farm. Make sure to water well immediately after each weeding so that the delicate roots get re-settled into the ground.

Feeding

We grow organically at our farm so we rely on regular foliar applications of fish and kelp emulsion to feed our lisianthus. When prepping the beds in the spring, we amend them with compost, cotton seed meal, and green potash. We have a really nice loamy clay soil at our farm that the lisianthus love because it holds water but does not stay wet. I suspect that growing this crop in sandy soils or heavy clay might be more challenging, but I don't have experience with that.

Selection

As with all flowers, you need to consider your end buyer before you make any decisions about which lisianthus varieties to grow. We use all our lisianthus "in house", mostly for weddings and occasionally for straight bunches sold through our grocery store accounts. As such, we have the luxury of being able to grow some of the shorter varieties that hold up better to bad storms and do not need netting, and some of the oddball colors like 'Roseanne Brown'. But if you are selling wholesale mostly to florists, you will be expected to grow the taller varieties since stem length (sadly, in my opinion) means more money. If you're selling mostly at a farmers' market,

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you probably should avoid 'Roseanne Brown' because all your customers are going to think it looks dead (and frankly, it does). So, before you start drooling over every cool photo in the catalog, think carefully about who's going to be buying from you.

Something to also consider when choosing lisianthus varieties is if you want to net them in the field or not. I'm going to be honest: I hate netting. I'm working hard to get away from it as much as possible at our farm. It's expensive, both to purchase and to put up every season (mucho man hours) and it makes harvesting so much slower and often a bit wasteful with all the broken stems, especially when it comes to brittle lisianthus. So we've been net-free on our lisianthus for two seasons now. This means that some old favorites have been given the boot ('ABC 3-4 Pink', I'm looking at you) and a lot of new varieties have been trialed specifically to find out if they'll stay upright on their own, even in our wicked summer storms here in the Mid-Atlantic. Some varieties that have done particularly well for us without netting are 'ABC 3-4 White', 'Echo Champagne', 'Echo Lavender', and 'Rosanne Green'.

Like snapdragons, lisianthus are segmented into bloom-time categories so you will sometimes see numbers associated with variety names (i.e., 'ABC 3-4 White'). Also like snapdragons, I have found that programming blooms in the field is much harder than it would be in a greenhouse, which is where that number system was developed. Inevitably, your lisianthus are going to bloom pretty much all at once when field grown. Be

prepared for this with a sales outlet eager to buy them as soon as you pick them. There was an article in a recent *Quarterly* that talked about experimenting with pinching lisianthus. We did not have a chance to try pinching to stagger the blooms this year, but plan to give it a go next year.



Second Flush

Assuming you were diligent in getting your plugs into the ground in early April, in the Mid-Atlantic area there is a long enough growing season to get a very nice second flush off your lisianthus, usually sometime in early to mid-September. This second flush is much welcomed at our farm since it's perfectly timed for our very full autumn wedding season.

To get a good second flush, you need to do a few important tasks. First, when you harvest the first flush of blooms in July, make

sure you are cutting the plants back almost to the base. Do not leave stumps of stems that will just result in weak secondary growth. Once you've gleaned all of your first flush of blooms, take time to thoroughly weed the bed, irrigate, and fertilize, ideally all on the same day. This gives the plants a huge boost and the signal to go ahead and put energy back into putting on new growth instead of shutting down. Then remember to be diligent about weeding every week or so thereafter. At our farm, we have to battle the crabgrass in particular in late July when it's rampant.

Remember to keep your lisianthus well irrigated while it puts on this new growth in the middle of the heat of summer, especially every time after you weed. I try to spray again with fish and kelp emulsion as the new stems are beginning to get taller. Any and all TLC you can give the lisianthus while they put out the second growth will result in taller and more plentiful blooms in September.

Now is a great time to start thinking about what lisianthus plugs you want to order for next year!

SOUTHEAST

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



Tanis Clifton

Happy Trails Flower Farm
cliftonchirol@gmail.com

I am thrilled to announce that the ASCFG is growing by leaps and bounds. Twenty-four Southeast Region members have joined since the March Grower Intensive in Athens, Georgia. These great new growers range in talents from just starting out in the flower farm business to veteran nursery growers, vegetable farmers, and university floral design instructors and more. We are pleased to have you all aboard.

Everyone wants to hear how things are going with other farms and most folks love a great story; that's what I hope to accomplish here.

Roy and Linda Doan of Aunt Willie's Wildflowers of Blountville, Tennessee had a good, though hot, summer. They were able to visit the Garden Gate Flower Company and The Blue Carrot in England and do one-on-one workshops with them. Both farms have beautiful images on their Facebook pages. Linda continues to mainly do weddings and will ideally grow fewer flowers next summer as they have more than they need for weddings. The Doans did about 42 weddings this summer—too many for them. Their plan is to cut down on that number, and raise their prices next season.

Steve and Mandy O'Shea of 3 Porch Farm in eastern Georgia say: "It's been a helluva summer." They fought more Japanese beetles than ever, saw more heat stress and burned starts than ever, are dealing with more thrips than ever, and unfortunately spread some compost over about an acre (half of their annual growing space) only to find it was contaminated with a persistent herbicide which has been deforming their second and third successions of celosias, zinnias, and sunflowers. Somehow through all of that, they are on track for their best revenue year, and working on increasing efficiency so that they aren't killing themselves in the process—too many 90-plus hour weeks. They're looking to hire more folks and drop it back to 65-75 hours next year.

Outside Nashville, Laura Bigbee-Fott of Whites Creek Flower Farm reports that although this is only her third year in production she thinks she's finally hit her stride! This will be the fall of spreadsheets for her farm while she puts everything she's learned into schedules, routines, and long-range plans. She'll also pursue the wedding and special event market in

earnest, with plans to finish the sitting garden for hosting workshops and DIY bridal parties. She admits she must focus on weed suppression; she's spending way too much time and money on it. Since she is planning on having events at the farm and is already giving tours on a fairly regular basis, she needs to keep the farm presentable and so far it's been a real drain on finances. There is going to be a lot of reading and research about weeds this winter.

The silver lining to all this weed invasion is that in just the last three months her farm has been on the cover of *Tennessee Home and Farm*, *The Nashville Ledger*, and was profiled by the local gardening show "Tennessee Volunteer Gardener"! Lots of free advertising, and she didn't pursue one of them—they all came to her out of the blue! Congrats on that, Laura.



Laura Bigbee-Fott

Teresa Biagi of Hazelfield Farm in north-central Kentucky had a great season in spite of way too much rain in June and early July. Some things got into the ground late due to daily rains but look fine now. The early sunflowers, zinnias, celosias, amaranths, and silky milkweed had to be mowed between the rows because they could not be cultivated, but that worked out okay. Only a few dahlias drowned. They love the tuberoses they received they obtained at the March Grower Intensive. Teresa has had more weddings this year than usual due to a new web site, Facebook updates, and word of mouth. All in all, a very busy and pleasant farming this year at Hazelfield Farm.

The final entry for the Southeast is the inspirational story about how Matthew and Sarah Ervin of Southerly Flower Farm started flower farming outside of Chattanooga.

"We inherited the house we're in, along with a little slice of land, about 5.6 acres, on Brayton Mountain in Bledsoe. Matthew's dad built the log cabin while Matthew was growing up.



Sarah Ervin design

"We cleaned up the house, which had no central heat or air conditioning, and we installed a geothermal unit this past winter. During the reconstruction, a pipe froze and burst in the upstairs bathroom, taking out half of the house, upstairs and downstairs, wood floors, sheetrock, carpet. After that, we decided it was time to grow up and get over our city conveniences; we never looked back.

"Matthew's grandparents lived on this land with a small homestead where our flowers are growing now. Matthew's dad was a true craftsman and perfectionist; you can tell in the details of the home. Matthew's mother grew her own flowers in the front yard here; daffodils still pop up in early spring, and we see his grandparents' perennials making an appearance as well.

"We have been here for two years and it is a part of who we are now. A fellow flower farmer said something along the lines of never take for granted the gift he had been given, and that is exactly how we feel as well. We want to respect those who came before us and take care of the land.

"We have been on a constant brainstorm since we got married. We wanted to be intentional about the paths we took and do something we both loved but we had absolutely no idea what that was. I even started a blog, if you can call it that, for a project to help me find out what I could be passionate about. We played around with the idea of vegetable farming a few times but it never stuck, mostly because there were so many top notch farmers in the Chattanooga area already doing their thing so well.

"One day I got an email from the photographers who shot our wedding, asking if I would like to style a mock-up of a wedding for a photo shoot, since I coordinate all things decor as a stylist. I am an event stylist and handle all details décor-wise in an event or wedding. Our website is <http://www.reverie-collective.com> I am just getting started as far as floral arranging so I wouldn't exactly say I am a florist yet, but working on it!



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"This opportunity required me to get in touch and coordinate with other Chattanooga wedding vendors. This turned into another photo shoot, and another, which were eventually published on wedding blogs. These photographers I worked with were absolutely amazing and captured every detail so well. The experience I gained from these shoots prepared me to design for actual weddings.

"The flowers were always my favorite part of styling: planning them out, working with them, obsessing over them. Somehow I stumbled upon the local flower movement and read about flower farms across the country growing and designing with their own flowers. I had a eureka moment: Why don't we GROW FLOWERS? It made so much sense. It would combine my love for creative work with my continually growing dream of farming. I had quickly convinced myself this was exactly what we needed to do. I found books and so many resources for beginning growers that I dove in head first. I started researching and learning all I could last summer and started planting this past spring. We joined the ASCFG on the advice of other flower growers and attended the conference in March in Athens. We learned so much and the people we met were so wonderful and generous with the knowledge they had gained over the years. So here we are, literally learning as we go.

"Because I love to capture with a camera, it is kind of a natural transition for me to share on social media. It not only challenges me with the camera, but also shares with others our progress. I have taken a few courses here and there but just kept it at hobby level. It has always been a fun way to create for me. But it has also been a personal goal of mine to keep building that skill and I am taking an e-course this fall to help with that. I currently have a Canon EOS 20 D and am loaning out a Canon EOS Rebel T3i.

"I think more people want to see where their product is coming from and to make a conscious decision to support local. By sharing the good and yes, sometimes the bad, people get to follow along in your progress. They get a glimpse into the life of the farmer or farmers and this creates a connection that otherwise might be hard to establish. I have found that I am in a rush the entire time I am at a market making it difficult to establish a relationship with others. Face to face contact with customers at the market is invaluable and can't be compared, but social media is a wonderful tool to supplement your connection with your customers, and reaches a larger audience. It

has helped us tremendously get our brand started. We have also created a simple web site using the platform Squarespace, which makes it fairly easy for anyone to build. And we plan to build up a blog to give a more in-depth insight.

"I still have a full-time job in insurance that sometimes works me into the evening, so Matthew quit his job to tend to the farm and help me with the event styling. Matthew was working in landscaping, but neither of us has a horticulture background. I learned what I know now from the ASCFG and other books and web sites, and the occasional bits of wisdom from my family. But I can see I have so much more to learn.

"When I was asked to share my successes in our first year I chuckled because I have been thinking of all of the issues we're in the middle of. We didn't get to attend as many markets as we had hoped, and we could have done more to establish how you can buy from us consistently. This year was a year of learning and experiments which did slow us down. We didn't get a succession plan out in time and there were many flowers I had to put in the "next year" pile. We can't stop the voles from eating our dahlias. I can tell you with certainty that we have not made a profit. I feel very "green" in this process but knowing there is a next year and that I am not alone is very comforting. We are excited, in a way, to be at the bottom because it is so much fun to see progression. It is our dream to mesh the farm with the styling and eventually as a florist for weddings and events using our locally-grown flowers. We aren't where we need to be by any means at this point. But we do know where we want to go and if we can start, we can keep going."

For the next *Quarterly*, I plan on doing more research on a mock wedding photo shoots. I feel like perceived value is worth its weight in gold. As you can see, Sarah and Matthew

Ervin have garnered a lot of attention due to publicity and social media. Jessica Hall of Harmony Harvest Farm in Virginia also participated in a mock wedding photo shoot and has realized a lot of attention from this publicity. Mock weddings coming soon!

NORTH AND CENTRAL

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



Mimo Davis Duschack

Urban Buds City Grown Flowers
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Resetting the Farm Mid-Season

We all know the feeling of that first harvest of the year: everyone is excited, full of ideas, and we are all in love with each other and most of all, the flowers! Our season is quite long; we started cutting the end of February and will go through November (God willing and the creek don't rise!)—it got darn close this year with all the rain!). Then comes mid-July and you notice that as it heats up, the excitement has faded, the innovative plans made in spring have fallen to the higher priorities of summer like saving a crop from weeds and other pests. Don't let the summer doldrums get you down! You can recharge your energy with new faces on the farm.

I've never understand why internships run eight or ten weeks. I always felt that all the training goes to waste when they move on. But this year I got it. At Urban Buds we were faced with losing two part-time employees within two weeks of each other in early August. We were worried that this would be incredibly disruptive to our schedule and throw us off course. But to our sheer delight just the opposite happened. In advance of his seven-week absence our employee contacted some friends of his, a couple he had met in the WWOOFing program last year at a farm in California. He took it upon himself to invite this couple to stay in his apartment here and use his car for the duration of his time away. What a lifesaver! The traveling farmers came to us trained in the basics: washing buckets, planting, weeding, mowing, putting tools away, and farmers' market salesmanship. Best of all they were excited to be on our farm; they were FULL of energy. The enthusiasm was infectious. Miranda and I were recharged and had the energy to work with them even in the heat of summer.

The traveling farmers came to us trained in the basics: washing buckets, planting, weeding, mowing, putting tools away, and farmers' market salesmanship. Best of all they were excited to be on our farm; they were FULL of energy.

The willing workers were in stark contrast to one of our previous employees. She was a high school student who worked with us part-time for the past year. She is a great person, but after we saw how hard the WWOOFers worked, we learned that a high schooler doesn't always prioritize the farm. You know with high school students there is always something going on: three proms, the school play and graduation too! She not only had senioritis, but she also had workitis! We wish her well as she moves on to college, but we've learned a valuable lesson about how to better to work with high school students.

So when our employees left the farm Miranda and I were ready for a reset, to bring fresh blood into Urban Buds. And it paid off! Consider hosting WWOOFers on your farm. They were a life saver for us! The farm has never looked better this time of year.

At the end of a quick August visit to dear friends, Miranda said to me, "Mimo, I think there is a cut flower grower around here. I remember meeting her at the Cut Flower School with Joe Schmitt and the University of Wisconsin Extension last year in Waukesha." Sure enough, an easy search of the ASCFG database led us to Martha Pineda, owner and woman in charge of Martha's Gardens, a seasonal cut flower operation just outside of Dubuque. We called her up and she said "Come on by!"

What a treat! Martha has it going on! She is selling at four farmers' markets a week and getting into weddings as well. After the Cut Flower School she decided to put up a high tunnel. (I am happy to know she paid attention to my talk on season extension!) Her farm is nestled in a valley with no cell phone reception and it sure was nice to feel of the peace of being unavailable. Deer can be a problem for her, but the fresh, fragrant air and towering trees seem worth it. At least to us city slickers! We were sorely tempted to rest in one of her quiet outdoor sitting areas, but Urban Buds was calling us south to St. Louis so we hit the road after one short hour.

Before we hugged goodbye Martha gave us some seeds she collected, and sells at the farmers' market. We have now have coreopsis and euphorbia to try. She also inspired us to take a second look at the dried flower market. I have always considered dried flowers just dead flowers, but she showed us some very pretty dried material. Thanks Martha—we will definitely be back!

SOUTH AND CENTRAL

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



Rita Anders

Cuts of Color

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During the growing season several growers text or email me questions. I decided it would be a good idea to share some of them—and my answers—with you because I know many of you have the same questions at one time or another. These are listed in no particular order. Keep in mind that I grow in Zone 8b in Texas, and my answers are shaped by my own experiences. I hope they're useful for you.

Q Can you start ageratum from cuttings?

A I grow 'Blue Horizon', and start my first batch from seed in September, I grow in a minimally heated greenhouse all winter. I take cuttings from established plants, and they root really well on my heated seed-starting table. I cut little two-inch or less shoots and put them in potting soil in trays. I do dip the cuttings in rooting hormone and they root quickly. I started growing ageratum over the winter because it has beautiful foliage and a bloom that pops in bouquets, and I needed a filler for my bouquets of dahlias, snaps and other early blooms.

Q How do you grow in this scorching heat?

A I do everything early in the day—picking, planting and spraying. I start my day really early and have enough help to get those chores that need to be done by noon so we are out of the sun by then. In the afternoon we do our hand watering, bouquet making, seed starting, mowing, and bed making for the next crops. To plant beds in our Texas heat I make sure that the beds are plowed well, and irrigation drip lines are in place and running properly. Then we put our watered transplants within the drip circles of moisture so we know that they won't be dry. We also water those newly-planted beds

for the first few days to make sure they are established. I also take my transplants of zinnias and celosia out of the greenhouse and harden them off for a couple of days before planting them out in beds. Even with all these precautions, not all plants survive, especially when daily temperatures top 100 degrees. And then you have to deal with rabbits dining on your transplants or a deer clearing an eight-foot fence and munching on your nicely growing sunflowers. The plants aren't the only thing to care for; we have to cover ourselves in sunscreen and mosquito spray, deal with fire ants, be on the lookout for copperhead snakes, wear long sleeve shirts and a good hat, and drink lots of water.

Q Is white, green or Aluminet better than black shade cloth?

A White is great as it reflects light. We have actually used a product called Kool Ray Liquid Shade; you spray on your greenhouses and wash off in the fall. I think it works really well, but there is that added work of having to wash it off. Aluminet is a very good product, lighter than regular shade cloth and easy to install but more expensive than regular black shade cloth. I would like to switch to Aluminet but have had my black 30-40 percent for 20 plus years so it's a hard sell on my part to spend the extra money.

Q Can you use black landscape fabric with the holes burned into it for flowers such as zinnias, celosia, lemon, cinnamon and African blue basil and lisianthus in the greenhouse or will the heat from the fabric make it too hot?

A I personally don't plant any of the mentioned plants into weed fabric in the greenhouse in Texas in the hot summer months, as they grow fast enough to shade out weeds fairly quickly, and I don't want that added heat around the plants at transplant time. I just make sure they are watered well with the drip tape.

Q What kind of millet do you plant, where do I get it and how do I plant it?

A I buy 'Lime Light', 'Purple Majesty' and pearl millet from Johnny's Seeds. I also plant ornamental mixed colors' broom and colored uprights sorghum from Twilley Seeds, which is a sister company to GeoSeed. I plant some by direct seeding them out into rows, but I also start some as transplants because when it's dry, like this year, it's hard to get it germinated before the birds and mice eat it all.

Q My lisianthus are blooming on 5 to 6 inch stems. Is this normal? The weather this spring was not normal and it was hard to stay on schedule.

A No it's not normal. Lisianthus usually grow anywhere from 24-36" tall. These plants were either left in a seed

tray too long and became stunted, or they have some serious root issues going on, in my opinion.

Q How many layers of netting do you use on Karma dahlias in the greenhouse?

A Two, plus I have to use extra support to keep them inside of their rows. Zinnias get two layers, lisianthus one, and celosia usually one layer.

Q How can I overwinter my *Salvia leucantha*?

A I overwinter mine by mulching them good with fall leaves and when they get a heavy frost, I cut them back and cover them with Agribon. In the spring I uncover them and they come back. I also take cuttings which root really well, and plant some in our unheated greenhouses where into the winter they bloom till I get a really hard freeze. I try to keep some always alive or I just order more flats.

Q Do you succession seed salvia ‘Blue Bedder’?

A I make a couple of plantings of salvia during the year but in my Zone 8b, salvia tends to perennialize for me. I lost my oldest bed this spring when it drowned in unending rain. I’m not a big fan of ‘Blue Bedder’ because I think it shatters too easily. I use it in wedding work and I like having a blue flower when I need a touch of blue.

Q What’s a true blue statice? I grew the Qis series last year and it was purple.

A I find that several flowers listed as blue turn out to be more purple. You might try the Pacific series; Geo lists a ‘Heavenly Blue’ and a ‘Midnight Blue’ as well as a purple. I’ve grown the Pacific strain as well as the Qis series and was happy with both varieties.

Q When do you start your cool season flowers?

A I order my Rocket, Chantilly and Madame Butterfly snaps, ‘Amazon Duo’ dianthus, Champion campanula, Pacific Giant delphiniums and bells of Ireland as plugs through Gloeckner and let the plug growers grow them for me. I have them scheduled to come in a couple of times in October and November. It is way too hot for me start my



own when they need to be so I leave this up to professionals. I order them in May when the previous year’s crops are finishing up. I start my other cool annuals such as ammi, bupleureum, scabiosa orlaya and statice by seeding them in October and November. I start my Crane series kale, and ‘Cheerful White’, ‘Cheerful Yellow’, and Katz stock in September. I direct seed my larkspur in November when my beds are ready.

Q When do you plant dusty miller?

A I planted my first batch years ago in early March. It took the cold well and it did well into the summer but once it got hot, it just sat there. I planted the ones that survived in five-gallon pots in my greenhouse; they’ve done well and have given me many cuttings to use for my wedding work.

Q When do you plant your Karma dahlias in the greenhouse and how far apart?

A I have the plugs shipped to me in early August and then I transplant them into 4” cups and grow them in the cups until they’re ready to be planted in my greenhouse in September. I plant them one foot apart down the row.

Q When do you expect to harvest from the dahlias you planted in September and do you plant them in pots, raised bed or in beds in the greenhouse?

A I plant them in beds and they start to bloom early November. I also have some planted in five-gallon pots, which also works well.

Q What is wrong with my dahlia in this picture?

A This picture (left) was sent to me by a grower trying to grow a spring crop of dahlias. Planting should have been earlier; unfortunately it had been raining and it became spindly waiting for the beds to be ready. I told her to plant deeper than normal and I would

pinch it to encourage more shoots.

Q What do you spray on your dahlias for spider mites and mealybugs?

A I was using Organicide and it seemed to be working great, but winter came along and I found out that I was using

cool water, which wasn't mixing well. My insecticide salesman told me to start using warm water and that did the trick to a point, but I had let the pests get away from me and had to step up my game. He recommended another spray called Tetrasan which stopped the mites dead in their tracks. For mealybugs I spray rubbing alcohol right on them with a little spray bottle and it works great.

Don't be afraid to post questions like these on the ASCFG Bulletin Board, if you have done a search and couldn't find the answer you are looking for. The ASCFG is a great group of very helpful growers and I'm sure someone can help you along the way. I hope everyone has their beds filled with fall seasonal flowers and finishes off the year with a bang.

WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Alberta, and British Columbia



Paula Rice
BeeHaven Farm
beehavenflowers@gmail.com

The first part of this article will wrap up a few things I talked about in the last issue. We had some pleasant surprises and successes this year and I want to share them with you.

The second part is about a lesson learned last year (when I was put out of business by an early, major-hard frost) and how I attempted to remedy it this year. So, if the first part doesn't interest you then perhaps the second will and vice versa.

First let's talk about the calla lily experiment. It began when Golden State Bulb Growers so generously sent home, with every ASCFG attendee at the 2015 California Grower's Intensive, calla lily bulbs. Personally, growing callas was something I was never even going to attempt. I was under the impression that it was something done well by the wholesalers, and I would not even be able to price competitively (kind of like roses). And, if farmers' markets were my only sales venue, maybe I still wouldn't attempt to grow them. But things have changed, because I have a very active florist route and my own farmer-florist design business—I have markets that **can** sell these, at a price that makes it worth it.

Anyway, here is how my calla experiment went: I planted ten yellow lily bulbs in a crate at the end of March. We were harvesting in June (it's really great to have flowers in June in my

neck of the woods). From that crate we harvested 34 flowering stems in June and July. Then I harvested and bunched most of the foliage and sold it to my florists as well. To be honest, it was the foliage that I liked from the start. My florists said that they bought callas for \$2/stem from the wholesaler, and every stem I put on the van was bought up by the first florist on my route. Basically, no one else ever knew that I even had them. So at \$2.00/stem x 34 = \$68, plus five bunches of foliage at \$6.00 = \$98.00 total. A single crate generated almost \$100. That's quite a bit more than my Asiatic or Oriental lilies. Hmm. It speaks to me.

Next: curly willow. At some point this summer I looked at my small hedge of curly willow and thought, "Why am I not harvesting that weekly and putting it on the florist route? Why do I think that that is something to harvest and sell only in the spring?" So I started harvesting bunches weekly and keeping them hydrated. If kept in water they keep their foliage—and even if they don't—fresh, bendable, curly willow is in demand. We now sell it regularly off the van all season long. I am careful to leave half of the tree so that it makes it through the winter. I will harvest the other half in spring.



At some point this summer I looked at my small hedge of curly willow and thought, "Why am I not harvesting that weekly and putting it on the florist route? Why do I think that that is something to harvest and sell only in the spring?"

Another way to increase demand for your curly willow is to use it to construct an arbor for weddings. We left one curly willow uncut this spring and let it grow. Then we chopped several of the nice tall branches for an arbor for my niece's wedding. It was super easy. We drove metal fence posts into the ground and attached it with zip ties, then decorated. The leaves come off easily a couple of days after cutting it down. I set the kids out there and they had everything stripped in 15 minutes.

Next: the farmer-florist/designer thing. There comes a point where you kind of level off with the amount of revenue you can generate based on the resources you have or are willing to have. But adding design work is one area that is a bit unique in that you can grow less and make more money. I watch and compare each sales venue so that I can set goals and know if I am keeping up with last year's sales. When I compared my sales numbers from "last year to date" to "this year to date", wedding design wasn't even in the books last year. But this year, there it is, listed among all my sales avenues. Found money. Where does the farmer-florist venue sit on that list? It's at number two, right after my florist route which groups all my florists into one. It beat out my farmers' market. More found money.

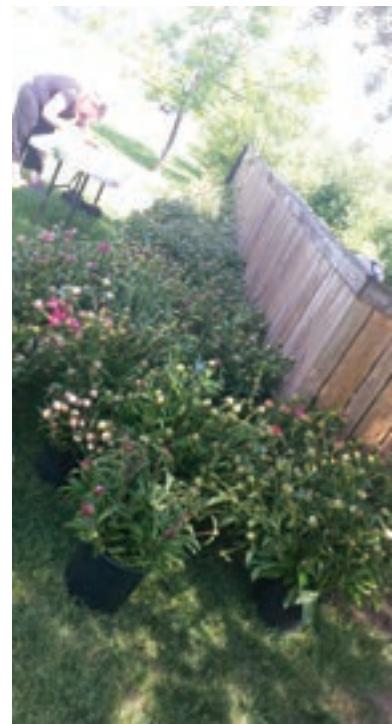
Finally: peonies. I had stated that it would be ideal to have a dedicated peony cooler for storing peonies long term. I have only one for everything, so along with my attempt to store peonies for as long as possible, I was constantly opening and loading the cooler daily all season long. But, despite this lack of infrastructure perfection, I opened my last bunches of peonies the third week of August and sold them to my florists. Yes, one-third of them were rotten, but the others opened nicely and sold easily, especially the bright pinks and deep reds. Yay!

Just so you get my vibe here: Imagine that you have been stranded on a deserted island for eight long years, you flag a passing ship and it actually notices you. It turns to come and

get you. You jump in the air, kiss the ground, throw sand everywhere and shout for joy. That is how I feel about being able to sell peonies into late August.

My next great experiment is to focus on roses. I want roses. Because of my climate (zone 3-4), I am looking for good cut flower roses that are: 1.) On their own roots. This way, when they die back (which they probably will), they will grow back true to their variety. 2.) Prolific bloomers or repeat bloomers, and 3.) Hardy to zone 4 or are a super tough zone 5 (like he has never died back on you). If you have any help for me in this area please shoot me an email at beehavenflowers@gmail.com.

Continued on next page.



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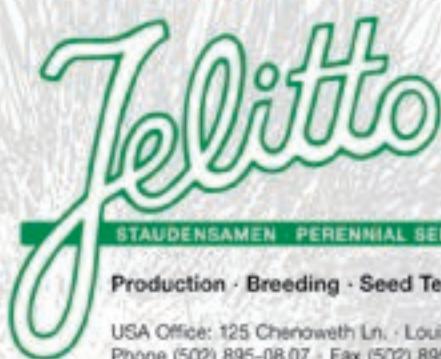
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Now for lessons learned. Last year we had two back-to-back killing frosts and then beautiful weather for 4 more weeks. These early frosts of 29° and then 24° put me out of business instantly. That means for the month of September I had no sale—not good. Obviously, nothing tender made it through the first night of 29° but the list below shows plants that did make it through. Those marked with an asterisk were extra tough, though even they succumbed at 24°. Had I been prepared with frost protection cloth for these cold-hardy plants, they could have survived those frosts and I would have stayed in the game.

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Bachelor buttons*	Nigella*
Bupleurum*	Parsley*
Calendula*	Rudbeckia*
Carthamus	Salvia 'Blue
Delphinium*	Bedder'*
Dianthus*	Scabiosa*
Euphorbia(Snow on	Snapdragons
the mountain)*	Statice*
Feverfew*	Stock*
Flowering cabbage*	Sunflowers
Gladiolus*	(especially
Grasses	'Sunbright'*)
Iberis*	

This year I'm ready, somewhat. I wasn't totally sure which summer date to plant these for fall sales. So I ordered plugs to be delivered July 1st. Everything in the hoophouse worked out perfectly. I would say I hit the target planting almost perfectly (I might make it the 3rd week of June). Everything else I planted in the field... and it stayed shocked forever. I definitely need a strategy and plan for planting tiny, "for fall sales" flower plugs in the heat of summer. There are also a lot of factors working against you when you live in the north with a short growing season, and you're planning for fall sales: You're planting tiny plugs at the hottest time of the year, and you're expecting the plants to mature at a time when the sun is losing its strength and the nighttime temperatures are cooling off dramatically; everything will be slowing down considerably.

I have a lot yet to iron out here and it's going to take a couple of seasons to get it figured out for my farm. Plan this winter to have a summer planting of frost-hardy plants so you can stay in the game and keep that last month of sales up.

CONTROL BOTRYTIS IN PEONY

As most of you have heard me say, I'm not a scientist, but a practicalist. Those with four years of botany or other scientific studies may find this paper amusing. For the rest of us, I hope the practicalist approach will be beneficial.

Botrytis, the main peony disease growers experience, is a grey or brown mold that produces spores which in turn produce mycelia. The mycelia are so small they spread or float through the air with the greatest of ease. (Sorry, I couldn't resist. I'm also a frustrated comedian.)

Avoid Injury and Wear and Tear

In my former retail greenhouse business, botrytis was seen in the foliage. This was caused by a damp environment inside the greenhouse, little or no air circulation, and frequent moving around of the plants. As plants would sell, it would be necessary to rearrange the display. Moving the plants probably caused some injury to the foliage from time to time, which opens plants up for botrytis entrance. Healthy plants usually stay healthy. Injured plants, just like people, are vulnerable to anything that comes along such as botrytis, powdery mildew etc.

In the peony fields, the first wave of botrytis may be coming from the roots. First-year plants may arrive with from the root grower already infected. Over the years I have kept records of first-year botrytis infections, trying to conclude if a specific variety might be more susceptible, or if it was the root provider. I believe some botrytis can be avoided by buying from root growers who sell the healthiest roots, and I've kept meticulous records of where our roots were purchased. Before planting, we soak our roots in a mycorrhizal solution for a few hours or a few days, depending on our planting schedule, to give them a healthy boost. First-year peonies can also become infected with botrytis from surrounding environment.

If botrytis is showing up in two-year or older plants not previously diseased, it's likely coming from the environment. Disease development will depend on the treatment by the farm or conditions at the farm. I've observed several indications as to why that happens. The most obvious is improper fall field maintenance. When your foliage starts to turn brown, you should cut it as close to the grounds as possible, and immediately—within 24 hours at least—spray the stubby stems and into the ground with a preventative spray. Removing all plant debris from the fields is extremely important; if left in the field it has the ability to overwinter and cause infection in the springtime.

THE ALASKAN WAY



Rita Jo Shoultz, Alaska Perfect Peony

I do believe certain varieties may be more vulnerable to botrytis. Again, not enough time has expired for me to make conclusive revelations or to share this information but my own observations have led me to this finding. More easily defined however, is the timing and method of spraying for botrytis prevention in the fall, after your plants are cut back.

Environmental Factors

In our fields, we have planted in blocks of eight rows with equipment paths between each block. Botrytis appears on the end rows of these blocks more frequently than the centers. This could be because the end rows are not getting as much exposure to the preventive spraying, which I believe is a contributing factor, but the outside rows of each block are more vulnerable to wind, injury, and disease spores blowing in from the wild vegetation around the field's perimeters. Perhaps a heavier fall saturation of spraying on all outside rows would help deter that situation.

Botrytis appearing later in the season on foliage is most likely caused by injuries. As the plants mature, your walking paths between rows becomes tighter and tighter. As you harvest the stems, you are in the fields walking and bending over; brushing against the foliage,

Diligence is a Must



obviously some injury will take place. Each tiny injury causes a wound that is vulnerable to infection. At this stage with the crowded fields it is extremely easy for the tiniest mycelium or spore to travel on your pants legs and in the air to the next plant down the row. This is the time of the season cycle to be extremely diligent in your scouting routines.

Scouting and removing infected foliage should be done as a sole project. Do not remove infected foliage as you are harvesting stems or other tasks. The chances of removing the foliage without spreading botrytis mycelia or spores, when you're not totally concentrating on that effort with bags and clean cutting utensils and baby wipes, could be disastrous. If I have only a very small infestation, I carry a spray bottle of copper fungicide and immediately spray the plant after removing the infected foliage. This has been effective in our fields as we now have very little botrytis. If the infestation is more severe, the entire field needs to be sprayed. The type of spray you use depends on your method of farming, whether you're organic or at least practicing sustainable methods. Remember, once botrytis is in a plant, the only solution is to remove the infected parts or perhaps the entire plant if it is a bad infestation. Spraying is only a preventative and will not "cure" existing diseases.



On a recent trip to Alaska to discuss climate change with those most likely to be affected by it, President Obama was delighted to receive a bouquet of peonies grown by Alaska Perfect Peony and delivered by Rita Jo Shoultz.

When I see botrytis coming from the root I tug the stem strongly from the root, trying to remove as much stem as deep into the root as possible. I put my palm around the stem on top of the soil to hold the root into the ground so I can pull the stem strongly without disturbing the rest of the root. If the botrytis is in the foliage I use sharp pruners to remove all the infected portions, and very carefully put the foliage into my plastic bag. I'm very careful not to shake or wave the infected foliage as the spores or mycelia will disperse into the surrounding area. I carry baby wipes and a small bottle of a bleach solution and keep my hands and pruners wiped clean frequently.

I try to mark on my field record charts where I find botrytis infections. If a plant continues to have botrytis over a couple of seasons, I remove the entire root from the field. To me, this continuous infection is a sign the root is diseased and will continue to show the infection in the future.

We spray each spring when we finish our disbudding. The tiny injuries from popping off the extra buds can leave tissue susceptible to infection. Heavy hailstorms or other weather-related events that might cause widespread injuries also indicate spraying is appropriate to protect damaged foliage from infection.

Vigilance, and a scheduled scouting program will keep your plants healthy and avoid a widespread outbreak of botrytis.



Alaska Perfect Peony is a family farm in Fritz Creek owned by Rita Jo and Leroy Shoultz, with about 15,000 plants in the field. Contact her at ritajo@alaskaperfectpeony.com

Keeping an Eye on Peony Health

At Washington State University in Puyallup, graduate student Andrea Garfinkel is working with professor of plant pathology Gary Chastagner to diagnose the causal agents of various diseases that affect peony. Follow their research at <https://www.facebook.com/WSUpeonies>

Here they share photos of botrytis on various stages of peonies.



A peony flower infected with botrytis.



Fuzzy growth indicates the presence of botrytis.



Foliar lesions of alternating dark brown and tan rings are typical symptoms.



Spent flower petals are easily colonized by botrytis, which can then cause infection on the foliage below.



Typical dieback seen in infected peony plants.



Even seemingly healthy plants can have one or two infected stems.



Lesions also arise from the base of the stems.

WHAT'S NEW with Your ASCFG?

Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

Allison Armbrust, Woodstock, IL

Loretta Ball, Craggy View Flower Farm, Barnardsville, NC

Anna Bankhead, Wellsville, UT

Beth Barnett, Larkspur, Chicago, IL

Bill Barth, Bella Vista Farm, Minden, NV

Niccole Bartley, Cross Street Flower Farm, Norwell, MA

Pattie and Alex Beebe, The Elegant Bee, Boerne, TX

Beth and Jonathan Brinton, Brinton Misty Mountain Farm, Marshall, NC

Michelle Bull, Flower Patch Farm, Penryn, CA

Helen Campbell, Helen's Garden, Towson, MD

Heidi Clark, Belleville, IL

Lauren Cox, Woodland Gardens Organic, Winterville, GA

Susan Crawford, Forest, VA

Mary C. Cridlebaugh, Cridlebaugh Farm, High Point, NC

Robert Croft, Sakata Seed America, Grand Rapids, MI

James DelPrince, Mississippi State University, Biloxi, MS

Colleen Dobbins, Peridot Florals, Ithaca, NY

Deanna Duffy, Happy Boy Farms, Santa Cruz, CA

Nina Eisberg, Patchwork Dahlias, Westminster, MD

Jenn Evans, PanAmerican Seed, Santa Paula, CA

Marcia Fellenbaum, Washington Boro, PA

Stan Fitts, Reeves Floral Products, Woodstock, GA

James Furnish, Iowa City, IA

Andrea Garfinkel, Oregon State University, Puyallup, WA

Tyler Gough, Indy Urban Acres, Indianapolis, IN

Molly Gray, Teepee Gardens, Windsor, ME

Sylvia Green, Green's Flower Farm, Wausau, WI

Christina Hartman, Wildheart, Kula, HI

Sharon Hays, Waterford, VA

Jackie Hough, Raft Swamp Farms, Red Springs, NC

Tracie Hovermale, Davidsonville, MD

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Alisa Johnson, Oakham Farm, Middleburg, VA

Laura Jumonville, Primm Springs Flower Farm, Primm Springs, TN

Paige Kennicott, Kennicott Kuts, Waterford, WI

Vanessa Knock, Amherst, Nova Scotia

Cathleen Knoll, Ceresco, MI

Teri Knuese, The Provencal Farmer, Bristol, WI

Anna Jane Kocon, Little State Flower Company, West Kingston, RI

Faye Krause, Flora Organica Designs, Arcata, CA

Misty LaRue-Russell, Murphy, OR

Bob Lott, Southern Roots Nursery, Newnan, GA

Kathy Madison, Sodus, NY

James Martin, Compost in My Shoe, Charleston, SC

Jillian Mickens, Open Door Farm, Cedar Grove, NC

Kaye and Ben Moomaw, Irvington Spring Farm, Lynchburg, VA

Tom Nass, Len Busch Roses, Plymouth, MN

Rebecca Pendexter, Stone Meal Farm, Santa Cruz, CA

Yana Reid, Century Farm Flowers, Boone, IA

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Mary Roberts, Windcrest Farm, Monroe, NC

Elizabeth Schultz, Bella Collina Produce & Flowers, River Falls, WI

Lynn Schultz, Green Meadows Florist, Chadds Ford, PA

Kelley Short, Muddy Truck Flower Farm, Georgetown, DE

Jeanette Smith, Cabin Hill Farm, Mount Jackson, VA

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Delanie Trusty, Hillsboro, MO

Janet Tuenschel, Newmarket, Ontario

Laura Vollset, Santa Cruz, CA

Jeff Webb, Webb Farm, Laurel, DE

Marybeth Wehrung, Stars of the Meadow Flower Farm, Kingston, NY

Mike Williams, WilMor Farms, Metter, GA

Jessie Witscher, Understory Farm, Sudbury, VT

Inaugural Mentor Program Well Received

We were heartened by the healthy response from potential mentors and mentees: we received more than 60 applications in thirty states, and one from Ontario.

In October, the Mentor Program Committee will narrow down both mentor and mentee applications to five each, and pair up the best five matches, based on location and shared business models. Once the matches have been made, the partners will be notified, and given each other's contact information.

We hope that the experiences of this first incarnation of the project will help build on it for the future. Stay tuned for the results!

Meet Your Incoming Board Members

These fine folks have been chosen to join the ASCFG Board of Directors. We thank them for their initiative in stepping forward to serve all members of the organization.



President
Frank Arnosky
2016-2018



Vice President
Jennie Love
2016-2018



West and Northwest
Regional Director
Lennie Larkin
2016-2018

Join the ASCFG Trials Program

The ASCFG Trials Program Committee has revamped its schedule, and is looking for a few good farmers. In the coming years, we'll not only continue our traditional seed trials, but add a single-species seed trial (we will compare all the major cut flower cultivars of one or two species at a time), a tunnel-only program (anemone and ranunculus will be the next species tested), and because that's just not enough, a trial for herbaceous perennials as cut flowers.

Who's in?

You don't need to participate in all these options; in fact, it's probably better that you concentrate on only one of them. We're looking for dependable growers, excellent record-keepers, and those members who will be sure to see the program through the entire growing season, from properly siting the plant material in the spring to promptly turning in data in the fall.

If you'd like to be one of the first growers to see the newest plant material coming in from the breeders, and to contribute to an important service for all cut flower growers, please participate. Contact the ASCFG office or find more information online.



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What Does it Do?

Have you ever wondered how to improve the vase life of that new dahlia variety, or what the best spacing should be for the eucomis lily you just purchased? These are typical questions facing cut flower growers which are examined and solved with the help of ASCFG Research Foundation funding. Scientists at universities and experiment stations use Foundation money to investigate problems that growers like you suggest.

What Are the Studies?

Here are some of the most recent projects that have likely benefited your flower company:

- ❖ Productivity and Profitability of Direct-seeded vs. Transplanted and Season-long vs. Successional Plantings of Annual Cut Flower Crops
- ❖ Confirming the Potential of "Wild" Pepper Lines as Fall Cuts
- ❖ Postharvest of Specialty Cut Flowers
- ❖ Low-risk Pesticides for Control of Powdery Mildew and Leaf Spot on Zinnias

How is the Foundation Funded?

The Research Foundation is currently funded solely by members' personal donations, and with proceeds from a benefit auction held most years at the ASCFG National Conference. The ASCFG Research Foundation supports a competitive grant program open to universities, governmental agencies, and other tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) organizations.

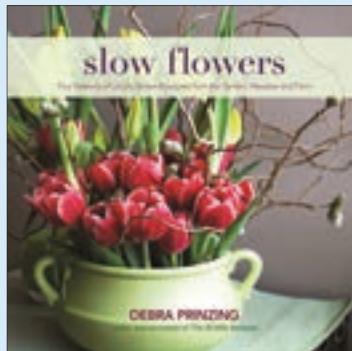
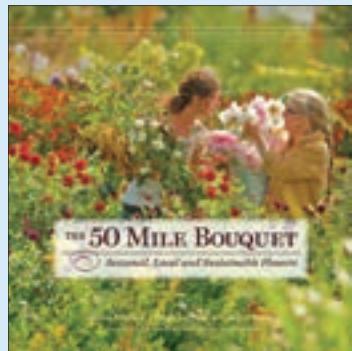
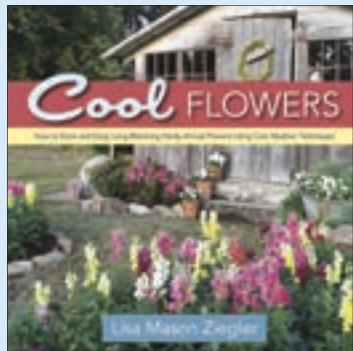
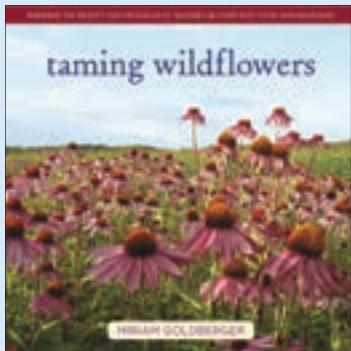
Send your suggestions on topics you would like addressed to Judy Laushman at mail@ascfg.org or Chris Wien at hcw2@cornell.edu.

How Do I Contribute?

ASCFG members may easily donate to the Foundation with the check-off box on their membership renewal forms. Online contributions are made at the "Research/Academic Research" tab at www.ascfg.org



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Beautify your bookshelf with these titles from ASCFG members.

_____ ASCFG Member Receives Garden Writers Association Award _____



Taming Wildflowers by Miriam Goldberger was recently in the news when its publisher, St. Lynn's Press, received a Silver Award of Achievement for the book from the Garden Writers Association Media Awards Program at its annual Symposium. The Pittsburgh publisher won under the "Publisher - Book" category for the 2014 title. Goldberger's *Taming Wildflowers* is the ultimate DIY book on wildflower gardening, featuring more than 60 of her favorite wildflowers and 300 full-color photographs. The GWA Media Awards Program recognizes individuals and companies who achieve the highest levels of talent and professionalism in garden communications.

Scenes from the Virginia Grower Intensive

September 20-22, 2015



Greenstone Fields' owner Barbara Lamborne and worker Thea Cox welcome attendees.



Eucalyptus, dusty miller, and other foliages are grown to supplement bouquets.



Several varieties of celosia fill the hoop houses at Greenstone Fields.



Lisa Ziegler shares her expertise with Virginia attendees.



Dave Dowling leads a tour of Greenstone Fields.



Some of the hundreds of varieties at Don's Dahlias.



Judy Laushman, Josie Crowson, and Don Dramstad.



Attendees marveled over the beauty and quality of Don's dahlias.



Josh Flynn, Wollam Gardens farm manager, explains dahlia production.



Wollam Gardens' workers show off a morning harvest.

Photos courtesy of Kathy Wirtala, Virginia Floral

Cooling Options for High Tunnels

Bob Rimol

Cooling efficiency in high tunnels is extremely important in crop yields. By maintaining cooler temperatures in high tunnels, watering is reduced and disease control is easier because the plants are less stressed. There are several options that you should examine when constructing your high tunnel or even upgrading an existing one.

Roll-up sides are the most basic form of cooling for ventilation in a high tunnel. Having about a 6-foot side wall with roll up sides is the key to ventilation. If you have a concern about rolling up sides and shocking the plants with cool air, there are two common options, which are gable shutters (discussed below) or a knee wall along the

sides of the greenhouse. Some high tunnel growers install a 24-inch-high knee wall with either polycarbonate or woven poly film along the sides of the greenhouse rather than use a conventional base board. This helps eliminate the problem of the cooler air, but also helps keep critters out of the greenhouse if you have that problem.

Roll-up sides are usually operated with a gear box kit. The gear box kit helps make it easy and safe to roll the sides up and down. Some people use a "T-handle" kit, which is simple and cheap, but it is not very safe, and is hard to operate on high tunnels longer than 48 feet. The last option is motorizing the roll-up sides. Motorized roll-up sides are run on tube motors and a

controller. More and more people are realizing that this is a great investment because they no longer have to "babysit" their high tunnel because of this form of automation. As the sides roll up or down, there are incremental openings that help moderate the cooling effect.

One last note is that the roll-up sides are usually not inflated, because they just do not work very

effectively when inflated. If you are concerned about heat loss, then we recommend purchasing a wind panel kit. A wind panel kit is an extra layer of poly from the end bow to the first bow in the four corners of the greenhouse where the roll up sides are located. This extra buffer helps seal out wind when the sides are not rolled up, and helps reduces drafts from the four corners.

Gable shutters are becoming increasingly popular due to their simple benefits. Gable shutters can be motorized, which is preferable because they work on a thermostat or non-motorized. Having the gable shutters allows you to begin your first stage of ventilation without opening up the roll up sides. These gable shutters also allow any hot air to escape that may be caught up near the peak in the warmer summer months. In the cooler



Rolling up tunnel sidewalls increase air circulation and lessens disease incidence.



Gable shutters.



A tube motor on roll-up sides, the most basic form of cooling for ventilation in a high tunnel.

months, gable shutters are often left open at times to allow humidity to escape when doing winter growing.

Roof vents are the ultimate investment in cooling. Roof vents can be motorized and operate on a thermostat or be non-motorized and open and close with a chain wheel operator. The nice thing about roof vents is that they open incrementally whereas roll up sides are either open or closed if motorized. Roof vents can be very effective in cooling in the spring or fall when just the roof vent is open without the sides being rolled up. When you combine a roof vent with roll up sides, you can maintain temperatures within the greenhouse close to the outside temperature. This is especially important during the warmer months that can be unproductive if it is too hot. The feedback from growers is that roof vents increase yields about 20 percent over high tunnels with just roll-up sides. Although roof vents can be expensive with the vent, motor and controller, their payback can be very quick with the increased yields.

Shade cloth is used sometimes for the severe summer months but you have to be careful with light reduction. Some crops need all of the light that they can get while others will benefit from cooler temperatures with the sacrifice in light levels. Usually, the highest amount of shade cloth used ranges in percentage from 30 percent for high light crops to 50 percent for cold-tolerant crops. Just beware of your location and typical light levels.

Doors are important features on high tunnels that can aid in cooling. Having a big door on each end wall does help get more air flow into the high tunnel. When you orient a high tunnel in your site, it is advisable to keep a side wall facing the direction of the summer prevailing winds. However, wind direction changes at times and having the option of opening up doors on your ends to facilitate air movement can be helpful.

Keep your plants comfortable in a high tunnel in the summer months. They will thank you later with increased crop yields and high profits.

Bob Rimol is owner of Rimol Greenhouse Systems, which he founded in order to provide innovative and quality greenhouse technology for growers.

*This article originally appeared in
Greenhouse Product News, March 2015, Copyright © 2015 Great American Media Services.*

From the DIRECTOR

Judy M. Laushman



The recent increase in ASCFG membership is described a few times in this issue. The funny thing is that until Chris Wien asked me to send him our numbers for a presentation he was making at Cornell, the steep incline of new members didn't really hit home. We have been so busy plowing through projects like the mentor program, Research Foundation grant applications, sixteen different grower meetings in five years, student scholarships, seed trials, board meetings, and a documentary that we've barely had time to lift our heads to look up.

Compare it to cutting a 25-foot row of gomphrena; you're glad when you get to the end of that row, and can't believe how full your buckets are.

It is gratifying to watch our numbers grow, and to see the "pins" signifying members on the online map multiply. As soon as we sign up members in North Dakota, and South Dakota, we'll have a presence in every state. Then we can move on to the rest of the western hemisphere.

As we continue to gain new members, we're reminded that the basis of this organization is to connect and educate growers, and that one of the foundations of education is research. After all, the ASCFG was created as a result of Allan Armitage's cut flower trials at the University of Georgia.

Sometimes it's hard to remember this as our attention is pulled into myriad other directions: counting heads on farm tour buses, resetting a member's online password for her, posting speaker videos and handouts in the Members Only section of the web site, editing Regional Reports, or searching for that perfect image for the cover of the *Quarterly*.

Betsy Hitt has done a masterful job of helming the ASCFG Research Foundation for several years, but because Chris Wien just can't sit back and relax after his retirement from Cornell University, he will be taking over the reins. Not to mix transportation metaphors. With the infusion of Chris' energy, both the ASCFG Research Foundation and the ASCFG Trials program will become more prominent.

Chris has some ideas to bring not only more funds to the Foundation, but to increase the visibility of, and applications for, the grant funding process. We know there are university and extension people who are interested in several aspects of cut flower research; we just need to track them down and make them aware of our funding system.

The Trials program will be expanded to include perennial and woody plants, as well as some single-species seed programs. We're working with breeders now to determine the best line for this trial.

We'll need your help to make these projects successful. Sign up to be a seed or perennial trialer. Share the word with your state floriculturists about the Research Foundation funding. Contribute to the Foundation! There is even a special box set up on the donation site allowing you to make a contribution in someone's honor.

Take some time during the fall and winter to explore these programs on the ASCFG web site. We'll be happy to hear from you.



The Oberlin Chamber of Commerce recognized area non-profit organizations with hand-painted banners, hung from downtown streetlight poles.

*Here is Isabella Thorndike carrying
an armload of peonies.*

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