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# *The* **Cut Flower**

Q U A R T E R L Y

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

**for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts**

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## If you don't know where you are going, you'll never get there.

Dave Dowling



Every year, as summer comes to an end, we should all take a little time, look back on the past growing season, and take note of what needs to be done better next year. I think we all agree that there is always something that can be done better. Better signage at the market, better communication with your florists, better weed management, better employees, better vacation time, better time management, better farm management. Better everything and anything. The list can go on forever. I doubt there are many facets of your cut flower business that are perfect, with no room for improvement. Identify just a few things that can be done better in 2017. Make a plan, write it down, and follow through. Share your plan with others; post it on the cooler door or workroom wall. Telling others of your plans should help you achieve your goals.

Many growers will have a greatly reduced workload when the first frosts of autumn arrive. No more daily harvesting of flowers and selling at markets or to florists. You'll have all winter to go through seed and plug catalogs and place your orders for next year.

S-c-r-e-e-e-e-c-c-c-h!  
(That was the sound of fingernails on a chalkboard.)  
Now that I have your attention: You *don't* have all winter to get those orders in! You should

have your plug orders in by early November, and seed orders in soon after. If you wait longer than that, you risk the chance of not getting what you need. Order your plugs early so the growers can get the seed and start your plugs in time for your desired ship date. Did you know that they plant the plugs just for you, often with your name right on the plug tray? If you wait too long to order, you're limited to any extras they *might* have available. Why set yourself up for disappointment?

Social media is a blessing to businesses, but can be a curse too. One bad review left unanswered can really hurt a business. Often it is not the "problem" that is the problem, but the way a problem is handled. If a customer is unhappy with your flowers, make it right *before* he can post a negative review online. If you find that unfavorable comments have been posted about your farm or business, post a reply, telling your side of the story, and offering an olive branch to the customer, all without putting her down or calling her wrong. Remember, "The customer is always right." Or at least let them think they are.

The "blessing" part of social media are the glowing reviews, hundreds of likes, thousands of followers, and customers posting pictures of your flowers for the entire

world to see. Social media can also help move flowers when you plant too many and have more than you can sell. (Who would ever do such a thing?!)

ASCFG Member Dave Delbo of Dave's Flowers, located in the middle of Pennsylvania, found himself with an oversupply of flowers in early August. Right when everything was blooming, it seemed everyone had left town. Dave decided to try something a little different. He posted the following on Facebook:

*"Our fields are blooming faster than we can cut and sell the flowers. So, on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, Dave's Flowers will be giving away flowers. All you have to do is stop in at the "gazebo on the hill" in Elysburg or at 189 Southern Drive (Route 487), Catawissa, help yourself to some flowers, and take a few extra stems to give to someone you love (or hate, I don't care). We will have sunflowers, lisianthus, dianthus, zinnias, and other flowers to choose from. Help spread some joy through our little towns. It doesn't matter if you have bought from us before or not. If you wish, you can leave a tip but it is not required."*

Dave paid \$20 to "boost" his post in his surrounding zip codes. Facebook allows you to zero in on location, gender, age, and a bunch of other parameters when running an ad. Well, Dave's

twenty dollar "investment" netted almost \$1,000 in "tips" that weekend. He said he had more customers that weekend than he usually has the entire summer. The post was "shared" almost 200 times, and seen by close to 20,000 people. Amazing for a \$20.00 "boost".

So don't dismiss social media advertising as something that won't work for you. If someone can "give away" flowers all weekend, and then have close to \$1,000 to put in the bank on Monday, it's worth giving a try.

By the time you read this column, the ASCFG Conference in Grand Rapids will likely be completely sold out. The Growers' School on Sunday and the Wednesday Tour filled up in early August, and we expect the main Conference to fill too. The building can hold only so many people and we can't squeeze in anymore. Sorry. And no, you can't sit on someone's lap or share a chair.

If you're registered for the Conference, I'll see you in Grand Rapids!

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*Dave Dowling is a Sales Representative and Warehouse Manager for Ednie Flower Bulb. Contact him at [dave@ednieflowerbulb.com](mailto:dave@ednieflowerbulb.com)*

# A Call to Action

Josie Crowson

ASCFG members, this is your call to action! For too long, we have watched as imported flowers took over our market.

Now local flower growers are staging a comeback, and the ASCFG is giving a major boost to this effort.

Building on its new video, the ASCFG will soon launch a marketing campaign promoting local flowers.

Our goal is a multi-pronged effort including articles in major national publications, podcasts, advertisements and commercials, and lots of social media promotions. But success depends on YOU. Here's why: you have direct access to flower buyers. They trust

you, they will listen to you, they will follow your recommendations.

You can have a major impact on the buying public. In fact, without your help, our promotional efforts could fall flat.



So what is the ASCFG asking you to do? Get the word out about the advantages of local flowers. Talk it up at your farmers' market, with your wholesale customers, and with visitors to your farm. Most importantly, give presentations in your community about local flowers. Our new video—"Local Flowers, Local Farmers: A Growing American Movement"—is the perfect vehicle to get you started and make this easy.

You're asked to give presentations all the time. Maybe you are uncomfortable onstage or feel you don't have time to prepare, so you don't do it too often. The video is a readymade feature that eloquently tells our story and using it makes your presentation easy. You can show the video and then follow with a talk about your own farm and your locally-grown flowers. Bring some sample flowers or bouquets to give away, or show pictures if it is not flower season. It's actually an easy sell. Flower buyers hear more every day about the advantages of local flowers, so they are primed to respond well.

You have watched the video, right? If not, don't wait another minute—view it on YouTube right now. <https://youtu.be/PEXs9UUgqqg>

## One Presentation Approach

Here's an example of what we did to get the word out. Jessica Hall (Harmony Hill Farm), Gwynn Hamilton (Stonecrop Farms), and I gave a presentation on local flowers at the Virginia Master Gardener College in June. Jessica brought three gorgeous bouquets from her farm; I brought a bouquet (definitely not locally grown) from my local grocery. I started the conversation by talking about the grocery store bouquet, pointing out that although the flowers looked pretty, the bouquet lacked variety and uniqueness, not to mention fragrance. It looked like every other grocery store bouquet. The contrast with Jessica's fresh bouquets was striking. The grocery store bouquet was unlabeled as to origin, and I noted that it was likely imported, as are 80 percent of the flowers sold in the U. S. After touching on the film's major

points (always best to give the audience a heads-up about what's coming), we showed the video.

Afterward, Jessica and Gwynn each gave terrific talks about their farms—their specific challenges, business models, what they grow, etc. Their passion showed through and the audience responded with lots of questions for these two talented women. We finished with a drawing for the bouquets—Jessica's three beauties and the grocery store bouquet. Jessica's bouquets went first, of course. The last "winner" reluctantly took the grocery bouquet.

I think our presentation made a real impact on those attending and, in my opinion, that was largely because we had both the video and local farmers in person. The video alone is good, but its impact is greatly magnified when you have real farmers there to emphasize its message and make it personal.

Another presentation here in Fredericksburg on October 2 will have a slightly different twist. Following the video, Barbara Lamborne will discuss her farm (Greenstone Fields) and Kathy Wirtala (Virginia Flora) will use Barbara's flowers in a floral demonstration. This event, held at a lovely local facility, is free and open to the general public, so we are hoping for a good turnout. The point is that you have lots of options for designing your presentation.

## Getting Started: Dealing with the Details

Here are some good target audiences: Master gardeners, women's clubs, garden clubs, university horticulture departments, farmers' market conferences, florists' conferences and meetings, local Chambers of Commerce, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs. You can probably think of many other possibilities.

Don't wait to be asked. Your job is to get the word out! Offer to give presentations to these groups. Most clubs and other organizations are constantly on the hunt for interesting presentations.

You can show the video either from your computer directly or from a DVD. The ASCFG office has a large supply of DVDs and will provide one for any member who is doing presentations.

Audiences always ask where they can find local flowers. If you are a grower, then obviously you are a good source. But let your audience know that they can do a zip code lookup for local flowers on the ASCFG website now. This is a new feature that ASCFG recently installed.

Judy and Linda will gladly send you handouts, such as "Why Buy Local Flowers" and "Help Us Spread the Word About Local Flowers" to help with these



presentations. Emphasize especially the points in the “Spread the Word” flyer. Encourage your audience to request local flowers from their grocer or florist. Your audience will respond—people like being called to action for a good cause. After I gave a presentation to my local garden group, some members went right out and told the grocer they wanted local flowers in the store. You can get people fired up! Even better, if we can get members of our audience to give presentations, our impact multiplies many times over. Master gardeners have an incentive because they can get volunteer credit hours for giving such presentations. Master Gardener groups, women’s clubs and garden clubs are always looking for new program ideas—here is one readymade for them. The ASCFG is able to supply DVDs that they can use for these presentations.

Don’t forget the shorter video about the ASCFG itself. Although it might not be appropriate for every presentation, use it whenever you can. If you are speaking to a group such as a farmers’ market organization or vegetable growers’ group, for example, some participants may be interested in starting a cut flower business and need to know about the ASCFG. To encourage membership, the office will send you “On the Spot” coupons that provide a membership discount for new members.

### Don't Have Time?

I don’t have time, you say. Of course, finding time to give these presentations isn’t easy. The demands of the farm are intense and constant. But as you know, sometimes you have to look beyond the immediate to the long-term. If you want your business to grow, you take the time to develop relationships with new customers, build new infrastructure on your farm, and plan your crops. In the same way, ensuring that the local flower movement continues to grow requires that we all work to spread the word about the benefits of local flowers. We are at a tipping point. I think Jennie Love said it best in one of her blogs: “For many years, it has been a real uphill battle for local growers to sway the hearts and minds of the consumer masses. But after a long struggle...real change is underway!” You can make the difference. Get the word out wherever you can!

## Making the Video: All the Stars in Alignment!

At its March 2015 meeting, the ASCFG Board voted to produce a video to promote local flowers. Our objective was to create a documentary that could be part of a powerful Buy Local Flowers campaign and would convince viewers to join the local flower crusade. We wanted to clearly demonstrate the benefits of local flowers: fresh, long-lasting, variety, fragrance, low carbon footprint, sustainably grown, great value.

We were a little nervous, because none of us knew much about filmmaking or how to find a good filmmaker. Serendipity intervened. My local Fredericksburg, Virginia newspaper reported that an Academy Award-nominated documentary\* filmmaker had just completed a highly acclaimed film on the Rappahannock River, a well-loved historic river running through Fredericksburg. I joined the Rappahannock River Society, bought the DVD, and was totally impressed with the quality.

Unbelievably, this well-known filmmaker lived in Fredericksburg, so I decided to try to meet him and get his suggestions on finding a filmmaker for our project. Bayley Silleck met me for coffee in downtown Fredericksburg and listened carefully as I described our project. Before long, it became clear that he was interested in doing the film himself!



I was stunned and thrilled. But Bayley is a nature lover and his wife a master gardener, so this project had natural appeal for him. He brought in a colleague, Rob Cleaton, with whom he had worked on “Rappahannock.” Rob has done a lot of work on TV shows such as *Breaking Bad* and *Lost*, and is a creative genius. Rob also lives in Fredericksburg—I couldn’t believe our luck! Negotiations on the contract were easy and quick, even though our budget was tight for such a project.

We had sufficient funds for one long-distance visit by the filmmakers, and decided that would be to Frank and Pamela Arnosky’s farm (Texas Specialty Cut Flowers). The rest of the filming was in the Mid-Atlantic region, but we felt that, even with somewhat limited geography, we were able to give viewers a good feel for a variety of farms, florists, and business models.

Working with Bayley and Rob was a delight. They truly cared about our project and it showed. They devoted an amazing amount of time to our film—long days traveling, filming, and editing. Bayley even agreed to be the narrator for our film. Rob and Bayley also had many creative ideas for improvement. For example, we wanted our film to promote both local flowers and the ASCFG, but our attempt at putting these two messages into one short film seemed to muddy the waters. Bayley and Rob suggested making it two separate films—one on local flowers, and a much shorter one promoting the ASCFG. That worked! Our finished DVD contains both videos, so you can show one or both as suitable for your audience.

\*The documentary is “Cosmic Voyage,” which received an Academy Award nomination in 1997.

*The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers  
presents*



<https://youtu.be/PEXs9UUgqqg>



*Help Us Spread the Word About Local Flowers!*

- Show our video and pass along this link to your friends and neighbors, members of your Master Gardener organization or garden club, and flower enthusiasts everywhere.
- Support your local flower growers. Buy their flowers, visit their farms and markets, and encourage your friends to do the same. Find local growers at [www.ascfg.org](http://www.ascfg.org).
- Ask for local flowers at your grocer and local florist. If they don't carry them, encourage them to buy local. Support grocers and florists who sell local flowers.

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### Julio Freitas, The Flower Hat

Jodi Helmer

#### *Wearing Many Hats: A Montana grower uses a quirky accessory to inspire his business*

When you meet Julio Freitas, there is a good chance he will be wearing a floral hat. He owns several of them but the first—a black baseball cap with bright red flowers—is his favorite. It was a gift from a friend as a nod to his passion for floral design.

Freitas wore the hat so often that it became his calling card as well as the source of inspiration for his business venture, The Flower Hat.

“It started as a joke,” he recalls. “But it stuck. People know the flower hat. Just this summer, I had four brides say, ‘I was wondering which hat you’re going to wear to my wedding.’”

The Flower Hat is a farm and floral design business based in Bozeman, Montana which Freitas started in 2014. But his flower design career started long before he started his collection of colorful, blossom-bearing hats.



#### Hotels to Cafés to Weddings

Freitas began creating floral arrangements for the hotel where he worked as a front office manager. The lobby, he explained, needed flowers and no one else was stepping up to tackle the task; he decided it’d be a chance to marry his left-brained job with a little right-brained creativity.

Although he had no formal training in floral design, Freitas had obvious talent. The reactions to his arrangements inspired him to seek out opportunities to practice his newfound passion. In 2012, he offered to design and deliver weekly

floral arrangements to a local café, Harper and Madison. To his surprise, the owner agreed.

“People started taking my business cards and I started getting requests to do flowers,” he recalls.

In the beginning, Freitas operated his floral design studio in conjunction with his partner, Shane Kirkham, an interior designer and owner of Kirkham & Company, and created arrangements on the side. Interior design clients often contracted Freitas to provide arrangements for their living spaces, complimenting

the “wild” feel of his designs, which incorporate bold colors and lots of texture.

As demand grew—and requests expanded to include weddings and special events—Freitas decided to create a separate business and The Flower Hat was born.

Brides are big business for The Flower Hat. Freitas, who started with just one wedding in 2012, designed bouquets, boutonnieres and centerpieces for 43 weddings this summer; the 2017 wedding season is almost booked, and Freitas is looking to expand his staff.

While brides loved his arrangements and Freitas loved the work, there was one thing he did not like about operating a flower business in the Northwest: importing blooms.

“It’s so hard to get flowers to Montana,” he explains. “I had friends in the business who were experiencing delays every week.”

To overcome supply chain issues, in 2015 Freitas started growing flowers in a 10 x 20 garden behind his studio. The colorful blooms, which included forget-me-nots, dahlias, anemones, zinnias, snapdragons, sunflowers and scabiosa, did so well that Freitas was able to grow about 20 percent of the flowers he used in his designs. This season, he expanded the garden to 5000 square feet and continues to experiment with new blooms.

## Growing Flowers in Big Sky Country

“In Montana, the hardest thing about being a grower is the weather; it can be brutal here,” he says. Some years, snow remains on the ground until April and flakes start falling again as early as September. This summer, nighttime temperatures dropped to 37 degrees in August.

“I look back on early spring and all the struggles it took to get it going, and I didn’t think I would make it,” he recalls. “I was thinking, ‘If I plant the ranunculus too early it will freeze and if I plant it too late it won’t be ready for wedding season.”

“I kept going because I hoped all of the hard work would pay off,” he adds. “Knowing—hoping—I would get flowers that would make brides so happy was what kept me going; that is the reason I’m a grower.”

Despite the challenges, Freitas admits there are some advantages to the Montana climate. Thanks to the unusual weather, Freitas can harvest anemones and dahlias at the same time—something growers in most other parts of the world cannot do.

“No one believes I can put both of those flowers in the same arrangement,” he says.

Educating clients about what grows well in Montana (and when different flowers are in season) is a big part of what Freitas wants to accomplish with The Flower Hat. To achieve that, Freitas encourages clients to select flowers based on seasonal availability.

“We want our clients to have the freshest product available,” he explains. “And the freshest product comes from our garden.”

In the midst of expanding his knowledge and skills, Freitas is also making time to celebrate all that he has accomplished with The Flower Hat.

“When you leave a steady paycheck to do your own thing, it’s pretty scary,” he says. “I’m so thankful that people trust us and want our product; that is the thing that I am most proud of.”

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*Jodi Helmer is a free-lance writer in North Carolina.  
Contact her at [jodi@jodihelmer.com](mailto:jodi@jodihelmer.com)*



## Dahlias: Beauties Filled with Beasts

Stanton Gill

Dahlias are stunningly beautiful flowers, perfect to generate sales at farmers' markets, to florists, and for events. They are perceived by many casual growers to be relatively easy plants to grow. They produce clusters of luscious blooms from early summer through late fall. What is not to love about dahlias as a cut flower?

When you first start growing them on a commercial scale you can be easily lured by thoughts of "Hey, this is easy!" the first year or two. When insects and disease discover your crop, your life will change and not necessarily for the better. Finding pests on your prized plants is a frustrating, disheartening experience and a wake-up call to some of the problems with dahlias. I don't want to rain on anyone's parade, but if you get into dahlias be ready to deal with issues that can crop up and reduce your profit margin.

We will leave the powdery mildews and root rots for a pathologist to write about, and concentrate on what entomologists are good at: telling you about insects and mites.

### Thrips

The major insect that must be dealt with when growing dahlias is thrips. Several species feed on dahlias; two of the most common are western flower thrips (*Frankliniella occidentalis*), and flower thrips (*F. tritici*). All have a single mandible they use to slash the plant tissue, injuring the plant cells. The thrips then suck up the plant juices exuding from the wound. This feeding causes a stippling effect on the dahlia foliage and flower petals.

Thrips are slender creatures with tube-like body shapes. Females insert eggs into foliage or flower buds. The hatching nymphs will go through two nymphal stages before becoming a reproducing adult. Adult thrips have fringed wings and are fairly good fliers. Although thrips rarely kill dahlias, they can affect the appearance by causing stippled leaves and damaged flowers, resulting in leaf drop and stunted growth.

In 2016, Brian Kunkel, University of Delaware, and I evaluated several low-risk materials for greenhouse thrips control. See <http://members.ascfg.org/articles/IPMFALL16> for charts showing which low-risk materials work the best. These newer materials are very effective, safe for the user, and have a low impact on beneficial organisms. The drawback is they are expensive compared to older classes of chemistry.

Biological control options are available. A native predator called *Orius insidiosus*, commonly called minute pirate bug, is found throughout the United States and in parts of Canada. It builds up in numbers on its own late in the season. You want to build a population up in June and July when thrips become active. To do so, purchase minute pirate bugs from a biological supplier.

The female minute pirate bug lays her eggs inside plant tissues, preferably that of heavy pollen bearers, so the young can feed on the pollen before searching for prey. After the eggs hatch into nymphs, growth time from egg to mature adult takes at least 20 days. It is possible for several generations to occur during a single growing season.



Thrips damage on dahlia flower



Thrips close-up under microscope



Mites, two spotted spider on dahlia flowers



Mites, two spotted spider egg and adult on salvia

We have used 'Purple Flash' ornamental peppers in greenhouses as banker plants on which minute pirate bugs are released in order to increase their numbers. They fan out from these plants and feed on thrips and other pests in production areas.

## Spider Mites

This past summer's heat wave affected not only the United States and parts of Canada, but the entire globe, with worldwide temperatures 1.5 degrees warmer than normal. In Maryland, we had a record number of days (53) with temperatures above 90F. This weather makes perfect conditions for mites to flourish.

Spider mites are about the size of a tiny speck of sand, making them difficult to see with the naked eye, but you can locate them with a 10 X magnifying glass. Spider mites are often more apparent during dry, hot weather. They tend to build up on the undersides of foliage, making contact with miticides a real challenge. You will need good coverage of a fine mist spray to reach those on lower leaf surfaces.

The low risk material to use for effective mite control is 0.5% horticultural oil, but making contact with the mites is critical for this material to work. If you catch mites just as the population is starting to build, miticide growth regulators are safe and effective. Hexygon and TetraSan are two mite growth regulators. They do not work on adult mites, but when applied to protonymphs and deutonymphs (young mites), prevent them from shedding their skin and going to the next life stage, so they die.

I have four or five more insects to tell you about, but I do not want to completely discourage you from ever growing dahlias again. I'll see many of you at the Grand Rapids National Conference, and I will expand on this list of insects and mites that attack dahlias.



Mite injury on dahlias

*Stanton Gill is Extension Specialist  
in IPM for Greenhouses and Nursery,  
Central Maryland Research and Education Center, University of  
Maryland, and Professor in Landscape Technology,  
Montgomery College  
Contact him at [sgill@umd.edu](mailto:sgill@umd.edu)*

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### “Change is Good...You Go First!”

Gay Smith

This spot-on phrase in a trade magazine column grabbed my attention several years ago. A quick Google search says it originates as the title of a book by Mac Anderson and Tom Feltenstein. I love it because it captures so much attitude in so few words. No doubt, change is good, exhilarating, inevitable, hard, and scary.

Clichés referencing change abound: *A leopard doesn't change its spots; Close counts only in horseshoes; In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king; Dogs bark, but the caravan moves on.* With the harvest season winding down, have you considered what changes you want to implement next year? Expanding production, or weeding out credit-takers from your customer base, perhaps? Changing packaging methods to reduce mechanical damage? Maybe it's time for an overhaul in solution use. One thing is certain about 2017 planning, change will be part of the picture.

#### Start at the Very Beginning

Let's focus on changes in postharvest protocols that improve quality. Think of vase life as a clock that starts ticking at cut point. Postharvest processes act to slow the clock in the initial and middle phases thereby saving energy for the final, consumer phase. The most basic starting point in postharvest is correcting the water balance disturbance caused when vascular systems get blocked by germs,



organic material or air bubbles. Another postharvest keystone is mitigating the release of stress and aging agents. An imbalance of hormones (plant growth regulators—PGRs), wreak havoc. Symptoms include ethylene development (aging hormone), leaf yellowing, stem stretching, phototropism, and geotropism (stems bending toward or away from light and gravity). A third basic consideration is the nutrient balance disturbance that occurs when plants stop photosynthesizing. It's important to augment stems with nutrients to ensure continued bud opening, color stabilization, and fragrance development.

Want to improve vase performance? Pick the right solution(s) for the right job. Crops with water balance problems like bupleurum, corn flower, lobelia, hydrangea, caryopteris, roses, veronica, and cotinus are wilt sensitive and fare best with a hydration solution as first drink. Hydration solutions are all about boosting flow and suppressing pollution. Hydration formulas do not contain sugar

because sugar, too early in the game, sometimes stimulates leaf yellowing.

Several commercial hydration products are available from Chrysal and Floralife (both long-time ASCFG supporters). Because they contain different combinations of clarifiers and acidifiers, it's important to compare to see which formula work best with specific crops, various water types, and farm infrastructure. Chrysal offers three hydration choices: OVB, Professional

Gerbera pills, and Professional #1. I am forever grateful to Frank and Pamela Arnosky for their product endorsement of Chrysal OVB. They swear by it even when temperatures soar over 100F. Floralife's Hydroflor 100 is another good commercial hydration solution option.

#### PGR Issues

Crops suffering from an imbalance of plant growth regulators at harvest display various symptoms including shortened vase life, stem stretching, bud stagnation, and premature foliage yellowing. Ethylene is an important topic for flower growers because it is deadly to cut flowers in minute amounts.

Ethylene is also known as the aging hormone, which pretty much says it all. It plays a major role in fruit, vegetable, and flower longevity. Sources of ethylene are rotting green trash, smoke, combustion engines, fruits, vegetables, and flowers themselves.

There are two sources of protection: silverthiosulfate (STS), a systemic postharvest treatment, and 1-MCP, a non-toxic, gaseous treatment. Chrysal AVB STS has specific disposal instructions and is registered for use in Texas, California, Michigan, Florida, and Washington. The other option, 1MCP, commercially called Ethylene Buster and Ethylbloc, uses a delivery system of small paper packets that once dipped in water, release the active ingredient as a gas. It is most appropriate for dry-packed flowers. If you plan to produce ethylene-sensitive blooms like delphinium, asclepias, freesia, veronica, or dianthus, an anti-ethylene treatment must be part of processing procedures as the difference in vase life between treated and non-treated blooms is dramatic.

Finally, let's consider nutrient imbalances. When you hear "nutrients" think sugar, usually glucose. Sugar keeps leaves and petals turgid, colors vibrant, and buds opening. Every brand of flower food contains sugar. But don't be too quick to grab the cheapest pail of powder off the shelf because it's not the best product for grower use. The big pails of powder sold at wholesalers are vase solutions for florist use. The differences in flower foods used for cooler rotation or sales display versus those used for filling vases is the percentage of sugar in the formulas.

Growers are best off using a low-sugar food, also called holding solutions. The two low-sugar foods I am most familiar with are Chrysal Professional #2 and Floralife 200. The only tricky thing about using either is measuring when mixing. Correct dosing avoids wasted money and provides 100% results. Many crops (especially spike flower) are well-suited for processing directly into a low-sugar (holding) solution at grower level. ASCFG's own Dr. John has loads of information on which species flourish in holding solutions. Check back copies of the *Quarterly*. Email me if you'd like a Chrysal treatment chart.

Change is good. Striving for continual improvement gives any entrepreneur a leg up. If flower holding quality has been less than superb this season, make changes for next year. Set up simple vase comparisons

## Exciting New Perennial Varieties from Seed



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of different treatments to dispel doubts on which gives best results, hydration versus holding. Make notes, take photos and embrace change as you improve processing protocols for next season.

*Gay Smith*

*is the Technical Consulting Manager for Chrysal USA.*

*Contact her at [gaysmith@earthlink.net](mailto:gaysmith@earthlink.net)*

## Pinching Sunflowers Produces More Stems—What About Profits?

Chris Wien, Emeritus Professor, Cornell University

The technique of pinching out the tops of seedling sunflowers can triple the yield of stems, as seen in summaries of our experiments with single stem and branching varieties in past issues of the *Quarterly* (Summer 2008 and Winter 2012). We pinched sunflowers in six years of trials, and came to the following major conclusions:

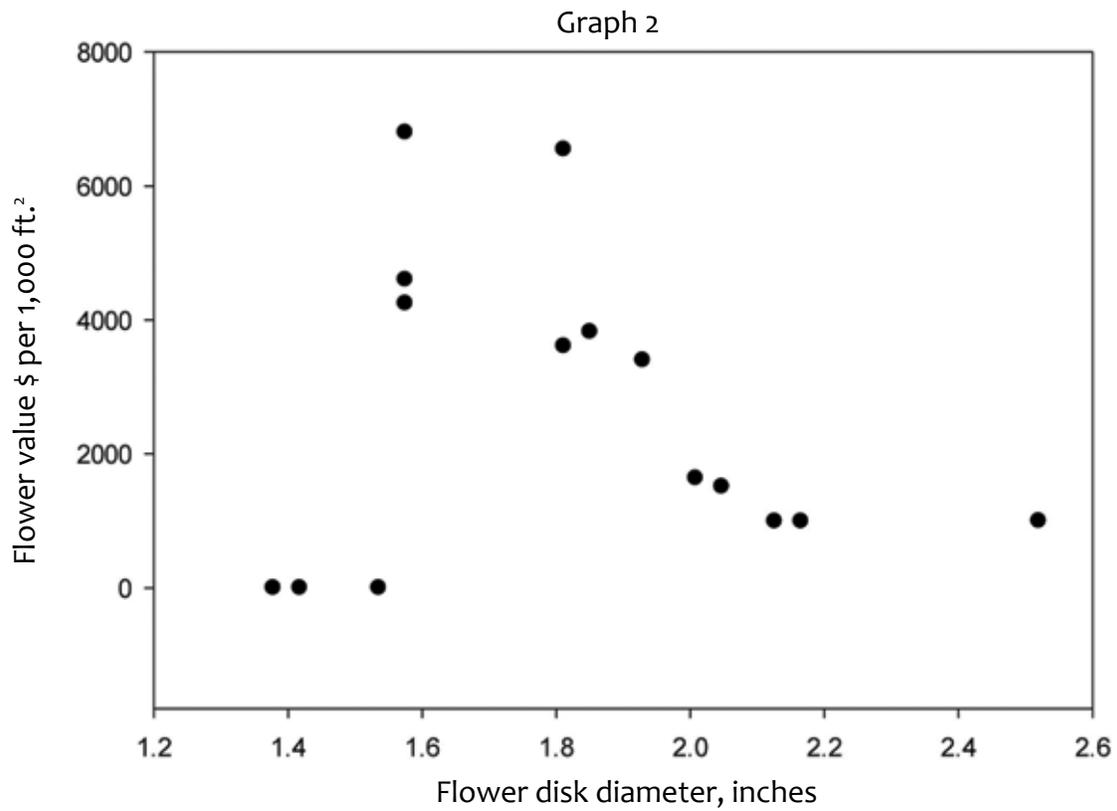
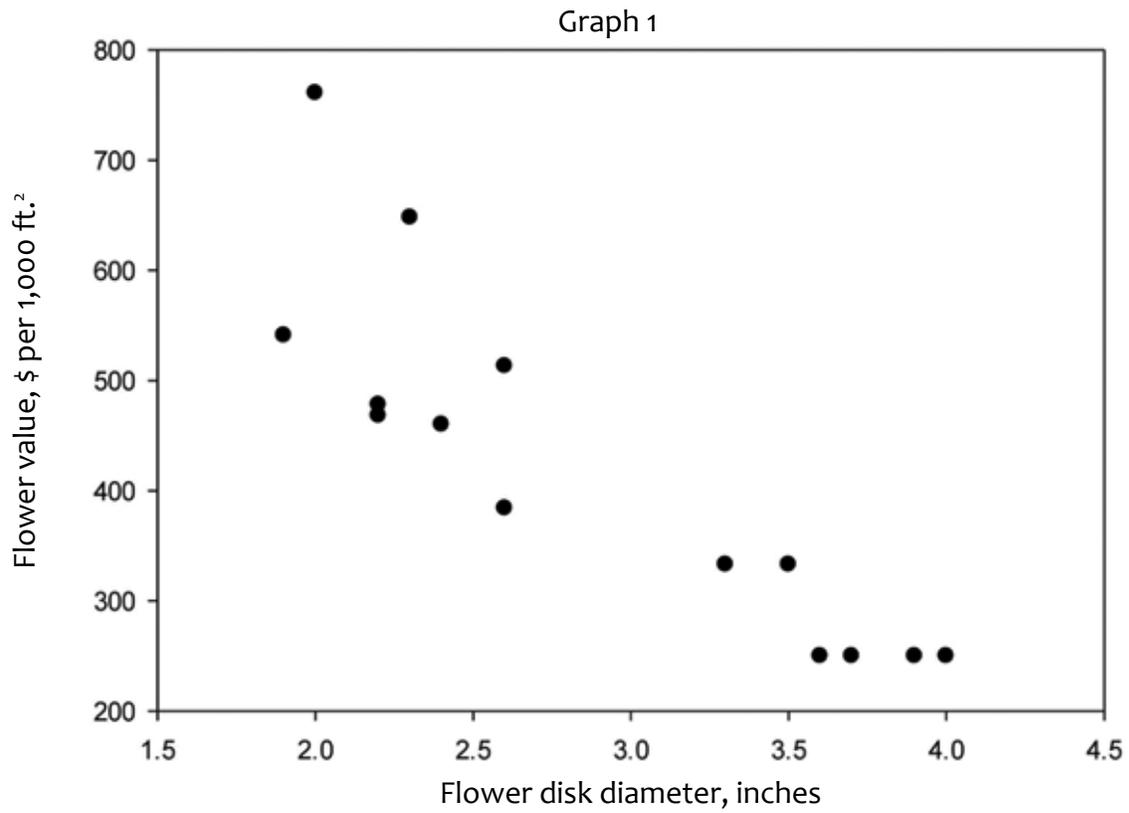
1. When pinched in the seedling stage (photo), sunflowers increase yield up to 3 to 4 times.
2. Pinching works on single stem and branched varieties, but branched cultivars produce more side shoots.
3. Late pinching (before flowering but when flower buds are visible) on single stem varieties produces very short branches, or none at all; on branched varieties many short branches are formed. Pinch as early as possible!
4. We have not found a good way to mechanize the pinching process.
5. Pinching stimulates the plants to form several stems in the same physical area, so flower size is reduced. If pinching and close spacing are combined, flowers produced are very small, but yields can reach 10 stems per square foot.
6. If the plants were too crowded, they produced flowers smaller than 1.5 in., abnormal flower shapes, and thin stems and lodging became common.



But can you make money with daisy-sized sunflowers? To answer that question, I consulted the USDA cut flower terminal market price list [<http://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/bh.fx201.txt>] and applied the prices to the yields and flower size information obtained in some of our experiments. More specifically, I set a minimum acceptable size disk diameter of 1.5 inches (ignoring petals), below which the value would be zero. I set a value of \$0.85/stem for flowers of disk diameter 1.5 to 2.4 inches, \$1.00 for flowers of 2.4 to 3.1 inches, and \$1.50 for flowers larger than that.

When the yield, price, and flower size information was combined for one of the pinching experiments using the single stem varieties, ‘Procut Orange’ and ‘Sunrich Orange’, value of flowers per unit land area declined as flower size increased (see Graph 1). In other words, pinching increased yields of small flowers, and increased income. There are practical limits, however. In another experiment with the branching variety ‘Goldrush’, the plant density became so high that flower disk size decreased below 1.5 inches, and value dropped to zero (left side of Graph 2). The differences in flower values between the two graphs are based on land area calculation differences, and should be ignored.

So pinch away to profits, but don’t get greedy!




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*Chris Wien is recently retired Professor of Horticulture at Cornell University.  
Contact him at [hcw2@cornell.edu](mailto:hcw2@cornell.edu)*

*Hypericum androsaemum*

*Hypericum* 'Romance All Around' collection  
Global Plants B.V. / Floral Chain Group

**DESCRIPTION**

*Hypericum* is most noted for its ornamental fruit, the onset of which follows flowering. The round or elliptical berries occur in short-branched clusters atop thick, smooth, leafy stems that typically range from 24 to 36 inches in length. The berries are collared by small leaf-like sepals.

**COLORS**

Hues include brown, purplish brown, reddish brown, red-violet, burgundy, pink, red, red-orange, peach, apricot, coral, yellow, green, cream, and white.

**VASE LIFE**

Vase life at the consumer level should be around seven to ten days depending on care, environmental conditions, and maturity at time of sale.

**AVAILABILITY**

Once available only from late summer through fall, *Hypericum* is now obtainable year-round from both domestic and foreign growers (particularly in Ecuador).

**Care and Handling****PROMPT ATTENTION**

Unpack *Hypericum* immediately upon its arrival, and check the quality. If you cannot attend to these flowers promptly, place the shipping box(es) in a floral refrigerator.

**PREPARATION FOR PROCESSING**

Remove any stem bindings and sleeves, as well as any foliage from the lower portions of the stems that would be under water in storage containers.

**STEM CUTTING**

Recut stems on an angle with a clean, sharp blade, removing at least one inch of stem.

**HYDRATION**

Immediately after cutting, dip or place the stem ends into a hydration solution to help the flowers take up nutrient solution more quickly.

**NUTRITION**

Following the hydration solution treatment, place *Hypericum* stems into sterilized storage containers partially filled with properly proportioned flower food solution, prepared with cool or cold water.

**REFRIGERATION**

Immediately after processing, place *Hypericum* into a floral cooler at 36-40F for at least two hours before arranging or selling them.

**Buying Tips**

- Select bunches that have firm, glossy, fully colored berries; firm, dark green, and blemish-free foliage; and young (not too woody) stems.
- Check fruit (berries) for blackening or skin collapse, examine foliage for blemishes caused by disease or insects, and avoid bunches with stems that are turning yellow.

**Fun Facts**

**WHAT'S IN A NAME** Plants in the *Hypericum* genus are commonly known as St. John's wort, but the species most readily grown for the cut flower industry, *H. androsaemum*, is more specifically called tutsan—a corruption of the French "tout sain", meaning "all healthy" (see "Over the Counter"). In addition, some in the floral industry have adopted the nickname "coffee bean berry" for these botanicals.

**FAMILY MATTERS** Some botanists categorize *Hypericum* in a new family, Hypericaceae (St. John's wort), while others place it in the Guttiferae/Clusiaceae (mangosteen) family. *Hypericum* is related to mangosteens (*Garcinia*), balsam apples (*Clusia*), mammee apples (*Mammea*), and Alexandrian laurel (*Calophyllum*).

**HOME SWEET HOME** These botanicals are native to the Mediterranean region of Europe, northern Africa, and the Middle East, into western Africa.

**VARIETY SHOW** Prior to 2001, cut *Hypericum* could not be imported into the United States because of insect issues. When the USDA ended the import ban, the development of new varieties expanded rapidly. Currently, there are more than 400 cultivars of *Hypericum*, at least one-third of which are grown for the cut flower industry.

**OVER THE COUNTER** Some 2,400 years ago, Hippocrates recommended *Hypericum*/St. John's wort to treat "nervous unrest". Even today, because of its complex chemical makeup, which some believe produces sedative and pain-reducing effects, *Hypericum* is taken internally to treat mild to moderate depression; anxiety; nervous disorders; insomnia and hypersomnia; bedwetting; anorexia; and neuralgia, fibromyalgia, sciatica, and rheumatic pain. In the U.S., it is sold as a dietary supplement, for which health benefit claims cannot be legally made.



**'Envy Flair'**

*Marginpar B.V. / H. & B.R. van den Bosch B.V.*



**'Red Attraction'**

*Esmeralda Breeding & Biotechnology / Connectaflor*



**'Fire Flair'**

*Marginpar B.V. / H. & B.R. van den Bosch B.V.*



**'Pinky Flair'**

*Marginpar B.V. / H. & B.R. van den Bosch B.V.*



**'Classic Flair'**

*Marginpar B.V. / H. & B.R. van den Bosch B.V.*



**'Green Finch'**

*Danziger "Dan" Flower Farm*



**'Green Attraction'**

*Esmeralda Breeding & Biotechnology / Connectaflor*



**'Honey Flair'**

*Marginpar B.V. / H. & B.R. van den Bosch B.V.*



**'White Seagull'**

*Danziger "Dan" Flower Farm*



**'Ivory Spices'**

*Danziger "Dan" Flower Farm*



**'Celine Classic'**

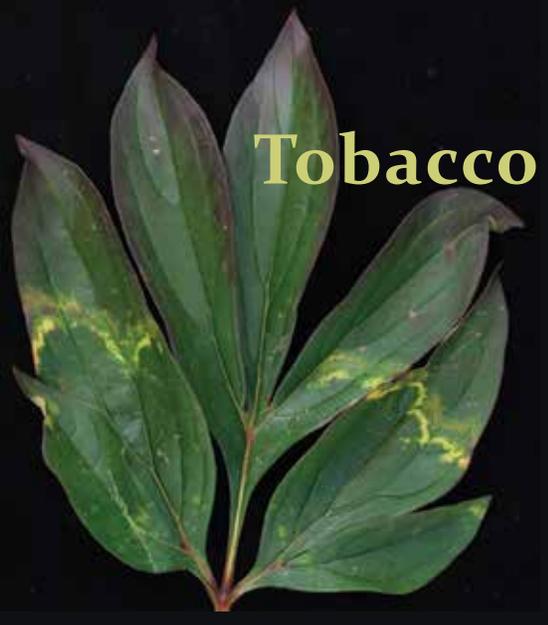
*Bartels Stek*



**'Chocolate Attraction'**

*Esmeralda Breeding & Biotechnology / Connectaflor*

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# Tobacco Rattle Virus Affects Peonies

## Scout your newly planted peonies to ensure they are virus-free

*Andrea R. Garfinkel and Gary A. Chastagner*

One of the great pleasures of our job is to work with peony growers as they establish their new fields. Perennial crops, such as peonies, are large investments which take years of care before the first harvestable crop. Even though growers likely won't be selling any out of their field for the first two or three years, this time period is critical for disease management.

One of the most important diseases to scout for during this time period is Tobacco Rattle Virus (TRV). Despite its name, TRV has a very wide host range and is one of the most common viruses to affect peonies. It has been reported on peonies in Asia, Europe, New Zealand, and North America. In our surveys of peonies from 2014-2016, in part supported by an ASCFG Research

Foundation Grant, we have observed peony plants with TRV symptoms from Washington, Oregon, Alaska, South Carolina, New York, and the Netherlands.

In most cases, TRV is introduced into newly planted peony fields on rootstock. Although most rootstock producers are careful to rogue (remove) infected plants from the field, detection of the virus is sometimes difficult and infected plants can be divided and sold. As such, it is not uncommon to have a few plants in a rootstock lot infected with TRV. If the majority of a rootstock lot is infected with TRV, this may be an issue to address with the supplier. It is critical for growers to identify plants that have potentially entered the field infected with the virus to limit its impact on the future harvestable product.

TRV on peony has also been referred to as "peony ringspot virus" or "peony mosaic virus," which describe the alternating yellow and green concentric ring pattern, and yellow and green stippling or blotching of the leaves, which are characteristic symptoms of this disease. It can also be expressed as yellow banding or chevron patterns across the leaf. In some conditions, these symptoms can appear more orange or purple. These symptoms, if apparent during cutting, can render stems unmarketable. There are no visible symptoms on the flower nor are studies available on how the virus affects flower quality or yield.

Symptom expression of TRV is highly dependent on cultivar and environmental conditions. As with other viruses, TRV symptoms can disappear during certain



Affected plants show a range of symptoms on their foliage.

times of year. Due to the transient nature of TRV symptoms, symptomatic plants should be tagged so the plant can be identified later if symptoms fade. Although symptoms may no longer be expressed, the plant is still infected with the virus. Furthermore, even if only a few parts of the plant are showing symptoms, the plant is systemically infected—all plant parts contain the virus. There is no way of “cutting out” or curing a peony of TRV.

Even in the absence of visible symptoms, the virus can move from plant to plant by nematodes, microscopic soil-dwelling roundworms, in the genera *Trichodorus* and *Paratrichodorus*. There is also some risk of TRV to be mechanically transmitted to healthy plants by contaminated tools that have previously been used on an infected plant,

however, this method of transmission is not well understood in peony.

Given the risk of transmission to healthy peonies, management recommendations usually involve roguing infected plants and replacing them with virus-free material, especially where the nematode vector is known to be present. Early detection means removing diseased plants prior to investing multiple years of care, after which the plant becomes more valuable and it is producing a harvestable product. Some growers may choose to leave a plant infected with TRV, especially in areas where the vector is not present. In this case, sterilization of hand tools with broad spectrum disinfectants, such as 10% Clorox regular bleach, or dipping tools in a 20% solution of nonfat dry milk between infected and healthy plants may help to prevent the mechanical spread of TRV.

If you have a question regarding whether or not your peonies may be infected with TRV, feel free to contact Andrea or Gary by email with photos of the plant(s) of concern. TRV diagnostics are available through many commercial agricultural testing facilities. Follow our peony disease research at: <https://www.facebook.com/WSUpeonies>

*Andrea Garfinkel is a graduate student, and Gary Chastagner is Professor, Department of Plant Pathology, Washington State University Puyallup Research and Extension Center, Puyallup. Contact them at [andrea.garfinkel@wsu.edu](mailto:andrea.garfinkel@wsu.edu) and [chastag@wsu.edu](mailto:chastag@wsu.edu)*

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One symptom of Botrytis blight is gray, fuzzy sporulation on foliage and flowers, similar to that shown on the flower of this hibiscus.

Photo courtesy of Scott Nelson/Flickr

# Cultural and Fungicide Control Options to Manage Botrytis

High relative humidity and low temperatures in the greenhouse open the way for *Botrytis* to develop on plants. A mix of cultural and fungicide control options will help you manage this common disease effectively.

**Joanne Lutz**

Controlling the greenhouse environment to encourage optimal plant growth while maintaining proper humidity challenges even the most experienced grower. Many greenhouse diseases are directly related to relative humidity. When the sun goes down and the greenhouse temperature falls, condensation can develop and provide the perfect conditions for disease spores to develop. Botrytis is one of the most common greenhouse diseases, and its symptoms can vary in appearance depending upon where the disease penetrates into leaf, flower, or stem tissue.

## Identify Botrytis Correctly

The humidity-chamber technique is a useful tool to help determine if the symptoms displayed are, in fact, the pathogen *Botrytis*. The objective is to create the ideal conditions to promote sporulation within 24 hours. Place a moistened paper towel in a plastic container or baggie. Then position the plant material displaying symptoms in the container, but not in direct contact with the wet paper towel. A bottle cap or small plastic lid can be used for this purpose. Place the container in a warm environment out of direct sunlight. If *Botrytis* is present, the characteristic gray, fuzzy sporulation will develop.

The ideal environment for *Botrytis* development is 75F to 82F and 80% humidity, but this can vary slightly. Four to eight hours of leaf wetness allows the spores to germinate directly on healthy plant tissues. *Botrytis* can also penetrate through wounds or natural openings.

*Botrytis* can lead to the formation of sclerotia, which are black, hard, irregular-

shaped structures within the plant tissue. They can remain viable in plant debris at temperatures ranging from 39F to 131F. Sclerotia are the primary means of survival for this pathogen, and when conditions become favorable, they provide a source of inoculum for infection to reoccur. This is why the prompt removal of infected plant material from the greenhouse helps to reduce disease pressure.

## Reduce Relative Humidity with Good Air Circulation

Many efficient portable instruments indicate relative humidity, air temperature, and dew point/leaf wetness in your production area. Cultural controls begin by supplying adequate air circulation to reduce the relative humidity. Allow as much space between plants as is feasible for better air flow. Horizontal air flow (HAF) fans have proven to be quite valuable in mixing the air and reducing the relative humidity in the plant canopy. Don't be tempted to open vents on rainy

days. If it's rainy or foggy outside, keep the greenhouse closed up and supply some heat. The timing of irrigation is also important. If drip irrigation is not available, limit overhead watering to the morning to allow the leaves time to dry.

## Rotate Fungicides to Reduce the Risk of Disease Resistance

Even with the best cultural controls, fungicides are often still needed. Researchers continue to identify strains of *Botrytis* that are resistant to one or more of the commonly used fungicides. Include three or more fungicides in rotation to slow the development of resistance.

*Botrytis* rotations include the following fungicides: Affirm, Chipco 26019, Daconil, Medallion, Mozart (TR aerosol), Mural, Palladium, Pageant, and Spectro. OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute)-listed products for organic growers include Actinovate SP, Cease/Milstop tank mix, Triathlon BA, and ZeroTol 2.0. It is always recommended to trial pesticides on small quantities of plants to evaluate them for phytotoxicity before making large-scale applications. Products other than those mentioned may also be safe and effective. Always read and follow all label instructions. Please note, some products may not be registered for use in all states.



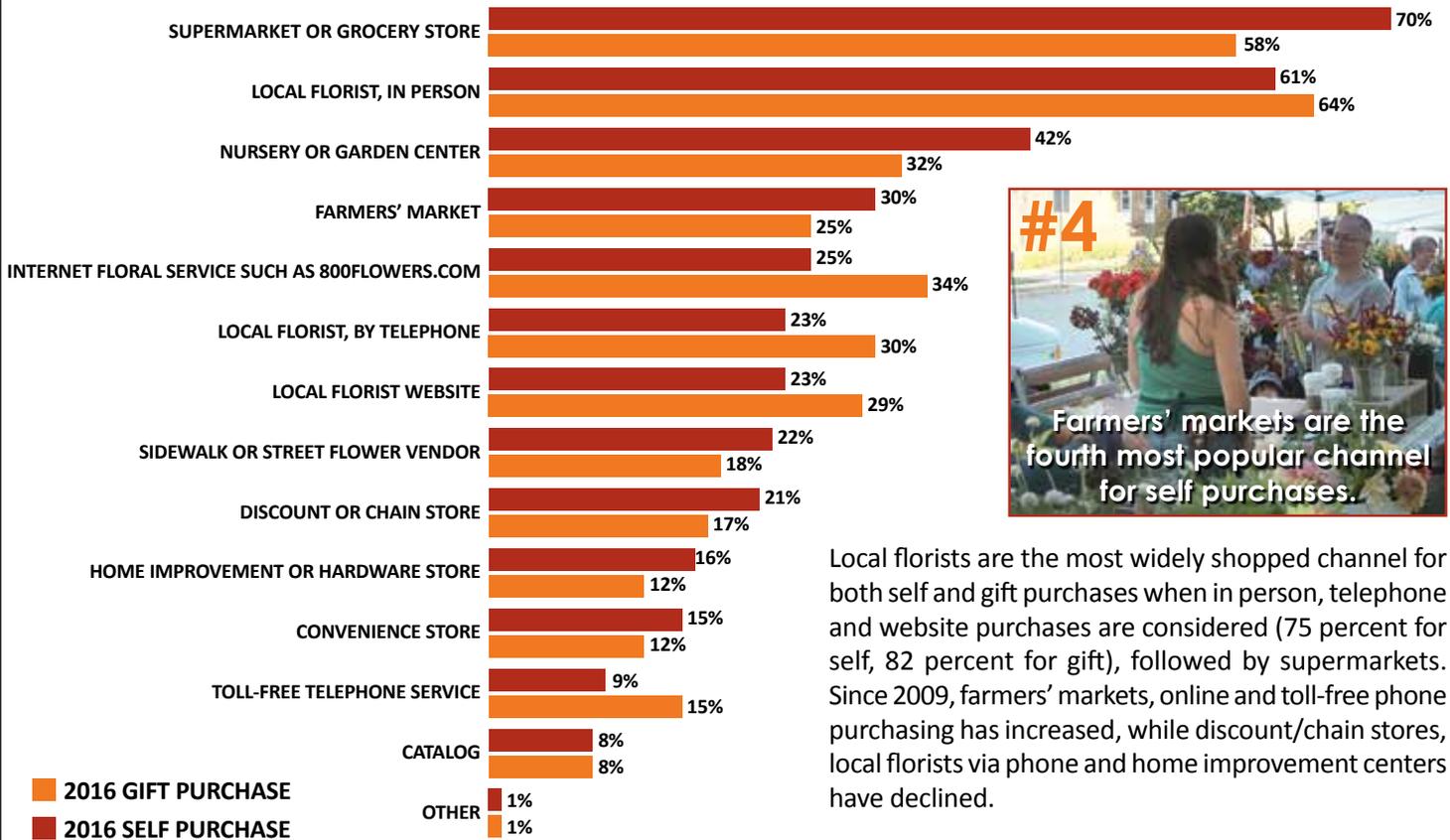
Botrytis can develop on flowers and foliage that are kept constantly wet, such as on the flowers of this catharanthus.

Photo courtesy of Scott Nelson/Flickr

*Joanne Lutz is a GGSPRO Technical Support Representative for Griffin Greenhouse Supplies. Contact her at [ggsprotech@griffinmail.com](mailto:ggsprotech@griffinmail.com)*

*Reprinted with permission from Greenhouse Grower*

## WHERE DO YOU BUY FLOWERS?



Local florists are the most widely shopped channel for both self and gift purchases when in person, telephone and website purchases are considered (75 percent for self, 82 percent for gift), followed by supermarkets. Since 2009, farmers' markets, online and toll-free phone purchasing has increased, while discount/chain stores, local florists via phone and home improvement centers have declined.

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### Diana Doll

StrayCat Flower Farm  
diana@straycatflowerfarm.com

Dear Readers,

Twelve *Quarterlys* ago I was gently nudged to run for the Northeast Regional Director seat on the ASCFG Board. At that time StrayCat Flower Farm was operating as it had been for about 18 years, and I was feeling like something had to change if I was going to “stay in it”. From the outside we appeared to be living the lifestyle many of our customers actually said they envied. The business was chugging along: we were selling all that we grew, we weren’t looking for new markets, our neighbor farmers on Intervale Road are good friends and great company. But something felt “off”, like I couldn’t see the forest for the trees, meaning that juggling so many small tasks felt like I was ricocheting around the inside of a pinball machine, on the verge of some outcome preferably avoided.

You’ve likely heard the proverb “The first step is half the journey.” My first step was to sign up for a workshop called “Taking Stock”, for growers with more than 10 years in business, who feel the need to assess their farm as it relates to their quality of life. The take-away message: are you running your farm, or is it running you? Rather than feeling dismayed by the obvious (in my case) answer, I was encouraged to do more homework. I signed up for “Whole Farm Planning”, did a business valuation with the intention of selling the farm, attended a winter retreat called “Courage to Change”, and took a year sabbatical from the farmers’ market where I’ve been selling since the late 80s.

Fast forward three years to this, my final article for the *Quarterly*. Incremental changes are underway. Turns out selling the business wouldn’t lead to a desirable outcome, since it’s “asset rich but land poor”. Asset rich because it’s a turnkey operation; a new owner would wake up tomorrow with orders to fill, and everything needed to hit the ground running. Land poor because the farm is on rented land in the flood plain of the Winooski River. Wonderful flat land, hardly any rocks, sandy loam, a 14-minute bike ride to downtown Burlington, the biggest city in Vermont. But rented land nonetheless.

Taking the year off from the Saturday farmers’ market was a bittersweet decision. Although it’s the least lucrative of all our markets, we consider it to be “free” advertising since we make a lot of connections there. A strong community presence, including auction donations for fund-raisers (in the form of gift certificates) and flowers for events (such as wine and cheese festivals) also serve as “free” advertising. Bonus: hanging in there for all these years has kept us in the running for “favorite florist” in our local weekly newspaper, *Seven Days*. (Toot, toot!).



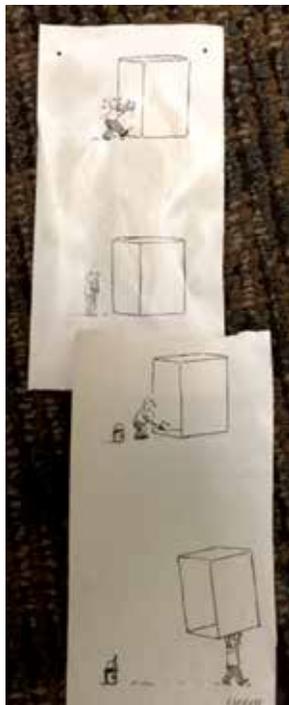
The biggest change is that we’ll be dropping our grocery store wholesale bouquet accounts. Sounds crazy, given that we really had to pound the pavement making cold calls back in the early 90s, before these stores even considered carrying fresh flowers. Nowadays there are several local growers supplying bouquets and grower bunches, and the produce departments have the task of balancing out how much to buy from each farm. A few seasons of running the numbers indicates that wholesale bouquets are no longer making enough profit for us to hang on to those accounts.

The third area we’ll be cutting back on is the number of weddings we do each weekend. Our web site will have a calendar that shows we’re booked any weekend we have just one wedding. I’m hoping this will greatly reduce inquiries from additional customers, to whom I forward a list of other area farmer florists. We’ll continue offering bulk buckets of loose stems for DIY wedding folks, and help them figure out how much to order so they don’t over-buy and feel overwhelmed by the work they’ve taken on.

But wait—we are still growers! That’s our favorite part of the business! How can we keep the farm without all the trimmings? Introducing (or should I say re-introducing, since there used to be several of these nearby) StrayCat’s Pick-Your-Own Flower Farm! We held a soft launch this summer via Localvore, a marketing group that gets the word out in exchange for a piece of the pie. Customers get a discount of 20% off the regular price. So far the results are encouraging: several

Localvore PYO's each week, plus their friends at the regular rate, and a few freelance floral designers whose customers are asking them to use local flowers. All of that without us uttering a peep. The nearest PYO is over an hour away from downtown Burlington (that's far away in New England) so I don't feel like I'm stepping on anyone's toes. If any of you are (or were) PYO growers, I would love to chat with you.

And so dear readers, I leave you with this drawing that says all of the above with just a few brush strokes...



remarks. Oh well, no hope of me ever having a hoop house on my urban farm—so, no lisianthus for me, I presumed.

Until I visited a friend's farm and I saw them. Growing outdoors in the field, tall beautiful, champagne-colored lisianthus busting loose with blooms! She had more lisianthus plants than her hoop houses could hold, so she stuck them out in the field. Well, if "sticking them out in the field" did this—I was going to stick some in my field too! And I did just that and I have been field growing lisianthus for many years now with amazing quality and quantity!

This past season has produced my most amazing lisianthus to date. I am going to share what we do and hope that it encourages you to give it a try if you aren't already growing it. If you are hoop house growing, you might want to consider growing some outdoors where there is unlimited and cheaper planting space.

I was not aware that lisianthus are hardy annuals (think *Cool Flowers*.) At an ASCFG conference following my first years of growing lisianthus I met Laurie Hodges. She shared with me that lisianthus could be fall-planted in my zone. "It's not the cold that will take it out, but wet feet! You should try fall planting in a very well-drained area."

So the following fall, in addition to the spring plantings I had tried, I also planted some 'Mariachi' in the field with all the other hardy annuals I typically fall planted. I selected 'Mariachi' because they had been borderline too short for my customers, and I thought perhaps I could get better stem length with fall planting. I gave the lisianthus the same "ignore factor" I gave to all my fall-planted stuff: plant into biodegradable film, water a couple of times soon after planting, hoop, and cover with AG 19 floating row cover for the winter to keep the wind and deer off the beds. Then it's "See ya on the flip side of winter." The following summer I had a bumper crop, and they were taller and more productive. They also bloomed seven days earlier than the spring-planted same variety. A successful experiment, I'd say.

## MID-ATLANTIC

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



**Lisa Ziegler**

The Gardener's Workshop  
lisa@shoptgw.com

Only July 6 we had a great meet-up and tour in the Mid-Atlantic, with folks coming from near and far. It was so great to put faces to names, and to see RPR Farms and all BJ Grewal is doing there. We so appreciate him hosting the ASCFG, and thank him, and all who attended. Our stomachs and our minds were overflowing when we pulled out at the end of a really good day. Let's do it again!

### Field-grown Lisianthus

I had been farming for almost 10 years before I tried my hand at lisianthus. I had always heard and been told that you have to grow it in a hoop house. Growing outdoors lends itself to comments like "You can't get good stem length, the rain will wreak havoc on the blooms" and other such discouraging



Another epiphany that occurred a couple of years later (I'm slow sometimes) is that if it could be fall planted, it only makes sense that it could and should be planted in very early spring (6-8 weeks before the last spring frost.) This would allow for the greatest opportunity for the plants to become well established before it had to grow stems and blooms. Bazinga! This early planting time has become a big part of my lisianthus success story.

I had an interesting weather intervention this season worth noting because it sent my stem production numbers over the top. This year's early spring planting happened in early March. We planted into open beds covered in Bio 360 black film with no row covers. Then April rolled in and we had two hard frost—22 degrees. Yikes. It killed the 4" tall central stems back, but the base of the plants looked good. This weather event pinched the plants naturally. They went on to branch and produce 3-6 honking stems per plant in place of our normal 2, maybe 3, max! I'd never pinched lisianthus before but will from now on. As a result of these monstrous plants I had to beef up my staking. Three times as many stakes as ever before, they were so tall and heavy with dollar bills—oh, I mean blooms—that they went down several times before I gave in and pounded more stakes.



I've never had much of a second flush of lissies to speak of in years past, mainly because I never invested the labor to keep them weed free. The growth of the pathways always crept on the beds and it was just never ending. So I tried something different this year. While I'm not a fan of landscape cloth on beds I have used it in pathways with great success. This year I laid landscape cloth in the pathways and up the sides of the Bio 360 covered beds. It worked great to prevent those 100% of pathway-creeping weeds. So the ground is completely covered for the season in the lisianthus patch except where the plants peek through, and weed control has been very manageable.

My experiences have shown that anyone can plant in very early spring (up to 6-8 weeks before your last expected spring frost), and some of us can also plant in fall. If anyone has field grown, fall planted north of Zone 7, speak up and tells us all about your experience, please! The real ticket to very early spring planting? Prepare the beds in fall and have them ready and waiting for planting in those very early days of spring. When you think about it, the rain is plentiful, cool nights encourage strong root growth, and the cool days encourage the farmer. What a blooming deal!

As my years of growing have led me onto paths of least resistance and just plain easy, I have found for my markets (florists) that tall, loaded lisianthus is king. These days I am planting just the 'ABC' variety because it uniformly and consistently produces 30-inch plus stems in the field. I'm sure there are others also with this potential. While dark purple/blue is a great seller, the open blooms suffer the most from rain damage. White, pinks, yellow, and the blushes show no or little damage from rain.



Harvesting field-grown lisianthus needs a bit more forecasting than hoophouse grown. I keep my eye on the next three-day weather forecast and harvest accordingly. I like to have at least 3-4 blooms open when I harvest to offer the best value to our customers. But when torrential rain is in the forecast, which is frequent, I will cut with only 2-3 open.

Our bunching/selling method is by the stem count per bunch. Our listing description is 6-10 stems per bunch with the current wholesale price. Early in the season when the bloom count is high on a stem, bunches have 6 stems. As the season moves along and the number of blooms per stem drops, that stem count moves to 10 stems per bunch. (We also do this with cockscomb; with honking heads 6 to a bunch, smaller heads 10.) Our customers understand and appreciate this system.

Another note of interest, lisianthus is one of a handful of plants I no longer start from seed myself. I purchase plugs in 285 trays that arrive just in time for planting in the field. Starting from seed yourself is a long journey, 12-16 weeks to get a nice transplant. It's like raising a puppy. I'll let someone else do the raising and I'll swoop in just in time for the finished product!

**Field Facts:**

- Fall planting (6-8 weeks before first forecasted frost) is hooped and covered with only Ag19 in zones 7 and south.
- Early spring planting (6-8 weeks before the last forecasted spring frost) into an open bed.
  - Planted 285 size trays directly into garden.
  - General purpose dry organic chicken-litter based fertilizer applied at bed making.
  - 30" raised beds.
  - Covered with black on black Bio360.
  - 8 rows to a bed.
  - 6" between plants in row.
  - Support netting stakes every 4 feet.

Fear not, you can grow lisianthus outdoors.

**SOUTHEAST**

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



**Tanis Clifton**

Happy Trails Flower Farm  
cliftonchirol@gmail.com

I have learned a lot of things the hard way, but I have also learned some of the most important things from the awesome farmers in the ASCFG. I would like to share some words of wisdom, suggestions for organizing your calendar, local workshops presented during this quarter, and maybe a little laugh, too. This article is about some of the things that I have gleaned from this group and even a few I learned on my own.

We had the distinct pleasure of hearing some awesome speakers during the Growers School' in Baton Rouge last March. I was struck by the many snippets of wisdom given by floral designer extraordinaire James DelPrince. Hence the first part of this article is dedicated to those words of wisdom.



*Quotable Quotes from  
James DelPrince, Ph.D*

"These people in the ASCFG are golden angels and don't ever forget that."

"When you're green you grow; when you're ripe you rot."

"Must take time for marketing."

"Social media your guts out!"

"When something seems hard, go for it."

"Build a solid style and your customers will follow."

"You want your career to be so fun that you can't wait to get to work."

**When is the Right time?**

Anyone who has farmed for more than a year or two knows they must plan ahead at least 6 to 12 months to time things right. Since most flower farmers grow multiple varieties, all requiring different scheduling, there is a mind-boggling number of tasks to remember. If you have ever forgotten to order in a timely manner, you know your variety selection becomes very limited and sometimes nonexistent. Here are a few tips to help get your timing right:

1. One of the best tools for planning ahead are wall-sized calendars large enough to write reminders for: when to order supplies; when flowers were harvested, seeded, transplanted, quantity harvested; what you need more of next year or what did not sell, etc.

2. A mobile phone reminder app. A few to look at for iPhone: Due, Clear, Finish, Any.do, Evernote, Alarmed. A few to look at for Androids: Any.do, Evernote, Todoist, Google Now.

3. One good way to remember to order plugs, bulbs, and seeds for the next season is to do so just as soon as that crop is finished. This will insure that this task is completed. You will remember what you want more of or less of while it is on your mind. I learned this little tip from Rita Anders (or Saint Rita Anders as James DelPrince so accurately named her).

4. If you are new to flower farming, below are a few suggested timelines for ordering some flowers (Zones 6-10). I learned these from Dave Dowling of Ednie Bulb, Ko Klaver of Zabo Plant, and from Fred C. Gloeckner.



A hand-tied bouquet featuring holly, Cyperus, crape myrtle fruit, camellia foliage and succulents with standard and spray roses by Nancy Bartlett.



MSU Coastal Wedding Floral Design workshop participant Nancy Bartlett views her design prior to photography.



Altar design using sorghum, Cyperus, and hops with commercially-grown flowers. Design by Megan Westervelt.

### Order Schedule

- January - mums
- March - hyacinth, daffodil, tulip
- April - anemone, ranunculus, Dutch iris
- June - seed for fall planting
- July - lily; plugs for winter and spring planting
- August - peony
- September - gladiolus
- October - seed for spring planting

5. For those finally jumping onto the hardy annuals bandwagon, your transplanting time should begin in September (for Zone 7), which means you should start seeds for this project in August. Please refer to Lisa Ziegler’s book *Cool Flowers* for more details on this cool planting strategy. In the South, it gets so hot so fast in the spring that many cool-season flowers just will not thrive as well as those planted in the fall. Planning and planting in the fall ensures more success for things like larkspur, bachelor buttons, rudbeckias, campanula, and more. You can also check out her awesome virtual book study online <http://www.thegardenersworkshop.com/workshops/cool-flowers-virtual-book-study/>

### What’s been happening in this region?

There seems to be a surge in activity related to flowers in all ASCFG Regions, and the Southeast is no exception. Some of the recent activity included seminars in West Memphis, Arkansas, and Biloxi, Mississippi.

West Memphis, Arkansas: “What to Do, Starting Today, to Have Cut Flowers All Year.” sponsored by Small Farms for Big Change. This organization is made of small farmers working and connecting with each other to educate, advise, and support one another through workshops, lectures, and peer discussion. Featured speakers were ASCFG President Dave Dowling of Ednie Flower Bulb, and Mark Cain of Dripping Springs Farm in Huntsville, Arkansas. The event was hosted by Arkansas State University Midsouth, and was chock full of information from these two flower experts. Thanks to Brandon Pugh of Delta Sol Farm for helping to organize this local floral event.

Biloxi, Mississippi: Mississippi State University Coastal Wedding Floral Workshop with James DelPrince, Ph.D. James led a two-day workshop, filled to capacity. Attendees included flower farmers as well as floral designers. Topics included how to book a wedding, care and handling of wedding florals, and all of the nuts and bolts of wedding design along with hands-on designing. Each participant left with a mini portfolio of arrangements which she created. Dr. DelPrince will be presenting similar workshop in 2017.

Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina: The Slow Flowers Community gathered with Debra Prinzing, founder and creative director of Slowflowers.com. This Slow Flowers Meet-Up was a dinner potluck, and specifically welcomed farmers and designers who are part of the growing local flower movement. This event was hosted by Jonathan Leiss at Spring Forth Farm.

If you missed any of these events, try to make it a priority in the coming year to attend one of these types of events. You will learn so much, network, and develop lasting friendships.

**Just for Fun**

I will leave you today with a few funny stories. You know we are all interested in improving our soil and I am no exception. I used to be so embarrassed when my dad would pull up in front of a neighbor’s house in our VW bus, and help himself to their bags of leaves set out by the street. Now the apple doesn’t fall far from that old tree! They say we repeat our parents’ behavior, and in this case it is true. I love free organic matter!

When it comes to building up great soil, we also attempt to sow cover crops. I will never forget the pungent odor of a buckwheat field in full bloom at our local university extension farm—talk about latrine! But what a great cover crop it is! I never dreamed that I would be on the hunt for a 50-pound bag of that pungent stuff, but here we go again. At our area feed stores, buckwheat does not seem to be a common item. However, one particular feed store said they could order some in for me—yay! After a few weeks of waiting I called Ernest at the feed store, and sho’ ‘nuff, they had gotten it in and at a great price of \$17.99. Well, upon arrival at the store I found waiting for me—Buck Treat Seed. As Strother Martin said “What we’ve got here is failure to communicate.”!

**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  
citygrownflowers@gmail.com

He’s not very big yet, but he is consuming most of Mimo’s time and energy. Introducing August Davis Duschack.



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## SOUTH AND CENTRAL .....

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



### Rita Anders

Cuts of Color

ritajanders@cvctx.com

I don't know about you all but I'm so ready for fall. The long summers tend to wear you down and really take the zip out of your emotions. As a year-round grower, this is the time I'm about done. Thanks to great employees, this August my husband and I were able to take off on an eleven-day vacation to Canada and Alaska. We were dreading coming back because we were getting word that the temperatures at home were unbearable. Much to our disbelief, upon our return it started raining, and continued about 18 days straight, ruining my already exhausted zinnia crop and making all the grass and weeds grow like crazy. I'm sure I am preaching to the choir because you all know what that's like.

A fellow grower in our area, Gita van Woerden from Animal Farm, had so much rain in June that her soil washed away, and she needed to bring in new topsoil. Despite all her troubles she is still excited about growing, and looking forward to the National Conference. Another of our lucky members, Gretchen O'Neil, just got back from attending one of Erin Benzakein's workshops at Floret. She had a very good trip and was elated that she got to attend. Mike Milligan from Prickly Pear is producing some really nice bouquets with his zinnias; he's having a good year and is already making plans for next year. Melinda Studinka, Meem's Garden, reports that she has been having good sales to her customers but will probably take the summer off next year from selling, as she states "It's really hard to grow flowers in this heat."

Besides the occasional phone call from members, we keep up with most growers through Facebook and Instagram. Social media is also great to inform your customers of what is new in the garden and entice them to buy. I'm not sure how the almost shut down of the oil fields has affected others in our region but here in Texas I have seen the effects in traffic flow at the stores.

This time of year is our new start to the next year. October starts our new season as all our plugs for all our winter and spring crops start rolling in, which means we have to be ready and of course I'm not! Greenhouse beds must be prepped, greenhouse repairs have to be finished. I hold off on recovering the houses that need their plastics redone because a late-season tropical

storm or hurricane could really hurt us. Heaters need to be checked and relit in case they are needed. This last winter they never came on because it was so mild. I have heaters only for my winter dahlia crop because they would be needed in case of a hard freeze.

Dahlias are a good fit for my year-round farm. We also are able to produce a very early crop of sweet peas, stock, and ageratum. My favorite Karma dahlias are 'Naomi', 'Prospero', 'Maarteen Van Zwan', and all of the new Fox series. My plugs are shipped to me at the beginning of August, but I put my order in April to insure that I get the varieties I want. I hold them for a week in the plug trays in an open greenhouse under shade to get them accustomed to our climate, which is very different from where they were grown at Bosgraf Greenhouses in Michigan. I transplant them into a four-inch cup with Sunshine Mix and they will grow for the next 3-4 weeks. While they are growing in the cups I get all my beds prepped and ready for my new crop. At the beginning of August I start watering my beds that hold the tubers from last year's crop with plain water. We have cut those old dahlias out in July and just kept those beds idle because I have found after much trial that dahlias do not grow in Texas heat even if I shade them. Also the bugs are uncontrollable. Many of last year's dahlias send up shoots and then I start fertilizing those beds with mushroom compost and an all-purpose fertilizer such as Peter's 10-30-20 and Hasta Gro, which is a liquid fertilizer. I use a Miracle Gro-applicator on the end of a water hose.



At the beginning of each year I amend all the beds, the ones with the old dahlias and the new ones I'm planting, with phosphorous (bone meal), at the rate of 10 pounds for every 100 square feet; nitrogen (kelp), one tablespoon per plant; and potassium (greensand), 10 pounds per 100 square feet. I also add a water-soluble micronutrient fertilizer. We also add mushroom compost to the beds. We have a mushroom growing facility 45 minutes from our farm so it's readily available. I also water the crop weekly with the Peters fertilizer alternating with the Hasta Gro. I water only on sunny days so the plants can dry off and stay clean from leaf diseases. This may seem like a lot of work but it pays off during the production season, November through June. We produce thousands of stems which we wholesale for \$1.00 to 1.50 each.



We transplant dahlias into readied beds in September. We make a solution of Actinovate and Rootshield, and water each transplant before placing in the beds. We use this mixture on all our transplants with much success. We also go through beds of last year's plants and fill in with new plants where the old ones didn't come back. I had a conversation with Bob at Bosgraf (our Karma supplier) who says

that I should really rip those old tubers out and come back with new ones, because the decrease in production will certainly overcome the cost of that new plant, but I just haven't found the strength to do just that. As of September 1st, last year's dahlias are already a foot tall and I will have blooms way earlier than the new ones that I'm planting, thus giving me a supply of dahlias for my October and November weddings.

I also have light strands hung above my dahlias to give them 14-hour days. You can make these yourself or source them from someone like Gloeckner Supply. They are spaced 4 feet apart on the strand, and we use 75 watt bulbs. Dahlias must have 14-hour light days or they won't bloom. If it's a very cloudy winter with low light conditions, hold back on the nitrogen fertilizer or dahlias will be too vegetative and not bloom much either.

Growing in the greenhouse can create its own set of issues. One of them is powdery mildew, which we counter by spraying with Strike Plus 50. Having an arsenal of insect sprays is also important, just in case. If you monitor your plants every time you are walking through or picking, you can stop an insect before it becomes a full-blown problem. When we have an insect spotting we treat that area only, not the entire crop, because with constant surveillance you can usually catch it pretty quick once you know what to look for. For example, with red spider mites you will see mottled little leaves that show white on the top side of the leaf. Wait too long, and you will see a large colony resting on the very top of the plant in ball of red. We use a product called Tetrasan to treat for mites.

For aphids we use Botanigard. Aphids get under the leaves so it's very important to spray under the foliage. For thrips we use Conserve or Botanigard. Thrips always seem to be attracted

to darker colors like 'Naomi' or 'Fox Maroon' first. You have to look really closely to see these guys, or take a dark piece of paper and tap the blooms on the paper and you will see them crawling around. You can also buy blue sticky cards for an early detection tool as they are attracted to blue. Whiteflies are attracted to yellow sticky cards. Mealybugs are also a pest on dahlias. We treat these with a spray of straight rubbing alcohol, or Botanigard. Growing over the winter is also really good because you don't get many pests as in the warm months; I always seem to get some but we take care of them before they get out of hand.

Greenhouse space is very valuable, so we manage to fill the house with sweet peas, mostly Winter Elegance Series, Mammoth, Spencer series, and 'Spring Sunshine'. Mixes are fine but I really like to pick my colors because I need a lot of blush colors for my early spring weddings. Sweet peas also seem to benefit from the lights and we are able to produce a really early crop. I like to use their side shoots for greenery in my bouquets.



October is a very busy month on the farm because all the plugs, and ranunculus corms I ordered months ago arrive. Frank Arnosky wrote a great article about anemones in the Winter 2013 issue of the *Quarterly*. Find it in the Members Only section of the ASCFG web site, under "Back Issues". Frank provides detailed information on how he treats and cools his corms. The Members Only section has a wealth of information; please log in and take a look if you haven't already.

This year's National Conference has had an overwhelming sign-up and I know it's going to be a good one! It will be a little rest for me as I get to sit back and absorb all the information from the slate of great speakers. I can't wait. Hope to see you there but if you can't tear yourself away from the farm, the presentations will be available after the conference in Members Only.

## WEST AND NORTHWEST .....

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



### Lennie Larkin

B-Side Farm

lennielarkin@gmail.com

#### Getting to Know You, Getting to Know All About You

At the spring Board meeting, we spent a good deal of time talking about the challenge inherent in serving a membership that is ever-growing and shifting. Well, let me first say, what an exciting time to be working with the ASCFG! We really are experiencing unprecedented growth; a sign that local flowers are on the rise (yes!), that people young and old are moving into farming (again, yes!), and most importantly, in my mind, that they're doing so with the support and guidance of a community of professionals who have been through the same steps, processes, and challenges. The goal is always to be amassing enough information and expertise within our network that no one is reinventing the wheel. There's nothing like learning by doing (and in fact I think my generation has a lot to learn about the value of trial and error over research and networking, but that's a whole other soapbox). But when we're stumped or diving into something completely new, who better to turn to than other ASCFG resources and members?

That being said, and bringing me to my main point—who are you guys? How big are your farms? What are you growing? Where do you sell? How has your business evolved over the years? What big changes have you made? What new processes and structures have you taken on, and what have you left behind? What are your main challenges and what do you hope to learn in the next year? What are you looking for from the ASCFG and our conferences?

As we grapple with finding the best ways to stay in touch with the membership and compile the answers to some of these questions (Ahem, a good start would be if everyone would fill out the little survey in your membership renewal.), I personally rely on cataloguing the struggles and expertise of those of you who I do know. I've so enjoyed hearing from many of you this year as you've written to welcome me to the board (thanks!), to just say hello and introduce yourselves, or to ask questions that have arisen out of your work or out of something that struck a chord in a recent *Quarterly*.

As our membership continues to grow by leaps and bounds, this helps me to have a sense of what's going on out there on your farms. Feedback, anecdotes, questions, and concerns are appreciated and in fact needed if the ASCFG is to do the best job possible in staying relevant and essential to our members. When I get emails saying that you've faced many of the exact challenges I have on my small farm, it lets me know where you're coming from. When I get multiple questions about the same plant, I know that we need to plan a conference session around it. Talk to us, either on the ASCFG Members Only Facebook group, by email, however you want.

In the meantime, here are some snippets of emails I've received, mostly in relation to my first *Quarterly* article with reflections from my first year in business with B-Side Farm in 2015:

*As a first-year grower, frustration and elation come every day, sometimes in waves. Your article was so spot-on to the mental pick-me-up I needed today. We have too much rain coupled with extended periods of high temps and humidity this*

*In short and in no order, from what I've learned from you experts out there, you need: a deep understanding of your location and market, fine-tuned efficiency in every step of the process, a sense of your "competition" and who is selling what (i.e. don't flood the market with the same old bachelor buttons), some startup capital doesn't hurt, a commitment to paying yourself and taking down time in order to make it in the long run, strong relationships with customers, relative proximity to your market, an eye to lowering your input costs per unit as you scale up, openness to hiring labor sooner than you might want to, and a solid understanding of your strengths and weaknesses as a grower and business person, and savvy marketing skills. To name just a few things resting on the tip of the iceberg.*

*year. Things that should live are dying or bolting, and things that should die are not; nothing seems to be happening as it should. But hey, this is just part of it and we have to adapt on the fly.*

~

*Your article made me painfully aware of the realities of growing flowers and I am wondering if you can share any ideas on how to produce and sell flowers in a way that pushes past that poverty line. In a sink or swim business I truly don't want to find myself treading water for a few years only to give up or be forced to throw in the towel. What are common elements of truly successful businesses?*

My answer: this deserves a survey and at least an article, and really a book! In short and in no order, from what I've learned from you experts out there, you need: a deep understanding of your location and market, fine-tuned efficiency in every step of the process, a sense of your "competition" and who is selling what (i.e. don't flood the market with the same old bachelor buttons), some startup capital doesn't hurt, a commitment to paying yourself and taking down time in order to make it in the long run, strong relationships with customers, relative proximity to your market, an eye to lowering your input costs per unit as you scale up, openness to hiring labor sooner than you might want to, and a solid understanding of your strengths and weaknesses as a grower and business person, and savvy marketing skills. To name just a few things resting on the tip of the iceberg.

~

*You made mention of bearded irises from your March designer panel. Do you have any more info on them as a commercial cut flower in terms of postharvest handling and expected vase life?*

My answer: most growers will tell you that if harvested in a tight bud with just a sliver of color, they can be kept in the cooler for 2 to 3 weeks, and when out, each bloom will last 2-3 days while other blooms on the stem keep opening.

~

*I started a cut flower business in Michigan over a year ago and I am starting my second year. This will be the first year growing lisianthus. I too have ordered the 288's. When will I need to transplant to the 72's? I have growing space in a small basement with grow lights and this year we have heat mats. I have been reading the Sakata information and it sounds so difficult! I don't want them to be rootbound but I can't plant directly outdoors because of frost. Do you plant yours in a greenhouse only?*

My answer: most people pot them up into 72's right away and grow them on for about a month. They can take more cold than they seem, and can be planted outside sooner than you might think, especially if you can build a little low tunnel. I'm sure you've read Jennie's article about lisianthus, but if not, check it out!

~

*"Invest in the bottlenecks" is good advice for any business and I'm going to keep it in mind for my very small but growing flower business.*

~

*I related to so much of what you had to say, and one of my goals this year is to figure out how to efficiently and effectively communicate my supply to a handful of customers + new customers I hope to serve this year. With everything else on the plate, it's tough to crack all those other business administrative tasks. I look forward to learning "with" you.*

~

*... your article touched on a lot of topics I'm struggling with these days.*



## P. Allen Smith Adds His Voice to Sakata Seed's Cut Flower Collection

Sakata Seed America has announced an expanded partnership with P. Allen Smith to create the P. Allen Smith Home Grown Flower Collection, including an exciting assortment of cut flower varieties bred exclusively by Sakata. This new collection is designed to augment the already established P. Allen Smith Home Grown Seed Collection, currently composed of 25 of Sakata's most garden-friendly vegetables. In addition, P. Allen Smith currently endorses the company's world-renowned SunPatents® impatiens to his robust audience of viewers and followers.

Smith is an award-winning designer, gardener, and lifestyle expert. But, above all, he is a true plantsman who grew up in the nursery business. His excitement for this collection is very evident. Says Smith, "I've handpicked these cut flower varieties because they are proven performers that give a great show with bountiful blooms

and vibrant colors. Home gardeners can fill their flower beds with the many varieties, or add them to the vegetable garden to attract pollinators and add floral interest. Each flower in this collection makes an excellent cut flower to create an arrangement and extend the joy gardeners get from the blooms. They can snip a few stems of gomphrena 'Ping Pong', sunflower 'Vincent', snapdragon 'Sonnet' or lisianthus 'Rosita' and get creative building their own floral design."

Consumers want flowers that are easy to grow and widely adapted, with a long vase life. Sakata believes this curated collection will give them just that. And with the influx of gardeners growing their own cut flowers continuing to rise in popularity, a home garden cut flower collection meets a mounting consumer demand in the marketplace.

"We have witnessed the exposure Allen has brought to gardening and healthy



eating, and specifically to SunPatents® and our vegetable collection," states Alecia Troy, Sakata's Senior Marketing Manager. "This is an exciting next step in our journey to connect with consumers through education and passion, and introduce them to an innovative collection of garden-friendly cut flowers."

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The advertisement features a large circular graphic on the left containing a collage of various colorful flowers, including red gerberas, purple and blue flowers, and yellow chrysanthemums. The GeoSeed logo is prominently displayed in the center of this graphic. To the right of the graphic, the company's address, service highlights, product offerings, and contact information are listed in a clean, professional layout.

## Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

- Amanda Allen**, New Hill, NC  
**Felicia Alvarez**, Live Oak, CA  
**Barbara Ayers**, Waverly Farm School, Pasadena, CA  
**Mary and Richard Badley**, Cedar Folly Farm, Reston, VA  
**Megan Balodis**, Marshdale Farms, Hopewell, NS  
**David Bell**, Courter Bell Farms, Blue Ridge, VA  
**Emily Bell**, West Brookfield, MA  
**Melissa Bokman**, Heirloom Acres, Faribault, MN  
**Amy Brown**, Edgewood, WA  
**Terry Brown**, Cochran, GA  
**Laura Bryce**, Kwantlen Univ. Hort. Dept., Surrey, BC  
**Margaret Bucco**, Morning Glow Gardens, Malvern, PA  
**Kyle Burns**, Fort Bragg, CA  
**Debra Byler**, Martinsburg, PA  
**Lily Calderwood**, USDA Extension Service, Voorheesville, NY  
**Katherine Campbell**, Virginia Beach, VA  
**Barbara Chastain**, East Ellijay, GA  
**Allison Chow**, Posy Gang, Whitby, ON  
**Carol Crich**, Blue Oak Farm, Sonora, CA  
**Kristin Dailey**, Green Garden Prods., Kalamazoo, MI  
**Lindsay Daschner**, Fairest Flowers, Lambertville, MI  
**Sara Davies**, Wild Child Flower Company, Veneta, OR  
**Shannon Diaz**, Prescott, AZ  
**Julianne and Timothy Du Four**, Du Four Flowers, Walkersville, MD  
**Tonya Dunn**, Garden Thyme, Inc., Fort Collins, CO  
**Heather Duplooy**, More Tomorrow Farm, Hendersonville, NC  
**Alison Fields**, Cincinnati, OH  
**Marsha Finley**, Gizbar, Louisville, KY  
**Emily Fitschen**, Canton, MO  
**Elisabeth Gibson**, Granville, OH  
**Diane Glock-Cornman**, Lavender & Locks, Elizabethtown, PA  
**Anthony Grassia**, Texas Specialty Cut Flowers, Wimberley, TX  
**Jolea Gress**, Green Earth Growers, Prior Lake, MN  
**Sara Hardy**, Gilford, NH  
**Steven Hong-Elder**, Hong Elder Floral, Albuquerque, NM  
**Dorothy Hoopes**, Oxford, MD  
**Lynn Hopkins**, Annandale, NJ  
**Vickie Hott**, South Branch Produce, Morgantown, WV  
**Nicolette Irving**, Flourish Flower Farm, Asheville, NC  
**Virginia Jordan**, Jarrettsville, MD  
**Brian Kanotz**, King's Mums, Sand Springs, OK  
**Hannah Keen**, 26th Street Farm, Hastings, NE  
**Ann Kerr**, Phoenix, AZ  
**Kirsten Knecht**, Williamsport, TN  
**Jim Kornolje**, Jacob's Acres, Rockford, MI  
**Roxann and Alex Kosmicki**, Duet Fields, Kansas City, KS  
**Angie Krausfeldt**, Chicago, IL  
**Katrina Landis**, Bozman, MD  
**Christy and Matthew Larkin**, Muddy Acres Farm, Whiteford, MD  
**Todd Lininger**, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
**Holly Lorinser**, Shelburne Falls, MA  
**Donna Macdonald**, Ashland, OR  
**Sara Mallory**, The Freckled Flower Farm, Montpelier, VA  
**Carole Mapes**, Detroit, ME  
**Eustacia Marsales**, Livingston, NY  
**Judy Maxwell**, Thomson, GA  
**Helen McLaughlin**, Mini Mac Farm, Long Valley, NJ  
**Nicole Meachum**, Hartford, MI  
**Peg Mere**, Island Produce, Monticello, IA  
**Rebekah Mindel**, Meadow Wilds, Ulster Park, NY  
**Amanda Morgan**, My Sister's Garden, Lake Toxaway, NC  
**Kathleen Murphy**, Camillus, NY  
**Jan Nagel**, Nagel Productions, Auburn, IN  
**Cathy Olsen**, Nurturing Nature Farm, Boyertown, PA  
**Wendy Opperman**, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
**Laura Padusnak**, Twilight Garden, Stone Ridge, NY  
**Tess Pangle**, Strasburg, VA  
**Kevin Perry**, North Fork Flower Farm, Brooklyn, NY  
**Leonard Pharr**, Whiteville, TN  
**Kat Poblete**, Anderson Acres Farm, Kent, CT  
**Erin Reese**, Scottsburg, VA  
**Denise Kelly and Rolf Weidhofer**, The Plant Barn, Chico, CA  
**Zandy Russell**, Zandy's Garden, Spokane, WA  
**Julie Schiedler**, Celebrate the Season, Bend, OR  
**Kendra Schirmer**, Laurel Creek Florals, Sunset, SC  
**Tiffany Shackelford**, Trenton, KY  
**Jennifer Snoddy**, Jenny's Country Bouquets, Chase City, VA  
**Jenny Staroska**, Living Land Farm, Wheat Ridge, CO  
**Alicia Steeves**, Littlest Flower Farm, Lunenburg, NS  
**Vanessa and Reggie Tarr**, Tarnation Flower Farm, Sugar Hill, NH  
**Connie Taylor**, The Flower Chicks, Ringgold, GA  
**Doreen Thomas**, Classic Designs by Doreen Thomas, Lachine, MI  
**Maria Tracy**, Heather Oaks Farm, Lady Lake, FL  
**Deanna van den Dries**, Bee Loved Gardens, Shedden, ON  
**Angela Van Order**, The Grateful Gardener, Zeeland, MI  
**Misty VanderWeele**, All Dahlia'd Up Flower Farm, Palmer, AK  
**Sarah Barkhouse**, Vanessa Helgerson, Vera Flora Farm, Gilsum, NH  
**Kristen Vietty**, Lunaria Gardens, Philadelphia, PA  
**Barbara Von Elm**, Growing Wild Floral Company, Delaplane, VA  
**Shawna Waldon**, Kentwood, MI  
**Katrina Walker**, East Olympia, WA  
**Wendy and Ashley Williams**, Three Sisters Farm, Cookeville, TN  
**Christine Wisneski**, Kinde, MI  
**Anna Yoder**, Gretna, VA  
**Jessica Zeiger**, MycoFloral Farm, Chicago, IL  
**Jennifer Zissou**, Meridian, ID

## New Faces on the ASCFG Board

These fine folks have been chosen to join the ASCFG Board of Directors, and help lead the organization through even more successful and productive years. Thank you to them, and to everyone who ran in this year's election.



**Secretary**  
Linda Doan



**Treasurer**  
Brenda Smith



**Northeast Regional Director**  
Carolyn Snell



**Southeast Regional Director**  
Val Schirmer



**Mid-Atlantic Regional Director**  
Lisa Ziegler

## Seed Trials

Are you an experienced grower? Are you organized and efficient—all the way through the growing season? Do you maintain excellent records? Are you interested in working with the newest cut flower varieties?

If you'd like to be one of the first ASCFG members to grow the newest seed varieties coming in from the breeders, and contribute to an important service for all cut flower growers, participate in the ASCFG 2017 Seed Trial. Contact the office for more information.





# ASSOCIATION OF Specialty Cut Flower Growers RESEARCH FOUNDATION

*Research • Growth • Results*

## 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](mailto:mail@ascfg.org) or Chris Wien at [hwc2@cornell.edu](mailto:hwc2@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](http://www.ascfg.org). Or, call the office at (440) 774-2887.



**Contribute \$45 or more and receive this flower pot mug!**

# Gay Smith Receives 2016 SAF President's Award

An international expert in floral care and handling and dedicated volunteer to the Society of American Florists' (SAF) annual Outstanding Varieties Competition, Gay Smith received the 2016 Society of American Florists' President's Award. Smith, technical consulting manager for Chrysal USA in Miami, Florida, received the honor on Sept. 24 during the association's 132nd Annual Convention in Maui, Hawaii.

"Every once in a while, the SAF president officially acknowledges exceptional work being done by an individual in the floral industry," said SAF President Martin Meskers, AAF, of Oregon Flowers, Inc., in Aurora, Oregon, during the award presentation. "I would like to give the President's Award to someone who is known as an expert in a field critically important to the success of this industry." About Gay Smith

Smith is respected in the floral industry for her vast knowledge of flower care and handling and is well-known at the annual SAF convention for her role with its Outstanding Varieties Competition, which features hundreds of entries — several thousand individual stems of fresh cut product and plants placed on display for evaluation.

Following her studies in Environmental Horticulture at the University of Arizona in Phoenix, where she grew up, Smith began working at a florist in San Francisco in the late 1970s. Following that retail experience, Smith began working at the San Francisco Flower Market for Kitayama Brothers. By 1981, Smith had made a name for herself as the first female manager among the male-dominated world of growers and wholesalers at the market.

Smith introduced to the market the innovative idea of importing flowers from Holland, Israel and South America, and she made a name for herself among floral designers in San Francisco. Before



President Martin Meskers presents Gay Smith the Society of American Florists' President's Award

"Buy Local" was a common phrase heard around the country, Smith marketed Sonoma County-grown garden roses, and established herself as an expert on unusual, unique blooms and their post-harvest needs.

Due to her keen eye and attention to every detail, and success in working across cultures, she was hired to open a small export business at the flower auction in Aalsmeer, Netherlands, in 1983.

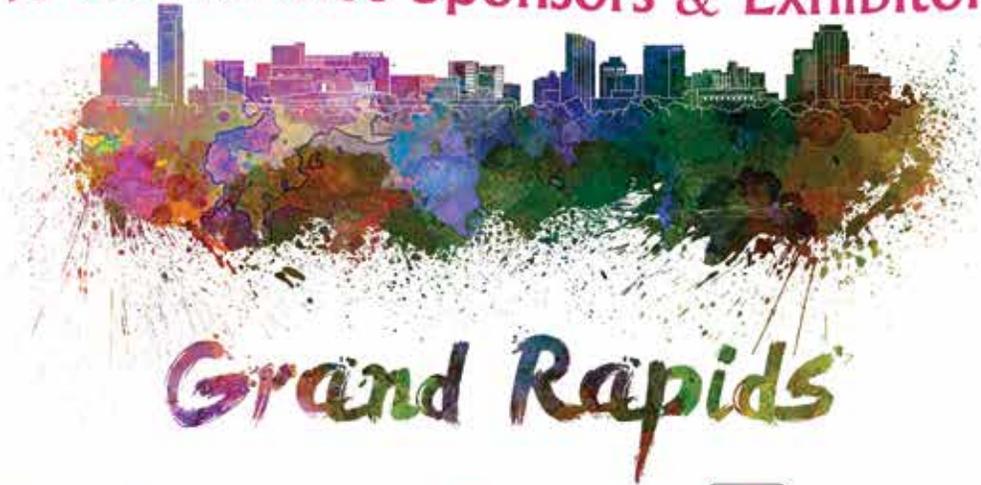
Smith returned to the U.S. in 1986, and settled in Portland, Oregon, where she honed her knowledge of marketing and care and handling at Melridge Inc., one of the world's leading breeders of new varieties of lilies and one of the nation's largest growers of bulbs and flowers at that time. Smith also led tours to farms throughout Central America and Europe, educating her floral industry colleagues about postharvest techniques, care and handling, and how to market unique floral products.

Smith joined Chrysal in 2001 as the technical manager for North and South America, traveling to wholesalers, retailers and supermarkets country-wide, dispensing care and handling techniques, proper hydration methods and the importance of PH levels to maximize shelf life.

Smith has also been a strong advocate for the industry, participating on numerous SAF committees and attending SAF's Congressional Action Days each spring. She also has been active with many other industry organizations, such as WF&FSA and the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers.

"Gay's presentations are peppered with anecdotes from her 45 years of experience," Meskers said. "There is literally no post-harvest question she can't answer — and she shares that knowledge in many trade publications."

# 2016 Conference Sponsors & Exhibitors



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### Timing is Everything

Judy M. Laushman



You've might have heard that the ASCFG has experienced phenomenal member growth in the last couple years. Or, if you're one of those new members, maybe you haven't been with us long enough to realize this.

We've grown more than 50% since 2013. For an organization this size, that's a pretty substantial leap. Watching membership applications pop up in email or fill our post office box never fails to elicit little whoops and hollers. Sometimes out loud. We're happy to welcome everyone: growers, designers, students, suppliers, and researchers. This variety is what makes our population so interesting, and sometimes a challenge to educate.

It's a great time to be connected to the ASCFG. Our inaugural mentor program has been a happy success, and we're looking forward to the second cycle of applications. The Trials programs are attracting the attention of national breeders and distributors. We're publishing one book, *Postharvest Handling of Cut Flowers and Greens* and are investigating the possibility of reprinting another—*Woody Cut Stems for Growers and Florists* (no promises yet, but we'd like to meet the increased demand for this out-of-print edition).

This year's National Conference and Trade Show is breaking all kinds of records for attendance, and with all these new growers to connect and inform, it's likely that our 2017 meetings will be equally popular.

The demand for locally-grown flowers is increasing. We still have some hills to climb, but with people like Josie Crowson and Debra Prinzing pushing us up them, the trek is easier. Please help us with this effort; see Josie's call to action on page 4, and make plans to start your own local campaign.

The most remarkable aspect of this coming together is the synergy created from the experience and generosity of our veteran growers, and the enthusiasm and optimism of so many new members. It's a perfect storm of sharing and learning, exemplary of the ASCFG since its inception.

Like Lennie Larkin says "There's nothing like learning by doing." Participate in as many ASCFG programs as you can, and let's keep this growth moving forward, learning together.



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