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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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## Flip the Script

Jennie Love



Every seasoned farmer knows that there's never a year without challenges. Never a season where you don't have to let a thing be done; to move on. Farming is, after all, founded on a cycle of constant change. Plant one crop. Harvest it. Plant another. No farm—or farmer—survives for very long without a bushel of ingenuity, heart, and fluidity built into the plan.

Of course, 2020 has been an “extra special” year for us all. Never have there been so many challenges on every front. Just when you think it couldn't get worse, it does. For instance, in August I got a phone call in the early hours of the morning with news that my family's dairy barn had suffered a devastating fire during the night. This was a barn my parents had worked so hard to build while they were young farmers raising four kids and trying to bootstrap it all together. A tornado had turned this same barn into a pile of twisted toothpicks in 2012. It took them two long and exhausting years, but they rebuilt then to make it better than ever so my brother could continue to farm when they retired.

And then it burnt. When I rushed home to help with the fire cleanup, I fully expected to find my dad, a lifelong farmer in his late 70s, emotionally crushed. I would have been. In fact, I was. The future seemed as dark as the blackened beams in the pile of rubble.

But here's the thing: my dad knows how to flip the script. He has a way of looking at the world with ever-hopeful eyes. Rather than mourn what was in the past, he immediately looked towards the future and what could come out of this unexpected change. Because the dairy side of our family farm had been forced to shut down in 2018 like so many other small dairy farms, the barn was a relic of the past. Yes, it held tremendous

sentimental value and was a monument to my parents' ability to work their butts off to build what was at that time a state-of-the-art facility. But it was time to close that chapter and start a new one. My dad saw this instantly while I was still mired in memories. He was ready to imagine what could be “now”, amidst all the change out of his control.

This season had been a real struggle for me emotionally as I was clinging to the business model I built over the past 12 years at Love 'n Fresh Flowers. Seeing the example my dad set in the aftermath of the dairy barn fire helped me flip my own script. The challenges of 2020 present us with many new opportunities. Never has the world been so receptive to the beauty and healing power of blooms. And since we farmers tend to be quick on our feet and work with what we've got at hand, we can embrace this tidal wave of change. Here are two areas of tremendous opportunity I see for ASCFG members.



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for very long without a bushel  
of ingenuity, heart, and fluidity  
built into the plan.*

### Weddings and Special Events

While the wedding and special events industry across the nation has taken a heavy hit due to COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, the landscape that is unfolding in the aftermath is incredibly welcoming to the farmer-florist model. What I'll call the “old guard”—florists such as myself who have been in this business for a decade or more and who have gone through the wringer in the 2020 season—are tired and ready to shift gears away from intensive wedding work. At the same time, the overall focus of weddings seems to have (finally) moved away from “one-upping everything ever posted on Pinterest” to “let's just get married and have a fun little party”. Just the kind of party a farmer-florist can help decorate without too much stress!



As the new pieces of the wedding world slide into place, there is a need for a fresh crop of floral professionals who can offer a simplified approach to wedding flowers, be it bulk buckets for the DIY couple or a quick bouquet for an elopement or décor for a small backyard wedding. The established florists in your town likely already have nearly full calendars because they had to shift so many weddings from 2020 to 2021 or beyond. Couples will be casting a wider net now looking for a florist. You can set the tone for how you'll work with them since it will be a bit of a "sellers' market" for the next year at least.

Even if you've never dreamed of doing weddings before, I'd encourage you to consider it for the 2021 season. They are indeed the best way to make your flower enterprise profitable. Too often I hear people comment they couldn't possibly handle weddings because of all the bridezillas. I'm here to testify that out of the nearly 700 brides I've worked with at this point, only two were what I would consider exceptionally challenging. The odds are you'll work with truly lovely souls more often than not. And if you create a streamlined system, figure out profitable pricing, and stick to what feels comfortable for you, weddings aren't any harder than growing the ranunculus and dahlias you'll use in the centerpieces!

## On-Farm Events

I'm not sure what life is like in your area, but here in Philadelphia, we have restrictions in place until March of 2021 that drastically reduce indoor fun like dining out, going to the movies, or hitting happy hour with friends after work. These restrictions on the usual forms of fun have created a fervor for "getting out", particularly for hands-on, outdoor, small group activities. There's a deep lack of connection and community in this time. Your farm could be a wonderful and welcoming spot for others to fill this need.

I've been hosting workshops and other educational events at my farm for nearly a decade. They've always been popular and have been an incredibly critical piece to making my farm profitable through the seasons. Rather unexpectedly, 2020 is proving to be no exception. In fact, the demand for workshops is through the roof here this fall!

With thoughtful planning and adjustments, it's been relatively easy to host small groups while maintaining social distancing so guests feel safe and comfortable. The studio barn at my farm has two large bay doors and 18 windows, so it's easy to get plenty of air movement. Workshops in the studio barn are limited to ten students who each get their own work station and plenty of room to spread out. Everyone is required to wear a mask in the barn, which made teaching a little challenging initially (I have a hard time hearing masked students) but it is starting to flow more easily now that I've adjusted. When not in the barn, students can take off their masks and roam around the farm freely to enjoy the peace and beauty in our fields. This relaxed and creative experience has led to more than a few teary-eyed students as they gush their gratitude at the end, saying it was just what their tired spirit needed. And, truth be told, I've been a bit teary too after each class, grateful for feeling connected again to my local community in a real tactile way.

Even if you are not at a place where you can feel comfortable hosting a formal floral design workshop, you can likely still come up with some on-farm events that will bring in new sales and create



more tangible connections with your community. Small group farm tours with a simple "fill your own mason jar" experience at the end could be a great start. Try reaching out to some local garden clubs and see if they'd like to come to the farm for their next club meeting. You can share some tips with them about dahlias, fall-planted bulbs, forcing indoor bulbs over winter, or whatever you feel you can confidently discuss. (Find local garden clubs on <https://www.gcamerica.org/>.)

I keep a running list of the Top 10 Customers at Love 'n Fresh Flowers (a list you should keep for your farm too so you can better understand what motivates customers to support you). Every single one of them has attended multiple workshops. On-farm events is where the deep connections are made. Customers see all your hard work and understand what is at stake. Tap into on-farm events now and you'll have established relationships with many new customers who will want to eagerly support your farm through many seasons and challenges to come. Because we all know COVID-19 isn't the last challenge we'll face as farmers.

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## Never Stop Learning

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick



No matter how long we've worked in flowers, there is always more to learn. Farming and floristry are constantly changing, and it's crucial that we evolve with them. For farmers, there are new flowers to grow, new diseases to fight, and new time-saving methods that will increase yield and profit. For florists, there are new flowers to learn about, new design techniques to try, and new services to offer.

When we were newbies, learning felt easy to come by because all information was new to us. We soaked everything up like sponges! Now that we're more experienced, we need more nuanced and detailed learning. This advanced education can be harder to come by, which means that we have to dedicate real time and effort towards seeking it out. But we're busy running our businesses, and it sometimes feels impossible to put our clippers down to take a class or read a book.

*Regardless of their formal training,  
the best employees are excellent at  
noticing how systems can be improved,  
and speaking their minds about it.*

But we have to put our clippers down, because learning new things as experienced professionals keeps us relevant in a fast-paced world. More importantly, when we learn, we expand as people, both individually and collectively. As the great writer Paulo Coelho put it, "When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too."

Together, we thought of some ways that we continue to learn as experienced professionals. Send us an email with a podcast suggestion, a book you loved, a lesson you learned from one of your teammates for a fellow grower or designer. We'd love to hear from you.

### **It's all about teamwork**

Over the years, our employees have taught us so much. We've learned how to properly broadfork, take cuttings, and fold silage tarps without getting in a fistfight. We've learned how to make wreaths of all kinds, decorate ourselves with floral jewelry, and keep the cooler organized so that nothing is wasted.

Our employees don't need experience at farming or design in order to teach us new things. On the contrary, our team members have backgrounds in mechanical engineering, painting, writing, landscape architecture, set design, theater, and more. Regardless of their formal training, the best employees are excellent at noticing how systems can be improved, and speaking their minds about it. That's why the two skills that we really look for in new hires are critical thinking and communication.

Ego can really get in the way of learning from employees. If someone makes a suggestion, our first impulse might be defensiveness. How can a new, inexperienced employee have a better idea than me? we might think angrily. How dare they suggest something to ME, the Queen! Shame over our mistakes and shortcomings is underneath a reaction like this.

If we can step over that first defensive reaction, we reach a more vulnerable place where we can listen without ego. Our employees are pointing to problems that need fixing, and the more problems we fix, the better our businesses will be. There's no law against admitting our own flaws to your team; we've all got them, goodness knows. It's best to skip the defensive reaction, admit our blind spots, and open the floor for some good old fashioned problem solving.

### **Friendship is the perfect blendship**

Have you heard of Mastermind Groups? We hadn't heard the term until long after "Business Club" was started. Mastermind groups are peer groups for business owners that provide support, problem solving, inspiration and more. This is Business Club for us. It started about four years ago with two photographers, a farmer, and a florist. Three restaurant owners have since joined. Before COVID-19 times, we met about once a month at a local bar. Sometimes we just chatted freely, and sometimes we had prompts to get the conversation going.

It started as just a casual get-together to talk about work, but Business Club has been more of a treasure than we could have imagined. There are so many commonalities between our very different businesses. We all use Instagram, we all are women business owners in a man's world, we are all trying to understand taxes and legalities and balance sheets, and we are all community builders. We've learned so much from each other, from concrete tidbits like a new helpful app to organize our work to how to apply for the PPP loan.

Beyond things learned, the supportive nature of the club has helped us all stay buoyant in these challenging times. We moved our meetings online after the pandemic, but we even email each other regularly between meetings, sharing news or just saying hello. These peers who were once casual acquaintances or vendors we worked with once in a while have become dear friends and teachers.

### Everyone needs a Yoda (or two)

Mentors in the business are an important part of the small business toolbox. Sometimes our questions are really nuanced and technical; a quick Google search just won't do the trick. That's when we call our mentors, who have known us for years and can quickly put our problems into context.

Mentors are particularly useful in helping with bigger picture decisions. To grow, or not to grow the business? To invest, or not to invest in this expensive piece of equipment?

*Mentors have been there themselves, and can lend invaluable advice as they look back over their own experiences.*

Anyone who wants to see you fulfill your potential, whose opinions you respect, and who will welcome random phone calls from you can be your mentor.

It can be hard to find mentors who have the experience you need. If that's the case, you can always start by paying someone to consult with you. Often those relationships bloom into something more organic and long-lasting. You can also seek out formal mentor-mentee programs. The ASCFG has a mentorship program, and often local farming organizations offer similar programs too.

Look for mentors not just in your field, but in others too; perhaps your sage grandmother is your mentor, or your friend who has experience in finance. Anyone who wants to see you fulfill your potential, whose opinions you respect, and who will welcome random phone calls from you can be your mentor.

### Keep your eyes and ears open

Podcasts have become one of the main ways we can continue learning on a daily basis. There are so many amazing design, farming, and business podcasts available for free that continuing education has never been easier. Here are some of our favorites (in no particular order)

- The Flower Podcast
- The Slow Flowers Podcast
- The Sustainable Flowers Podcast
- The Passion Economy Podcast
- The Goal Digger Podcast
- The No-Till Market Garden Podcast



There are also free YouTube videos, online industry discussion groups, magazines, books, and more! Many of these resources can be accessed as audio files on your phone making it even easier to learn on the go or while working.

### Getting off the farm and out of the studio

Being small business owners means we do it all. It's hard to break away from the every day "To Do" list and make time for focused learning. For us, attending conferences and classes provides an opportunity for deep learning away from the distraction of business.

Not only does learning occur in the sessions with the speakers or instructors, but learning also takes place amongst the students or attendees. For LB, the most scribbling in the notebook is always during on-the-side chats with farmers before or after sessions. Getting out of our comfort zones to attend conferences can feel like a big effort, but it is always valuable and worth our time, money and attention, even for just one piece of information that will open up new worlds.

Visiting other farms or designers is another great way to continue learning. While we may all be in the same industry, we all do things differently. Seeing how another designer packs her van for a wedding can be a game changer. Learning how Sunny Meadows Flower Farm wash their buckets, how Hendricks twines their sweet peas, and how Color Fields Farm grows in crates can't be Googled; it has to be seen and experienced. We can't wait to schedule some visits once it's safe to spend time with others!

Send us your favorite ways to learn at [butterbeefarm@gmail.com](mailto:butterbeefarm@gmail.com) and [ellen@locoflo.com](mailto:ellen@locoflo.com).

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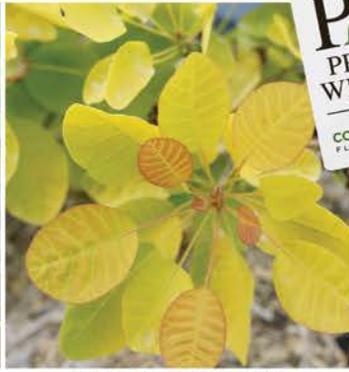
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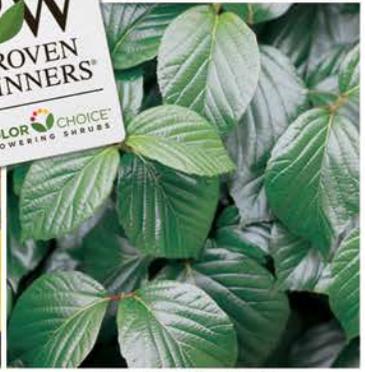
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## Flowers in the Heart of the City

**Jodi Helmer**



*A Minneapolis grower contends with the joys and challenges of operating a flower farm in the heart of the city.*



Molly Gaeckle

After George Floyd died in May, Minneapolis residents took to the streets to protest police violence against Black Americans.

Amid chants of “No justice, no peace,” Blackhawk helicopters flew overhead, the National Guard patrolled the streets in tanks, fires ravaged neighborhoods, and Molly Gaeckle planted cut flowers at Northerly Flora in south Minneapolis.

“Being in Minneapolis has been very emotional and intense,” says Gaeckle. “It feels like a form of activism for me that I can grow beautiful, joyful things in this darkness.”

Gaeckle started growing cut flowers in 2016. While working for the local food co-op, a farmers’ market, and a small-scale vegetable farm, she learned that the cut flower industry faced many of the same issues with social justice, workers’ rights, and environmental degradation as a local food industry; she wanted to do her part to help change the industry.

A 6,000 square-foot plot of land became available after a local vegetable grower moved to another site. Gaeckle leased the space, located one block from her house, and turned it into Northerly Flora.

*“One of the best things about being in a neighborhood is chatting with passersby,” Gaeckle says. “If we weren’t in the city, I would miss the neighbors who walk by and chat. It adds a lot of emotional value to me.”*

She calls the first year “a giant experiment,” and recruited friends and family to sign up for her inaugural CSA to test the model and her ability to grow enough quality flowers to consistently deliver bouquets. Gaeckle had 40 CSA members in the first year.

“I was so excited to get started, and it spiraled into a business,” she recalls.

Word spread and the CSA grew, increasing to 70 members the second year, and 155 members this year. Members pay \$210 for the 10-week shares. Between July and September, Gaeckle meets members at locations across Minneapolis for weekly pickups.

### Expanding Her Borders

As the CSA grew, so did Northerly Flora. Gaeckle expanded from the original 6,000 square foot plot to a second area of the same size and, this season, expanded to a third site in nearby Hudson, Wisconsin. She grows dahlias on one site, up to 80 different varieties of annuals such as zinnias, campanula, celosia, lisianthus, rudbeckia, amaranth, dianthus, and marigolds, planting early spring blooms on another, and summer-flowering annuals on the larger plot in Wisconsin.

To maximize her small space, Gaeckle focuses on high-density cultivation, and favors cut-and-come-again varieties.



“One of the best things about being in a neighborhood is chatting with passersby,” Gaeckle says. “If we weren’t in the city, I would miss the neighbors who walk by and chat. It adds a lot of emotional value to me.”

Connecting with customers is also what Gaeckle likes best about the CSA. The model has also helped Northerly Farm remain profitable during the global coronavirus pandemic.

Sales of the seasonal subscriptions, which sell out every year, make up the bulk of the revenue at Northerly Flora. Gaeckle has also started selling to florists and providing flowers for a small number of events. Diversification, she hopes, could make the

“One-and-done perennials are so much harder in a small space,” she explains. “You really need more space to spread out to grow those varieties.”

Gaeckle admits that growing on several smaller plots of land is one of the challenges of urban farming. Uncertainty about land access is another issue that weighs heavily on her.

“It’s hard to have a long-term business plan when you don’t know how long you can grow on the site,” she explains. “I have a five-year lease on one site, and I’m year-to-year on another; I can grow there until they decide to develop it, which will happen eventually.”

### Minnesota is Indeed Northerly

Whether she grows in the heart of the city or a rural community, Gaeckle has to contend with short seasons, cold winters, and hot summers.

“Minnesota’s growing season is so short,” she says. “We go from so cold to so hot; our shoulder seasons with mild temperatures are too short for most flowers.”

Gaeckle has a single high tunnel but investing in a greenhouse on borrowed land is not an option, so she starts seedlings in her basement.

“I start the seedlings in the basement and try to start hardening them off in the backyard; it’s a crazy dance in the spring,” she says. “Space limitations are a growing challenge; we’re about to bust at the seams.”

Despite the challenges, Gaeckle loves her urban location. In the city, she says, buildings protect against storm damage, offer insulation during late-season frosts, and minimize pest pressure. Gaeckle also appreciates spontaneous opportunities to connect with her neighbors.

farm more financially sustainable and help avoid burnout.

“I’ve been grateful for the CSA model, for sure,” Gaeckle says. “The pressure of pumping out bouquets each week, making sure there are enough flowers that are unique and blooming to fill the CSA subscriptions is stressful. With florists, it’s pretty sweet to sell a few buckets of flowers for \$500 that take a lot less time than making bouquets.”

As Gaeckle contemplates the best mix of sales channels to maximize revenue and minimize stress, she’s also questioning whether the future of the farm is in Minneapolis or outside the city limits.

“On the Wisconsin site, it’s essentially unlimited space where I can do some long-term planning; I’m taking this step out of the city, out of urban growing and I’m at this crossroads with my business and deciding which direction I should go,” she says. “While I love being in the city, space will always be an issue.”



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## Silverleaf Whitefly: An Opportunistic Pest

Courtney Llewellyn

Farmers constantly have to be on the lookout for the next worse thing, so they can still work forward to raising successful crops. Cindy McKenzie, Ph.D, a research entomologist with the USDA-ARS, recently led an online session to talk about a growing threat throughout the United States—silverleaf whitefly.

As background, McKenzie described the pest (*Bemisia tabaci*) which all look identical. There are currently three biotypes: New World (type A), Asia Minor type (type B), and Mediterranean (type Q). It was first discovered in America in 1897 on tobacco and sweet potato plants. Fast forward to 1985, and Biotype B was found on hibiscus. By 1989, it was causing tomato mottle. In 1993, it led to golden bean mosaic. By 1995, it was causing tomato yellow leaf curl. All these instances were found first in Florida, but they spread quickly.

McKenzie noted, “Whitefly attacks more than 600 species from 74 plant families. They love ornamentals. They are one of the top 10 pests worldwide, and

they vector over 100 plant viruses. Whitefly is a phloem feeder, and inflicts damage by direct feeding, and then secreting honeydew that triggers sooty mold as well. They typically feed and lay eggs on the undersides of leaves.

Whitely Biotype Q is particularly ominous, as conventional insecticide control options are limited. When Biotype Q was first identified as problematic, it was flagged as a regulatory concern threatening cotton and vegetable production.

McKenzie said the pest is always found in protected commercial horticultural greenhouse plantings, in all assortments of ornamental and herbaceous plants, but never in open field agriculture.

“The Mediterranean type is resistant to almost every chemical they tested on it.” McKenzie said. After having been discovered in Florida for the first time in 2005, it was then spotted in Arizona. The USDA-ARS had to figure out where it was and how to treat it. Today, 27 states have reported Biotype Q whitefly problems, including



all of the Eastern Seaboard, the Midwest from Ohio to Illinois and Wisconsin, and the Pacific Northwest.

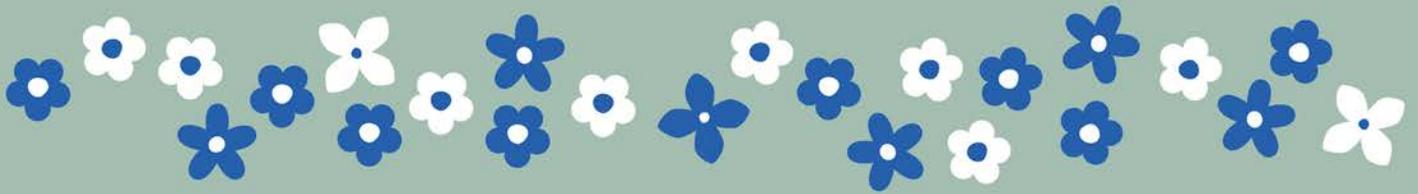
There is a little good news: Most of the tested rotational insecticide programs managed total populations (although none dropped the population completely to zero). It was noted that dinotefuran resulted in 97.4% control, pyrifloquinazon 95.4% control, and cyantraniliprole 93-97% control on salvia tests. Additionally, foliar applications performed better than drenches at low label rates.

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# Organic Certification for Specialty Cuts



Robbie and Deena Miller cut dahlias—a customer favorite—in late summer at Sweet Roots Farm. Photo by Roseann Bath Photography

Thinking about becoming a certified organic flower grower? Learn what you need to know to make the right decision for your operation.

Julie Martens Forney

*Second of a Three-Part Series*

The era of certified organic products has definitely arrived, with sales booming in many areas, including grain crops, mushrooms, livestock, maple syrup, and personal care products. The latest addition to the organic line-up? Hemp. “It’s interesting that flowers, for some reason, haven’t shown as much growth when it comes to certified organics,” says Don Franczyk. He’s the Executive Director of Baystate Organic Certifiers in Dighton, Massachusetts. “There aren’t that many certified organic flower growers in the marketplace now. Maybe there’s not enough consumer demand.”

A former flower farmer, Franczyk is very familiar with flower production and still grows flowers—just for himself. These days he dedicates his work hours to helping producers cross the finish line to earning organic certification. “The biggest advantage to getting certified is that you can market your product as organic,” he says. “You can use that happy USDA seal that identifies stuff as organic and gain an advantage in the marketplace, because consumers recognize that seal.”

Baystate Organics currently has 50 to 75 flower growers who are certified organic, with most growing flowers in addition to vegetables. “We have a lot of smaller farms up and down the East Coast who are adding flowers to their crop mix,” Franczyk says. “For growers who are good at raising flowers and can bring a nice bouquet to market, there are customers looking for them.”

## Choose Certified Organic for Marketing

Missy Bahret, co-owner of Old Friends Farm in Amherst, Massachusetts, is one of those growers Baystate certifies. The farm raises a variety of certified organic products, including cut flowers, salad greens, vegetables, and ginger. “I have only ever farmed organically and feel best aligned with those practices,” Bahret says. “We noticed that many farms were claiming to be organic but not actually adhering to all the guidelines, and we wanted some differentiation for better transparency to our customers. Ultimately we chose to be certified organic for marketing reasons.”

Bahret’s decision to pursue certification reflects that of other flower growers. According to Franczyk, there are three main reasons flower growers give for getting certified. “Mostly, it’s for marketing purposes,” he says. “Some growers believe in the program and want certification. Others want to market something as organic, so they need certification.”

For Deena Miller of Sweet Roots Farm in Grass Valley, California, pursuing organic certification was intentional from the start, a philosophical choice that’s opened doors to marketing opportunities. Sweet Roots is certified with California Certified Organic Farmers. “That certification helped us land our wholesale client Flora Fresh, who has a dedicated cooler for organic sustainable flowers,” Miller says. “Being certified organic also helps when your farm is big enough that you’re shipping. It opens doors for selling. We don’t ship our flowers.”

Joan Thorndike, at Le Mera Gardens in southern Oregon, tells a similar tale. “If you’re selling only locally, the organic certification isn’t as important. But for us to sell to New Seasons Market, a Portland supermarket chain that wants certified organic flowers, the certification is vital. It’s a fantastic opportunity for us. We’ve created a size of market style bouquets for their stores.”



Sweet Roots Farm - Deena Miller flower field Roseann Bath Photography

Thorndike has been growing organically for over 28 years, long before the USDA created the certification process. After years with Oregon Tilth, Le Mera has switched to USDA certification. “I really appreciate that the USDA enforced what organic means,” she shares. “There was a lot of backlash when that happened, but it was good. What they did basically says that if you follow these practices and are certified, you can have that green stamp.”

### Why Growers Don’t Get Certified

At its heart, organic certification is essentially a marketing program. That’s the huge advantage. But at the same time, because a certifying agency grants you the right to use that organic moniker, you’re committed to keeping records—and lots of them. “One of the main reasons growers don’t get certified is recordkeeping,” Franczyk explains. “For farmers who are already stretched thin, it takes a lot of added labor and time to maintain the necessary records.”

Despite being a strong advocate for organic flowers (“they deserve their own moment beside organic food”), Miller advises growers to pause before pursuing certification. “If your market doesn’t demand it, it’s a lot of recordkeeping,” she

says. “But I’d also say that although the initial application takes time and records, maintaining them is not that difficult. Recordkeeping is definitely not at the top of the list for not becoming certified for me. I struggle more with the lack of organic alternatives for specific floral needs, such as rooting hormones for cuttings.”

For flower growers with a split operation—part organic certified, part in transition to organic certification—there’s even more to the recordkeeping process. “You have to track things very closely if you have a split operation,” explains Don Lareau of certified organic Zephyros Farm & Garden in Paonia, Colorado. Zephyros is certified with OneCert.

Cathy Jones of Perry-winkle Farm in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, follows organic growing practices, but isn’t certified. “Most people say it’s too much paperwork, but that actually helps you become a better farmer. Our farm is certifiable at any moment, so we’re committed to organic growing. The main reason we’re not certified is cost.”

Cost is actually the second reason that flower growers give for not becoming certified. “Growers pay a certification fee every year,” Franczyk explains. “The fee schedule includes a cost-share reimbursement that lets growers recover a portion of those certification fees each

year.” Administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) of the USDA, that program has typically reimbursed growers 75 percent of eligible expenses, up to \$750 maximum.\*

“If you have a market that’s looking for organic flowers, the cost for organic certification is definitely worth it,” Franczyk adds. “Or if you’re developing a market for organic flowers, it’s also worth it.”

## Choosing an Agency

The single most important part of the organic certification process is selecting an agency. Growers typically choose an agency in their state. “Most growers don’t understand that they can work with anyone,” Franczyk explains. In the United States, there are 47 USDA-accredited certifying agents. Not every agency works in every state, but between local and national agents, there are typically multiple options for certification in each state. The USDA offers an Organic Certifier Locator search engine on their website.

Franczyk urges “definitely shopping around to find someone you want to work with. Look for someone whose style suits you. For instance, do they answer the phone or return your emails? Customer service is very important.” When you’re in the process of becoming certified, you can contact any certifying agency when you have a question about materials you’re using on the farm. That’s when customer service really gets put to the test.

It’s also worthwhile to ask about the agency’s experience with flower growing. “Our inspectors really know a lot about floriculture,” Bahret shares. “But I’ve heard this is not always the case, and inspections can take longer as the inspector is learning how to adapt their veggie-based questions to flower growing.” Lareau says that “every three years our certifying agency sends a new person, and it takes them about the whole three years to figure out what we’re doing. They don’t have a lot of flower growers in their client base.”



CSA bouquets are a great way to showcase the hundreds of flower varieties grown at certified organic Zephyros Farm & Garden

The other thing to consider is cost. “Every agency is set up differently,” Franczyk adds. “Some are for profit; some are not. It’s very competitive. Some charge what the market bears, while others work to keep their fees lower. And some unfortunately make it difficult to figure out the fees.”

When considering an agency, he suggests downloading the fee worksheet and determining the costs before you apply. “Especially if cost is a factor in your decision to certify or not, work through the fee schedule for different agencies and figure out what you’ll pay. Our fees are fairly reasonable. We start at \$400 for a new operation with minimal sales and go up from there. You can find an agency in your price range.”

## Is There a Case for Not Certifying?

In addition to recordkeeping or cost, flower growers do cite other reasons for not getting an organic certification. “It is possible that someone may choose to support local vendors for things like compost, seed, soil or plants, rather than sourcing from a certified organic outlet,” Bahret says. “In that case, the grower may not be able to be certified because of that choice.”

Perry-winkle Farm dropped their organic certification due to cost. “That was

back before there were cost-share reimbursement programs. We have been able to stay uncertified because we sell directly to our market customers. After 30 years of marketing in our area, customers know us, and they trust us. The organic seal isn’t going to influence them,” Jones explains. “When new folks show up at our stand, we’re able to engage them in conversation and explain our farming practices.”

“All of that being said, I always recommend that new growers obtain their organic certification as soon as they are able. Then the organic seal can do the talking for them. It will open doors and hopefully provide a better price for their product.”

For growers who do under \$5,000 in sales, it’s legal to market your flowers as organic—without being certified—as long as you’re following organic standards. “Usually these are small farms that are selling directly to consumers,” Franczyk says. “Certified organic flowers certainly have the opportunity to grow like other organic product areas. If consumers knew what was actually being done to most flowers from south of the border—they’re heavily sprayed. It’s not something they’d want in their home. If people understood that, they’d flock to organic flowers.”

*\*In August 2020, the FSA blindsided certifying agencies with an announcement that reimbursements are dropping in 2020 to 50 percent, up to \$500 maximum. If you’re currently a certified organic grower, you have until October 31, 2020 to apply for reimbursement at the higher rate. Contact your certifying agency to apply for reimbursement as soon as possible. Also contact your Senators and Representatives to lobby for the reimbursement program. Learn more at [www.baystateorganic.org/costshare](http://www.baystateorganic.org/costshare).*

*Due to Covid-19, Oregon Tilth is currently not accepting new applications for the USDA National Program (NDP) certification.*

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# Cut Flower Cooperatives — Stronger Together

Kevin Edberg

## Part Two of a Four-Part Series

In the Summer 2020 issue, we began a discussion about how cut flower producers might use the cooperative business model to provide support for individual businesses. In that article, I defined a cooperative as a business that is owned and democratically controlled by the people who use its services: a democratic association of member-owners use a business to meet shared needs and desires. This time, I will discuss issues commonly faced by boards of directors as they seek to govern the co-op. In the Winter 2021 magazine, I'll examine business issues, and in Spring 2021, I will focus on how growers might consider forming new co-ops.

### Governance by Boards

Every organization needs a clear process for decision-making. As the size of an organization grows, so too does the challenge of making decisions for the benefit of all stakeholders, and co-ops are no exception.

Most producer-owned co-ops are governed by a board of directors made up of people chosen from and by the membership in a one member-one vote election, but there is much flexibility in the size and operations of co-op boards. Just as an organization's articles of incorporation creates the relationship between the organization and the state and gives the organization authority to operate, so the bylaws describe the relationships between the organization and its members, and most of the critical aspects of the board are described in these documents. These include things like the number of board members; officers and their roles; term length; scope and limitations of authority, etc.

In small co-ops, it's not uncommon for all members to be board members, and even for the board to be a "working board" where board members not only make decisions but are responsible for doing the work of the co-op as well. Once the membership gets much bigger than

about ten members, organizations tend to move toward representative boards, and at some point, the board hires someone to manage the co-op.

### Delegated Authority and Accountability

Members join co-ops to secure certain benefits. To obtain these benefits, the member-owners delegate authorities (via the bylaws) to an elected board, which in turn delegates authorities to the manager, who in turn delegates authority to staff, and in this process benefits are created and returned to the members.

But each delegation of authority is accompanied by a requirement for the accountable use of that authority. How that accountability shows up in the organization is a critical part of governance, and is a core responsibility of board members, regardless of organizational size. I personally believe that in the U.S., we do a miserable job of understanding and practicing accountability, and that board

members typically learn how to be governors of their organizations through a whole series of bad experiences, with little coherent discussion of roles, responsibilities and critical functions. I further suspect that most of us who have served as board members often come away from the experience wondering why the work needs to be inefficient, boring or even painful...and frankly it doesn't matter whether we're talking about the church council, the school board, the city council or the co-op board.

I won't address that larger question in this article (though for those who are interested in the subject, I would recommend *Boards That Make a Difference*, by Dr. John Carver). Trying to be pragmatic and useful, I will identify some key topics for co-op boards that have the capacity to make the

board experience more useful, more enjoyable, and most importantly, more impactful. No board can take on all these topics at once. I encourage each board to reflect on the list and pick one or two that seem most relevant and needed for your group, and then see how you can make changes for the coming year.

**Get the right people on the bus:** In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins writes about the importance of having the right people with the right skills and aptitudes in the right roles. Co-op boards are no different. Strong boards think about leadership succession, pay attention to the culture of their board, and are always in a process of recruiting leaders to consider future board roles, providing ways to engage and train members for future leadership. Waiting until the day of the annual meeting to round up an unwitting candidate/volunteer is seldom a strategy for success. Looking at the membership of your co-op, who might make up your dream team for leadership?

As you experience turnover in leadership, how do you orient them to the board? Consider having a consistent

onboarding process, providing copies of key documents like the articles and bylaws, most recent full year financial performance, meeting calendar, and opportunities for Q and A.

**Consistent participation:** Governance takes time, and most leaders have more than one place asking for their leadership. It's no surprise that board meetings are short during the growing season or held at times when other useful work can't be done. Nonetheless, creating a

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culture that supports consistent meeting preparation and participation is critical to making timely decisions. Be thoughtful about holding meetings at a time and place and with supports (food, childcare, etc.) that support participation

**Strive for satisfying meetings:** Good meetings require preparation. A satisfying meeting is facilitated by a clear agenda, distributed in advance with any necessary supporting information and reasonable time for preparation. Ideally the agenda identifies the topic and the desired outcome needed. (Discussion? Decision?). Be intentional about the length of the meeting and allocate reasonable time to each item to create a sense of timely discussion.

A helpful practice is to create an annual board calendar of topics/action that need to be considered, and then scheduling each topic at appropriate times throughout the year to minimize the likelihood that a needed action gets forgotten. (Don't forget the Annual Meeting!) Consider the use of a consent agenda for relatively perfunctory items like minutes or acceptance of reports that don't require discussion.

**Intentionally engage with members:** Cooperation grows at the speed of trust. Being transparent about the work of the board builds trust. The members have delegated authority to the board through election, but engagement with members is not a once a year event. Create ways that allow members to know what the board is doing. Help them understand the forces the board is dealing with in making a potentially controversial decision. Prepare them to make key future decisions.

One special example of engagement is the co-op's Annual Meeting. Many think that annual meetings are dull, boring affairs, and the shorter the better. I believe an annual meeting should be a recognition and celebration of all the work that has been done in the previous year. Use the opportunity to share key financial

and operating results. Engage members in thoughtful discussion. Recognize leadership that is leaving the board. And have some fun. Make it an event where members look forward to reconnecting with co-owners in your shared venture.

**Intentionally describe success:** If you don't know where you're going, any path will get you there. A key board responsibility is to articulate a vision for the co-op's future. Rooted in the needs of the members, the vision can be powerful in engaging management, staff, and members in a clear understanding of why the co-op exists, and how it will be and remain relevant to its members. Holding a half-day or full-day strategic thinking session every year or two is a good practice that sets aside the day-to-day business to think about the future. (This might also be a good time to review the existing bylaws to see if preparation is needed for changes). Engaging a facilitator is a good idea so that all board members can fully participate in a process that identifies key financial and operational outcomes.

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**Respectfully supervise the Board's one employee:** If the co-op is large enough to have staff, then the Board needs to be intentional about its role as employer, specifically for the General Manager. (If there are other staff, their supervision is the responsibility of the General Manager, not the Board). This is a specific role for the Board and must be approached with respect and positive intention. This topic requires much more conversation than can be given justice here. But suffice it to say it is critical for the Board to set clear and reasonable expectations for the GM, but also to be reasonable in providing support and appreciation for the work of the GM.

**Know your numbers:** The Winter 2021 article will talk about the co-op's business. But a key board function is to have sound financial management policies and practices in place, and to be aware of the ongoing financial status of the co-op.

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Many think that annual meetings are dull, boring affairs, and the shorter the better. I believe an annual meeting should be a recognition and celebration of all the work that has been done in the previous year.

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If you have a GM, then having an active board treasurer role is a good practice to ensure appropriate segregation of duties, review of bank statements, etc. Receiving and reviewing accurate monthly or quarterly financial statements is a sound practice that allows the board to respond to changing financial conditions while fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities for the care of members' assets.

Next issue: The Business of the Co-op. I welcome reader comments and questions!

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# The Italian Cut Flower Industry - An Overview

**Margherita Beruto<sup>(1)</sup> and John Dole<sup>(2)</sup>**

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Mention Italy, and people are likely imagine picturesque villages in the mountains, endless rows of olive trees and grapevines, and historic cities filled with ancient ruins and exquisite art.

What is less well known is that Italy is a major producer of cut flowers. Blessed with high light, a long growing season, and moderate Mediterranean temperatures, Italy grows a broad array of cut flowers and foliage. Italy is also a major producer of nursery plants, with almost half of ornamental farms (about 48%) dedicated exclusively to floral products, about 43% focused on nursery production, and the remaining 9% involved in both sectors. The two industries intersect in the production of woody cuts, which has been increasing.

## *Major Flower Growing Regions in Italy*

Floriculture production occurs across Italy, but the most important cut flower regions are Liguria (representing about 22% of the national surface and the 30% of total production), followed by Tuscany, Lombardy, Campania, Sicily, Lazio, Veneto, Apulia, Piedmont, and Emilia Romagna, which together represent more than 90% of the production of cut flowers and potted plants. As a general trend, cut flower production in Italy has decreased due to competition from other countries, especially those in South America and Africa, where production costs are considerably lower. However, the woody cut sector has increased.

Data from the Italian stock exchange (2017) show that the most important Italian cut flower is ranunculus, produced mainly in Liguria and Campania. Formerly roses were the most important crop. Acacias from Liguria, carnations from Campania, and calla lilies and chrysanthemums from Tuscany are also noteworthy. The

floriculture industry has been increasing in Apulia over the last few years where the main cut flower crops are gladiolus, liliun, carnation, rose, freesia, gerbera, iris, and chrysanthemum. Numerous species of woody cuts are grown, including green foliage like eucalyptus and ruscus, flowering species such as acacia, genista, and viburnum, and fruit-bearing foliage, such as rose hips and viburnum.

Liguria, home to the Sanremo Flower Market, has traditionally been considered the center of high-quality floriculture production in the Mediterranean area, especially in terms of exports to northern Europe and the USA. While Liguria is still important, there is strong competition from southern Italian regions and from importing countries. As a result, the number of Ligurian businesses involved in floriculture has declined.



Italy is a center of ranunculus breeding and development.



Shade house cultivation of ranunculus.

## Major Cut Flower Crops in Italy

Data collected (2018) at the Flower Market of Sanremo, Liguria Region show that ranunculus is the major cut flower.

	% of the total cut flowers sold	Average annual price / stem	Sale period													
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec		
Ranunculus	31.1	0.38														
Rose	15.6	0.35														
Carnation	5.9	0.15														
Anemone	8.8	0.21														
Sunflower	5.1	0.30														
Lily	3.1	0.84														
Chrysanthemum	1.6	0.68														
Daisy	2.6	3.24														
Statice	1.8	1.05														
Poppy	1.6	0.33														
Marigold	2.6	0.15														
Freesia	1.7	0.15														
Peony	1.6	0.58														
Alstroemeria	0.8	0.27														
Gerbera	0.6	0.24														
Sweet pea	1.5	0.28														
Snapdragon	0.5	0.40														
Cornflower	1.2	0.21														
Wallflower	1.1	0.39														
Scabiosa	0.8	0.19														
Craspedia	1.3	0.16														
Other cut flowers	9.1															

## Farm Characteristics

Detailed data from the Census of Agriculture 2012 revealed that over the past decade, Italian floriculture has undergone profound changes, some similar to those happening elsewhere in Europe. Due to the economic crisis, and the occasional technical and managerial issues, many Italian companies have folded, with the cut flower sector suffering the most. Although the average farm acreage in Europe has increased [size of Dutch cut flowers companies has increased from 0.5 ha (1.2 acre) in 1980 to 1.2 ha (3.0 acres) in 2012] (Gimelli, 2012), in Italy farm size has remained constant. In addition, the majority of cut flower farms usually have less than 1 ha (2.5 acres).

Due to poor profits, many small companies have returned to producing vegetables. However, several companies have become more specialized, especial-

ly in the cultivation of ranunculus, poppy, chrysanthemums, and even specialty rose production (in Sardinia, rose hips, scented roses, etc.).

The management of Italian cut flower production farms is still largely based on the family, with about 90% of farms directly managed by owners and their family members. However, fixed or seasonal wage labour is also used to help run the farms.

About 57% of the cultivation is in the open field, and about 43% under protective structures such as greenhouses, tunnels, shade covers, etc. Overall, 34% of the farms use only field production, 38% use only protected cultivation, and 28% use both. There has been a trend toward using more protective structures, indicating an evolution to a more efficient floriculture.

The majority of farms (about 90%) are equipped with irrigation systems, which are different according to the crop, and can be applied manually or with automatic control (irrigation by sliding and infiltration, submerged irrigation, rain sprinkling, micro-irrigation, etc.). Fertigation with or without electronic control is applied according to crops. In recent years, the general trend has been to cultivate cool-season species with low thermal requirements, so only an emergency heating system is usually used. When needed, gas or oil heating is generally used, although in recent years growers are using more renewable energy systems. The use of smart management (Internet of Things) as well the use of online purchase or sale and online catalog are increasing.

## *International Trade and Domestic Consumption of Floriculture Products*

Italy is the fifth largest exporter of flowers in the world, after Holland, Colombia, Ecuador, and Kenya. Traditionally, the flowers are sold in Europe, with the Netherlands being the most important market for cut flowers. The production of cut foliage is very important as well since it can be done without the use of greenhouses and heating, and foliage is in demand by consumers.

While demand from foreign markets has recovered in the past two years, the domestic front remains weak. The per-capita Italian consumption of cut flowers and ornamental foliage is estimated at some 29 € (approximately 35 USD) per year (AIPH, 2014). This per-capita consumption is quite stable after a sharp decline during the economic crisis. The major reasons Italians buy flowers is for gifts (48%), followed by home decoration (22%), weddings (13%), cemetery (12%), and others (5%). Although the rose—of every species and color—is by far the most important in the sales of fresh flowers (more than 45%), Italians are fond of tulips, gerberas, lilies, and orchids, without forgetting the traditional carnations and ranunculus, of

course. The chrysanthemum is most important for funerals, although this flower is a symbol of joy in many parts of the world. According to various studies in the sector, the largest number of flowers is sold in the South—particularly in Sicily—with approximately 29% of sales, followed by the Northwest, Northeast, and Center. A little over 40% of purchases are made by people over 55, including 22% by retirees.

In Italy, about 65% of the total sales of cut flowers and ornamental foliage are sold via florists and another 25% by street vendors. Supermarket sales have not been very successful in Italy and account for only 3-4% of the total sales. The remainder is sold through various outlets such as garden centers or directly from growers.

### *Summary*

As with the United States and Canada, the Italian cut flower industry is increasingly focused on specialty cut flowers and foliage, especially those from woody trees and shrubs. Imported flowers have increased, resulting in more competition with local producers. However, the cut flower industry is still an important sector in Italy. The marketing chain is adapting by selling more flowers through garden centers and direct to the customer.

The majority of farms are small and family owned/operated—another similarity to the United States and Canada. Much of the production is in the field, but increasingly producers are using greenhouses and other protective structures.

### *Information Sources*

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Shade house production of hellebores.



Dahlia cultivation.

# U.S. Economic Outlook: The Path to Regain Lost Ground May Be a Marathon Rather Than a Sprint

*Economic growth following the coronavirus is expected to be sluggish. Addressing the coronavirus pandemic may be the only path to full economic recovery in the long run.*

**Charlie Hall**

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Real gross domestic product (GDP) in the first quarter of 2020 fell 5% at a seasonally adjusted annual rate, essentially marking the start of a sharp recession as a result of a halt in economic activity in order to contain the spread of COVID-19. The latest data show consumer spending rebounded 8.2% after falling 12.6% in April, but personal income fell 4.2% after rising 10.8% in March due to stimulus checks. Durable goods orders rebounded 15.8% after an 18.1% decline in May, driven by slight increases in transportation and autos, the hardest hit areas.

Economic data further supports forecasts of a significant second-quarter plunge (a 35% to 50% drop is projected) followed by a bounce (of maybe +25%), with much slower growth thereafter (discussed below). Several economists have been in the media of late projecting how fast we will recover from the Great Shutdown, and many of them point to the latest jobs report as evidence that we can get back to normal if we simply put policy measures in place to get people back to work quickly.

I believe, however, that the economic recovery from this recession will likely be much slower than many want to believe. As more economic data became available throughout spring, I found myself changing my own projections about the shape of the recovery almost weekly. I no longer expect the recovery to resemble anything like a V-shape or a U-shape, nor do I expect it necessarily to be an L-shaped or hockey stick recovery like we saw after the Great Recession. Instead, it

will likely be characterized by the initial sharp drop we have already experienced, followed by a sharp bounce back to a higher-but-not-back-to-normal level, and a slightly upward-sloping recovery after that, with the steepness of that slope dependent on demand factors, supply chain effects, and policy influences.

## **Uncertainty Revolves Around Length of Gradual Recovery**

There is obviously a lot of uncertainty surrounding this forecast. The drop could be steeper or not as steep. The rebound could be faster or slower. GDP could be far below trend by late 2021 or it may be above trend. However, the general pattern (sharp decline, partial upswing, then gradual recovery) seems the most likely result, with the uncertainty revolving around the length of the gradual recovery stage.

The rise in COVID-19 cases in several states has renewed fears of a second wave, but it's important to note that this is still part of the initial pandemic. For the most part, states have paused their re-openings rather than locking down again. That may change. However, there is likely to be an increase in self-imposed isolation regardless of state directives. That means a more gradual pace of economic improvement and perhaps a further decline in GDP in the quarters ahead. Extending support for the unemployed and increasing aid for state and local governments will be key policy decisions facing Congress in the near future.

## **Housing Data Encouraging, Consumer Confidence Slightly Down for Now**

Housing data remain positive, so that is good news for the green industry. New home sales rose 16.6% in May to a 676,000-unit annualized pace. While the increase was a bit more than expected, the prior month's data were revised lower, leaving the trend over the past three months close to the initial estimates. Builders are upbeat, however, with most reporting strong prospective buyer traffic. Existing home sales tumbled 9.7% in May, but existing homes are tallied when the transaction is completed at closing and those data-lag purchase contracts, or pending sales of new homes, by one-to-two months. Keep in mind that the May data also reflect the March and April period, when the economy was largely shut down.

Consumer confidence has held up reasonably well considering the U.S. continues to combat a global pandemic. Confidence measured by the Conference Board was down just 46 points in May from its February pre-COVID peak, and at 86.6, confidence is only as low as it was in 2014. For some context, confidence slid a total of 86.6 points back in the 2008 recession to a record low 25.3. In the 2001 recession, confidence fell a similar 81.1 points over 31 long months and had some false-pops along the way down. The sharp down-turn in March and April confidence was consistent with large swaths of the economy temporarily closed and consumers being confined

to their homes. In May, many stay-at-home orders began to be lifted, and confidence likely brightened, preventing a further drop. We expect confidence rose a bit in June as states re-opening plans got underway. But there remains risk of further declines in coming months, particularly amid increasing positive case counts.

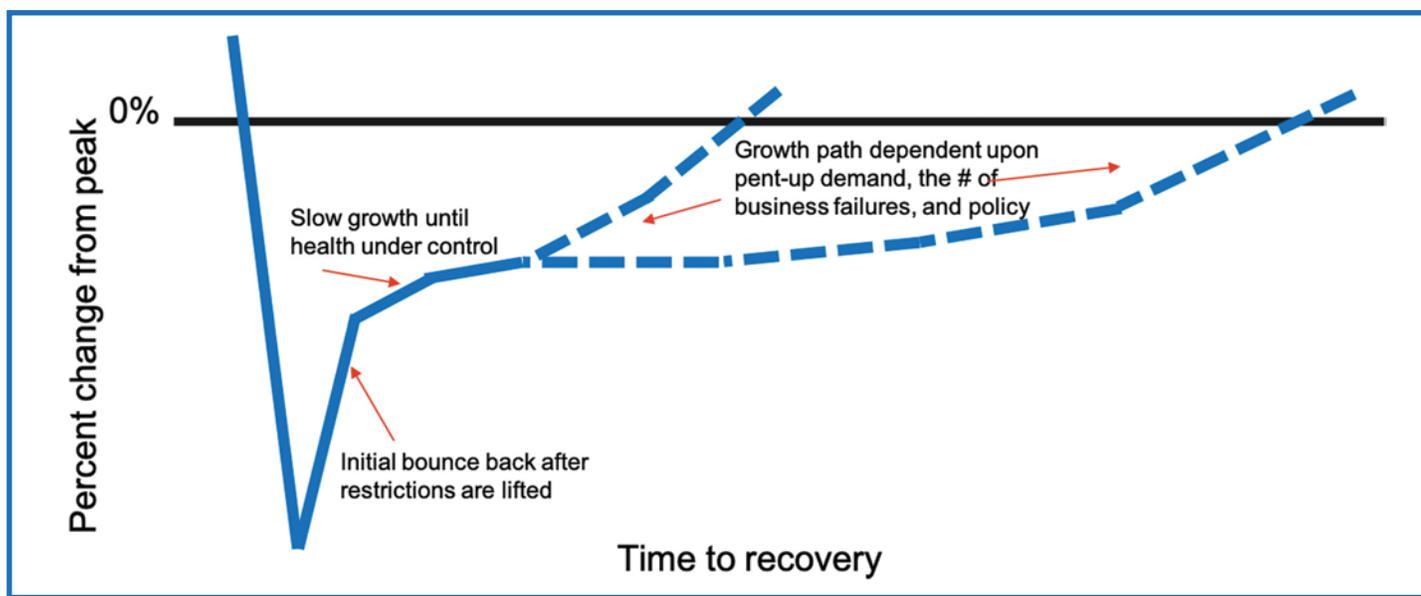
### COVID-19 Threat is the Main Obstruction to Consumer Spending

While I was disappointed in the initial drop in green industry sales this spring, I was pleased with some of the anecdotal information I've been hearing from firms across the industry. If the trends of the general retail sector are any sort of proxy for the lawn and garden retail sector (they usually are), then we should feel pretty good, since they reported a record 17.7% increase in sales in May. Any monthly increase larger than 6.7% would have been a record, so this outturn cleared that bar with room to spare. It was also more than double the

consensus expectation for an 8.4% increase. You could throw some cold water on this by pointing out that after back-to-back record declines, the low base effects from COVID-19 set us up for an easy percentage gain. That may be true, but consider this: in the month of May, general retailers saw more than half of the lost spending return. After being down more than 20%, retail sales are now off only about 8% since February.

In summary, the primary barrier to economic activity at the moment is depressed consumer spending due to the threat of COVID-19 itself as opposed to any state or local government restrictions on economic activity, inadequate income among consumers, or a lack of liquidity for business firms. Traditional macroeconomic tools (e.g., stimulating aggregate demand or providing liquidity to businesses) may have diminished short-run impacts in an environment where consumer spending is fundamentally constrained by health concerns. Hence, the only path to full economic recovery in the long run may be to restore consumer confidence by addressing the virus itself.

### Economic Recovery Projection



Economic recovery from the current recession will likely be characterized by an early rebound after restrictions are lifted, followed by a sluggish upward growth trajectory.

*Reprinted with permission from Greenhouse Grower, August 2020*

*Charlie Hall grew up in the industry on a nursery in western North Carolina. Although an economist by training, he is currently a professor in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M University and holds the Ellison Chair in International Horticulture. [charliehall@tamu.edu](mailto:charliehall@tamu.edu)*

# Evaluating production strategies for Ranunculus in the Intermountain West

This report is funded by the ASCFG Research Foundation.

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## Summary of Need

Most national recommendations for ranunculus advise growers in USDA Hardiness Zones 3-7 to plant in spring for a summer bloom 90-110 days later (e.g. July-Aug), though optimal performance is noted during cool, spring conditions. Trials in New York, however, determined ranunculus may be fall-planted in high tunnels for harvest in April-May at USDA Hardiness Zone 5 (Wien, 2009; Wien, 2013). In Utah, most specialty cut flower production occurs along a 150-mile north/south stretch in the valleys of the Wasatch Front, where zones range 4-7 (USDA-ARS, 2012). However, microclimate often dominates growing conditions over the official classifications because of the state's high elevation, semi-arid climate, and geography, making production unique. In particular, long winters, 30-40F daily fluctuations in air temperature (Utah Climate Center, 2019), and prolonged overnight frosts that coincide with intense daytime temperature and solar radiation make planting times for cool-season crops, like ranunculus, difficult to predict, and early market demands challenging to meet.

Around Salt Lake (Zone 6-7), growers independently discovered that not only can ranunculus survive the winter with just mulch and a low tunnel (as urban farm sizes limit space for high tunnels), but production also improves. Fall plantings can result in an early bloom that peaks during cooler, spring conditions. Conversely, spring plantings flower later when sunlight is too intense and daytime tem-



Photo courtesy of Fawn Rueckert, Sego Lily

perature too warm. However, production is still temperamental. There is uncertainty regarding planting dates, degree of winter protection, northern limits for fall planting, and use of high tunnels. Understanding and optimizing ranunculus production for Utah will help meet early market demands and increase farm profitability.

## Purpose

The goals of this project are to evaluate Ranunculus plant survival, harvest season length and timing, and stem quality and quantity after planting:

- in fall versus spring
- in a high tunnel versus field
- with the use of varying soil insulation methods during winter

## Procedures

The study was located at the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station - Greenville in North Logan, UT (41° 77' N, -111° 8' W) at an elevation of 4,780 ft (USDA Hardiness Zone 4-5). The following conditions were tested:

- 1) *Field Plantings*: no low tunnel or mulch (-LT -M), planted in Nov. 2019, Mar. 2020, and Apr. 2020
- 2) *Field Plantings*: under a low tunnel with fabric (AG-50 frost fabric) and mulch (4 inches of straw) (+LT +M), planted in Nov. 2019, Mar. 2020, and Apr. 2020
- 3) *High Tunnel Plantings*: no low tunnel or mulch (-LT -M), planted in Nov. 2019, Feb. 2020, and Mar. 2020
- 4) *High Tunnel Plantings*: low tunnel with fabric (AG-50 frost fabric) and no mulch (+LT -M), planted in Nov. 2019, Feb. 2020, and Mar. 2020.

Corms of 'LaBelle' were soaked, but not pre-spouted, and then planted at a two-inch depth, in rows spaced six inches apart, and at a staggered 6-inch in-row spacing. One soil temperature sensor was installed at a two-inch depth in 2-3 replicates of each insulation treatment. To test the efficiency of various low tunnel materials at insulating soil temperature over winter, three additional insulation treatments were monitored for soil temperature, but not planted: mulch and no low tunnel, mulch with a low tunnel covered with only 6-mil plastic, and mulch with a low tunnel covered with both frost fabric and plastic.

Emergence was monitored February to May 2020. In April, the low tunnels within the high tunnel were removed. In May, shade cloth was added to the high tunnel and field low tunnels. Harvest occurred 3-5 times per week, and stems were graded as marketable when lengths were 10 inches or greater, straight, and otherwise unflawed.

## Preliminary Results and Discussion

### Temperature Conditions

The high tunnel had daily soil temperature fluctuations with lows that remained just above freezing through winter, and gradually increased from January onward. The presence and absence of low tunnels within the high tunnel had minimal difference on soil temperature at a 2-inch depth.



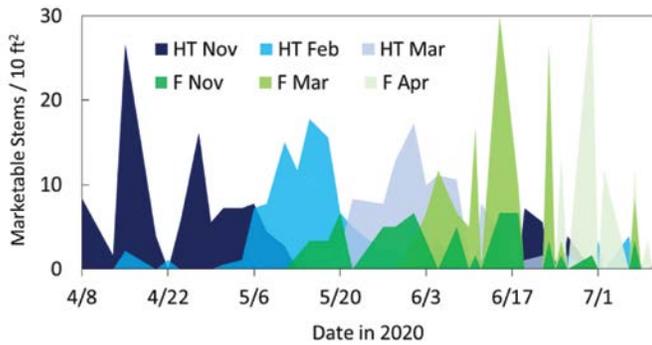
High tunnels (left) and field (right) in North Logan, Utah on 4 Feb. 2020.

In the field, soil temperature fluctuated less through most of winter in all insulation treatments. A heavy, late-November snowstorm covered the field and snow remained through early February, providing natural insulation. As a result, the soil without a low tunnel or mulch (-LT -M) remained at 32F during the coldest months of winter. At this time, soils with mulch (-LT +M) and soils with low tunnels and mulch (+LT +M) were typically 5 degrees warmer (remaining around 37F for most of winter) because of the added insulation from the straw. By February, freeze-thaw periods melted snow and the uninsulated soil (-LT -M) reached lows of 26.5F. Conversely at this time, the field low tunnels provided modest daytime temperature increases; daytime highs from low tunnels and mulch were 3-6F greater than mulched-only soils. The type of low tunnel coverings had a minor effect on soil temperature: fabric + plastic warmed the

**Table 1.** The emergence (%) of ranunculus corms grown in a high tunnel and field, with (+) or without (-) low tunnel (LT) and mulch (M) protection in Logan, UT (USDA Hardiness Zone 5).

Location	Winter Protection	Planting Time	Emergence (%)
High Tunnel	+LT -M	Nov	98%
	-LT -M	Feb	96%
		March	93%
Field	+LT +M	Nov	90%
	-LT -M	March	94%
		April	95%

most during the day in late winter, followed by low tunnels covered with only plastic, and then low tunnels with only fabric, but differences were near negligible. Overall, mulch was most effective at insulating winter soil temperature and was the most economical insulation method, but ensuring its timely removal was critical to avoid etiolated plants. Low tunnels with plastic required venting starting in March, whereas fabric covers cost less and required less maintenance labor, but were more prone to wind damage.



**Figure 1:** Marketable stems per 10 square feet that were harvested in the high tunnel (HT, blue shades) and field (F, green shades) by planting date (Nov, Feb, Mar, and Apr) in 2020.

### Emergence

The high tunnel and field had high emergence rates, regardless of the winter protection method or planting date (Table 1). The lowest spring emergence rates were from planting in November under bare soil conditions (-LT -M) in the field, likely a result of the sub-freezing soil temperatures in Feb. 2020, though winter survival was still relatively high at 90%. In the high tunnel, the emergence rates were lowest from the March 2020 planting at 93%, but this was attributed to rodent damage.

### Harvest Season Timing and Length

In the high tunnel, harvest of November plantings began on 8 Apr. 2020, and peaked 15 Apr. (Figure 1). Harvest of February plantings began 15 Apr. and peaked 15 May, and March plantings began 15 May and peaked 01 Jun. In the field, harvest of November plantings began 13 May and peaked 01 Jun., harvest of March plantings began 01 Jun and peaked 15 Jun, and April plantings began 15 Jun. and peaked 30 Jun. Harvest from all plantings tapered by the second week of July. The



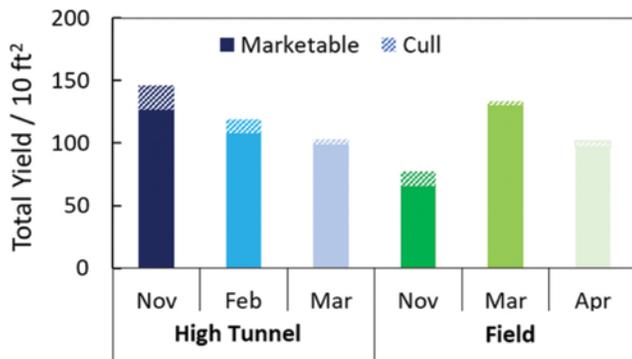
USU Small Farms Lab posing with ranunculus stems on May 6, 2020 (left), and still harvesting on 30 Jun. 2020 (right).

staggered planting dates in the high tunnel and field allowed for an extended harvest that lasted from April – July with well-timed flushes of marketable stems.

The use of low tunnels within the high tunnel did not advance harvest, indicating high tunnels alone in northern Utah are sufficient for overwintering corms, and harvest can be extended by staggered planting dates. In the field, however, the use of a low tunnel and mulch advanced harvest by two weeks compared to corms planted into bare soil. Low tunnels and mulch in the field may not be necessary for the winter survival of corms (particularly in years with heavy snowfall), but provide the advantage of an earlier harvest in spring.

### Yield

Overall yield was greater in the high tunnel than field, but both produced a strong percentage of marketable stems (Figure 2). November plantings produced twice as many total blooms in the high tunnel than field, as peak harvest occurred six weeks earlier during cool, April conditions, yet had overnight protection from adverse weather. March plantings produced the lowest yields in the high tunnel, but also allowed for an extended harvest into late June. In the field, production was greater from March and April plantings, and these helped extend the harvest season later, but also resulted in more narrow windows for harvest. In northern Utah, both fall and spring plantings can produce strong, staggered harvests of marketable stems. Grouped in bunches of 10, ranunculus typically sells for \$15, or \$12 if stems are shorter than 10 inches and otherwise high quality. Ranunculus is a promising and profitable crop for farms in Northern Utah.



**Figure 2:** The total yield as marketable (solid bars) + culled (striped bars) stems per 10 square feet in the high tunnel (HT, blue shades) and field (F, green shades) from April – Jul 2020, by planting date (Nov, Feb, Mar, & Apr).

## Next Steps

Results from only ‘LaBelle’ grown in North Logan, Utah (USDA Hardiness Zone 4-5), were reported here, as data analysis is in process. ‘Gigi’, ‘Amandine’, and ‘Tecolote’ were also tested in North Logan. Six farms along the Wasatch Front that represent warmer USDA Hardiness Zones and microclimates also grew ‘LaBelle’ in the field with November and March plantings under +LT +M and -LT -M conditions and tracked soil temperature. The next steps are to analyze temperature and production across these farms to understand differences in growing conditions on production quantity and quality along the Wasatch Front. North Logan trials will be repeated and expanded through 2023 to capture variability in winter weather, isolate the effects of low tunnels and shade, and test pre-sprouting as a method to further advance harvests.

## What’s the Take-Home Message?

Though findings are from only one winter season, our research indicates that ranunculus can be overwintered in USDA Hardiness Zones less than Zone 7. Winters in Logan, Utah, are somewhat milder and often receive more snowfall than other Zone 5 areas. Therefore, using some winter protection is recommended to insulate the soil. Planting in high tunnels, or using mulch or mulch and low tunnels is recommended for field production. Planting in fall and spring helps stagger harvests.

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Photo courtesy of Heather Griffiths, Wasatch Blooms

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Lindy Bankhead  
Florage



Heather Griffiths  
Wasatch Blooms



Fawn Rueckert  
Sego Lily



Lindsey Waddoups  
Three Sprouts



Shelly Zollinger  
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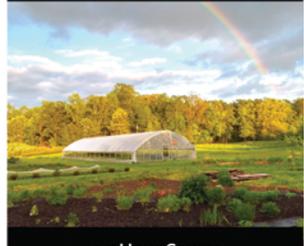


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## Onings Holland

The year 2020 will likely become a separate chapter in the history books—so many extremes and life-changing events in just a couple months. Let's not talk politics, the cause or the way it was managed; let's just talk about how the Coronavirus has impacted and changed the U.S. flower industry.



The day after Valentine's Day I travelled to Europe, and visited several growers and hybridizers in Italy and the Netherlands. The flower market was good, flower growers were content, and the new projects we were working on looked very promising. I remember visiting a very large grower in Napoli, with one of the best Mistral anemones I have ever seen, and in huge numbers.

Four weeks later I received a WhatsApp video from the same greenhouse, where the crop was just rototilled and destroyed, because the market completely collapsed. Remember, most of the Italian-grown flowers are sold via Dutch auctions, and because of the lockdowns, these flowers could not be sold or transported. March and April were tough for the flower industry all over the world. Supermarkets were cancelling their orders with growers



(trucks had to make room for toilet paper). Markets and wholesalers were closing, and we received several cancellation requests. The wholesale market died, wedding industry gone, and the faith in the flower industry was almost gone.

It was important to us to make sure our bulb growers would not give up, so we showed them support. Same for our customers. At all times, we had our eye on the bulb, so to speak.

But, towards the end of April, just like a plant that was pruned back, you saw the flower industry coming back, but in a different way. Flower growers found a way to be creative again. Several growers we work with never used social media, but quickly discovered how powerful it can be. Also, consumers became more conscious about where they buy their groceries, including flowers, not necessarily for the health benefits and environmental reasons, I believe consumers realized they needed to support their local restaurants, business, and products, etc. People are giving each other flowers for support, encouragement, and, most importantly, love. Exactly what a flower represents. Several flower growers I talked with said that they've had Mother's Day type sales for weeks, even for weeks after.





Normally I travel all over the country, but I could not because of travel regulations. I have not seen my customers in Canada for over a year, have not seen the bulb

fields in April, not the Dutch Lily Days in June. Heck, I even missed my parents' 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

**New Introductions** 2020 is also the year when we introduced a few new items like the Italian Viola, Italian Petunia, and Italian Girasole sunflowers. We are working on more items from Italy like Zinnia, Primula, White Sunflowers, Eucalyptus, Agapanthus, Aster, Cardoon, Helichrysum, Clematis, Dahlia, etc., but we need to properly test these first (who's interested?). I was supposed to be back in Italy to see more trials, but the travel ban caused me to stay home. Seed and plugs are or will become available for some of these items.



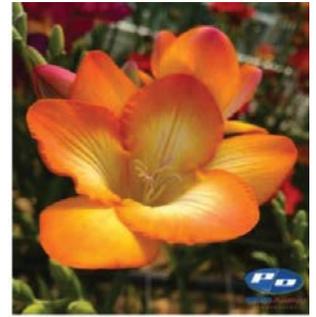
**Italian Ranunculus and Anemone** We are very excited about the new Italian ranunculus and anemone types and varieties and expansion by Biancheri Creazioni. Some of the new 'Hanoi' types are impressive. Biancheri's team is doing a great job improving current and different varieties and types of ranunculus.



**Daffodils and Sonatini** Together with Leenen we are working on introducing Sonatini™, a mini amaryllis more "user friendly" and more affordable to use in flower arrangements. These can be grown year-round and are hardy! And do not forget the Fancy Daffodils: Yosemite Valley, Squaw Valley, and Romantic Paradise are superb cut flowers.



**Freesia** Penning Freesia is expanding their production of Peachy Queen, Starlight, and Strawberry Swirl on our request, plus we cannot wait to test some of their new brown and orange bicolors.



**Peonies** The guys at Groot & Groot grow some gorgeous peonies. They are considered the premier growers of peonies in Holland, Southern France, and Latina (Italy). Their Latina, or Italian, peonies are suitable for growers in milder climates with hardly any frost.

**Lilies** Lily is still our main product, and I'm amazed how few flower growers grow lilies. Likely not knowing how easy you can grow lilies. #ilovelilies Besides the traditional 'Stargazer' types, we have some novelties like Zelmira, a peach OXT, and several new Double Orientals and LxAs. Lilies are amazing and unlimited. Tall, short, large, petit, fragrant or not—check us out at [www.onings.com](http://www.onings.com)



Yes, 2020 is one we'll never forget. But, it makes us very excited for 2021. Just imagine the wedding and event industry opening up again...there will be more weddings, more events, etc. There may not even be enough (white) flowers to fill demand. But, most importantly, this change in consumer behavior will stay, and so will their flower consumption and awareness of locally-grown **specialty cut flowers**. Good job, y'all, and thank you for coloring the world with us.



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***Hydrangea paniculata***  
**'Fire Light Tidbit'™**

A dwarf hydrangea similar to BOBO® for the front of the border with a bun-shaped habit, and proportionately sized, rounded blooms. The late-season blooms emerge a creamy, light green-white and quickly begin to turn raspberry pink, creating a pleasing blend of colors not seen before. 2-3' tall/wide, USDA zones 3-8. To find a list of licensed growers go to: [FireLightTidbitHydrangea.com](http://FireLightTidbitHydrangea.com)



***H. paniculata*** 'Quick Fire Fab'™

A most remarkable, early-blooming hydrangea with lots of wow. It has large, football-sized and shaped blooms with densely packed cruciform flowers of a creamy green color. Soon after, watermelon hues appear at the base of the bloom and work their way up towards the tip. 6-8' tall/wide, USDA zones 3-8.



***Hydrangea serrata***  
**'Let's Dance Can-Do!'™**

An excellent rebloomer—requires a short period of growth to create new wood blooms. Also, because it sets flower buds along the entire length of the stem, if it's cut back or damaged by cold temperatures, lower old wood buds will still develop into flowers. Height 3-4', width 3', USDA zones 5-9.



***Hydrangea arborescens***  
**'Invincibelle Garnetta'®**

Deep garnet-hued buds open into lush pink blooms. It flowers a bit later, which makes it an ideal season-extender and companion to the other fabulous varieties in the Invincibelle® series of native smooth hydrangeas. Height/width 2.5', USDA zones 3-8.



***Cornus sericea*** 'Arctic Fire'® Yellow

Arctic Fire® Yellow dogwood is a new selection of North American native *Cornus* that offers all the durability of the species but with vivid yellow stems. Stunning on its own or interplanted with best-selling Arctic Fire® Red dogwood. Height 4-5', width 6', USDA zones 2-7.



***H. paniculata*** 'Limelight Prime'™

An improved, more refined 'Limelight', with darker leaves, stronger stems, a more compact habit, and upright growth. It makes a great container. The blooms emerge a vivid lime-green and maintain that color until they transition into a bubble gum pink, and then a deep punch pink. 4-6' tall/wide, USDA zones 3-8.



***Syringa*** 'Baby Kim'™

An improved version of garden classic 'Miss Kim' with a more compact habit, and darker purple blooms that do not fade to white. Great fragrance, disease resistance, and superior landscape performance. Height 2'- 3', width 2.5', USDA zones 3-8.

**Snapdragon Costa Summer Series**

A greenhouse forcing series (Group III-IV) with a mix of colors, including orange, pink, rose, white, and yellow. Height 32"-40". A versatile series for spring to early summer planting. Solid, well-rounded spikes on sturdy stems even under less favorable light conditions. A premium quality cut flower for greenhouse, tunnel or open ground.

**Cosmos 'Double Dutch Rose'**

Four-foot stems bearing pure luminous rose, double flowers with golden eye. Broad lacy petals make a big color show. It makes a fit companion for 'Double Dutch White'. For field-grown cut flowers, and massed landscapes.

**Diathus Barbienne Series**

Superb biennial cut flower series, stems 24-32 inches. Among the earliest to bloom in spring. High yielding and uniform in flower time. Improved tolerance to rust disease vs. standard varieties. For professional cut flower production under tunnel or outdoors. Colors include Deep Red, Rose, Violet, White, Mix (10 colors).

**Lisianthus 'Can Can Purple'**

Group 3-4, spray type. Large, deep purple blue flowers are densely petalled with nice rose-form shape. Stem length is about 36"; 45" at closer spacing. Late flowering for summer crops. Each stem produces a spray of flowers on top that open within a tight window to yield a ready-made bouquet. No pinching needed. These labor-saving traits are good for the bottom line. The full spray may reduce the number of stems needed in the arrangement. Good for hoops, or in the field during summer.

### Italian sunflower **Girasole**

Thanks to our very close relationship with growers and hybridizers in Italy, Onings is now able to offer Italian sunflowers. At first glance, these look like a regular sunflower, but nicer. That is true, but thanks to the strong genetics, these varieties are less susceptible to fungal diseases and can be grown closer together. What really sets them apart is that some of our sunflowers are daylength independent and can be grown during the winter.



### **Ranunculus Cloni™**

There are a lot of new varieties being introduced every year. While the demand of Cloni™ Success Hanoi remains very high, similar and more productive varieties are becoming available. Keep your eyes open for Cloni™ Success Confetto, Lady, and Tolosa. Also, in the Cloni™ Pon Pon and Elegance lines, there are several improved varieties now available. The white Cloni™ Pon Pon Iglo is the best seller.



### **Anemone Italian Mistral**

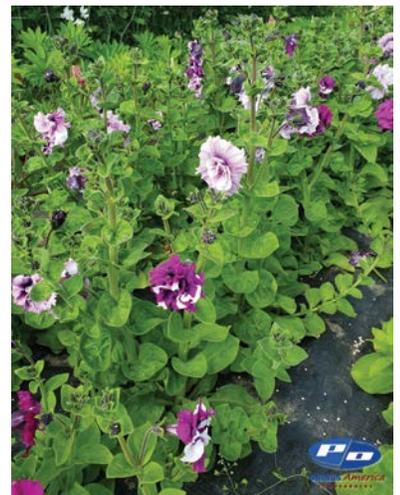
Several new anemones have become available this year, including Mistral The Edge, a very large pink anemone. Rosa Chiaro (pictured) and Bianco Centro Nero are best known. All anemone are easy to grow, bloom very early in late winter, and are very productive.

### **New Italian Anemone**

In the line of Italian anemone, great progress has been made to get good length on some of the double-flowering anemone. Next year we'll show you a white, double-flowering anemone! *Troppo bella!*

### **Penning Freesia Starlight**

Large, fragrant, double, white flowers with a mysterious light pink glow. All Penning freesias are great producers and make excellent cut flowers. Besides Starlight, several other blushed and striped freesia are now available, including the pastel Peachy Canyon.



### **Italian Petunia**

This is the first year we are 'testing' the demand and use of our Italian cut petunia. The trials showed us there is huge potential. This varietal produces a 16" to 20" stem with large flowers and a vase life of about 10 days. It produces multiple stems from a small seed and is easy to grow during the summer. Now that all varieties have proven to produce well, we will work on a balance of color mixes (pastel, white and peach/salmon shades) that meet the demand. We are working on a plug program for fall 2021 as well.



**Fancy Daffodil Mont Citroen Blanc**  
Unfortunately, COVID-19 withheld us from visiting the bulb fields in Holland this year. While several new daffodils are being introduced by W.F. Leenen, it's hard to select new varieties unless you can personally feel, touch, and smell the flowers. Mont Citroen Blanc is a new variety, exclusively available in the USA via Onings America. It is late blooming, very strong with tall stems and a solid base; perfect for cut flower production.

**Italian Viola (pansy)**  
Frankly, more trials need to be done to select the best color and varieties. We carry six different varieties and our goal is to narrow it down to just one or two that are best suitable as an (edible) cut flower. Now the Italian Viola come in a wide range of colors, but with the feedback of this year's trials, we are planning to offer two blends to meet demand. More than likely, the viola will be available as a plug in late 2021.

**Sonatini™ Amaryllis**  
Bigger is not always better! While the large-flowering amaryllis is gorgeous, its thick stems and huge flowers are very difficult to use in smaller arrangements or bouquets. Sonatini™ has the resemblance of a true amaryllis, but is a bit smaller. It is great as a cut flower or as a pot plant. Also, Sonatini™ is hardy and can be left in the ground for repeat flowers. Depending on your zone, Sonatini™ may even flower twice each year. Because a smaller bulb can be used, Sonatini™ is a lot more affordable and available in many colors.



**L x A Hybrid Lilies**  
While a lot of new Oriental and O x T lilies are being introduced each year, most are not so-called "U.S. varieties". The focus of most hybridizers was on the huge Chinese market (remember, it may take 7 to 10 years to make a crossing commercially available). The U.S. market typically asks for a smaller bulb, and vibrant colors for use in bouquets. Not exactly what floral designers are looking for and one of the reason why lilies are not used much by designers. Onings now has a few "pastel and antique" varieties which we believe make a lily sexy again. L x A hybrid lilies are very easy to grow, have no scent, have a great vase life, and mix really well with any type of flower. Pick the stem when the flowers are colored and puffy, but still closed, to avoid any issues with pollen.



Proven Performance.

LUMINARY™  
'Opalescence'  
*Phlox paniculata* PPAF CPERAF

This new Tall Garden Phlox for Proven Winners Perennials boasts well-formed panicles of bi color pink flowers. Improved mildew resistance ensures performance throughout the year. Zones 3-8.



# NEW Cut Flower Marigold Xochi Orange



**Strong stems** and **rich color** make **NEW Cut Flower Marigold Xochi Orange** the **best for bouquets and grower bunches**.

Xochi is short for Xochitl, which means flower or princess of flowers. An excellent option for Summer and Fall cut flower programs, Xochi offers the uniform crops, good shippability and durability to meet the increasing consumer demand for Dia de los Muertos and Halloween celebrations.

Contact your distributor today for availability of NEW Xochi Orange Marigold seed or plugs and visit [bloomstudios.com](https://www.bloomstudios.com) for more information.



**BloomStudios**<sup>SM</sup>

WITH PANAMERICAN SEED<sup>®</sup>

Visit [bloomstudios.com](https://www.bloomstudios.com) for current Terms & Conditions of Sale.  
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**Lisianthus 'Arena I Light Pink'**  
An improvement to the original Arena I Light Pink, it features early, large, light pink flowers with slightly wavy petals and less bud blasting.



**Lisianthus 'Arena I Purple'**  
Even with its earliness, it is easy to achieve a longer stem and good branching with this new addition to the Arena series.



**Lisianthus 'Arena I Pure White'**  
This early-flowering variety boasts brilliantly white, highly double flowers which are medium large.



**Lisianthus 'Corelli III Peach'**  
The Corelli series features large double flowers with fringed petals that have a delicate curl. Peach has a pinky-peach hue and may turn yellowy-peach under cool conditions.



**Lisianthus 'Corelli II Light Lavender'**

Light Lavender's petals are the most fringed within the Corelli series, and produces a stable number of petals even under high temperature conditions.



**Helianthus F1 'Sunrich Orange Summer DMR'**

Plant height, growing speed as well as flower shape and color are similar to Sunrich Orange Summer with the added value of resistance to multiple strains of downy mildew.



**Callistephus 'Nina Plus White'**

Large numbers of small, semi-double flowers are produced on sprays, early flowering. The Nina series features more disease resistance than other varieties.



**Callistephus 'Nina Plus Purple'**

Vigorous and vibrant, Nina Plus Purple has an abundance of small, semi-double flowers. The Nina series features more disease resistance than other varieties.



**Lisianthus 'Croma II Champagne'**

Good branching, stable flower color and thick petals, Champagne is an excellent addition to the Croma series.



**Achillea 'Firefly Sunshine'**

A yarrow with good height at 28-30". Yellow flowers hold their color for a long time with the whole plant appearing as though it is in flower at once. A Proven Winners® Perennial.



**Allium 'Serendipity'**

Globe-like rosy purple flowers are approximately 2" in diameter. Mature plants are packed with dozens of stalks, 15-20" tall. Unlike bulb alliums, this variety blooms later in mid to late summer. Seedheads hold their shape after flowering is finished. A Proven Winners® Perennial.



**Buddleia 'Lilac Cascade'**

Pale lilac panicles are an impressive 12-18" long and incredibly stout. At maturity, the panicles cascade down the habit for maximum display, similar to a bridal wreath spirea.



**Baptisia DECADENCE® DELUXE 'Blue Bubbly'**

Sixteen-inch long spikes of pale lavender blue flowers extend well above the foliage. The full, bushy habit reaches 4-4½' in height. Plants are very long-lived once established. A Proven Winners® Perennial.



**Clematis 'Rain Dance'**  
A bush clematis with excellent height, reaching 42". Indigo blue flowers are notably large for a bush clematis, at 2½-3" wide. Wispy white seedheads follow flowering.



**Origanum 'Drops of Jupiter'**  
This ornamental oregano provides interest both as a flowering and foliage plant. Fragrant chartreuse foliage holds up in full sun before being covered in flowers in late summer. Purple calyxes continue to look nice after mauve pink flowers have past. A Proven Winners® Perennial.



**Echinacea COLOR CODED™ 'The Price is White'**  
Five-inch wide pure white flowers have horizontally held petals for maximum display. The plant is 20-22" tall, and is comprised of many well-branched stems. A Proven Winners® Perennial.



**Phlox LUMINARY™ 'Opalescence'**  
The new gold standard in powdery mildew resistance. 'Opalescence' has a moderate height of 30-32" tall and well-formed panicles. Light pink flowers have dark pink eyes. A Proven Winners® Perennial.

**Phlox LUMINARY™ 'Ultraviolet'**  
An improvement on the classic 'Nicky', 'Ultraviolet' matches its predecessor in height and flower color but adds a sturdier habit and improved mildew resistance. A Proven Winners® Perennial.





**Sunflower Sunfinity™**

Perfect for pick-your-own and photography sessions. Instagram-worthy plants for 9-12 weeks. Continuous flowering and branching. Golden yellow petals with dark center. Bouquet-size flowers. At maturity, 4 feet tall by 4 feet wide in full sun. Succession plant if harvesting regularly. Available as seed or plugs from your favorite supplier.



**Dahlia 'Moon Lady'**

Vibrant, large yellow flowers on strong stems. Try 'Moon Lady' from cuttings or plugs next season.



**Dahlia 'Café Au Lait'**

She needs no introduction, but is new to Syngenta Flowers through our acquisition of the exceptional Verwer genetics. The creamy, blousy blooms of 'Café Au Lait' are truly irresistible. Try 'Café Au Lait' from cuttings or plugs next season.



**Dahlia Karma Series**

Nine beautiful varieties now available from Syngenta Flowers. Karma is known for its strong stems, productive plants, and beautiful blooms. Try Karma from cuttings or plugs next season.



**English Lavender Scent™ Early**

See how easy lavender can be from seed! Available in the traditional blue but also a fun, unique white that will get your customers talking. First-year flowering perennial or treat as an annual. 12-16" stem length.

**Lavender Vintro™ Forte Blue**

A strong series of English lavender ideal for overwintered culture. Strong habits and growth hold up to the rigors of wet and cold overwintering. Strong flower stems, 14-18" stem length. Available as cuttings or plugs from your favorite supplier.





**Lavender Violeta™ Purple**

The first ever Spanish lavender from seed with repeat flowering. Vigorous habits with large high quality flowers rival vegetative varieties. A breakthrough in breeding that elevates the Spanish lavender class. First-year flowering. 14-20" stem length.



**Penstemon Arabesque®**

Summer alternative to snapdragons. Available in Appleblossom, Red, Orchid, Pink, and Violet varieties. Branching habit with strong stems.



**Aquilegia Kirigami™**

An improvement to Origami. First-year flowering perennial. Large, upright-facing flowers. Perfect tucked into bouquets. Red, pink, yellow, and blue varieties available.



**Viola Tiger Eye™**

Distinctive veining pattern and rich colors make this a must-grow novelty viola for cuts. Available in Yellow and Red varieties and a mix.

### Ornamental Cabbage 'Condor Red' and 'Condor White'

Both 'Condor Red' and 'Condor White' are earlier to color with taller stems (24-30") than the leading competing variety. The ideal round-shaped heads are small and held on strong and straight stems. Stems are easy to cut and bunch. Available in three colors: Pure White, Red, and White.



### Celosia 'Chief Fire Improved'

Fire Improved is a new bright, bold and overall *hot* color. Fire Improved offers improved uniformity for earliness, flower shape, habit, and stem length. Chief can be direct sown in the cut flower bed or field and is highly suited for production in areas with high temperatures. Available in Carmine, Fire Improved, Gold, Persimmon, Red, Rose, and a Mix.



### Lisianthus 'Echo Improved'

Group 1, standard double spray type. 'Pure White Improved' features larger flowers with an improved plant habit and more top flowering. Echo's strong stems (36-48") easily support gorgeous all-double flowers. Available in Blue, Champagne, Lavender, Pink, Pink Picotee Improved, Pure White Improved, Purple, and Yellow.



#### **Lisianthus 'Voyage 2 Improved'**

Group 2, double flowers. The Voyage series features gorgeous large, fringed flowers with strong petals that withstand the rigors of shipping. Pure White has longer and sturdier stems with the same true white color and series earliness. Available in Blue, Champagne, Deep Rose, Green, Light Apricot, Pink, White Improved, and Yellow.



#### **Lisianthus Echo Purple (New in 2019)**

A Group 1, standard double flower-spray type. New Purple is pure color from late bud to full flower. 'Echo Purple' features large flowers with a strong plant habit and top flowering. Echo's strong stems (36-48") easily support gorgeous all-double flowers. Available in Blue, Champagne, Lavender, Pink, Pink Picotee Improved, Pure White Improved, Purple, and Yellow.

#### **Delphinium Candle Violet Shades Improved (New in 2019)**

Candle is suited for winter production and flowers within a minimum of 10 hours of day length. Vibrant Violet Shades Improved matches the series better by offering long stems (48-60"), better plug performance and more uniform flowering. Available in Blue Shades, Violet Shades Improved, and White Shades Improved.



#### **Marigold COCO (New in 2019)**

Marigold COCO offers uniform earliness, long stem length (24-36"), and fully double blooms. COCO is suitable for tighter space production; especially when disbudded. Crop time is 12-15 weeks, and seed is available bobtailed. Available in three colors. Orange, intense vibrant orange; Gold, beautiful golden orange; Yellow, bright intense yellow.



**Lilium OT 'Lovestown'**

'Lovestown's' color is a rich cerise pink on large blooms. Plants have a great bud count. This true pink OT that will definitely catch your customer's eye. Overall height is 50 inches, and growing time is 90-100 days.



**Lilium OT 'Belleville'** A deeper, richer yellow color than its predecessors, 'Belleville' is a deep sunshine yellow with large blooms. 'Belleville' has a mature height approaching 50 inches.



**Roselily 'Anouska'**

Sure to be a hit is the new roselily 'Anouska'. With its gorgeous pink and white blooms it is stunning! It is a pollen-free Oriental with large double flower blooms that can easily reach up to 4". 'Anouska' has a mature height of 28-32". Growing time is approximately 100-110 days.



**Lilium OT 'Touchstone'**

This beautiful lily has fragrant violet-red/pink flowers and blooms naturally in July and August. With a mature height of 50-55" this plant will be a terrific addition to a bouquet. Lots and lots of blooms! Growing time is approximately 105-115 days.



**Roselily 'Ciara'**

This double Oriental roselily has dark pink petals with deep red/pink centers. It has a soft fragrance and can reach heights of 40. Roselilies are known for their exceptional shelf life. Growing time is about 95-100 days.



**Roselily 'Monica'**

Monica is a stunning pure white roselily. It is pollen free with multiple flowers to wow your customers. Growing time is approximately 110-120 days with a height of about 50 inches.



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**WHERE PASSION  
COMES TO BLOOM**

// Dahlia

// Roselily

// Calla

// Asiatic, Oriental, & OT Lily

// Freesia

// Alstroemeria

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**Matthiola 'Katz Hi Double White'**  
 This top-selling color will produce approximately 90% double-flowering plants. Twice the yield of standard varieties. It requires less cold during bud formation, resulting in a more programmable series in warmer conditions. It delivers a shorter crop time, uniform stem length and timing, and better heat tolerance than traditional field types.



**Celosia Sunday™ Cherry**  
 First professional cut version of the popular plume-shaped celosia. Full plumes and long, strong stems enhance high-end retail mixed bouquets. Short, programmable production time and high yield are ideal for high-density programs. Excellent shippability and vase life. Features a bright cherry color with clean, green foliage.



**Panicum 'Frosted Explosion'**  
 We are pleased to reintroduce this popular variety in 2021; it is also now available only as multipelleted seed, so you get up to 6 seeds in each pellet. This allows for more even germination and more harvestable stems per transplant. This easy-to-grow grass adds a delicate texture to any bouquet. Dries well. Harvest stems when seed heads are green all the way to bronze tinged. Stems last 10 to 14 days in a vase. Grow under long days for optimal stem length; see bloomstudios.com technical resources for key growing tips.



**Lisianthus 'Can Can Purple'**  
 Medium, double flowers with a top-flowering habit ideal for use in bouquets. Bred and selected for reduced sensitivity to rosetting, resulting in less risk in production. Can Can is group 2.5, with slightly later timing ideal for late spring and summer crops. Top flowering, spray-type lisianthus has highly filled flowers.



**Lisianthus 'Flare Jade'**  
 Produces a spray of flowers on the top of each stem that opens within a short window, giving a bouquet effect to every stem. Bred and selected for reduced sensitivity to rosetting, resulting in less risk in production. Jade brings a trendy light green color to the assortment.



**Snapdragon 'Potomac Red Improved'**  
This industry-leading series is selected for stem and flower quality, photoperiodic response, and earliness to flower. A group 4 snapdragon best for long days, high light, and warmer temperatures. Plants produce tall, strong stems, and long spikes with good flower quality. Can be grown year-round with supplemental high-intensity light.



**Snapdragon 'Maryland Rose'**  
Your best choice for cool-season, low-light and low-temperature conditions. Grow this energy-efficient series with other Group 1, 2 varieties for fall, winter and spring programs. Well-defined flower spikes are produced on sturdy, clean stems.

**Early Release 2022 Introductions (Available Now)**



**Dianthus 'Sweet Neon Purple'**  
Versatile and programmable series can be produced without vernalization and is the best dianthus for cooler production seasons. A top-notch filler series that features large, long-lasting blooms on strong stems. Very uniform height and flowering with excellent retail holdability. Bright purple really pops in bouquets.



**Snapdragon 'Potomac Dark Pink'**  
Brings a key color in the dark pink/rose category in line with the newer breeding in the Potomac series; a great match to Pink. Replaces Rose with a more uniform flowering variety and improved bud taper. This group 4 snapdragon is best for long days, high light and warmer temperatures.



**Cut Flower Marigold 'Xochi Orange'**  
Strong stems and rich colors for summer and fall cut flower programs. Xochi means "flower" or "princess of flowers" and is a shortened version of Xochitl, an ancient Mayan word used most commonly in Mexico. Uniform, shippable, durable; great for Dia de los Muertos, and Halloween bouquets and grower bunches.



**Oriental lily 'Silverside'**

A knockout variety for a white Oriental. 'Silverside' is by far the finest upward-facing white Oriental we have ever seen, with wonderful fragrance. Approximately 110 forcing days and 40 to 44 inches in height, producing large white flowers with a pleasant fragrance.



**OT hybrid lily 'Redford'**

Bears solid rich red, blooms with no spots that do have a hint of lime-green in the nectary center to add excitement. Not a deeply scented as most OTs. Fragrance is more reminiscent of its Oriental liliium parentage. It will flower for you in 100 days on just about 40-44" tall stem.



**OT hybrid lily 'Felino'**

This is an excellent new selection that has the potential to replace many or all yellow OTs. Bred for the American cut flower market that uses many yellows. The stem is very sturdy and provides 3-5 buds from a 16-18 size bulb. What we like about 'Felino' is that the bulbs store well, so we can continue throughout the year. It blooms in 95 days.



**Calla 'Montevideo'®**

Calla lilies are the most unusual and interesting flowers. The name comes from the Greek word for "beautiful." This variety color is almost black. The 'bloom' is actually a modified leaf known as a spathe, sits at the top of the leafless stalk. Inside the spathe, you can see the tiny true flowers on the stalk.



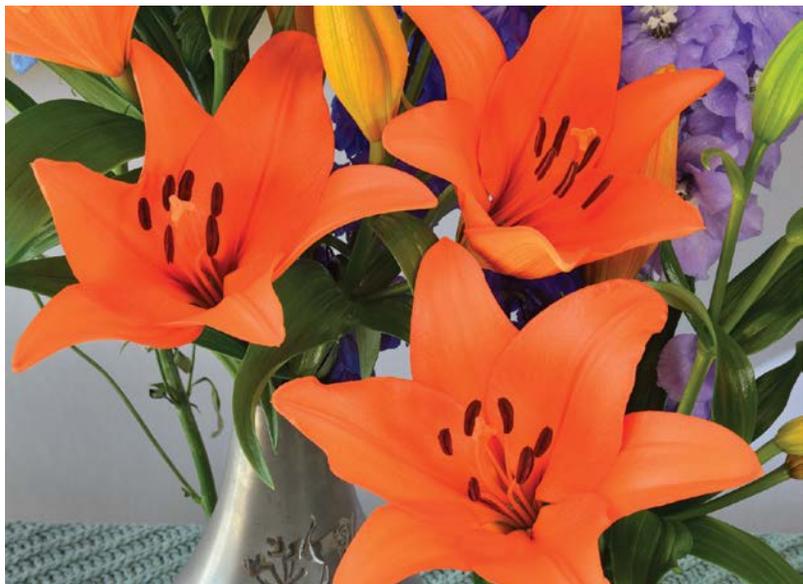
**Calla 'Dubai Nights'®**

'Dubai Nights' is a nice upright, deep color calla lily excellent for cuts. This semi-evergreen perennial with broadly lance-shaped, glossy, white-spotted, dark green leaves blooms from early summer to early fall with large funnel-shaped, maroon spathes with creamy-white margins. An absolute showstopper and very recently introduced in the U.S.



**Roselily Doria®**

Doria is one of the deepest full pink varieties in the roselily series. The retail market likes this flower very much because it presents itself as a double-flowering 'Stargazer' look, with no pollen, providing a pleasant fragrance very well. The color is close to a deep pink with reddish undertone including the Stargazer-like freckles in it. Definitely worth your trying.



**LA Hybrid 'Surfside'**

One fantastic-looking orange-flowering lily! We suggest using size 14/16, which will give you 3 to 5 blooms. 'Surfside' is excellent for the South, or when growing in the hotter times of the year. Upright flowers, deep rich color tone that does not fade when bloom gets older.



**Cosmos 'Double Click Bicolour'**  
Fully double blooms in shades of burgundy-purple and white. Tall plants have abundant foliage which can also be used as filler.



**Wangenheimia lima fishbone grass**  
Novelty flat seedheads give distinction to small bouquets. Also dries to a light green colour.



**Lisianthus 'Corelli Lavender'**  
Won our hearts when the first bud opened. Wavy petals and soft lilac colour are on trend for bridal work.

**Zinnia 'Key Lime Pie'**  
Make summery crisp bouquets this blend of white and green medium-sized, double blooms.



**Sunflower 'Sunfill Green'**  
Bold green filler for large arrangements. A new and unusual way to use sunflowers, this kind grown for its buds.



**Craspedia PAINBALL™ JUMBO**

If you've been underwhelmed by seed-grown craspedia, meet 'Jumbo', the newest in the Paintball™ series from Danziger (the folks that brought us Scoop™ Scabiosa and Skyler™ Veronica). 'Jumbo' has the largest heads of any craspedia, producing uniform yellow globes sometimes exceeding 1.5" in diameter on stems up to 3 feet tall. Craspedia prefers a Mediterranean climate, but is quite adaptable. Hardy to 25 degrees. Craspedia dries perfectly and can be painted or dyed for a wider range of colors. Photo courtesy of Danziger.

PLUGS AND PERENNIALS FOR FLOWER FARMERS

A photograph of a man with a beard and a dark t-shirt, smiling and holding a large, vibrant bouquet of flowers. The bouquet includes various colors like yellow, orange, pink, and white. The background is a dark, rustic wooden structure, possibly a barn or greenhouse.

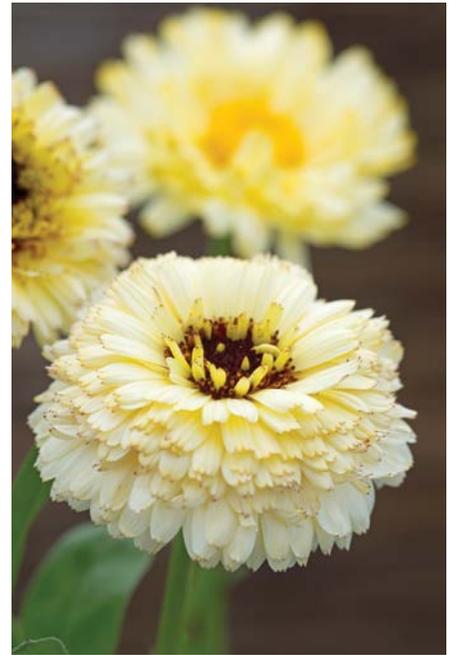
[www.farmerbailey.com](http://www.farmerbailey.com)  
[www.farmerbaileyperennials.com](http://www.farmerbaileyperennials.com)



**Nicotiana langsdorfii 'Bronze Queen'**  
 Unique, hot chocolate-colored flowers, with contrasting green calyx. Pelleted seed. Height: 3 feet. Breeder: Sahin brand of Takii Europe.



**Aster (Callistephus chinensis) 'Bonita Shell Pink'**  
 New to the popular Bonita series is Shell Pink, an on-trend, light pink color that deepens as the flower matures! Beautiful, fully double pompon flowers, held at a perfect angle for maximum impact. Fusarium tolerant. Shell Pink joins the other colors in series: Blue, Light Blue, Pink, Rose, Scarlet, White, and formulated Mix. Crop Time: 15 weeks, Stem Length: 30-36 inches, Spacing: 4 x 5 inches. Coated seed. Breeder: Sakata



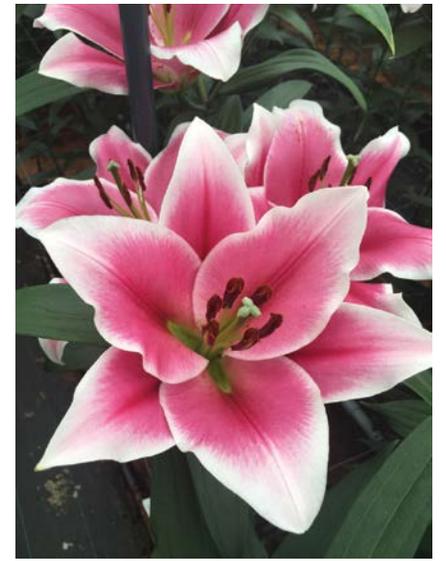
**Calendula officinalis 'Ivory Princess'**  
 White double flowers, with dark or light center. A unique color break. Raw seed. Height: 28 inches. Breeder: Sahin brand of Takii Europe.



**Lily 'Proposal'**  
 A new white Oriental lily with huge upward-facing flowers that absolutely dwarfs all other lilies. The flowers are 12-14 inches across! 110 day force time, height of 40". A show-stopper for sure!



**Lily 'Tigris'**  
 A new very nice bicolor OT Hybrid with large flowers, very strong stems, and extremely dark green leaves.



**Lily 'Love Day'**  
 A new pink-flowering Oriental, with shorter and wider dark green leaves, strong stems, and upward-facing flowers. Flower color does not fade with age!



**Matricaria (Tanacetum parthenium)  
'Campagne Improved'**

Single flowered spray-type Matricaria with small pure white ray florets around yellow centers. Improved selection with dark green foliage and natural appeal. Uniform, disease tolerance, and ability to thrive in less favorable climates. Culture requires 14 hours of light, and can be grown year round, when light is available. Stems: 24-32 inches. Pelleted seed. Breeder: Evanthia BV.



**Dahlia 'Night Silence'**

A softly colored decorative dahlia with dark stems and coppery foliage. Interesting color that coordinates with just about any other color in a bouquet. Plants reach 40", and produce 5" diameter flowers.



**Dahlia 'Black Pierre'**

A new "black/burgundy" dahlia to add to your crop plan. Sturdy stems with ball-shaped flowers on 40" tall plants with green foliage. These 3" ball dahlias are good for straight bunches, and as a focal flower in mixed bouquets.

**Lily 'Sarah Bernhardt'**  
One of the best pink Oriental doubles on the market today, it consistently gets higher flower prices than all other doubles on the market today. Very strong stems, about 36" tall, The flower color does not change with time, it will open till the last bud after cutting!



**Dahlia 'Dark Destiny'**

A 5" decorative dahlia is produced on 40" tall plants. The flower color is a rich burgundy shade that is in high demand for event and wedding work.



**Dahlia 'Kick Off'**

A new, soft orange decorative dahlia that grows on 40" tall plants. The dark-colored, stiff stems make this a great cut flower. The 4" diameter flowers work well in mixed bunches and bridal bouquets.

## NORTHEAST

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont



### Bailey Hale

Ardelia Farm & Co.  
ardeliafarm@gmail.com

Successful flower farming is a combination of growing, marketing, and selling. I have no wisdom to share on how to market and sell during a pandemic (our sales are down 99% for 2020), but I do still know how to grow things, and I've been focusing on that this year. You can always hone your horticultural skills, regardless of how long you've been at it. As you may know, we specialize in sweet peas, so let me share my tips for success.

Autumn is the perfect time for many, dare I say most, of us to sow sweet peas. I see plenty of misinformation, or partially correct information, about sweet peas out there, so as one who lives and breathes sweet peas, let's break it down. Pay attention to these temperature ranges and figure out when you can offer these conditions to your plants. All flowers will thrive best if you give them the conditions they prefer, rather than imposing your conditions on the flower. Few are as particular as sweet peas.

If you can keep your babies above 20F all winter, you can sow any time after you feel that fall nip in the air. Sowing from mid-September into early winter gives you a chunky, well-rooted transplant that will leap out of the ground when spring weather arrives. Southern growers especially need to start in the fall in order to have a chance at enjoying flowers before the spring and summer heat arrives.

### Sowing methods: Keep 'em cool!

I prefer to use a deep 50 cell tray (I like the T.O. SureRoots deep 50 tray), but any deep cell or pot with a good volume of soil will work. In most cases they will spend most of the winter in this tray, so larger cells are better than smaller. Sow seeds one-half to one inch deep and water well. There is no need to soak sweet pea seeds before sowing. Soaking slightly reduces your germination rate and increases the chance of spreading of pathogens.

Germinate at 55F. Sweet peas have no business on heat mats, under lights, or on your windowsill! You will see growth in 7-14 days. *As soon as* you see growth emerging, move these seedlings into full sun if they aren't already in a sunny location,



Cold-grown transplant produced in a 5" deep container, showing large root system and natural branching.



Naturally-grown sweet peas.

and maintain between 32-55F. Once you see some leaves run them even cooler. Ours spend all winter around 35F. There is no harm in letting your seedlings get frosted. Brief spells down to 20F are of no concern in this juvenile stage.

Direct sowing can work for some, but beware of mice, slugs, birds, and soggy soil.

### Growing-on and transplanting

Southern growers will want to transplant into the location where they will flower as soon as the plants have a few leaves. Since Southern growers may have their plants in trays for only 6-8 weeks, a smaller cell tray can suffice, but choose a deep tray to accommodate the long root system. Never allow seedlings to dry out. If you have a fall heat wave coming, but you've already started your seedlings, put that tray in your cooler for a few days to avoid the worst of the heat.

For those of us with wintery winters, keep your plants wherever you can maintain them in full bright natural light, but as cold as possible; 33-45F is ideal for this slow growth period. You will see short, stocky tops but the roots will be getting huge below the surface. We use a minimally heated greenhouse because we experience extreme cold here in Vermont. If you are generally above 20F in winter, growing them outside may be perfect. Don't let them get waterlogged, but don't worry about brief cold snaps. Growing in trays gives you flexibility. You can drag those trays into a garage if a cold snap is coming, or even put them into a cooler and keep them just above freezing for a few days. They will be fine. Again, colder is better than warmer for sweet peas.

As spring approaches, transplant outside or in tunnels when you are reasonably sure they will stay above 20F. Cold soil is fine, but persistently wet soil is a problem. Sweet peas are heavy feeders. Apply compost and manure liberally, and feed with a liquid feed of your choice. Anything recommended for tomatoes will suffice.

Cold-grown transplants will branch on their own. If you have grown them too warm or too dark, you may have very tall, stretched plants with no side shoots. In this case pinch out the tips to encourage branching and vow to grow your transplants colder and brighter next time!

**Trellising methods and stem length**

We prefer plastic trellis netting as it is affordable and durable and widely available. You can use any sort of fencing or chicken wire or twine you may have on hand. Plants can easily exceed 8’ in height and can get quite heavy, so plan accordingly.

We generally cordon train our plants, where each plant is restricted to one leader, and all side growth is removed. This results in very long flower stems. It is highly labor intensive and probably not worth it for most growers. Naturally-grown plants are simply plants that are allowed to climb and branch as they please. Early in the bloom cycle you will still get some long stems. As the plants get larger and weather warms you will see stem length shorten. At this point you can cut them with a bit of the vine to achieve a usable length. Many florists love the leaves and tendrils. Cut EVERY open flower off of the plant at least once a week to keep the plant producing.

The longest stems occur when plants are given a 45F/65F night/day cycle. While variety selection is important, there are few cut flowers that are more dependent on their growing conditions for size and quality. We all like to blame our seed/bulbs/plugs for poor results in a crop, but with sweet peas, the blame almost always falls squarely on the grower!



Long stems of commercial multifloral varieties grown under cool spring conditions using the cordon method.

**Daylength**

Sweet peas are naturally long day plants, needing 12 or more hours of sun to flower. Of course the long days of summers come with heat, so luckily there are varieties that will bloom under shorter days. “Winter” varieties bloom with 10+ hours of light, and “spring” varieties need 11+ hours of light. Don’t be fooled into thinking winter or spring varieties are somehow more cold hardy—it just designates their daylength response. All sweet peas are identical in their desired temperature range. Southern growers will want to stick with winter types so the plant will bloom when temperatures are favorable.

**Primary types of sweet peas**

*Grandifloras* These most closely resemble wild sweet peas, and for the first 200 years in cultivation were the only sweet peas available. They have small rounded flowers, 3-4 per stem, are often very fragrant, grow well outdoors, and produce in abundance. They are generally too short for cutting as individual stems, but are perfect for cutting with a bit of the vine attached. Very few grow grandifloras for cutting, but they should be considered. Some grandifloras are very old while others are recent creations. ‘Mrs. Collier’, ‘Dorothy Eckford’, ‘Almost Black’, ‘Turquoise Lagoon’, and many others fall into this category.

*Spencers* The first Spencer sweet pea showed up as a mutation around 1900. ‘Countess Spencer’ was the first variety to have large ruffled flowers, and all Spencer-type sweet peas since then have been bred from this initial discovery. These can have very long stems for cutting, generally produce up to 4 flowers, and come in a huge range of colors and patterns. They are most often summer flowering, needing 12 or more hours of daylight. Thus they are not well suited for winter production but will do well in cool summer locations. ‘White Frills’, ‘Windsor’, ‘Mol-



Naturally-grown sweet peas.



lie Rilstone’, ‘Nimbus’, and ‘Jilly’ are just a few of the hundreds of desirable varieties available.

*Multifloras* As you might assume, these are the types with 5-6 or more flowers per stem, and understandably have been bred for cut flower producers. Many multifloras are

also “winter” or “spring” types, making them a good choice for Southern growers in winter. Generally speaking they do just as well for northern growers producing in the summer, and they will often come into flower a week or two before Spencers. Since these have historically been bred as commercial cutting strains they tend to have the longest stems of all. They tend to have slightly less ruffled and slightly smaller flowers than Spencers, but can be forgiven on account of their stem length. ‘Sunshine’, ‘Elegance’, ‘Bouquet’, ‘Solstice’, and ‘Mammoth’ are some of the multiflora series you may encounter, with many colors available in each series. We use mainly the ‘Sunshine’ series in our cutting beds all season. You are advised to buy seed from a sweet pea specialist as oftentimes cheap seed has deteriorated genetically and won’t live up to expectations.

**Pests**

Aphids and thrips are the primary insect pests to watch out for, and powdery mildew and botrytis are the fungal pathogens of most concern. Be ready to act at the first sight of any of these, or employ preventative measures to prevent them from taking hold. Mosaic virus is spread by aphids, so aphid control will prevent viral pathogens as well.

**Postharvest**

Cut when one-half to two-thirds of the flowers are open. We cut directly into Chrysal AVB, to protect them from ethylene damage, and stems go right in the cooler. After 3-12 hours in AVB, we transfer to Chrysal Professional 3, which has more sugar than a standard holding solution. Stems handled in this manner will hold in the cooler for up to 5 days, and then last an additional week out of the cooler. If you are opposed to anti-ethylene treatment, your flowers will last only about 3 days, which may be fine for sales to local wedding designers. Cutting them on the vine seems to offer a bit of natural ethylene protection.

Yes, sweet peas are divas and require more fuss than most any other cut flower crop. Maybe they don’t make commercial sense for your operation, but at least plant a small patch for personal enjoyment. Treat yourself. You deserve it.

**MID-ATLANTIC**

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



**Michelle Elston**

Roots Cut Flower Farm  
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Saying NO may be your superpower. Or at least, it may be the key to your sanity. I hate saying NO. Somehow, it feels like giving up, not pleasing, not meeting expectations. Yet every time I say NO, my business gets stronger, my staff is happier, my mental health improves, and my farm improves. Here are a few examples of ways I’ve said NO over the past few years (and some ways to say yes, when you really mean NO):

NO to small orders. I try really hard to think of the cost of filling an order, especially if we’re delivering the flowers. Time to grow, harvest, assemble an order, and most importantly, communicate with a customer, all count as part of the cost of the transaction. If I can group orders, they may be collectively worthwhile, yet there are times when we simply say NO because the costs are too high. The way to say yes to these customers is to direct them to our existing structure: pick up at a farmers’ market we’ll already be attending, or communicate which days we deliver to supermarkets in their area.

NO to drop-in visits. We are not open to the public. This was a really hard NO for me to make. But my focus, flow, and productivity have greatly increased since I’ve established this farm rule. We have a “by appointment” sign at the road, and if people drop by, we hold firm and tell them we are not open to the public. The



yes to this is that (during non-COVID-19 times) we have several on-farm pop-up shops throughout the year, and we encourage everyone to come for one of these days. We keep postcards of dates in the barn and give them to drop-in people, encouraging them to come back later.

NO to answering every form of communication. We eliminated a phone number for Roots about 4 years ago. This frustrates people, for sure, but it's been life changing for me. We take orders only via email. If someone contacts us any other way, I respond by asking them to email our Info account. We have one person who handles all orders, and this keeps everything organized without things slipping through the cracks. You may decide a phone number is necessary for you, but I'd encourage you to not be slave to every form of communication that exists. You could easily spend your whole day checking Instagram, Facebook messenger, email, website contact forms, phone calls, texts and more, without ever getting into the field to actually grow your product.

NO to underperforming plants. Here's a deep secret: I hate dahlias. I said it. In our area, they get potato leafhoppers, Japanese beetles, cucumber beetles, stink bugs, powdery mildew, and more. Summers are hot and they take forever to really kick into bloom. So we grow only three varieties, and I don't give them much attention at all. Along these lines, we are quick to eliminate poor plant varieties, till in aging perennials and replant with young, vigorous ones, pull out shrubs that are not worth their space, and give up all together on things that just don't do well in our climate. I'm a plant lover through and through, so the yes is obviously to try new varieties all the time, but to ruthlessly eliminate whatever is not earning its space.

NO to a big customer. One of the hardest decisions I ever made for Roots was to say NO to a grocery account which we had for about 5 years. It was a significant part of our revenue, and I was terrified. But we simply were not a good match for this company's business model. Both parties were frustrated, and I knew we had different goals and values. The very year we said NO to this chain, we experienced unprecedented growth with another chain, and have never looked back. We now are in business relationships with companies who are great matches for our product and everyone is profiting.

I'm sure you've made a million NO decisions during this COVID-19 this season. Which ones will you continue to enforce as you move forward? For me, in hindsight, I often wonder what took me so long to say NO to something that was bogging me down. The freedom, momentum, and growth that emerge are so refreshing. And of course, the beauty of a NO is that you can always change your mind!



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## SOUTHEAST

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



### Val Schirmer

Three Toads Farm  
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### This Year's Top Flowers and Foliages from the Southeast Region

It was a great idea by the *Quarterly* editor to move the New Varieties section to the fall issue of the *Quarterly* in 2018, and I once again asked the Southeast members for their VERY favorite flower and foliage cultivars for my fall article.

I always love sharing what's performing well in our fields, tunnels and greenhouses—whether it's something new or a good ole workhorse that can be counted on just about every year, no matter what Mother Nature throws our way. It helps us all be better, more successful growers.

This year I decided not to summarize what you told me, but instead to use your own words and descriptions—I enjoy how personalities and excitement shines through!

**John Dole, North Carolina State University, Raleigh** I've had good luck with the baby's breath look-alike *Euphorbia corollata*, flowering spurge. Stems look good on the plant for about 6 weeks, and old florets drop off on their own, leaving the fresh ones. This native U.S. plant is cold hardy in Zones 3-9. It produces latex that is apparently toxic, like its relative, snow-on-the-mountain. Plant Delights Nursery sells a selection known as 'Carolina Snow.' I did a simple post-harvest test and got 8 days in water and 13 days in flower



*Euphorbia corollata*, flowering spurge.

food. With flower food the florets stayed on very well until I finally threw them out, not because the flowers looked bad but because the foliage had turned yellow.

**Lis and Tim Murray, Hawk and Sparrow Flowers, Stanley, North Carolina**

We began growing lilies this year, trying them in crates, the hoophouse, and out in the fields. Growing in the hoophouse worked best. Our favorites are 'Fata Morgana' and 'Must See' Asiatic lilies. No fragrance, and smaller double blooms that are not damaged in bouquets and in the cooler. Expensive bulbs, but much less damaged product.



Asiatic lily 'Must See' ready to open.

**Alexis Sheffield, Wild Roots, Harrodsburg, Kentucky** My CSA members and market customers are loving 'Silver Shield' plectranthus for its silver color and how long it lasts in a vase. I feel like it gives that eucalyptus feel people are obsessed with right now but is far easier to grow. Also, a big fan of the 'Terracotta' celosia—a consistent performer and the color really melds surprisingly well with a lot of different color schemes. The landscape plant I've been using a lot of is rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) and I'm LOVING them. You can't beat that bright white textural element and bonus points for being a Kentucky native!



Celosia 'Terracotta'



Milkweed

**Kerrie Brogdon, KB Farms Cut Flowers, Cottondale, Florida** We have loved milkweed, snow-on-the-mountain, and loosestrife for bridal work. Postharvest: just the little gerb tablet, and I give the milkweed extra time because of the oozy sap. I give it a little more of a resting period and try not to recut when arranging. I

quick dip the snow-on-the-mountain and have heard of some people who boil for 10 seconds and then quick dip, but I try to get by with as little postharvest as possible.

**Tanis Clifton, Happy Trails Flower Farm, Dennis, Mississippi** Favorite cultivars are dianthus Neon series; eucomis ‘Tugela Jade’ (perennial); and lisianthus ‘Mariachi Lavender’. These aren’t new but they are reliable, consistent performers.



Eucomis ‘Tugela Jade’

**Niki Irving, Flourish Flower Farm, Asheville, North Carolina** I’m not really growing anything new this year compared to years past because I’ve been focusing on planting perennials the past two years (and can’t chime in on those too much yet because they’re too new),

but my favorites and florist favorites are the cosmos Cupcake and Double Click series, phlox ‘Cherry Caramel’ and ‘Blushing Bride’, and blackberry lily. Of course we always love the dahlias, ranunculus, and lisianthus, but so does everyone.



Blackberry Lily

**Virginia Rudnicki, Flora Berry Farm, Berry, KY** While this white snapdragon is not a new variety, I find myself thankful to God that I was able to grow and sell any flowers this year. We moved to Kentucky on March 3, so our growing year was short to begin with plus trying to get our home, farm, and lives organized in a new location, and then on top of all that, as we all had to, we had coronavirus to deal with, so I am excited that our flowers did well and we were able to make a few contacts to sell too this year and looking forward to next growing season even being more spectacular.



Snapdragon

**Kristi Ruggles, Mountain Girl Provision Company, Greenup, Kentucky** My favorites this summer, all field grown, include forget-me-nots; this is my first year growing them and they are just hidden little bursts of color in my bouquets, especially with reds, but really, with any of the flowers they add such an unusual and noticeable color. I love all the celosias and cockscombs. Amaranth ‘Hot Biscuits’, and the red one that’s really popular have been riddled with bug damage. The plumes are undamaged and lovely, but the foliage is a complete loss.

**Joe Burns, Bees N’ Blooms, Grayson, Georgia** We’ve been in business many years beautifying commercial properties with bedding plant displays, and started growing and selling fresh cut flowers for the first time this year. These are a few of the varieties we have loved. Marigold ‘Coco Orange’. Pros:



Marigold ‘Coco Orange’

Great bright color; heavy bearer, and long vase life. Cons: Stems shorten toward the end of the season. ‘Sunfinity’ sunflower. Pros: Easy to grow and popular with customers. Cons: Blooms are somewhat fragile and beetles can be a problem. Gomphrena ‘Fireworks’ Pros: Long vase life, minimal pest issues, and unusual form and texture that creates interest in bouquets. Cons: Slow to start growing in spring.

**Stephanie Kilroe, Dancing Hearts Homestead, Monroe, Georgia** The best crop I had this year was the Tecolote ranunculus. It was vigorous, strong, beautiful, and tall! I bought it from Flamingo Holland and am getting ready to order for next year.

**Mary Mason Royal, The Royal Gardens, Elko, Georgia** I love to grow roses! We have over 200 bushes that provide beauty and fragrance. My new favorite is ‘Bliss Parfuma’. It is the perfect color for “blush” that the brides drool over. The buds and the blooms are magnificent! My second new favorite is ‘Moonlight Romantica’. It is a very soft yellow, almost cream, with layers of petals. Both roses are disease resistant and make me very happy!



Rose ‘Bliss Parfuma’

**Linda Doan, Aunt Willie’s Wildflowers, Blountville, Tennessee** I grew a few new dahlias and ‘Brown Sugar’ was by far my favorite. Spring foliage is such a lovely green but often too fresh to hold up well, summer foliage is great but it’s so hot it sometimes wilts, so fall foliage is my favorite. It’s often already dying but that’s the look we’re after. In general, the longer something is on the stem/branch, the better it holds (baptisia, basils, physocarpus, fern, clematis and most vines,



Perennial Begonia seedpods

and tree foliage). And when things go to seed they’re golden! I have an old perennial begonia that has pretty foliage but the seed pods are amazing. Even the ridiculously invasive poke

and porcelain berry are fun when in seed/fruit. My theory is “Look around and use what you have.” Many of us have run-down old farms that are just full of weeds and seeds that work well especially in the fall. Even cover crops deserve a closer look. Buckwheat saved a white wedding last summer when I realized the bloom held up well in table pieces. Now I always cut a bucket for design before I whack it down. *Heptacodium macinoides* (seven son flower) is one of my favorites. It’s so unique and just starting to bloom now.

**Janet C. Nutt, JanBil Farm Country Cuttings, Cedartown, Georgia** Zinnias and celosias are my customers’ favorites but I always get requests for sunflowers which don’t grow well for me (they often get bug bites which misshapes the disc so I call them Misfits, which endears them to customers because they are different and they sell). Mountain mint has been SO popular! *Rudbeckia triloba* is a great filler. I can’t pick and sell enough of poke berry in the cascading seeded stage. Gladiolas have sold like hotcakes this summer.



Zinnia, celosias and ‘Misfit’ sunflowers are market favs.

**Julia Keel, Full Keel Farm, Fort White, Florida** My favorite and best performing varieties in north central Florida include celosia ‘Bombay Pink’, ‘Delhi Pearl’, and ‘Flamingo Feather’; beautiful, versatile colors, and tolerant of climate and growing conditions. Cosmos ‘Versailles’ White and Flush provide great color, are highly productive, and have strong stems and a great vase life. Dahlia ‘Suncrest’ has excellent heat tolerance and productivity. Snapdragons Maryland and Costa series are great for for early blooms on strong, tall stems.



Dahlia ‘Suncrest’

I hope you’ve enjoyed breezing through these stories as much as I have, and perhaps there’s a new variety or two that you’ll try—or retry—next year! Stay safe, everyone.

## NORTH AND CENTRAL

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



### Jamie Rohda

Harvest Home  
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As I sit and prepare to put my thoughts on paper for my last ASCFG column, I feel way underqualified to speak to this season. What a year it's been on all fronts. It's been an exciting and challenging year in many ways, and one that has stretched us emotionally and physically. It has been such an honor to serve on the ASCFG Board for the past three years, and to play a tiny part in helping to guide this amazing organization through this time.

Now, on to the nuts and bolts of our season, which I feel way more qualified to speak to. When I took this position on the Board of Directors I knew that I wanted to try to give some nugget of useful information in every *Quarterly* article that you could easily put to use. It's what I've always enjoyed about the articles and conferences. If I could take away one bit of information that could improve my business then I considered it time well spent.

Foliages continue to play a huge part in our florist sales; here are a few updates on that segment of our crops. We've had some successes this summer, and some definite fails.

After growing dusty miller successfully for many years—for goodness' sake, I even wrote an article about how to grow it for the *Quarterly*!—we had a complete and utter failure with it this year. We have been very successful growing each planting for two seasons in our hoophouses so I thought, “Why not try it for the third year?” I guess that was the straw that broke the camel's back. At least two-thirds of the crop died over the winter, and the plants that were left were not really thriving, then came under attack



I love the color of the alternanthera!

from an early outbreak of grasshoppers, so we decided to just get rid of the crop and have a summer without Dusty. Yes, we've missed it (it was in our top 5 grossing crops last year) but it's forced us to depend on some other foliage this summer.

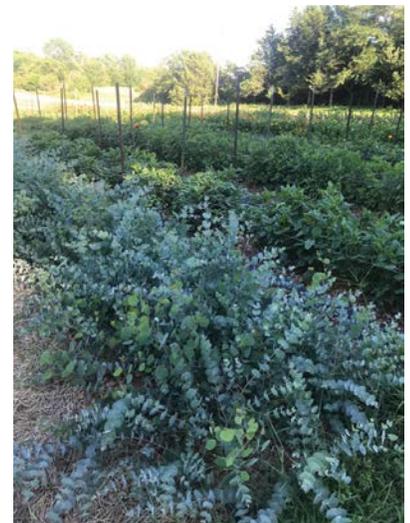
Our plectranthus was successful again this year and we grew a new foliage, alternanthera 'Purple Knight', for the first time. While alternanthera tends to grow more like a vigorous ground cover, it has made really nice cuts. The color is beautiful, especially for fall, and the stems are getting quite long now. As I write this we've cut nearly 40 bunches from our little planting of 50 plants, and you really can't tell that we've harvested any.

Eucalyptus continues to be a popular crop with our customers, and we accidentally added a new variety, 'Baby Blue', to our plantings this year. A mix-up with some plugs that we thought were all *polyanthemos*, but turned out to be half 'Baby Blue', turned into a happy mistake for us. The 'Baby Blue' outgrew the *polyanthemos* and we started cutting it the first week of August—the earliest we've ever cut eucalyptus. We've also got a little plot of experimental eucalyptus growing for a trial that we're doing and I can't wait to report on any successes with those!

We haven't grown chocolate mint since our veggie/herb growing years, but thought we'd give it another try as a cut this year. It's a vigorous grower as you'd expect a mint to be, but it hasn't gotten too out of control. It's a bit small and tedious to cut but the fragrance can't be beat, and we've got a few customers who love it and buy up all that we can cut.



A bed of about 50 alternanthera plants. The walkways quickly disappeared!



Baby Blue and polyanthemus eucalyptus growing happily together.

Another foliage fail for us this year was our plantings of basil which all succumbed to downy mildew in the space of about 72 hours! We had blazing heat most of the summer and then one cool week with rain, and they were done for. I did notice that the ‘Cardinal’, which we’d never grown before, seemed pretty resistant to the mildew but then got pretty beat up in the storm that hit us mid-August.



Centaurea 'Aloha Blanca'

On the flowering front, one new crop for us this summer was *Centaurea americana* ‘Aloha Blanca’. What a weird and wonderful crop! We had a few customers who said “No, thank you”, but enough folks liked it that we sold every bit of it. We’ve also found it to make an interesting dried flower.

We tried the new zinnia color, orange, in the Queen series. I’ve been pretty much underwhelmed by it. I love the Queen series but the orange doesn’t seem to be enough different from the Benary Orange (just smaller) to make it worth growing.

Our crop of ‘Jura Salmon’ celosia has been great this year. This isn’t a new crop for us but since this variety is no longer available commercially we’ve been saving our own seed and finally feel like we’ve got a pretty pure crop of it. Some years I’ve had a lot of junk in the plantings but this year they looked great. Now I’ve been having fun selecting out a few that have some beautiful color variations in hopes to come up with some unique varieties from it. If you’ve never saved seeds I’d suggest starting with some celosia. So easy and fun!



Jura Salmon celosia

With the cancellation of so many weddings and events this summer we had to think about ways to make changes to our business plan. One new thing for us this year was opening up a tiny farm shop here on our farm. We don’t have regular store hours but just have it open during any events or tours we have here at the farm. It’s only a 12 x 12, insulated and now finished room in our barn, which also doubles as a cool room on harvest days when we can’t fit everything into our cooler.



The debut of our tiny farm store!



Some of the fresh florals available.

For our inaugural opening of the shop we had a free farm tour open to the public, and we were pleasantly surprised at the great turnout. Over 100 people turned out to join in on a tour, shop for bouquets and succulents, and just hang out with us to discuss all things floral. Even

though the temps were in the high 90s we all still had a great time. We debated whether or not to charge for the tour, but decided to keep it free. We put out a free will donation jar, and sales of fresh flowers, succulents, and honey made it well worth our time.

I hope you all have found profitable ways to tweak your business this year to keep up with the every changing rules and restrictions. I think change is good for all of us and hopefully we’ll all come through this with a stronger business plan in mind.

And for a personal note, our third daughter, Hannah got married this year. What a year to get married! I said I wouldn’t do it but once again I found myself playing the role of floral designer, wedding coordinator, food organizer, and mother of the bride. All made a bit more challenging in the year of COVID! I

believe the day of the wedding also had the highest heat index of the summer, and the reception was in an air-conditioned but un-insulated barn! Nonetheless it was a beautiful day in every way.

Thank you so much to all of you and the Association for giving me the opportunity to serve as a Regional Director these past 3 years. We have learned so much from being members of the ASCFG, and it's been a real pleasure to serve and give back. Keep on flowering—I hope to see you at an event again one of these years!



Our beautiful bride, Hannah, and her three sisters!

## SOUTH AND CENTRAL

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



**Shanti Rade**  
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It's hard for me to think of what to write about right now that will have anything profound or hopeful to offer you. This pandemic is still having such a gripping effect on our everyday lives. This year has had so many crazy changes, personal and professional. My brain is fried. But I am going to try to find a few nuggets for you, at least share a few of the highs and lows from this year.

### Sundays Off

This is the first time in 15 years that my partner and I have taken a day off together. We have been doing Saturday and Sunday farmers' markets for the last 15 years together. A few years ago we switched to taking turns on Sundays, but that still didn't give us any family time.

This year, with the circumstances of the pandemic, first the market wasn't open, then it wasn't really worth attending with the restrictions, and finally we just made the choice to prioritize family time instead of sales. Literally, this little thing has had a gigantic effect on my life. Our Sunday market customers are sad and miss us and email and message me weekly asking when we will be back. We still send some limited flowers up to the Sunday market with a vendor who lives near us, but it's only a very small amount compared to our normal sales. Now that I have seen the light of working a little less, I don't think I can ever go back. And while we are missing a big chunk of our income from this market, our overall revenue is up year to date. We have made some major increases in wholesale sales, which requires a little less labor on our part. And so, at the end of the year, I don't think we will see any significant change in net income, but I will let you know for sure once we get there.

Even if most Sundays I still do farm chores, pick sunflowers, sneak in a solo work project, clean the house, and do all the laundry, I am trying really hard to find a little time to relax and do floral design practice for fun. Read a little. Cook a little more. And we are committed to making family fun happen, which is really a challenge. It's so easy to fill it all up with work. We have taken our kids hiking, kayaking, skateboarding, to eat sushi (okay, we always do that on occasion), legit home manicures, and so many other things that we have never had time for before.



Family kayaking at Watson Lake in Prescott, Arizona.



Just a few members of the happy Whipstone Farm crew.

## Employee Solidarity

Something about the pandemic state of the world has really brought our crew together. I am not sure I can totally put my finger on why. But maybe the social distancing, spouses/partners losing jobs, appreciating locally-sourced food more than before, feeling needed and supporting one another, I don't know exactly, but I feel like we have the tightest, strongest, most caring and dedicated crew, as a whole, that we have ever had. We have kept the crew a little smaller than usual this year, as we froze hiring this spring. I don't feel like I can take the credit for any new hiring or training techniques or anything we implemented consciously. Just a little gift from the universe, sending us some hard-working, lovely people this year. I am going to hang on to them as tight as I can.

## Selling Wholesale

Again, something about the pandemic. People can't do what they normally do, but they still want security and connection, good food, and beauty in their lives. During the pandemic we have developed a few new, bigger wholesale accounts this year that have really helped us stay afloat this year. One is a large local food cooperative, who buys from us and distributes to restaurants, CSAs, and health food stores around the state. This has allowed us to break into a larger geographic market area than we were ever willing to deliver to before. And this account has brought in some significant extra revenue to cover for one fewer farmers' market.

The premier floral wholesaler in our region has also finally started buying from us. I have been talking to them for over two years about this and while they seemed interested, it never took off, even after they came out more than once to tour the farm. Well, this year, with a new manager in place, they finally started buying. One month in and it's going amazingly well. This may not be very exciting news for those of you in places where local flowers have been "in" for a long time now. But honestly, here in Arizona, it's still new. The most surprising part (to me anyway) was how well they promoted our product from the get-go. They put our farm name on everything we send to them. They made a special display area for local product (currently that's only us) and they post about us on Instagram every time they get a new delivery. They pick up from our farm (2.5 hours away) twice a week. Surprisingly, I didn't have to drop my florist prices by very much for the wholesaler and the product seems to be flying off the shelves. They order in larger quantities

and rarely specify any colors or types, which is so much less work than the smaller florists I have been selling to who have a lot of specific needs, understandably. And because this year has been crazy, we aren't always completely ready with their order when the driver arrives early.

The best part is the delivery folks get to walk around the farm on a self-guided tour, shop in the farmstand for fresh veggies, and appreciate the clean air and quiet surroundings. I forget how magical a farm can be when you live cooped up in the city. I am sure they go back to the warehouse and brag about what a great trip it was. Thank you, Mayesh Phoenix, for making my fear of selling to wholesalers a lot less scary.

So, wow, 2020. It's been a real roller coaster. Not just the pandemic, but Black Lives Matter, online schooling, unprecedented wildfires, Supreme Court upheaval, lots of personal challenges and heartbreak for people in my inner circle, and so much unknown about the future. I can't put into words the depths of it all or where my hope lies. I can barely handle one day to the next. But I do hear from almost everyone that flower sales are great, apart from the wedding industry.

I hope you all are surviving the best you can. Take a moment to acknowledge how hard this year has been, and appreciate the people you love. And please feel free to reach out to me—I would love to hear how your year is going, all the ups and downs.

I am including a few bouquet shots from this year since Erin McMullen and I recently did a Facebook Live for the ASCFG on our bouquet programs. I finally found my perfect bouquet backdrop, the cement floor of our vegetable processing room.

## The Secrets of Bouquet Making

Find Shanti Rade and Erin McMullen’s Facebook Live “Ask an Expert” Recording in Members Only.



## WEST AND NORTHWEST

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



### Erin McMullen

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raindropfarm@peak.org

As this year drags on, I’ve found myself struggling to maintain. I mean really on the most basic level. With all of the things on my plate, sometimes it seems like maybe it would be nice to just throw the plate at the wall...ya know?

With farming, as we’ve discussed before, every year is a new journey, a chance to try new things and solve problems. The challenges of 2020 have added a whole new layer to that journey. Now, instead of just managing crews, planting, selling, maintaining, harvesting, and family, we’ve added the layer of maintaining social distances, crew health, family health, job loss, home-schooling, and all the rest. It’s no small feat and we, as a peer group, can help by reaching out and offering support as we have the capacity.

For those of you out there who are just starting your flower journey, how are you doing? Are you finding enough support amongst the chaos? How are sales? What could you use to help your journey take shape?

For our more seasoned growers, how are you? What is stable in your farm this year? Is it the same as it has been in the past? Do you find yourself longing for normalcy, or thriving in the challenge of the “pivot” (I promise not to use that word again, haha)? How are sales—have they shifted? When you think ahead, are you excited, or in a rut?

I’m asking these questions because I genuinely want to know. I need the connection. I need to know, on a daily basis, that I’m not alone in the abyss of 2020. And I know that I’m not, but some days it just feels as though there is no way through the blackberry bramble that is this season. Don’t get me wrong, I’m kinda, on a weird level, enjoying the uncertainty of things. It’s really allowed us to step back and re-evaluate what we have done in the past, and how we can move forward. We’ve taken a long hard look at our business, from angles I didn’t even know existed, and found new niches and exciting paths forward. It’s exhilarating, and exhausting all in the same breath, and there are days that I feel like quitting, sandwiched right between record sales days. It’s days like these that it’s easy to lose sight of the rewards of the job.

So, I’m working on it, and I would encourage you to take the time to do the same if you aren’t already. I caught myself noticing the beauty around me last week. I know that sounds



*Have you ever stood in your field and just been overwhelmed by the exhaustive work that you've put in? Do you take the time to pat yourself on the back, or just put your head back down and keep going?*

ridiculous for someone who is literally surrounded by beauty every day, but something about seeing the forest for the trees. We had just gone through 5 days of noxious, hazardous air quality, the result of a series of terrifying wildfires that burned over a million acres here in Oregon. I was standing, wearing my respirator, in the middle of one of our fields and noticed that I could hear birds, for the first time in days. I looked up and saw the colors against the gray and it made me indescribably happy. Like brought me to tears, happy.

Have you ever stood in your field and just been overwhelmed by the exhaustive work that you've put in? Do you take the time to pat yourself on the back, or just put your head back down and keep going? Either way, I love it. This time, this year, this world is overwhelming. It's exhaustive. It's oppressive and challenging. Times are tough. But we are resilient. We've got the grit it takes to make good things happen. I hope that you know how good you are and how honored I am to be a part of your peer group. Together, we are bringing beauty in a time of great need, and that, in and of itself, is amazing!

## CANADA

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



### Janis Harris

Harris Flower Farm

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### A Renewed Love for Marigolds

I remember that I had a doll named Marigold, and that we had a Tamworth sow named Marigold, but I had forgotten about marigolds as cut flowers.

For the last two years, I've participated in the ASCFG Cut Flower Seed Trials. It's a big commitment, but I'm happy and proud to support such an important program. In both 2019 and 2020, we were eager to open the packets of seed mailed to us, and go through them to see what we got. We were very surprised and concerned that there were a lot of marigolds!

We planted them and waited to see what they were like. When they started blooming, we were thrilled with the large, full, and plump ruffles of orange and yellow petals. They worked really well in our market bouquets because they were long and straight with high branching stems. Customers were pleasantly surprised to see "an old favourite" in their bouquets. They have a great vase life and long bloom time on the plant.

Marigolds do have a strong scent. But I LOVE it! They make your hands black and it is hard to get the scent off. I use the "Gardener's Soap" from Gretel's Handcrafted Soap, a division of Sunny Meadows Flower Farm in Columbus Ohio. I believe they can ship anywhere.





The colours are very vibrant. A citrus orange, lemon yellow, and carrot orange. But there was also a pale, almost buttery yellow one this year that we are liking.

When we are training our helpers for harvesting, in general, we usually tell them “The row starts off with colour, and you pick until there isn’t colour.” That’s hard with marigolds because there are so many

stems per plant. Usually you can’t tell that they have harvested the row because there is still so much colour.

My hope is that orange comes into fashion because I love orange flowers—it’s such a vibrant and happy colour. The “red letter” day will be when I have a request for an orange wedding. We love pairing the orange with pinks for a tropical vibe, or reds and yellows for a hot as fire look.

In 2019, we trialed ‘Deep Gold’, ‘Falcon Yellow’, ‘Jedi Orange’, ‘Oriental Deep Gold’, and ‘Oriental Gold’ from AmeriSeed; and ‘Coco Deep Orange’, ‘Coco Gold’, and ‘Coco Yellow’ from Sakata.

For 2020, there were ‘Bindi Gold’, ‘Chedi Yellow’, and ‘Mayan Orange’ from AmeriSeed; ‘EXP Xochi Orange’ from BloomStudio; ‘Bengal Orange’, ‘Hemant Deep Yellow’, ‘Janthra Yellow’, and ‘Royal Ball Gold’ from East-West Seed; and ‘Nosento Lime Green’ from Evanthia.

We found that there were certain ethnic cultures (Middle Eastern) that wanted the marigolds for religious ceremonies. They are considered pure and a global religious symbol in Hindu, Buddhist, and Catholic celebrations. In India, they are traditionally offered to honour all of the gods and goddesses, but especially Laxmi and Ganesh. When purchasing them the customers didn’t seem to want the stems attached but we had to educate them that we needed to cut them “as if we were using them for a bouquet” so they would regrow with good stem length. They really wanted only the bloom. They also said that when we were picking them, they didn’t want us to bring them to our noses to smell them. It altered their purity. They used them to break the petals off for confetti and also used the bloom for necklaces and decoration.

I saw in an Instagram post that Frank and Pamela Arnosky were planting marigolds to use for Dia de Muertos (Day of the Dead) on November 2. Unfortunately, in our climate they are long since frosted away by then.

Marigolds also have medicinal properties. They are used to address cuts, sores, and general skin care because of the essential oils, and are high in flavonoids such as carotene. They act as an anti-inflammatory to promote topical healing and soothe irritated skin. They are also a good plant to have in your fields. The smell of the plant above the ground deters harmful insects but also if you work the marigold residue into the ground it will cleanse that area of the soil of root insects such as root maggots.

At first, I thought the seed companies were crazy trying to make marigolds a “thing” again. But they definitely have earned a place in our late summer bouquets. Our florist customers are also loving them!

Add some marigolds to your next seed order!



## Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

- Sarah Ackman**, The Marmalade Lily, Loveland, OH  
**Mary Ann Adams**, One Hubcap Farm, Blythewood, SC  
**Carry Ady**, Livy Rose Flower Farm, Alpine, UT  
**Emily Alfred-James**, Misanthrope Meadows, Laingsburg, MI  
**Carol Arteaga**, Chicago, IL  
**Rebecca Battle**, Sweet South Flowers, Cleveland, TN  
**Jodi Beardsley**, Adorn, A Flower Farm, Lewiston, ID  
**Tracy Berkey**, Countryside Blessings, Carlisle, KY  
**Lori Bierma**, Petals & Pottery, Aurora, OR  
**Stacey Blanton**, Blanton's Blossoms, Woodstock, IL  
**Jeanne Boes**, San Francisco Flower Mart, San Francisco, CA  
**Annette Bolt**, Fleur Farm, East Dorset, VT  
**Walt Borisenok**, Old Tavern Farm, Saratoga Spring, NY  
**Sara Bozorg**, Bedford, NH  
**Brittany Brock**, The Bloomery, Sims, NC  
**Marissa Brower**, Brower's Flowers, Rockford, MI  
**Bess Brownlee**, Southbound Flowers, Florence, MT  
**Jesica Carden**, Charleston, SC  
**Sandy Carr**, Onalaska, WA  
**Traci Castro**, Schell Farm Gardens, Norwalk, WI  
**Autry Cataldo**, Little Flower Farm, Niles, MI  
**Susan Chaisson**, BrightStar Flowers, Severna Park, MD  
**Kerstyn Chang**, The Flower Initiative, Columbus, OH  
**Rudy Crownhart**, Windy Girl Garden, Liberty Lake, WA  
**Jasmine Cyr**, Glenisla, Beauharnois, QC  
**Jaime DeMario**, Bee Dreams, Nevada City, CA  
**Sage Devlin**, Greenstone Fields, Leesburg, VA  
**Annie Domenici**, The Flower Farmhouse, North Plains, OR  
**Amber Doscher**, Shine Flower Farm, Monroe, WA  
**Dawn Dufault**, Bayberry Farm & Flower Co.,  
 North Dighton, MA  
**Thomas Dunnock**, Flutterby Farm, Seven Valleys, PA  
**Michele DuRand**, Lavender's Blue Mn, Watertown, MN  
**Matthew Dynakowski**, Fred C. Gloeckner & Co.,  
 Plainsboro, NJ  
**Kris Elledge**, Shine Flower Farm, Monroe, WA  
**Mindy Ellis**, Modoc Gardens, Modoc, IN  
**Melanie Estes**, Mel's Flower Farm, Tecumseh, MI  
**Linnea Fink Bittner**, Green Earth Growers,  
 Bloomington, MN  
**Mackenzie Flores**, Daffodil Valley Farms, Puyallup, WA  
**Emily Fuller**, Heart Song Farm, Siler City, NC  
**Jessica Gates**, Harvest Moon Farm and Flower, Greenville, SC  
**Holly Giguere**, Boom & Berry, Homosassa, FL  
**Colleen Gilmore**, Bud and Blooms, Bloomingdale, NJ  
**Janet Goodenbery**, Rooted in Joy Farm, Oakfield, NY  
**Valerie Goulet**, Picaflöre Ferme Florale,  
 Saint-Marc-sur-Richelieu, QC  
**Kerry Griffin**, Better Half Farm, Moultrie, GA  
**Mary Gudgel**, SunBlooms, Merced, CA  
**Leah Hansen**, Blue Bell Flower Farm, Franklin, TX  
**Crystal Hatfield**, Maggie Mae Flower Farm, Plumas Lake, CA  
**Nichole Heinlein**, Warrenton, VA  
**Tina Higgins**, Blackstone Flower Farm, Harrow, ON  
**Melissa Holloway**, Holloway's Garden, Indianapolis, IN  
**Kim Hulse**, Fresh Stems by Kim, Chubbuck, ID  
**Rosie and Alexander Hunt**, The Maple Yard, Scottsville, KY  
**Ann Jackson**, Happy Valley Organics, Kelowna, BC  
**Sara Jewett**, Local Flower Co., Saint Johns, FL  
**Jean-Pierre Jouannic**, Newton, NJ  
**Sharon Kelley**, Kelley Flower Farm, Modesto, CA  
**Ellen Kerchner**, Ellen's Flowers, Colorado Springs, CO  
**Sherry H. King**, Bloomin' Idiots Flowers, Northport, AL  
**Linda Kosa**, Flower Thyme, Wellsville, NY  
**Allie Kuppenbender**, BleedHeart Floral Farm & Design,  
 Mazeppa, MN  
**Rebecca Kutzer-Rice**, Moonshot Farm, East Windsor, NJ  
**Sarah Landers**, Brick Street Flowers, Allen, TX  
**Norah Langweiler**, Naked Flower Farm,  
 Egg Harbor Township, NJ  
**Robyn Legun**, Robyn Hood Farm, Carson, WA  
**Rosie Leitmann**, Crabby Face Farm, Springbrook, ON  
**Lisa Loehr**, Loehr Beautiful Flower Farm, Newburgh, IN  
**Vicki Loehr**, Loehr Beautiful Flower Farm, Newburgh, IN  
**Judith Loretto**, Three Girls Garden, Toms River, NJ  
**Laura Lovern**, Raven Rock Farm, Amherst, VA  
**Rebecca Martin**, Flower Hill Farm, Akron, IN  
**Christina Matthews**, The Flower Lady, Cincinnati, OH  
**Melissa Matz**, Blooming Betties, Loveland, CO  
**Melina McArthur**, Field Flower Farm, Foothills, AB  
**Christopher & Mary Beth Milo**, Heaven Scent Cut Flower  
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**Gabriella Moir**, Tweedthistle Farms, Medina, OH  
**Sandra Morrell**, Wild Sky Blooms, Kingsport, TN  
**Brittany Mundine**, Hither Blooms, Frankfort, KY  
**Melanie Munro**, Red Maple Ranch, Yuba City, CA  
**Abbey Murphy**, Crown & Roots Farm, Holden, MA  
**Jessica Neese**, In Bloom Inc. Scottsdale, GA  
**Rebecca Petropoulos**, Sullivan Family Farms,  
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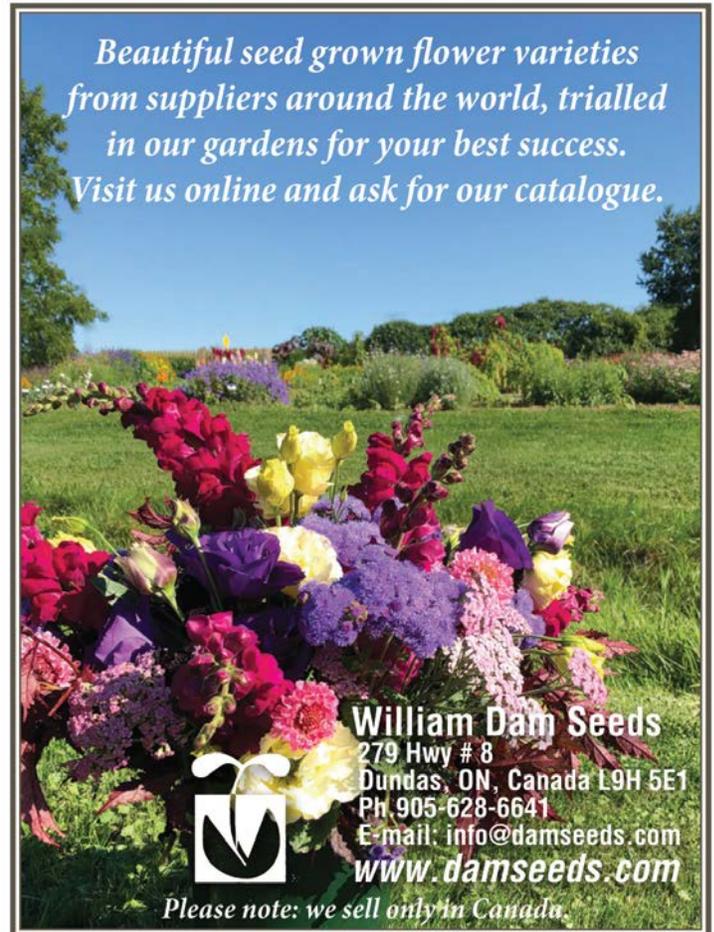
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**Dawn Stair**, Stair Family Flower Farm, Berlin, PA

**Louise Sullivan**, Sullivan Family Farms, Cheney, WA

**Stacie Surowiec**, Lavender and Posies, Forest Hills, MD

**Alexis Szarek**, Bloom, the Abbotsford Tulip Festival, Abbotsford, BC

**Darcy Tabor**, Immie's Garden, Spring Hill, TN

**Julie Taylor**, London, KY

**Naturee Thomas**, Ayer, Chester, VA

**Aimee Thuen**, Honeysuckle Homestead Flowers, Spirit Lake, ID

**Elizabeth Treiber**, Wicked Blooms, Bettendorf, IA

**Rebecca Utz**, Rutz Flower Field, Walton, KY

**Andrea Verouden**, Hard Scrabble Blooms, London, ON

**Katie Walker**, Portland, OR

**Kimberley Walker**, Victoria, BC

**Nancy and Bonnie Ward**, Fern's Field Grown Flowers, Chester Springs, PA

**Penny Warner**, Gourd & Nettle Farm/Penny's Bloomers, Georgetown, TX

**Korin Watson**, The Grounded Garden, Westminster, MD

**Jacquelyn Weiss**, Paisley & Fringe, Southwest Harbor, ME

**Ann Welch**, Bella's Blooms, Midlothian, VA

**Brianna Wells**, Happy Trowels Farm, Kaysville, UT

**Deena Whitehurst**, Oregon City, OR

**Kelsey Whitlock**, Sunhearth Flower Farm, Reston, VA

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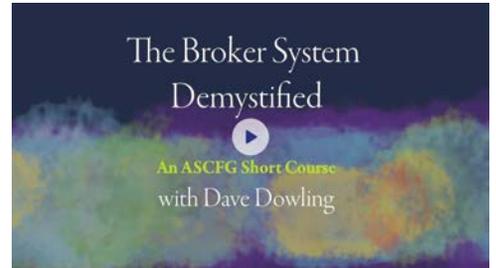
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## “Indefatigable”

Judy M. Laushman



I’ve heard this word in my head countless times this year as I read about people overcoming the multiple challenges 2020 has thrown in their paths. The COVID-19 pandemic’s deaths and business failures; social injustice brought to the forefront; wildfires, hurricanes, floods, and other natural disasters exacerbated by climate change; anxiety as parents worry about children, children worry about parents, and everyone hopes the best for their neighbors—this combination of stressors has not been experienced previously by so many millions.

Throughout these months, our members dealt with these obstacles by finding—or creating—new sales outlets, subsidizing their farmers’ market sales with new wholesale accounts, moving from lavish wedding accounts to smaller, more intimate venues. They’re combining forces with other local companies to bring their products to consumers in creative ways. This, often while navigating the new system of home-schooling through Zoom or adding different delivery routes to existing ones.

Inspired by this indefatigability, the ASCFG staff has also adapted to the changes of this new world. We’ve been able to work together, while apart, to bring you three issues of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*; our social media presence has expanded exponentially; we’ve hosted online sessions like Zoom webinars and Facebook live events (see more on page 74), and we continue to welcome new members from across the country and around the world.

Our goal is to continue to serve you as best as we can, to maintain at least one constant in your lives.

It’s hard to predict what we’ll be talking about in these pages in January of 2021, but can only hope that the world will be a safer, healthier space than it is at the end of 2020.

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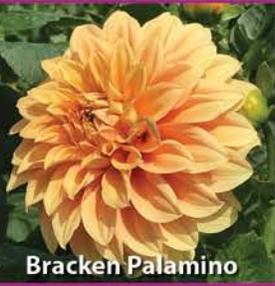


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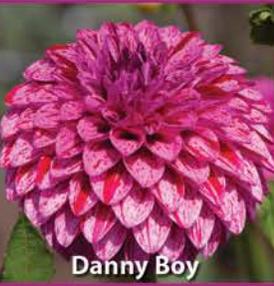
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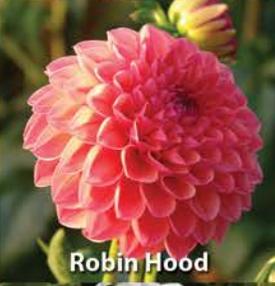
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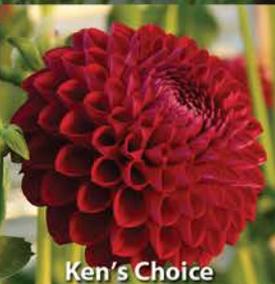
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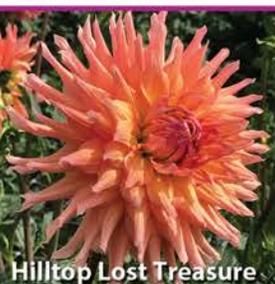
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