

Volume 24, Number 2 Spring 2012

The **Cut Flower**

Q U A R T E R L Y

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and specialty greenhouse cuts

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FROM the **PRESIDENT**

Polly Hutchison

For the last four years, other than annual ASCFG conferences and the occasional family reunion, Mike and I have saved a little in the vacation fund and put the rest back into building the business. This winter we have gotten in some vacation time at last. Both northern California and Florida have been on the agenda, and as certified plant nerds we of course had to check out some farms and gardens on the way.

I love seeing other farms! Each grower and gardener has some little nugget of a system or way of doing things that is all their own. We looked at gardens clinging to steep hills and big, beautiful Full Belly Farm in the wide

Capay Valley. Mike used to farm out near there and it was a treat to see his old stomping grounds. South Florida was a wonder because it is so hard to tell where the natives end and the invasives begin. I looked to the wild spaces to inform me as there are wonderful parks there. We also saw well-planned gardens with gorgeous trees and borders. There were so many trees I had never seen before. Lots of cool pods and cones! I am excited to be out in Washington State for the conference this fall as well, another wonderful climate for plants. I hope to see everyone there, as this meeting will be just fantastic, with more on-farm time than ever. Save the date: November 12-14.

Many thanks to the members who answered the quick survey and to those who gave me your thoughts on improving the ASCFG before our board meeting in February. It really helps us to know what you all think. We will likely send out those mini-surveys again from time to time; thanks in advance for taking a minute to answer us.

The board meeting was incredibly productive, and I must say we have an excellent crop of Regional Directors at your service this year! We slogged through conference decisions and changes to the website (and probably the bulletin board) and finalized the budget. We have trimmed some expenses, and after ten

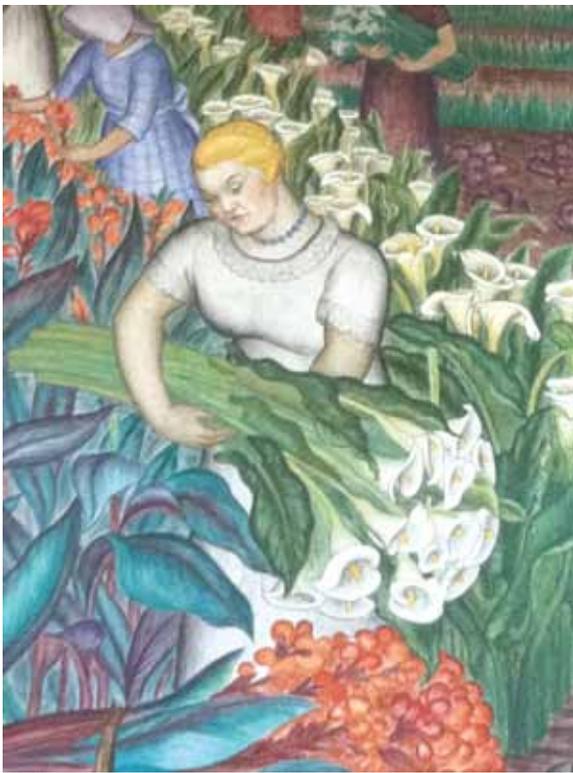
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Flower harvest from the murals at Coit Tower, San Francisco”

years at the same rate, we also had to increase the annual dues by \$20.00. We plan to make it more worth your while than ever to be a part of the ASCFG.

We are also hearing you loud and clear about meetings and what you want from them, and we have a great crop of Regional Meetings planned, as well as cool plans for 2013. Watch this space for more news on this in the summer issue. By the time you read this, you might have seen me at the Northeast Regional Meeting on March 26 - looking at more farms, talking to farmers and designers and growers of all descriptions. I'll be the one with a huge smile on my face!

Evaluation of Field-grown Cut Chrysanthemum Flowers

Mark Bridgen

In 2011, we concluded four years of research growing cut flower varieties of chrysanthemums in the field. We evaluated their growth and performance, but most importantly their ability to flower in September and early October under natural light conditions.

This work was conducted at the Cornell Long Island Horticultural Research and Extension Center at Riverhead, Long Island, where Dr. Bridgen is the Director. The station is in USDA zone 7a-b.

In previous years we had trialed 58 different cultivars of cut chrysanthemum varieties both inside and outside high tunnels. In 2009, we induced early short days by pulling black plastic over the plants for five weeks and demonstrated that all cultivars have the ability to flower early if treated correctly.

The cultivars that flowered in September and early October under natural conditions and that grew the

best in previous experiments were propagated and tested in 2011 to confirm their performance. These superior plants included 'Ann', 'Cheer', 'Derek Bircumshaw', 'Gillette', 'Indian Summer', 'Joyce Fountain', 'Paintbox', 'Pennine Romeo', 'Pennine Sparkle', 'Pennine Swan', 'Pennine Swing', 'Pretty Polly', 'Prom King', and 'Prom Queen'. These cultivars grew and flowered well in 2011.

Those cultivars that flower in September are:

- 'Derek Bircumshaw' - yellow flower, incurve bloom, disbud for larger flowers
- 'Gillette' - white flower, incurve bloom
- 'Indian Summer' - bronze, decorative flower, disbud or spray
- 'Joyce Fountain' - red flower, reflex form, can disbud
- 'Pennine Romeo' - lavender flower
- 'Pennine Swing' - purple flower



This research demonstrated that by choosing the correct cultivars, cut chrysanthemums can be produced outdoors under natural photoperiodic conditions. There are several advantages to growing mums as a field cut flower: it is a "new" specialty cut flower, inexpensive, easy to grow, and there are a variety of colors and forms from which to choose.



Cut Flower Research at Cornell University

Chris Wien has shared a summary of his work at Cornell on field- and high tunnel-grown cut flowers. Projects included amaranth and larkspur pinching trials; sunflower pinching, spacing, photoperiod, and pollination experiments; and varietal differences in sunflower petal detachment force; as well as variety trials of seventeen cut flower species. To read the complete report, go to <http://tinyurl.com/7xlxuqe>

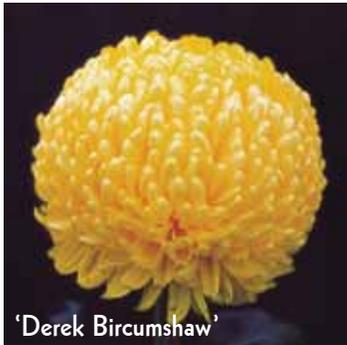
For an overview of all of Chris' work (there is a lot of it!), visit his home page at <http://tinyurl.com/77dcyec>



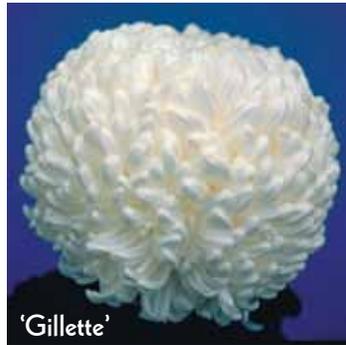
'Pennine Romeo'



'Pennine Sparkle'



'Derek Bircumshaw'



'Gillette'



'Indian Summer'



'Prom Queen and Prom King'

Photos courtesy of Ray Gray, King's Mums

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Coral Bells

Janet Foss

I must admit I'm an addict for new plants. Not just any new plant: it has to be useful for cutting, floral work, and it has to be showy. I prefer big flowers that make a statement, but I love cool filler flowers too. I seldom look for foliage-only plants, and I don't particularly care for plants that are too short for my buckets. I don't usually sell anything if it doesn't look good in a bucket, because everything leaves my farm in one.

When I started growing cut flowers thirty years ago, my grandmothers had coral bells (*Heuchera*) in their gardens.



'Delta Dawn'

Whenever you visited any of them, they were excited to show you these neat plants. They always had the newest and best ones, and you never left without a few starts tucked away in the car for your own garden. The flowers were tiny; even the "large" ones were small. They were useful, but not on a grand scale.

I can't even begin to think how many bigger, better, brighter, newer coral bell plants I have tried over the years. I guess I was thinking they would eventually be the size of *Campanula persicifolia*—now that would be a good cut flower!—but they were just coral bells. The breeders must have thought that too, because like an overnight plant revolution, they forgot about trying for cooler, better, stronger flowers, and concentrated their efforts on the foliage. Wow, the results are amazing!

I don't know if the word "amazing" even really covers it, but they've totally changed coral bells into a plant sensation. Instead of calling them coral bells, they began using the genus name—*Heuchera*. It sounds new and fresh and exotic. The new *Heuchera* hybrids are all about the foliage. The color and texture make them great plants for containers, and they're also useful for borders.

The breeders weren't really thinking about cut flower growers or they would have grown longer flower stems, but we are adaptable people and we take what we can get, and bring fresh ideas into the lives of people who have never had a garden or grown a plant.

So are these beautiful new leaves useful for florists? They should be, but probably not for the mass markets.



'Mysteria'

However, studio florists, wedding and event designers, and specialty shops will find them fun and interesting. These cultivars often have short stems, which are a bit on the weak side, but in water flowers last for two months plus. Plants have some of the most incredibly colored and textured foliage available in the plant kingdom. For hand-worked, small arrangements they add a lot of interest and color not really thought of in the plant world, like metallics, mottled bicolors, browns and blacks and deep purples. I have mostly seen them used in small vase arrangements but they would be interesting for corsages and boutonnieres as well.

The leaves last a long time in water, one of those things you actually get tired of having around. I have a vase of them in the house that are three months old and other than the dust they are beautiful. How do they fit into a grower's regimen? With a little protection they can be harvested even in winter months. They do well in crates: six small plants will fill out a crate fast, and need thinning in a year. Crates can be moved around—out in the summer and in for the winter—which in mild areas keeps the foliage nice all winter. For us, they have been more disease free and vigorous in crates than in the ground. After harvest they can be stored in the cooler, but they also do well out of the cooler. Tight bundles may be subject to mold, but loosely in a vase they last a long time. We haven't tried storing them dry in the cooler, but probably a few days would be okay, though there isn't much stem to trim when placing in water. We store them in pint jars which are not really ideal, but if we are careful it works and looks nice.

Some coral bells have nice flowers and can be useful for cutting, and other varieties have been bred with reds, whites, and salmons, but they have never proved profitable for cutting. The white-flowered form, *Heuchera villosa*, which blooms in the fall, looks promising as an astilbe substitute for autumn weddings. One variety is called 'Autumn Bride'. Its large cone-shaped sprays are useful when mature.

Some of the brightly colored ones do add nice bits of color to spring arrangements. I still would love to see coral bells the size of *Campanula persicifolia*, or even campanula with flowers the color of coral bells.

Heuchera has not been something I have been willing to pursue for cut flowers, they are short, and they are leaves, which I perceive as being inexpensive. Sometimes I need to take a fresh look at what I'm doing, and how and why I'm doing it, and make changes that will be useful for my business instead of doing the same old thing. After all, this is all about specialty cut flowers which means fresh and new and special, and probably an adjustment in thinking.

Janet Foss, J. Foss Garden Flowers,
is a specialty cut flower grower
in Chehalis, Washington,
and a long-time contributor to
The Cut Flower Quarterly.

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Ten Things You Should Know About Farm Taxes

Joseph Finora Jr.

Light, along with water, oxygen and temperature, are the environmental factors that affect seed germination. Light can stimulate or inhibit seed germination or have no effect at all. Some plants that require light for germination include ageratum, begonia, browallia, coleus, geranium, impatiens, lettuce, nicotiana, petunia and sna As farming promises to remain competitive, tax credits and other incentives become more valuable. Below are some items to keep in mind before meeting with your accountant.

1. What's deductible? Generally speaking, to be deductible a business expense must be both ordinary and necessary. An ordinary expense is one that is common and accepted in one's business, such as rent payments or equipment-rental costs. A necessary business expense is one that's helpful and appropriate. An expense does not have to be indispensable to be considered necessary. For example, a business could operate without a computer, but the purchase of one might be a deductible expense.

2. Identify assets. Not "identifying" assets leads to missing deductions, according to Greg Scott of PwC's Private Company Services in San Francisco. "A big mistake," Scott said, "is not realizing that farm appraisers generally do not ID a lot of assets. They leave value 'buried' in the non-depreciable land cost." Frequently overlooked depreciable costs include fences, roads, drainage and wells.

3. Do you market? "A farm may be able to take a deduction for advertising and promotion costs," said Mildred

Carter, senior tax analyst at CCH, a provider of tax and legal information in Riverwoods, Ill.

Did you invest in a direct mail or email campaign to help cultivate business? Some of the costs involved in the production of business advertising, i.e., printing and graphic-design services, may be deductible.

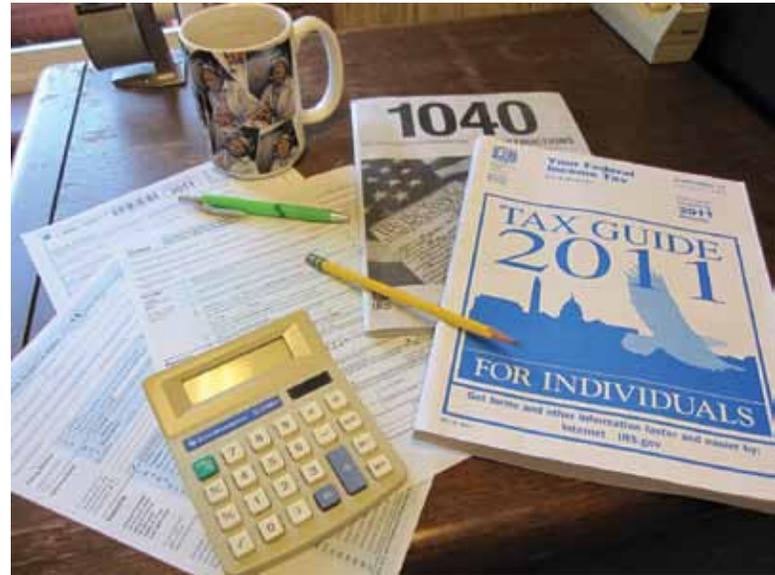
4. It's all about business. Do not mix business and personal expenses. "Keep personal and business expenses separate. Farmers tend to have loose controls when it comes to cash and tend to 'co-mingle' business and personal funds. You must protect the integrity of the business," said Scott Hunziger, a CPA in Cutchogue, N.Y. "This will also help should you ever need bankruptcy protection." Sole proprietors however, cannot "separate" themselves from their business.

5. Work at home? As many farmers live on the farm, a home office is a reasonable item. "You can deduct expenses for the business use of your home if you exclusively and regularly use part of it for business purposes," Hunziger said. Items include relative depreciation of your home, real estate taxes paid, mortgage interest, insurance, telephone line(s), Internet, etc. If you claim this

deduction, be careful, as this has been an IRS "red flag" area.

6. It's my hobby. The IRS presumes an activity is for profit if it makes a profit during at least three of the last five tax years, including the current one. Not all producers of agricultural products, even those earning income from farming activities, meet such guidelines and are therefore not considered farms.

7. 'Conservation expenses.' "Many miss out on structuring ownership to qualify for the cash method of accounting, if eligible," Scott said. "Whether using the cash method or not, you can deduct fertilizers, soil amendments, plus soil and water conservation costs." While farmers can deduct "conservation" expenses, these can only be taken for land you or a tenant is farming or has farmed. Earth moving for such purposes as terracing, drainage, brush eradication and windbreak



plantings, plus other activities, might count toward this deduction, according to IRS Publication 225, Farmer's Tax Guide.

8. Bumper crops. Should you sell more crops than you normally would due to Mother Nature, you may be able to postpone the reporting of the gain from the additional sales until the following year. There are restrictions, i.e. you have to prove it.

9. Suffered a loss or theft? Casualty and theft losses of farm business property usually result in deductible losses. If a fire or storm destroyed a building or equipment, you may have a deductible loss. Should you receive an insurance or other form of reimbursement, you must subtract the reimbursement when calculating the loss and be able to prove such an event took place.

10. Need more deductions? The Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit gives businesses a federal tax credit of up to 40 percent of income tax on the first \$6,000

of wages paid to "disadvantaged workers," including ex-convicts, the disabled and welfare recipients. Paperwork must be submitted within 30 days of hiring and can be cumbersome. The standard mileage deduction for 2011 is 51 cents per mile from Jan. 1 to June 30, and 55.5 cents for July 1 to Dec. 31. Like the Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit, the mileage deduction applies to all businesses.

Joseph Finora Jr. is a financial writer in Laurel, N.Y.

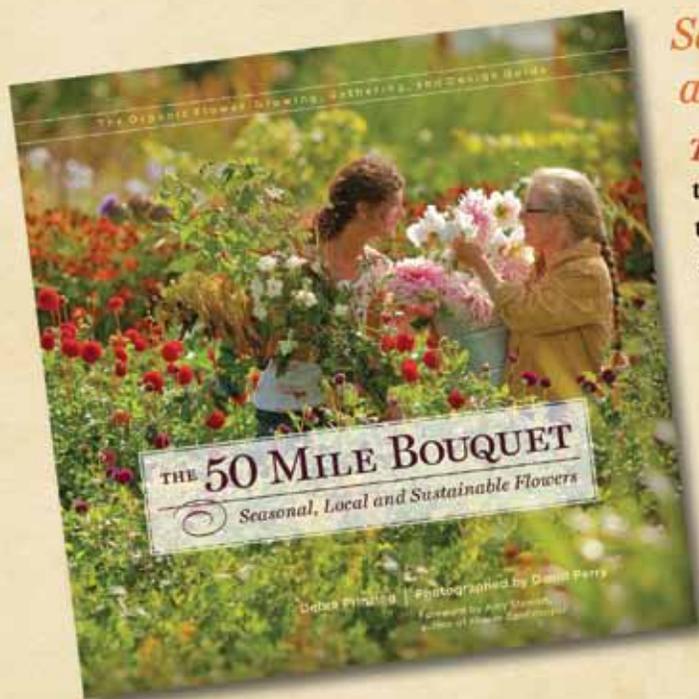
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Important reminders

- Keep business and personal expenses separate.
- Speak early with your accountant when contemplating a major financial decision.
- Proceed with caution when claiming the "home office" deduction.
- The IRS does not consider hobbies as businesses.
- Farms with non-traditional income sources might experience a different tax treatment.

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The Advent of the “Craft” Grower

Gay Smith

While waiting for a plane recently, I bumped into Pat Dahlson, the CEO of Mayesh Wholesale. Mayesh is a nationwide chain with locations all over southern California, several in Arizona, and in Las Vegas, Charlotte, Detroit, Cleveland and Miami.

As we chatted about the unimaginative Valentine’s marketing emphasis on reds and whites, when everyone is longing to conquer January blahs with vibrant splashes of spring color, Pat said the supermarket has taken the lion’s share of rose business away from the flower shop.

“Craft” growers—a distinguishing term separating growers who produce specialty blooms from those producing traditional, everyday types such as roses, carnations, poms, and gyp.

He continued to say that without product from “craft” growers (think ASCFG members), wholesalers and retailers would be at a loss on ways to compete for holiday sales. Aha!

“Craft” growers—a distinguishing term separating growers who produce specialty blooms from those producing traditional, everyday types such as roses, carnations, poms, and gyp.

At the risk of sounding new age-y, the prefix “craft” in front of “brewer”, “baker” or “creamery” conveys a host of positive images: mindful production, distinctiveness, sustainability, handmade, characteristics that drive sales. Maybe I’ve been hanging out with the wrong groups, but this was my first time hearing specialty growers referred to as craft growers and I loved it.

Referring to yourself and identifying your business as a craft growing operation seems an excellent way to emphasize the uniqueness of your products over more generic imports. This is an identification that provides a slightly vague, but definitely positive description of what sets you apart from mega-size commercial flower producers. Nothing’s wrong with the moniker “local grower”, but “craft grower” packs more punch, not to mention panache as the wheels start turning in Ms. Flower Consumer’s head.

Choosing the social venue is also important to hitting your target audience. According to a 2011 survey by Performics on social shopping, women are far more likely than men to search for deals on web sites, and they favor Facebook more than men do. Men look for product information, read reviews, and frequent other social networks including YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn more frequently than do women.

Are you honing training efforts to make 2012 more successful than 2011? Regardless of whether you have one employee or ten, nothing is as effective as good training. Unfortunately, the new person is often trained by the employee he or she is replacing and details are often not clearly spelled out. Sometimes training is an activity that employers assume is happening when in fact, employees don’t realize that daily information feed is their classroom.

Effective training takes on several styles. Hands-on, written, posted information and periodic follow-up quizzes ensure information sticks. Periodic review sessions help keep everyone on the same page. Sales training requires a bit more attention because the salesperson has to establish a clearly defined beginning, middle or end to the activity to close the transaction. Sales success requires good listening skills and the ability to direct the situation rather than passively respond, or talk over the other person. A waiter never responds to a customer’s query on a menu suggestion by asking “How much do you want to spend?”, yet that reply is heard frequently in flower sales venues.

Staying Connected

What’s your involvement with social media, one of today’s trendiest forms of advertising? Most would agree that a lot of social media marketing is directed at the Gen Y group, but is that the group you want to target? Look close at Ms. Flower Consumer. Notice that she is between 45-65 years old, and definitely does not fit into Gen Y category (people born between mid-1970s and early 2000s). When planning social media posts, plan accordingly, don’t lose sight of who has the most disposable income and who pays the bills. Many consumer purchasing surveys about flower consumption indicate baby boomers are the top flower purchasers.

An Educated Customer Means Repeat Business

Don't underestimate the positive impact of customer education on how to condition their flowers as part of your sales spiel. Customers remember flowers that last long after the memory of cost has faded. The respect you give to the production part of the flower story is seen as an act of respect for quality. Remind your sales staff to share that message with customers.

Another sales training point is how to speak about flower longevity. A University of Minnesota study examining the impact of flower guarantees found that 76% of participants said a longevity guarantee would positively impact their flower purchasing decisions. The same study indicated people are willing to pay more for flowers that last 11-14

A University of Minnesota study examining the impact of flower guarantees found that 76% of participants said a longevity guarantee would positively impact their flower purchasing decisions. The same study indicated people are willing to pay more for flowers that last 11-14 days compared to those lasting 5-7 days

days compared to those lasting 5-7 days. What is the take-home message? Provide the average number of vase life days for different flower types in sales displays. Educating customers builds relationships and repeat sales. The flower food packet means more to customers when it's presented as part of the story about quality and care. Teach them how to recognize quality, how to care for the blooms at home, and where to display (or not!). All of this sounds as though it would be intuitive to people who buy flowers, but it is not!

Consumers want to know the origin and production story behind their purchases.

Craft producers are rising stars in meat, veggies, cheese and chocolate merchandising. Fulfill your customers' desire by becoming their craft flower grower.

Gay Smith

is the Technical Consulting Manager for Chrysal USA.

Contact her at gaysmith@earthlink.net



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Scale Insects of Woody Plants

Stanton Gill

When you were a child you may have been forced to take piano lessons, like some of us, and you had to learn music scales. Now, we want to discuss another type of scale – scale insects and their impact on your cut flower operation.

I recently received a package from a cut flower grower in Maryland which contained branches of willow, plum, quince, yellow-stem dogwood, curly willow, lilac and star magnolia. Each sample was infested with soft or armored scale. This operation has a wonderful and thriving cut stem business, and they were alert enough to catch this problem before it really blew up on them.

It's easy to overlook scale insects since their covers (teste), for most species, blend in with the color of the bark of the plant. Their covers often look like part of the plant. The

scales are pretty sneaky in this survival adaption. Because they are hard to spot they build up over several years until you either see the massive buildup of covers, or the plant stops producing vigorous growth.

The least expensive control for soft and armored scale is applications of 3-4% horticultural oil applied when temperatures reach 50-55F for at least 4 or 5 days. Scale insects reduce their respiration in cold weather but when temperatures reach 50-55 respiration increases. The oil applications act as suffocants, so you want the insects' respiration rate to be up to obtain successful suffocation. The application should coat with a fine mist the stems and trunk of the woody plant receiving the application.

The other method is to apply an insect growth regulator during the crawler period. To be successful with this you

need to identify the scale species to determine when crawlers will be active. The two best insect growth regulators that have minimal impact on beneficial insects are Distance and Talus. They are great products but rather expensive. You may have to go this route if you have really let the scale population build up and the oil applications are just not sufficiently reducing the population.

Contact the Extension entomologist in your state to help identify the scales on your plants. You are welcome to send me good, close-up digital pictures of the scale covers for identification. Send them to sgill@umd.edu

Check out these photos of soft and armored scale on cut woody stems. They should help you identify similar



Japanese maple scale on dogwood.

insects in your own operations.

Also helpful is a 15-page fact sheet I developed for the Maryland landscape and nursery industry. It includes several photos, describes plants and their damage, as well as the insects' life cycles. It provides control method recommendations.

You can find it online at www.IPMNET.umd.edu. The title is "Scale Commonly Encountered in Maryland Landscapes and Nurseries."



San Jose scale on plum.



Japanese maple scale on quince.



Tulip tree scale (2nd instar) on magnolia.



White peach scale on curly willow.

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Megan Bame

Using 1-MCP Nanosponges to Control Botrytis

Cyclodextrin-based nanosponge structures (CD-NS) are an alternative delivery method for gaseous 1-MCP which is traditionally applied in a sealed chamber. 1-MCP is an ethylene antagonist that has also been shown to be effective in reducing damage caused by *Botrytis cinerea* in several cut flower species. The CD-NS technology allows for an extended release of 1-MCP, resulting in benefits such as reduced dosage of active ingredient and reduced number of delivery times. This study looked at the effectiveness of a non-volatile formulation of 1-MCP delivered via CD-NS in controlling botrytis on *Dianthus caryophyllus*. Treatments included two concentrations (0.25 and 0.5 $\mu\text{L/L}$) of active ingredient (1-MCP) in CD-NS in a vase suspension or a 6-hour treatment with the commercial gaseous 1-MCP (3.3% a.i.). Flowers were inoculated with *B. cinerea*.

All 1-MCP treatments displayed slower development of *B. cinerea* compared to the inoculated control. The treatment of the lower CD-NS concentration performed similarly or better than the commercial gaseous 1-MCP until day 13. At day 14, the lower dose of the CD-NC was most effective and by day 15 all inoculated flowers reached 100% pathogen infection.

The study concluded that 1-MCP included in CD-NS is a promising formulation for the control of fungal diseases in cut flowers in the postharvest environment. They suggest further research to determine the mechanism of the results.

Seglie, L., D. Spadaro, F. Trotta, M. Devecchi, M.L. Gullino, V. Scariot. 2012. Use of 1-methylcyclopropene in cyclodextrin-based nano-sponges to control grey mould caused by *Botrytis cinerea* on *Dianthus caryophyllus* cut flowers. *Postharvest Biology and Technology*. 64:55-57.

Reusing Peat in Crate-grown Lilies

Peat moss is one of the preferred substrates for the production of most greenhouse crops. Lilies, grown in the greenhouse, in shipping crates, often utilize peat in combination with other well-draining substrates such as composted bark, sawdust or coir fiber. The possible reuse of peat has at least two potential benefits: lower production cost and increased sustainability since peat is a limited natural resource. Concerns about reusing a planting substrate include disease problems, excessive accumulation of nutrient elements, unbalanced nutrient content and poor physical conditions. This study compared new and reused substrate for the production of *Lilium* 'Helvetia' plants, grown in crates in a polyethylene-covered greenhouse.

Many evaluation criteria of the cut flowers grown in new and reused substrate showed no significant difference. These criteria include fresh weight, dry weight, internode length and stem diameter. However, the stem length, leaf width and leaf length were reduced in the reused substrate. Leaf length and width were reduced by less than 1 cm, but stem length was reduced by 12 cm, from 89.2 cm in the new substrate to 77.1 cm in the reused substrate.

The study looked at physical and chemical soil properties and nutrient solution levels and determined none of the changes substantially affect plant growth. This study concluded that peat can successfully be used as a substrate for cultivation of *Lilium* in greenhouses for two or three cultivation cycles.

Jimenez, S., B.M. Plaza, M.L. Segura, J.I. Contreras, M.T. Lao. 2012. Peat Substrate Reuse in *Lilium* 'Helvetia' Crop, *Communications in Soil Science and Plant Analysis*, 43:243-250.



Anther Responsible for Flower Bud Abscission in Asiatic Lily

This study utilized *Lilium* flowers in part due to the easily identified floral organs. The study aimed to look at the role of the floral organs, specifically the anthers, in triggering a signal for flower bud abscission. Bud abscission is a year-round issue, particularly when lilies are forced under high temperature conditions.

Primary buds at different development stages were collected from *L. x elegans* 'Red Carpet'. The researchers suggest further study with buds evaluated on the stem, but acknowledge some difficulty in evaluation by using that method.

This study concludes that, based on changes in carbohydrate content and accumulation of metabolites in the anther, improper development of the anther is a triggering factor in inducing flower bud abscission in Asiatic lilies. Furthermore, bud abscission at the critical stages of bud development is induced by lack of fructose and sucrose in the developing anther and lack of translocation of 14C sucrose to the anther from the filaments.

Hwang, S.A., P.O. Lee, H.S. Lee, J.S. Lee, M.S. Rob, M.P. Choi. 2012. Flower bud abscission triggered by the anther in the Asiatic hybrid lily, *Postharvest Biology and Technology*, 64:31-39

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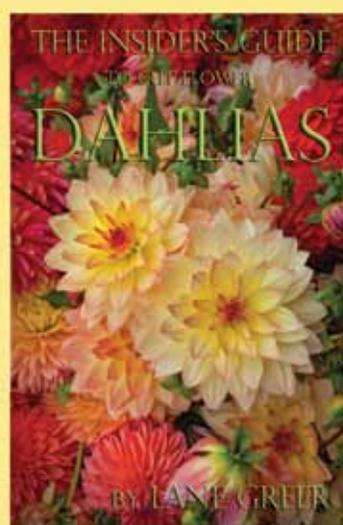
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Marion Baker, Duchess of Gloucester Flowers Gloucester, Virginia

Megan Bame

Marion Baker and her business, Duchess of Gloucester Flowers, are at a crossroads. Since starting the business in 2005, Marion has sold the majority of her flowers through the Williamsburg Farmers Market. This year, when she received the application for the farmers market, she decided it was time to shift her focus. Instead, she intends to spend 2012 on growing her relationship with area florists. She hopes to increase the number of weddings she provides flowers for as well, since this is a market area she particularly enjoys.

Marion started her professional career in social work, but was drawn to ornamental horticulture in the mid-1980s. She completed a certificate program in Georgia and became a Master Gardener in Maine, where she also worked full-time as a grower in the production range at an independent garden center. When she moved to Williamsburg, Virginia, she continued her horticultural pursuits through various jobs, including a stint at Busch Gardens. Ultimately though, she had a “nagging desire to be a business woman” and decided to start a cut flower business on farmland she had purchased in Gloucester.

She completed a workshop, “Growing Cut Flowers,” offered by Virginia State University and took a small business development course before jumping in. Her first ASCFG conference was in Pennsylvania and she attended many Mid-Atlantic Regional Meetings over the years, which she found to be particularly insightful. Though she



Marion and Gretchen at Williamsburg Farmers' Market.

started the business with a partner who shared her love of gardening, after a year they realized they had different visions and Marion bought her partner's share of the business.

The farm property is 5 acres, but only a half-acre is currently in production. Since starting seven years ago, Marion has doubled the bed space and hopes to see continued growth. She also has a small greenhouse and a 17x48' hoophouse. The strength of the business and Marion's spirit was tested last year when a tornado destroyed her hoophouse only months after it was erected. But she rebuilt and is looking forward to her first full season with it.

While the tornado was an extreme weather event, Marion, like so many others, concedes that Mother Nature provides the greatest challenges to growing. She says, “Every day I have a greater respect for weather and pests.” While she battles the common pest problems of aphids in the greenhouse and thrips in the field, a more unusual pest that thwarts her growing efforts are voles. She's tried lots of vole control options, most recently finding some success with a “Vibrasonic” repellent. The voles are a particular nuisance for her perennials, a production area she'd like to be increasing.

In addition to perennials, she grows annuals, bulbs and woody. Peonies, tuberose, gladiolus, lavender and daffodils occupy the greatest percentage of bed space. Other field crops include zinnias, cosmos, larkspur, agrostemma, dianthus, red broom corn, yarrow and foxtail lily. In early spring the greenhouse is fragrant with freesia, ranunculus and anemones before transitioning to crate-grown Oriental lilies. The hoophouse starts the season with sweet peas and snapdragons, but Marion is looking forward to planting a sizable crop of flowering kale for late summer and fall. Her florists love the kale and she's found that it's a good end-of-season crop.

In addition to specialty cuts, she has two niche markets: edible flowers and colonial-style evergreen decorations (dried flowers on boxwood and juniper, for example). Her foray into edible flowers began when a mushroom grower at the Williamsburg Farmers Market asked her about the availability of lavender for culinary uses. The mushroom guy is also a food distribution broker and knew chefs who were looking for lavender. She started researching what other flowers were edible and began growing violas, nasturtium, bachelor button, snapdragon, and sunflowers

(for the petals), to name a few. She sells an 8 oz. clamshell for \$3 and the broker increases the price that the chefs actually pay, but she's glad to let the broker do the selling.

She's created an off-season profit center by offering workshops through the winter months. Folks pay a fee for a workshop plus lunch to hear about topics such as edible flowers and flower arranging. The chef from the local bed and breakfast prepares lunch and chats with the participants about how he uses the flowers in his cuisine.

Marion does it all at the Duchess of Gloucester—growing, marketing, book-keeping and advertising. When the task list gets too long, she hires contract labor. While growing is her first love, she has come to recognize the importance of talking to the florists she serves. She calls weekly to let them know her availability and has found that it's a teaching moment to help the florists realize what's locally available. She doesn't feel like she gets a premium for her locally-grown flowers, typically relying on the USDA price report to set her prices. As she works with the florists more this year, she hopes to help them better appreciate the value and quality product she has to offer and move her prices accordingly.



Crystallized violas on chocolate mascarpone cups created by Chef Eric Garcia of Inn at Warner Hall, Gloucester, Virginia.



Allison Wildridge and Paulette Atkinson, friends and market helpers.



Flower Confetti Salad created by Chef Eric Garcia of Inn at Warner Hall, Gloucester, Virginia.

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Postharvest Treatment of Gardenia

Iftikhar Ahmad, Alicain S. Carlson and John M. Dole
NCSU Department of Horticultural Science

Gardenia, also known as cape-jasmine, is a common evergreen woody species, widely grown in the United States in the South and on the West Coast. It has become a popular cut flower for its lush, fragrant, white or creamy flowers, which are available from late spring to midsummer. Once cut, the flowers may last for 1-3 days under most circumstances; however, their vase life can be doubled if properly handled.

For extended longevity, stems should be harvested by cutting with sharp cutters. Avoid pulling stems as the

uneven wounding can shorten the vase life. Harvest buds in the morning and open flowers in the afternoon. Studies conducted at North Carolina State University (NCSU) have shown that for proper bud opening and longer vase life, stems should be harvested when petals have started to unfold (see photo below) as many stems harvested at bud stage failed to open further in vases. On the other hand, harvesting too late, when flowers are fully open, should also be avoided as the petals bruise easily and turn brown during handling.



Proper cut stage with petals white and just beginning to unfurl.

Limited information is available on gardenia postharvest handling. Therefore, experiments were conducted at NCSU to determine ethylene sensitivity, and effect of anti-ethylene agents (STS and 1-MCP), and find the best commercial preservative for gardenias. Stems harvested in the morning at a commercial flower farm were packed dry in a floral box and transported to NCSU within 24 hours of harvest. Upon arrival, stems were treated with either 1-MCP (Ethylbloc), STS (Chrysal AVB), or water (control) for 4 hours and then exposed to 0, 0.1 and 1.0 ppm ethylene for 20 hours. In the second experiment, stems were placed in Floralife Clear Professional for 48 hours and then moved to water, or in Floralife Crystal Clear, Floralife Rose Food liquid or water (control) continuously. Stems were observed daily and were considered dead when more than 50% of the petals were wilted, faded, or necrotic, the stems bent or buds failed to open.

Gardenia was not sensitive to ethylene when exposed to 1.0 ppm for 20 hours as all treatments had similar vase life, which averaged 7.0 days (Table 1; Fig. 1). Major reasons flowers were terminated included petal wilting, fading

and necrosis, with only a few showing bent neck. Stems placed in STS had no bent neck, and those in water and 1-MCP had 11 and 13% bent neck, respectively. While the anti-ethylene agents had no effect on vase life, 66% of buds placed in STS opened completely compared with only 38 and 20% buds opened completely in water and 1-MCP, respectively (Fig. 2).

In the preservatives study, placing stems in Floralife Rose Food extended vase life by 2 days as compared with water, and more flowers opened (93%) as compared with other preservatives and control (water), while Floralife Crystal Clear extended vase life by 0.8 days (Table 2; Fig. 3). However, Floralife Clear Professional had similar vase life as water (control). Gardenia did not benefit from the use of Floralife Clear Professional. Preservatives had no statistical effect on petal wilting, fading or bent neck, although Floralife Rose Food may have reduced bent neck and petal wilting. All the preservatives had more necrotic petals as compared with water only (control), but that could be due to the flowers lasting longer (Fig. 4). Preservatives significantly improved flower bud opening and stems placed in Floralife Rose Food had very attractive,

large sized, fully opened blooms, with Floralife Crystal Clear being the second most effective preservative (Fig. 4).

In summary, gardenia growers should pay attention to the harvesting process and the harvesters should be properly trained for harvesting the stems at proper stage when petals have started unfolding. It is good news that gardenias are not ethylene sensitive. Gardenia stems do best when placed in Floralife Rose Food as compared to the other preservatives tested.

The authors gratefully acknowledge the Kitayama brothers for providing gardenia stems and Floralife for providing preservatives for the studies.



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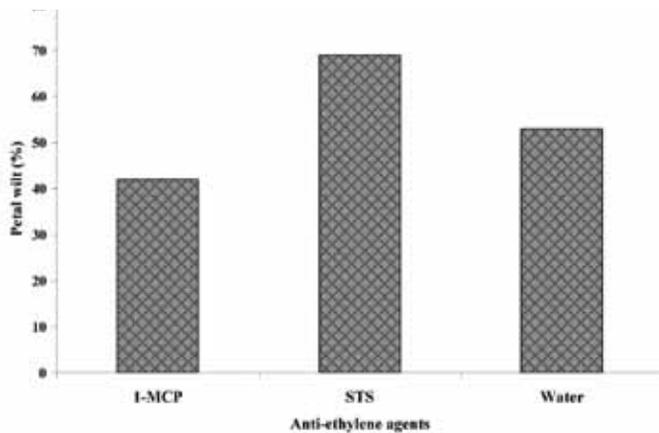


Fig. 1. Effect of anti-ethylene agents on petal wilt (%) of gardenia.

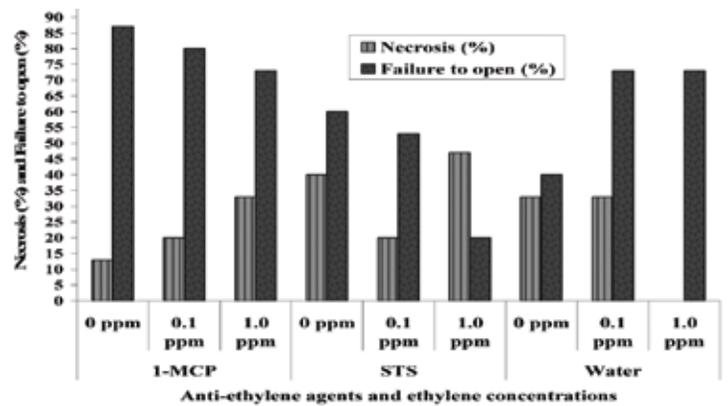


Fig. 2. Effect of anti-ethylene agents and ethylene on necrosis (%) and failure to open (%) of gardenia.

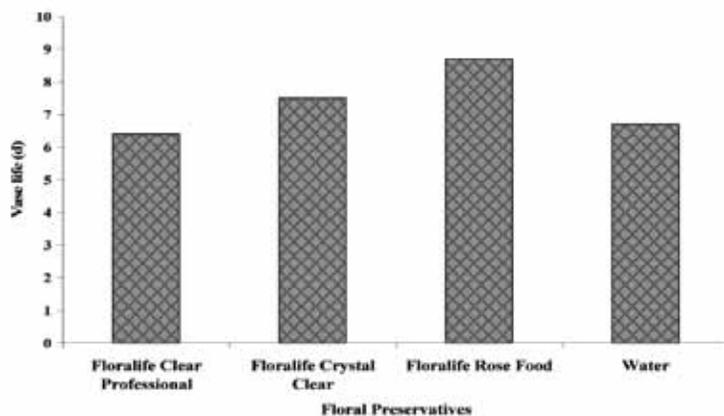


Fig. 3. Effect of floral preservatives on vase life of gardenia.

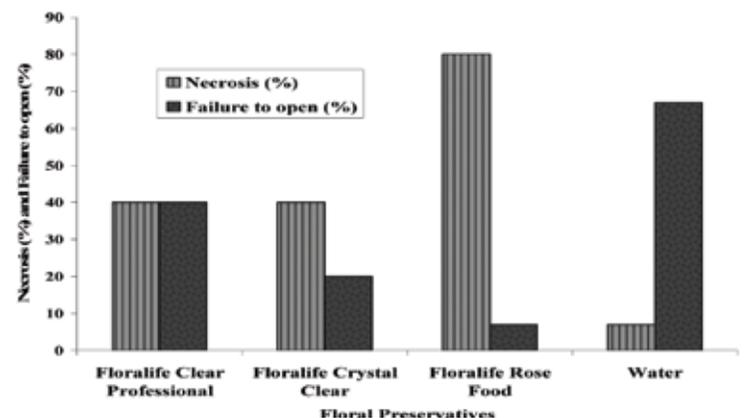


Fig. 4. Effect of floral preservatives on necrosis (%) and failure to open (%) of gardenia. The higher amount of necrosis on the flowers in the Floralife Rose Food is due to the flowers lasting longer.

REGIONAL REPORTS

NORTHEAST

Missy Bahret

Old Friends Farm

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“A weed is a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The plot of land I rent may have a beautiful view, but it has its challenges. One of the first times I saw the land it was in potatoes, but I would never had known that if someone hadn't told me. As I walked the field, the red-rooted pigweed and lamb's quarters were nearly as tall as I was, and the seedheads were dispersing their prolific offspring with exuberance. While I walked through the field I thought about how varied the threshold for weed allowance is amongst farmers. That night, as I shook the weed seeds out of my shoes, I thought, “I would never want to rent that land.

As fate has it, I found myself working that very land a couple years later, and for the last 8 years. Okay, weeds, it's you and me, and only time will tell who wins.

The numbers are daunting. A single plant of red-rooted pigweed can produce a whopping 100,000 viable seeds, and those tiny buggers can exist ungerminated for up to 40 years. The saving grace (if there is one) is that with competition within a crop, their offspring numbers decrease to between 10,000-30,000. Galinsoga waits until summer to do its thing, but it can have 7,500 seeds per plant ready in under 8

weeks! Although its seeds are viable for less than three years, it has a natural spread of ten miles a year. Nutsedge spreads mainly from its tubers, which can last around 3 years.

The weed list goes on. Many of these weeds are host plants for pests that affect our flower crops. Weed banks are the only banks you want to see fail!

Here are photos of two of our mainstay implements, which we use to tackle our weed bank ‘inheritance’. Both are used for stale-bedding (reducing the weed numbers before any crop is seeded or planted.)

Weed pressure has reduced significantly on my farm over the last 8 years, but we still have more to go. Although each year we vow to do better with weed management the following year, we indeed strengthen our defense strategy each year. The eye-high weeds having a reproductive heyday are a thing of the past (thank goodness!) and we strive to catch the windows of weeds when they are at their nearly imperceptible and small stages.

Best of luck to everyone with their crops this year. Be sure to use the information you learned from the National Conference, Regional Meetings, Growers' School, and (of course!) the Bulletin Board to help you have the best flowers yet!

“Everything takes time. Be patient. And while you are waiting, pull a weed.”

Evelyn Underhill



At high speed, the baskets disturb the very topmost layer of soil, thus killing recently germinated weed seeds. Prepping beds in advance allows time to greatly reduce the weeds in the top surface. Transplanting and direct sowing will be less weedy as a result of this pre-seed/pre-plant cultivation practice.



A homemade metal box that hovers over the complete bed. It is tractor mounted. Not shown: Propane tank sits on the tractor by the driver, tubes feed propane to implement, and collars that center the tubing above each hole in bed box.

MID-ATLANTIC

Becky Devlin

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The mild winter we have had in the Mid-Atlantic region has not made me any less excited for spring this year. Each year, I anticipate the new season like a child waiting for Christmas. And this year is no different. My David Austin English rose collection is fully established and should produce the best crop yet.

I'm looking forward to showing off these beauties at this year's Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting that will be held at my farm here in Virginia Beach on June 18th.

In addition to the English roses, Gloeckner has sent us several varieties of the new Kordes Freelanders roses that have been bred for outdoor growing and cut flowers, to trial and display at the meeting. For those growers who have always wanted to add roses, but think they are difficult to grow, we'll also go over our simple and organic methods and materials for low-maintenance rose growing.

In addition to roses, dahlias have been one of my favorite focal flowers. However, they have also been my biggest challenge in the hot, humid summers here. The spring always shows great promise with lush, green growth, but just as the blooms get cranking, the beetles come in full force and chew the buds before the petals begin to unfurl. As soon as we'd get the beetles under control, the hot summer sun beats down and slows production. But after a few seasons of trials, I think I have a decent system figured out.

We'll have 20 varieties of dahlias, and our no-dig/summer shade/low-cost tunnel in place for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting. Come check out my favorite varieties for cutting and learn my must-have organic controls for great dahlias. In addition to the roses and dahlias, our lilac trial plants will round out the morning tour. As a result of an ASCFG Grower Grant, I planted 20 varieties of lilacs to trial in a warm climate. The plants were planted 2 years ago and, since many were small rooted cuttings, I have yet to see much blooming from many of them so far. I am looking forward to seeing and sharing the results this season, hopefully right in time for the meeting.

I'll have my farmers' market display set up on site, and we'll discuss it over lunch. We'll pack the afternoon with mini sessions on succession sowing in the Mid-Atlantic and Southern regions (with varieties and timelines from many growers in both regions), and one other juicy (as yet undecided) topic.

We'll round out the day with a chance to be a part of group ordering for fall bulbs, shrubs and plants. If you are a smaller grower, or just want to try a new crop or variety without jumping in too deep, this is your chance to get smaller quantities of great cut flower varieties at case lot prices or better. Want to try some new parrot tulips? Maybe get a larger range of ranunculus varieties and colors without having to plant 10,000 corms? Looking to add a handful of several varieties of shrubs without having to meet a \$500 minimum or get stuck with 30+ shrubs? This is the way to do it. I hope all of you (from any region!) will join us.



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SOUTHEAST

Charles Hendrick

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As I write, we are emerging from the mildest winter we can remember. We undoubtedly have more cold weather ahead, but signs of spring are definitely in the air. By the time you read this, we will all likely be elbow-deep in the dirt once again, preparing for the excitement of another

growing season and the challenges, frustrations, and joys that each season inevitably brings.

Thanks to a suggestion from Missy Bahret of Old Friends Farm (Northeast Regional Director), we emailed a Survey Monkey survey to the Southeast membership to get their thoughts and suggestions for the Regional Meeting. We had interesting and extremely helpful responses. Of the 23 responders who completed the survey, 60.9% prefer the Meeting to be held during the off season (December–March), and 52.2% prefer a one-day event. Based on the overwhelming desire for an off-season Regional, we are foregoing a fall meeting, and instead will go forward with plans for a March 2013 Regional Meeting in or near Lexington, South Carolina, where we will tour Floral & Hardy Farm. We had many great suggestions for topics and offers of help from members, so we have a great base to begin the planning process. The ASCFG Board has decided that Regionals should be done with a two-day “Grower School” format, since the National Conference Grower Schools are always very well attended.

Some of our members’ comments included:

“Love the opportunity to visit another farm, even if it is in the winter or off season – there is always something to learn.”

“I’m a relatively new grower and would love the opportunity to visit with other local growers on a regular basis to reduce the ‘learning curve’.”

“Networking is the best way to learn who to go to for help. Farm tours help you think and say ‘Why didn’t I think of that?’ I learn best by doing and making mistakes and it is really nice to have someone help overcome the mistakes (been there, done that) and be encouraging (not asking ‘why did or didn’t you do that?’).”

“I love flower growing and want to share my enthusiasm and knowledge, and hopefully make some money at it before someone has to send me flowers. But when they do, I will not be growing them, and I do not want flowers grown in South America.”

Twenty out of 23 responders want to network with other growers (87%). Twenty-one want workshops; active learning (91.3%), and 78.3% want a farm tour. We hope to



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meet expectations, and look forward to seeing many of you in March 2013!

Thanks to an article in the January 2012 *Growing For Market*, we applied for the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture’s Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative, which was available in all 50 states this year according to the GFM article. Hopefully we may qualify for funding of a new high tunnel.

The District Conservationist who took our application also told us about purchasing crop insurance at a reasonable price. She said we could not purchase the insurance until later in the year, so we will definitely be looking into that. We definitely need it because of the threat of hurricanes where we live near the coast. She also gave us a nifty aerial photograph of our farm. If you are interested in learning more, contact your local USDA office.

If your local office isn’t very helpful, contact a neighboring county. Our experience was that the local office was not very interested in helping us, but we got the opposite service in our neighboring county, where they were very helpful. Since I go there regularly anyway to florists, it did not matter to me to deal with another office. The Conservationist there could not have been more helpful, and all I had to do was sign a “Transfer of Farm Records Between Counties” form. (Footnote: If you do not subscribe to *Growing for Market* you should. Excellent resource.)

It appears that there are glimmers of hope that the “Great Recession” might be loosening its grip as the economy seems to show slow signs of improvement and unemployment slowly declines in some areas. Times have been tough for many of us, some worse than others, probably depending on many factors individual to each of us. I end this report with the hopeful comment from one of our fellow growers:

“... hold ON in the tough economic times.....things WILL turn around.....and we allthose of us who CAN hold on.....will be sitting pretty as pretty can be.....yes??.....STAY focused.....TRIM down.....do whatever it is to be the BEST you can be.....”

Hang in there friends!

MIDWEST

Kent Miles

Illinois Willows

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Social Marketing

There’s a new social player in town, and it’s taking the country by storm. It’s called Pinterest and if you haven’t heard of it, you won’t be in the dark for long.

Pinterest is an online pin board, a place for viewing photos. The majority of the viewers are women, who categorize, bookmark, store and share pictures of clothes they are wearing, food they are eating (recipes), jewelry and flowers that they are inspired to have. Users have pin boards (subject boards) to help them prep for weddings, decorate their homes, plans for ideas on spring gardens and landscapes.

On wedding boards, pictures of arrangements, colors, favorite flowers and new introductions of flowers that may have never been seen before are viewed. You can click the Like, Repin, or Comment tabs on pictures. The Like tab is clicked to like a picture. The Repin takes that pictures and puts it on one of your boards. The Comment tab lets you make a comment on that particular photo.

So what is the advantage of being on this site? You are able to show photos of your flowers: the way you grow them; the sizes, different colors and varieties you produce; and textures of what we (growers) love to do. Think about it: post a picture of a bed filled with a bright assortment of zinnias or a bed of ‘Pro-Cut’ sunflower—what a visual impact that would be to prospective brides! A future bride sees your pictures and BAM! She wants that combo for her summer wedding. So whether the bride is down the street and never knew you grow cut flowers, or she’s across the state, she can now find you,



“ We are the King of Marigold ”



Marigold

Marigold History

Marigold Flowers with a Rich Golden History in Asia. American Marigold have been a part of Asian life for at least the last 50 years. With large gold, yellow and orange flower blooms, American Marigold are the best selling flower variety in Asia. We have pioneered the development of American Marigold in tropical over the last 20 years with breeding, trialing and high tech seed production to obtain the very best selection for farmer and growers.

Our next mission is to introduce tropical sense to US market. **Please join us.**



the grower of these lovely flowers. As a bonus, each photo you post has your web address on it .

Some numbers: in early February, comScore reported that Pinterest had hit 11.7 million unique monthly visitors in the United States alone. That is less than three years after its initial launch (March 2010). Considering that number of consumers, flower growers need to jump on board with Pinterest. Pinterest is driving people to our web sites and blogs. We are in a green industry that is highly visual and Pinterest is a visual medium. A great combo !

With Pinterest, as growers with e-commerce on our web sites the viewers are driven back to us to find out more about our farms, and the flowers we have to offer them. With just being on Pinterest a short time we have already had contacts on our products. So I feel that Pinterest has helped get the I.W. message out.

These are just some of my thoughts on Pinterest. Some growers may not have an interest in “pinning”, but at least look into Pinterest and decide if it is for you.

To move my information to my markets and the greater world, I also use Facebook, Twitter, and blog and web sites. In the future I may consider videos of my farm and its flowers.

I started with Facebook a few years back with a personal profile page. A co-worker said I should post some pictures of my flowers, so I posted a few. Looking into this site further I saw that I could make a business page. I started an Illinois Willows business page. Basically, the I.W. page is a running story of what we are doing at Illinois Willows. As of March 1st we have more than 500 people following us. They are floral friends, designers, educators, customers, other growers, industry associates, and the international floral community.

We have recently redesigned our web site. When you pin (photos) on Pinterest your tag is there for them to click back to your web site.

In late February I started a blog: mrwillows-willowsontheprairie.blogspot.com, thus getting my feet wet in another area. Other ASCFG members have been blogging for a number of years and it is always a pleasure reading and learning about their farms.

Happy growing and marketing, ‘til next time !

SOUTH-CENTRAL

Rita Anders

Cuts of Color
ritajanders@cvctx.com



I recently attended the ASCFG spring Board of Directors’ meeting, and really enjoyed getting to know several growers representing all the regions of the country. It seems everyone has such different growing conditions but the love of flowers in common, and the desire to make this organization an awesome group to belong to. We were very busy for two days planning and I am very excited about this year’s National conference in Tacoma, Washington in November. Book your calendars now because you don’t want to miss it.

Hopefully you all have visited the newly revised web page and see how appealing and informative it is. As with any organization or business, it’s a good idea to change things up and spice up your offerings. We tend to get settled in a rut and we do things because it’s good enough and things get stale.

Last summer the drought was very disheartening and once it started raining, it was like a switch went on. I hired two new employees who each in their own ways have livened up our business. One employee is very excited about marketing and sees the artsy side of making things look good, and she is organized. We have added another market because of her enthusiasm. The other is a recently-married young farmer who is developing a beef and organic vegetable operation with her husband. She wants me

to teach her and she keeps me going with all her enthusiastic energy and constant “Why don’t we do this?” My answer is “There’s not enough time in the day to add all that”.

One of my better sayings is “Work smart, not hard”. To work smart you must be organized. Nobody wants to spend thirty minutes looking for the trowels you need, only to find them much later exactly where you used them last time. Just think: if you always put them back, you would have all the plants already planted and would be moving on to the next chore. Having a routine for your major harvest days and everyone knowing what to do next makes it go like clockwork until...those three little ladies drive up to order flowers for an upcoming function. And did I mention unannounced. Boy does that throw a kink in the day but you do what you can and don’t stress.

Every week I make a list of things to accomplish. Staying on top of things helps you stay organized and if you do things when you are supposed to, it takes a lot less time. If you don’t weed that row this week, next week it’s going to take twice as long because with this year’s mild winter and all the rain—yes, you read that right, rain—those weeds are twice as big. If you see aphids, spray now, not later, because those little bugs multiply rapidly.

Now I figure if I write this and read it often enough, I might follow my own advice. I try to, but sometimes it just gets too crazy.

I found a great product called Organocide. It’s OMRI-approved for organic growers and works great on red spider mite. Safer Soap and neem oil work well on aphids. I like to harvest my flowers for the day and then spray if I have to. I do the same when I put out fish emulsion because I want to make sure I don’t burn the petals. I just wish they would invent an odorless fish emulsion.

It’s been an awesome late winter which has been more like spring in our region of Texas. It’s great to have flowers like ranunculus, anemone, dahlia, stock, and calendulas in season-extending greenhouses this time of year, but if you are making bouquets for winter markets, what do you use for greenery? Horizon ‘Blue Ageratum’ grows well in the winter greenhouse, and makes beautiful greenery. It will freeze, though, so try to keep it protected. We have been able to harvest 12-20” stems on a 6” initial spacing and using horizontal netting.

Another favorite is African blue basil. It's the only basil I've been able to grow in the winter greenhouse because it too will freeze. This basil can be grown only from cuttings. It also can be used as a substitute for traditional basil in pesto and makes a great basil jelly. Every year we plant dill and we have so many volunteers come up around the place. With this year's mild winter, even the dill that is growing outside is doing great. Another filler we have been using with our winter bouquets is bamboo, which has a pretty leaf, and great vase life.

I planted Cerinthe out in the garden in January and will be harvesting from it by the first of March. Fall-seeded bells of Ireland are also growing nicely and I can't wait to harvest these little beauties.

We will be having our Regional Meeting at Nancy Bartlett's farm, tentatively on August 6th in Folsom, Louisiana. Nancy and I are working on a program and we would appreciate input on what you would like covered at the meeting. Email me at ritajanders@cvctx.com to let me know what you would like to be included on the program and we will do the best to accommodate. As soon as we get a program, we'll send it via email and post office, so you can plan on attending.



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ABC 1-3 White	ABC 2-3 Lavender	



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NORTHWEST

Diane Szukovathy

Jello Mold Farm

diane@jellomoldfarm.com



Way back in 2009 as the new Northwest Regional Director, I was quite taken by the fact that we had a few ASCFG members

in Alaska. Even though I've lived in Washington State all my life, I'd never been up yonder, to the last rugged frontier. I'm comfortable with and even a little proud of the open spaces and the self-sufficient individualism which is part of the lower forty-eight's northwest culture, but Alaska is a whole other game entirely. That place makes our majestic mountains seem like foothills, our winters like perpetual spring, and our brand of flower farming a little tame.

Five years ago, the seeds of a new floral industry were just sprouting up there in the vast hinterlands. A few pioneering flower growers had the bright idea that since their peonies bloomed in summer when no one else in the world could supply this iconic flower, why... that just might be the makings of an industry. Never mind that Alaska has

almost no cleared and cultivated farmland, that most folks deal with mega feet of snow every year, soil temps that don't rise above 50 degrees and winters that last eight months. Never mind that though nearly every Alaskan over five years of age knows how to dress a moose and can tell you several spine-tingling brown bear stories, even so, basic agricultural knowledge is scarce. Never mind all that, when there are stumps to clear and roots to get in the ground!

This past January, I journeyed to Alaska for the first time, on an invitation to speak at the Alaska Peony Growers Association (APGA) winter conference. "You can bring Dennis and make a vacation out of it," my generous hosts suggested. Dennis wasn't buying it, stubbornly insisting that his idea of a winter vacation lay in an entirely other part of the planet. When I got there, temperatures at Alyeska Lodge outside Anchorage were ranging between -10F and five above. And what an amazing, enchanted winter wonderland! 120 growers came from all over the state to this two-day gathering, clustered in a warm room to talk about

peonies with views of ski slopes and snow covered trees just outside the picture windows. To help set the mood in the room, meeting organizers had ordered in a bouquet of fresh peonies from Chile. They arrived a little worse for the wear but still quite dramatic in that setting.

Ron Illingworth, APGA President and co-owner of North



Michael Poole and Michelle LaFriniere standing in front of their fields at Chilly Root Peony Farm

Pole Peonies, reported on the current state of the industry. There are now at least 50,000 peonies planted in Alaska ground, with that number doubling every couple of years. I learned that there are three basic regions of peony production, each with its own unique growing conditions and harvest season. Ron and Marji's farm sits up near Fairbanks in a region they identify as the northern interior (think Minnesota winter on steroids.). Strangely, the northernmost peony farms have the earliest production in the state, beginning in July. Snow cover protects the roots during the harsh winter months and all plantings are in raised berms so soil temperatures can warm in spring.

The two other regions of peony production are the Kenai Peninsula in coastal southwestern Alaska and the Mat-Su Valley, a little farther north and more inland. Each of these regions has an active community of growers who have been sharing knowledge and offering support to new growers. Denise Bowlan of Pioneer Peonies in Wasilla reported on the newer, yet actively expanding Mat-Su region. Rita Jo Shoultz updated attendees on developments with the Kenai Peninsula Peony Growers. Her farm, Alaska Hardy Peony, located near Homer, was one of the first to plant peonies. The Kenai region is far enough south that they still have slugs and earthworms. Their peonies come on latest, with harvest extending into September.



ASCFG Members at the APGA Conference. Back row: Shelley Rainwater, Clay Sullivan, Marji Illingworth, Rita Jo Shoultz, Diane Szukovathy, Carolyn Chapin, Ron Illingworth and Chris Beks. Front row: Beth VanSandt and Jan Hanscomb.

Ko Klaver of Zabo Plant gave a dynamic presentation on business planning, laying out a worldview of the floral industry and offering growers strong advice on organizing together for quality control and joint marketing. Ko was born and raised in Holland where cooperatives are the name of the game in the floral industry. His talk sparked energetic debate about possibilities for forming one or more peony producer cooperatives and the need for an “Alaska Peony” brand. Should growers form together to jointly own packing and shipping facilities? If so, should this be done on a regional or statewide level? Should they organize only for marketing purposes and if so how would consistent quality standards be maintained?

Alaska growers are unique in the world. This is a state that has a roadkill dispersal program run by the state patrol so meat doesn’t get wasted. These folks regularly deal with blizzards, power outages, frozen pipes, crazy spring thaws, bears, moose traffic, and insects from hell. Their everyday lives depend on a level of personal responsibility that has them prescreened to make fine, successful farmers. When asked how many of the attendees planned to have their own coolers and packing facilities, well over half the hands in the room shot up. Clearly, this is a group of committed do-it-yourselfers, and cooperative formation will not come without challenges. The conference ended with many healthy questions still in the air for this brand new industry.

The next day, Beth VanSandt and Kurt Weichhand drove me 5½ hours west to their aptly-named farm, Scenic Place Peonies, on the Kenai Peninsula, where I stayed for three more nights as their lucky guest. We toured several farms on cross-country skis and visited with many of the local Kenai growers. “You’ve got to come back in the summer,” they kept saying and heaped such generous hospitality on me that I am still reeling. I fell in love with the spirit of Alaska’s wild frontier flower farmers. I keep remembering the words of a Mat-Su woman, a brand new grower I sat next to during one of the conference sessions, “I’ve got a quarter acre planted,” she said. “I’m doing it for my grandkids. My mother left me a little money and I can feel how proud she is of how I am using it.”

In the past three years, the ASCFG’s Alaskan membership has grown from four to nineteen. It’s been a privilege to watch history being made on my watch—the birth of a whole new industry in floriculture. Peonies in summer, who would have thought?



Kurt Weichhand and Beth VanSandt pose in front of their ruggedly constructed hoop house at Scenic Place Peonies.



Diane Szukovathy and Beth VanSandt touring Kenai peninsula peony farms on skis.

Correction: The photo on page 75 of the Winter issue of *The Cut Flower Quarterly* was of Diane Szukovathy and Stacie Sutliff, not Melissa Feveyer. The ASCFG regrets the error.



WEST

Christof Bernau

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Greetings from the thirsty West, where the grip of La Niña is just beginning to show signs of weakening. Up until mid March, California and much of the Western region has been experiencing below average temperature and well below average precipitation. Unlike El Niño events, where the West typically receives well above normal rainfall during the wet

season, La Niña events are usually cold, but can bring either above or below average precipitation and thus greatly impact the resultant snow pack that so much of the West depends on for agriculture, industry and urban consumption.

Current sea surface temperature monitoring in the South Pacific and weather modeling agencies are predicting that we will return to neutral El Niño/Southern Oscillation conditions for the summer of 2012. Lingering effects of the gradually dissipating La Niña cycle, based on most predictions, suggest that the southern and central United States will see above average temperatures for the period through May, and the West and Northwest will see cooler than average temperatures. For the next couple of months, the northwest and northern tier states are predicted to see above average precipitation, and the Southwest will be drier than normal.

Across California, Nevada and Utah, ENSO (El Niño/Southern Oscillation) modeling suggests that we will receive normal rainfall levels, but given the near-drought conditions we have experienced so far and the fact that the “rainy season” normally tapers by mid-April, this does not bode well for our water supply. More on western precipitation patterns and potential impacts for the 2012 growing season in a moment. For anyone interested in pursuing current La Niña/El Niño/Southern Oscillation discussions, you can receive an e-mail notification from NOAA when the monthly ENSO Diagnostic Discussions are released, by sending an e-mail message to: ncep.list.enso-update@noaa.gov.

As one dimension of this colder than normal winter, in Santa Cruz we have experienced 125% of our normal “chill hours” for the winter, for the 2011-12 season from November 1 through February 29. Though precise definitions vary, chill hours are commonly regarded as the total number of hours that plants are exposed to temperature between 32-45 degrees F. While chill hours are especially important for deciduous fruit tree growers, as inadequate chill can result in blind wood and delayed, erratic or staggered bloom, potentially compromising

pollination, fruit set and production, flower growers also have an important stake in adequate cold exposure for our perennial crops.

Without adequate winter chill, many crops, such as roses, echinacea, forsythia, lilacs and sedum never go fully dormant. Consequently, they do not get the rest required to burst out of dormancy with big, showy blooms. Instead, during mild years, we often see continued, but weak growth throughout the winter and then light flower production during the main growing season. Fortunately, this year, both fruit and flower growers will benefit from the cold.

Researching rainfall records and snowpack information, it quickly becomes evident that in most data collection sites, we are at only 40-50% of normal for the water year to date and only 30-40% for the entire water year. Perhaps more disconcerting is the fact that in much of the West, snowpack levels in the mountains are at 30-50% of normal. This is important because much of our water supply comes not from groundwater pumping, but rather from surface water sources: rivers and streams fed by snowmelt in the late spring and summer and the extensive reservoir system that holds back what would otherwise largely run to the ocean, for the sake of agriculture, industry and human consumption.

For early in the 2012 growing season, we may not have to worry too much because most reservoirs are in good shape. Presently, the reservoir systems of California, Nevada and Utah are all at above average levels for this time of year, due to the incredibly wet 2010-11 rain year and due to snow coming to the Sierras and other western mountains well into June. In fact, at the end of June 2011, Sierra snowpack was at 180% of normal. This, combined with a very cool summer, meant that snowmelt and runoff to the reservoirs continued through the end of summer 2011 as water demands for crop production was declining.

Arizona’s reservoirs, however, are below average for the year, and storage may continue to diminish if the Colorado River basin and the Southwest do not see at least normal precipitation for the year. As the 2010-11 water year’s dividends are used up, we will likely begin to feel the impacts our dry 2011-12 water year, in the form of water rationing, fallowed land and the desire to further exploit our precious groundwater resources.

Is groundwater pumping really the answer? Excessive pumping, defined as extracting water faster than natural recharge processes unfold, can lead to a host of

long-term consequences, such as the lowering of water tables, the drying up of shallower wells, reduced stream flow and lake levels, compromised water quality, increased pumping costs, land subsidence and, for coastal communities, the disastrous advent of salt water intrusion into aquifers.

While this is certainly an issue for the arid West, groundwater depletion is a problem in regions across the country and around the world. (See the USGS image on

groundwater pumping and land subsidence.) In parts of the Pacific Northwest, water tables have dropped by up to 100'. In the Ogallala aquifer, which underlies much of the Great Plains, water levels have declined by 100' or more, though conservation, improved delivery efficiency and crop land reduction due to low commodity prices have slowed the rate of aquifer depletion. In the Arizona, water tables in the Phoenix and Tuscon areas have dropped by 300-500', a trend unlikely to improve any time soon with continued pressure of population growth and extensive desert agriculture. Even along the around the Great Lakes, along the Gulf Coast, in Florida and the Atlantic Seaboard, drought and groundwater depletion are increasingly becoming topics of concern and examples of land subsidence are becoming all too common.

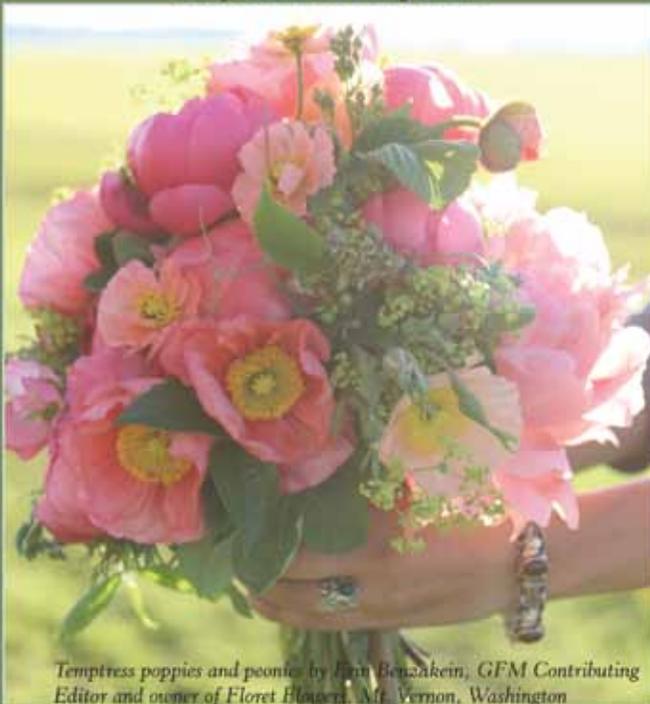
Sounds like a lot of doom and gloom. Some cynics say we should just get on with the business of using up resources and grow the economy. Manifest destiny, dominion over nature, the insatiable capitalist growth imperative and similar rhetoric are all in need of serious reexamination in light of present day phenomenon and empirical evidence that demonstrate that we are in fact living in a fragile world of finite resources and that our actions, individually and collectively, have an incredible impact on our ecosystems.

As crop producers, be it food or flowers, we have a profound responsibility to use our resources with care and respect and to be exemplars of how to live within our means. We are the consumers and stewards of Earth's precious resources. In the realm of water, we must strive to use less by increasing soil organic matter, which like the snowpack, is a reservoir to retain soil moisture, while simultaneously improving soil structure, aeration, nutrient provisioning and facilitating more extensive root penetration.

We also need to be vigilant about the timing and methods of water delivery to avoid the drying impacts of sun and wind, watering early or late in the day depending on the presence of wind and extent of disease pressures, and by using drip irrigation and other delivery conservation strategies wherever possible. Higher density plantings, within the tolerance range of local pest and disease issues, living mulches and soil cooling surface mulching can all further contribute to water conservation. Finally, perhaps most difficult of all to ponder, is the thought that maybe we should not be growing certain water-dependent crops, or that we should be growing them only when soil moisture retention has been significantly improved, or on the margins of the rainy season when less irrigation will be needed to produce high quality crops because of natural rainfall delivery.

While there are literally hordes of resources about water in agriculture and horticulture, xeriscaping and other related topics, I thought I might leave you with the names of a few of my favorite books about water. Food for thought and contextual information to weave into our farming practices.

Growing for Market
cut flowers in every issue



Temptress poppies and peonies by Erin Benzakein, GFM Contributing Editor and owner of Floret Flowers, Mt. Vernon, Washington

Print subscriptions: \$36/year in U.S.
Online with archive of 1,300+ articles: \$89/year
www.growingformarket.com
PO Box 3747, Lawrence KS 66046
800-307-8949

Specifically on water in the West, I recommend Mark Reisner's classic Cadillac Desert. Also of interest might be An Introduction to Water in California, by David Carle and California Rivers and Streams, by Jeffrey Mount. On the natural history of water and the water cycle, see Fresh Water, by E. C. Pielou and The Water Atlas, by Robin Clarke and Jannet King. Venturing into the realm of water politics and our future, see When the Rivers Run Dry, by Fred Pearce, Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit, by Vandana Shiva, Water, Culture and Power, by John Donahue and Barbara Rose Johnston, and finally, Water Resources: Efficient, Sustainable and Equitable Use, by Wolfram Mauser. These titles are only a very small sampling of the vast writings and thinking on water, and I have not even touched on online resources, but for anyone interested in one of our most precious resources, I hope the above works can stimulate further inquiry, reflection, activism, conservation and conversation.

To receive an e-mail notification when the monthly ENSO Diagnostic Discussions are released, please send an e-mail message to: ncep.list.enso-update@noaa.gov.

The ASCFG Welcomes its Newest Members

Teresa Barnhardt, Harrisonburg, NC
Bethany Bernard, The Flower Peddler, Bridgeton, NJ
Stacy Brenner, Broadturn Farm, Scarborough, ME
Lauren Brown, Fairfax, VA
Dorothy Canote, Harvester, Harrisburg, MO
Kat Clark, The Restoration Farm, Louisburg, KS
Krishana Collins, Bluebird Farm, West Tisbury, MA
John Dart, Dart-Am, North Pole, AK
Harry Davidson, Wasilla, AK
Anouk Dupraz, Anouk Dupraz Fleurs, Crissier, Switzerland
C. English, Harrison Brook Farm, Liberty Corner, NJ
Jennifer Feddema, Wellandport, ON
Graham Garrod, Tonbridge, Kent, United Kingdom
Melissa Glorieux, Aster B. Flowers, Essex, MA
Rickie Goldberg, True Blue Farm, Pawley's Island, SC
Christina Goy, Montalbano Farms, Sandwich, IL
Linda Guy, Plants Nouveau, Charleston, SC
Janelle Henicke, J. Hink Specialty Cut Flowers, Seminole, TX
Melody Horn, Juniper Hill Farm, Westport, NY
Mike Huggett, American Takii, Inc., Litchfield, MI
Barbara Jefts, Native Farm Flowers, Saratoga Springs, NY
Tom Jobb, Fred C. Gloeckner & Company, Bothell, WA
Gayle Johnson, Sonora, CA
Joel Kempfer, Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., Fort Worth, TX
Gibby Knoebel, Gib's Farm, Elysburg, PA
Sue Lincoln, Giggly Roots Garden, Eagle River, AK
Rachel Lord, Stems, Homer, AK
Leslie Mahle, Sogn Valley CSA, Cannon Falls, MN

Carol Mann, Stonington, CT
Chad Miller, KSU Dept. of Horticulture, Manhattan, KS
Jon Milligan, Round Rock, TX
Art Modderman, Coopersville, MI
Greg Noller, Sakata Seed, Morgan Hill, CA
Angela Palmer, Plants Nouveau, West Newbury, MA
Marla Palmiter, Palmiter's Garden Nursery, Avon, NY
Laura Paxton, Bella Flower Farm, Oberlin, OH
Mary Beth Perilli, Field House Botanicals of Vermont, Jericho, VT
Susan Poneman, Heavenly Hydrangeas Floral Design, McLean, VA
Richard Repper, Echo Lake Peonies, Soldotna, AK
Joan Riemer, Brush Prairie Flower Co., Brush Prairie, WA
Colleen Riley, Fritz Creek, AK
Sue Roseman, Boondock Blooms, Mound City, MO
Julane Schneller, Stoughton, WI
Charlene Smith, Cane Creek Nursery, Lobelville, TN
Reuben Stoltzfus, Narvon, PA
Kay Studer, Buckeye Blooms, Elida, OH
Vikki Tesar, Waxhaw, NC
Nancy Tuinstra, Tuinstra Farms, Daggett, MI
Linda Ugelow, Bedford, MA
Peter Van Noort, Sakata Seed, Morgan Hill, CA
Janet Walrath, Creative Haven Flowers, Arlington, WA
Sheila Wedel, Sheila's Garden Market, Galva, KS
Elia Woods, Common Wealth Urban Farms, Oklahoma City, OK

Thanks for the Good Word!

New members named you as the reason they joined the ASCFG

Rita Anders
Allan Armitage
Pamela Arnosky
Louise Bennett
Christof Bernau
Lynn Byczynski
Linda Chapman

Leah Cook
Kathy Cron
Josie Crowson
David Davidson
Melanie DeVault
John Dole
Dave Dowling

Andrea Gagnon
Polly Hutchison
Cathy Jones
Ko Klaver
Catherine Mix
Shelley Rainwater
Joe Schmitt

Rita Jo Shoultz
Gerard Smit
Gay Smith
Diane Szukovathy
Joan Thorndike
Doug Trott
Bernie Van Essendelft
Bob Wollam

2012 ASCFG Grower Grant

Congratulations to Missy Bahret, who received the 2012 ASCFG Grower Grant. Missy is co-owner of Old Friends Farm, a 15-acre diversified certified organic farm, with four acres in cut flower production. Missy has farmed for 13 years, and has run Old Friends Farm for eight. She is serving her second year as the ASCFG Northeast Regional Director, will host a Regional Meeting on March 27, in Amherst.

Lisianthus is a high-value cut flower in high demand by floral designers. Although it grows well in hoophouse conditions, field production poses problems such as weed competition. Missy will investigate whether intersown cover crops will improve stem count, quality, and height of lisianthus flowers.

The results of her research will be published in *The Cut Flower Quarterly*.



ASCFG 2012 Scholarship Winner



Vikki Tesar of Waxhaw, North Carolina has been awarded the ASCFG Dave Dowling Scholarship. A part-time student, a part-time flower grower, and a full-time mother, Vikki's passion for the flower business and commitment to continuous learning impressed the scholarship committee.

She is enrolled in the Horticulture Technology program at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, North Carolina. A wide range of courses includes one on specialty crops, with a portion of the

class devoted to cut flower production. With a current GPA of 4.0, Vikki plans to complete her degree in May 2013.

At Poplar Ridge Farm, she is responsible for all aspects of production, from ordering seeds, plants and plugs, to planting, harvest, pest and weed control, and record keeping. She is also the head groundskeeper of the estate.

The committee appreciated Vikki's life experiences, and the fact that she is already well on the floriculture path.

ASCFG Research Foundation Announces Grant Recipients



The ASCFG Research Foundation has presented grants to several groups in the cut flower industry.

Chris Wien of Cornell University was awarded for his proposal titled *Testing the Potential of "Wild" Pepper Lines as Fall Cuts*.

At North Carolina State University, John Dole and Alicain Carlson will study the *Production and Postharvest Evaluation of a new Sandersonia x Gloriosa Hybrid as a Cut Flower*. They will continue their work on *Postharvest of Specialty Cut Flowers*.

Raymond Cloyd will *Determine the Effects of Pesticide Mixtures on Arthropod Pests of Cut Flowers* at Kansas State University.

Postharvest Treatment of Hydrangea for Unique Coloration is the focus of Henry Schreiber's work at the Virginia Military Institute.

The ASCFG Research Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, accepts grant proposals from cut flower growers, university and/or extension floriculture researchers, and industry specialists. The results of the grant should benefit specialty cut flower growers in the field or in the greenhouse.

It's important that these researchers are supported, so that they are able to continue this important work for us. To contribute to the ASCFG Research Foundation, contact the office at ascfg@oberlin.net or see the Academic Research page at www.ascfg.org



Association
Specialty
Cut Flower
Growers

2012 National Conference and Trade Show

Tacoma, Washington

November 12-14



Learning to grow together!

Monday, November 12

Growers' Workshop: Building Marketing Coalitions



Working Models

Organizers of Fair Field Flowers, the Alaska Peony Growers Association and the Seattle Wholesale Growers Market Cooperative will tell the stories of how and why their groups were founded, what needs they serve, and their current states of development.

Finding the Right Fit: Business Structures for Organizing

An overview of various models for marketing groups, examining LLCs, different types of cooperatives, and the functions of other non-profit organizations.

Fundraising Possibilities: Case Studies

The Specialty Crop Block Grant and the Value-Added Producer Grant Programs are important tools for all sized growers. Learn how to use these programs from Dan Kent of Salmon-Safe, Inc., Portland, and Oregon Coastal's Pat Zweifel.

Marketing Locally- and Sustainably-grown Products

Alaska, California and Wisconsin have proven to be leaders in the movement to promote their states' products. Representatives from these organizations will discuss sustainable standards and eco-labeling for regional success.

Monday, November 12

Season Extension Growers' School

Bulb Forcing

Learn how to expand your crop selection as well as your growing season with instruction on standards like tulips, daffodils and lilies, along with alliums, ranunculus, anemone and ornithogalum.

Jello Mold Farm

Tour this innovative Northwestern farm, learn about cut flower mum production in hoopouses, and other innovative practices.

Sedums and Other Succulents for Pots and Wreaths

Succulents are one of the hottest trends in the floral industry! Learn from expert Robin Stockwell, Succulent Gardens, the best varieties and design selections sure to please your buyers.

Evening Keynote

Debra Prinzing and David Perry, authors of *The 50 Mile Bouquet*, will speak about their book project and rising consumer interest in local flowers

Image on previous page courtesy of David Perry.

Tuesday, November 13

Conference Sessions

Keynote address

Kasey Cronquist, Executive Director of the California Cut Flower Commission

ASCFG Trials and New Varieties Report

Always one of the most popular sessions, John Dole's New Varieties Report presents the best cultivars recently released as cut flower favorites. He'll combine this with results of the 2012 ASCFG Seed and Perennial Trials. Add impassioned audience participation for a lively experience!

Sexy Flowers: Hellebores and Gloriosa Lilies

Learn how to grow, cut and market these beauties, sure to add some flavor to your crop rotation.

Composting and Vermicomposting

As growers strive to become more sustainable, current and accurate information on these topics is essential. You'll get it from Lisa Taylor of Seattle Tilth.



High Tunnels

What's the best way to achieve optimum growing conditions in high tunnels? What is the best style for your conditions and your crops? Sustainable and conventional methods will be examined.

Wednesday, November 14

Tours

Seattle Wholesale Market

Choice Bulb Farms

Skagit Gardens

Top off the day with a local foods feast at Maplehurst Farms, in the beautiful Skagit Valley.

AND MUCH MORE!

Judy Laushman

By now, it's clear that 2012 will be an unusual weather year. Northern states with temperatures in the 70s and 80s during March, tornadoes wreaking havoc across the country before spring officially started, and plants flowering well before their usual times have marked this season as one to remember. And, perhaps, wonder about long-term repercussions. Read Christof Bernau's West Regional Report for a better understanding of how some of these are already in effect.

The ASCFG will have a different kind of year as well. As several Regional Directors note in their reports, a productive Board of Directors meeting was held in February. Several projects were discussed, with both short- and long-term goals kept in mind. You can imagine that with a group of such creative and energetic people, the ideas were flowing fast and furious.

One important issue that affects all members is the online Bulletin Board. This program has served us well for more than ten years; the combination of weekly conversations between growers across the country, and the years of archived information make it an invaluable member service. Think of all the growers you have met through the Bulletin Board; doesn't it feel as if you work with them every day?

If you have hesitated to reply to a message you've seen, or to start a conversation of your own, go ahead and give it a shot. Not all posts are answered immediately, and sometimes it takes a couple go-rounds to get a result.

Now is a good time to become more familiar with these kind of processes, because we are investigating alternatives to the current system. The Bulletin

Board is useful for the kind of dialogue it engenders, but it does not support the posting of photos or videos, important tools for communication in such a visual world as flowers. A program called Social Engine allows users to easily share pictures or other images, and provides even more social networking than does the current system. The plan is to get it up and running, have it tested and populated by some ASCFG guinea pigs (or beta testers, depending on your geekiness level), and open it to the membership when the bugs have been worked out. We are aiming for July.

The current Bulletin Board will remain in place so its archives can still be accessed, and eventually, exported to the new program. As always, the ASCFG staff and the Board will be happy to help answer questions about the best way to use the new system.

I'm likely to use Social Engine to talk to you about the OFA Short Course in Columbus, Ohio this July. The Short Course is one of the largest floriculture meetings in the country, with almost 10,000 attendees, 120 speakers and 500 trade show exhibitors. This year the ASCFG has been invited to be part of the Florist Round Table Discussions, which will focus on current trends in the florist industry. Since the hottest current trend is the production and purchase of locally-grown cut flowers, the ASCFG is a natural fit. We'll have a small display, and will fill it with product from ASCFG members. Please plan now to send flowers for this event. I'll let you know details when I have them.

Before then, you'll have the chance to meet other members at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting at Becky Devlin's Roost Flowers in Virginia

Beach, and in August, at Blue Stem Farm in Louisiana for the South and Central Regional Meeting. Remember that the ASCFG members who organize and host these meetings are growers as well, as busy as you with their own farms, businesses and families.

Make this your year to attend a Regional Meeting (it doesn't matter if it's not "your" Region) as well as the National Conference in Tacoma. Diane Szukovathy is organizing a conference program unlike any we've hosted before. Check out page 33 for a preview—just a sampling of the kind of unique sessions she has created. This is the year to learn about not just new varieties and plant selection, but how to work with other growers to create marketing cooperatives, how to find and write grants, and the nature of cooperation.

We know that companies must evolve on several levels; those based on the fast-changing natural world – like flower farming – must become even more adaptable. What better way to learn how than from other growers?

*The first day of spring was
once the time for taking
the young virgins into the
fields, there in dalliance
to set an example in
fertility for Nature to follow.
Now we just set the clock an
hour ahead and change
the oil in the crankcase.*

– E.B. White

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