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The **Cut Flower**



Q U A R T E R L Y

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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Polly Hutchison

At this writing, we are two meetings into our “experiment” in honor of our 25th anniversary: four Super Regional Conferences around the country and the calendar. WOW. In Texas and North Carolina, hordes of growers came out to learn and laugh, tour and talk with each other about cut flowers. Thanks to all of you and to our hosts and our sponsors. It is so exciting to have your energy and participation—I can’t wait to see how the October and November meetings go! Mark your calendars and sign up now for one of those meetings if you haven’t come out yet (or even if you have).

Advocacy and the ASCFG

Another exciting initiative came out of the Tacoma conference. Diane Szukovathy got folks together to talk about cooperation with other groups to advocate our local and regional flowers across the country. She asked Kasey Cronquist of the California Cut Flower Commission to speak at the conference. He has an excellent perspective; California cut flowers are 80% of all the flowers grown in the U.S., but United States flowers have dropped from 80% of what is sold in this

country to only 20%, with South American flowers picking up the balance. This is just since 1990! This is a huge issue for big growers that have to try to compete with these tariff-free flowers. This is also an issue for smaller, direct-market growers, as we have our fresh local flowers compared to product shipped in from Colombia. These are often not marked as imports.

The idea of working with CCFC was approved by the members at Tacoma. As a result, the California growers invited the ASCFG to attend their lobbying “Fly-In” in February in Washington, D.C. Many of you commented on our Facebook photos—your flower farmers in suits! We had a great group of ASCFG growers: Dennis Westphall of Jello Mold Farm, Washington State, Dave Dowling and Ko Klaver of Maryland, Andrea Gagnon of Virginia, and myself from Rhode Island. The excellent firm that organized us and made our lobbying effort effective is Stewart and Stewart, who has been advocating for flower growers in one form or another for over thirty years. There were fifteen growers from all over California as well, including ASCFG member Mike Mellano, Sr.



Dave Dowling, Andrea Gagnon, Dennis Westphall, Ko Klaver, and Polly Hutchison visited their representatives in Washington, D.C. in February.

What Did We Do?

Ran, sometimes literally, from one side of Capitol Hill to the other, as Stewart and Stewart had scheduled meetings with as many of our members of Congress as possible, as well as with top staff people at USDA and other offices. We had an incredible reception, and several folks were really happy to hear about flower growing in their state, and meet actual farmers. Some of the growers testified at hearings with the EPA and against renewing Ecuador’s tariff-free status.

What Did We Say?

One effort that we all promoted with House staffers and congressmen was the initiation of a “Flower Caucus”, a group to address the needs of flower growers and to promote other activities around American cut flowers. This appears to have been successful, with a number of Representatives signing on and a chair from each party.

Secondly, we were there to raise awareness of the uneven and ineffective labeling on imported flowers, and to promote the idea of a unified system of promotion



Polly Hutchison enjoys the warm welcome from USDA staffers.



Mike Mellano, Sr. represented both the ASCFG and the CCFC.

by state of cut flowers. Some states have a label we could tie into, for example “Virginia grown” for produce. This initiative is a natural one for the ASCFG. As part of this, we helped our congresspeople become more aware of the value of floriculture in their states. From our perspective as ASCFG growers, this was the most important thing we were there to do.

Finally, although this was not our major intent, we mentioned our support for real immigration reform, including portable visas. This will benefit any grower who uses imported help, and as Jose Ortiz of Joseph and Sons so poignantly pointed out, it

is a human rights issue. It is time we took a page out of Canada’s book and made it easier for guest workers to come and go.

What’s Next?

We are incredibly grateful to the CCFC and Stewart and Stewart for including the ASCFG in this historic trip, and we look forward to working with them in the future. Towards this goal, the board has approved an ongoing committee on Advocacy and Governmental Affairs. The co-chairs are Andrea Gagnon and Dave Dowling. We hope to come up with a plan to fund further

efforts and determine what the ASCFG can do with our resources to advocate for specialty cut flower growers, as well as work with larger growers like those at the CCFC.

We will also be inviting all the CCFC growers to become a part of the ASCFG. I recommend for those of you who buy flowers in for events or your shop to look to buying from California or other large growers over the imported flowers, after you have looked to ASCFG members, of course. Some of the CCFC growers are easy to find at the wholesalers; Joseph and Sons for stock and other crops, Mellano, Sun Valley, gerbera from Maximum Nursery, and Ever-Bloom. Another cool grower is Resendiz Brothers—all specialty South African and Australian natives.

Finally, we are more than just a United States organization, and we value and welcome our Canadian and international members. However, the basic tenets behind this effort are shared values among all our members,

and this is an important issue to part of our membership. The majority of members are selling locally or regionally, we all face competition from cheap import flowers. Better labelling, and national advocacy will help all of us.

One Last Thing

We do have another advocacy item in the works; we will be there in force at this year’s OFA Short Course. Linda has designed a great ad you’ll see in *Florists Review*, we’ll have a couple of workshop slots, and we’ll have a beautiful display in the Columbus Convention Center. We are very excited to be a part of the largest trade show and conference on horticulture in the country, and we are grateful to OFA for extending the invitation and helping us to reach future florist and grower members there. This effort was spearheaded by Ko Klaver, and we have American Grown booklets and lots of flowers coming from CCFC growers to help with our unified message. Join us there if you can.

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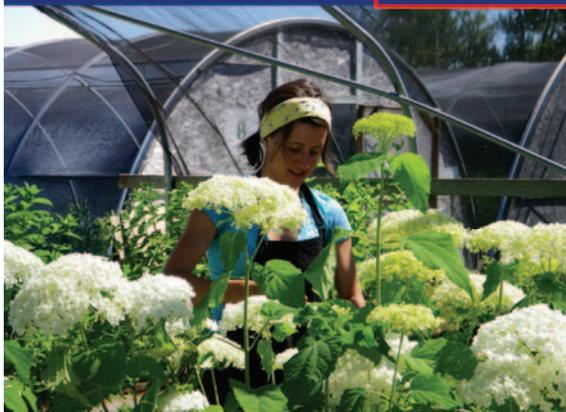
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See us at the OFA Short Course!





Using Found Items in Floral Design

Ann Sensenbrenner

Farm To Vase, Madison, Wisconsin

Broken pottery, computer keyboard keys, and styrofoam packaging. Everyday objects, even minimally altered, can have a stunning and provocative impact. Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dali used Found Objects to create works of art that grapple with man's contribution and impact. Andy Warhol, expressing the fact that the richest and the poorest Americans often consume the same products, used silver paint on Coca-Cola bottles. In recent times, as green principles and recycled materials are increasingly in vogue, clothing designers are making high-fashion garments entirely from thrown out, found, or repurposed elements. Trashion, they call it. *Found Magazine*, created by Davy Rothbart and Jason Bitner, collects and catalogs found notes, photos, and other interesting items, publishing them in a magazine, books, and on FoundMagazine.com. Items range from love letters to grocery lists, and they are contributed by people who find them in public places. All

of these projects remind us that art, beauty, and truth can be found anywhere, if only we allow our eyes to open wide.

Nature leaves us with objects to be found as well: bark, nuts, fungus, husks, pods, stones and more. How often do we walk past these natural

In January after a foot of snow, pine cones become my roses. Milkweed pods are my orchids. Evergreens, birch, holly, winterberry, dogwood, curly willow, hare's tail grass and gold mop cypress can go a long way, but I have to be very creative to keep my own

elegant structure and essential simplicity of the landscape is revealed. The more I walk quietly and look with care, the more I truly revere the shapes and colors of the current season, with no nostalgia for the season gone. Only rarely do I find myself trudging through the snow humming Simon and Garfunkel's "April, Come She Will." (Eco-floristry pep talk.) And only until bright yellow lichen on a cold fallen branch grabs my attention and stops me, agape. Its yellow-on-gray contrast is as illuminating as forsythia in spring. Green moss on fallen bark pops forth with the freshness of bells of Ireland. A geometric gem such as an old wasp nest section takes on the esteem of the sacred flower of life. At those moments, a florist and a human couldn't ask for more.

This is my experience; this is my climate. Florists around the country will have their own regional found items to use and enjoy. Clamshells, molted snake skin, driftwood, volcanic rock, geodes, Spanish moss. What gifts

In January after a foot of snow,
pine cones become my roses.
Milkweed pods are my orchids.

items without a second thought? Occasionally, as in the case of a shed antler, we might even regard the object with annoyance because of the deer control problem of which we are reminded. As we walk our land, headed to our rows of stunning flowers, these discarded treasures blink up to us, asking that we value them too.

As a designer in Wisconsin committed to using only local flowers, I suppose my use of natural found objects has come, in part, from necessity.

interest and that of my buyers. I have joked that if I could, I would deliver my customers a cardinal sitting on a snowy branch. (Well it would be lovely, albeit fleeting!) Designing directly from the local land in a northern climate requires an open mind and an uninhibited eye.

Despite the challenges, I am constantly rewarded by the surprises and full scope of nature around me. When the temperature drops and the distractions of the showier plants have fallen away, the



In the woods of southern Wisconsin, Larry Johnson of Still Point Farm knocks down bracket fungus Ann Sensenbrenner used in a Thangsgiving floral design.

Wild-collected moss and other natural items complement the cultivated flowers in this design.

does your local landscape have tucked away, and how will they vary throughout the seasons? If you are a grower who sells to florists, start to see items you find as potentially valuable. Can you offer a box of perfectly formed pine cones or bright white strips of birch bark? Florists might love to buy these items from you. Wisconsin's own Star Valley Flowers even offers a Woodland Pack for sale in May, filled with a changing selection of artifacts found in the forests. At any time of the year, a well-placed found item in a floral arrangement can be visually stunning, and will remind your buyer of the land on which the flowers were grown. A Chinese proverb tells us, "When you drink the water, remember the spring." For our purposes we hope to impart "When you adore a flower, remember the field."

Emily Watson, ASCFG member and owner of Stems Cut Flowers in Milwaukee, Wisc., also works to make these connections in her buyers' minds. She says "Demand for locally-sourced

products seems to grow every year. The availability of unique and seasonal items being sold by a person with a story, living in their community has become really appealing. But it takes a long time to forge that relationship and educate your customers. Change is hard for people, they have routines, and they have grown accustomed to price points that we can't always match." Emily and I agree: It's no reason to stop trying. (Go Badgers!)

As we work to educate people about the negative consequences of buying imported flowers, we must consider what we do in our own design work to differentiate our product. Yes, we know our flowers are fresher and will last longer. We know they were cut by people who are supported with fair labor practices. We know they have not been doused with chemicals to survive a long journey. But if the look of our designs is a mere replication of a vase of South American flowers,

then how does a consumer tell the difference? Some of our regions have begun intentional marketing strategies, such as "CA GROWN," and in my own area "Buy Fresh Buy Local."

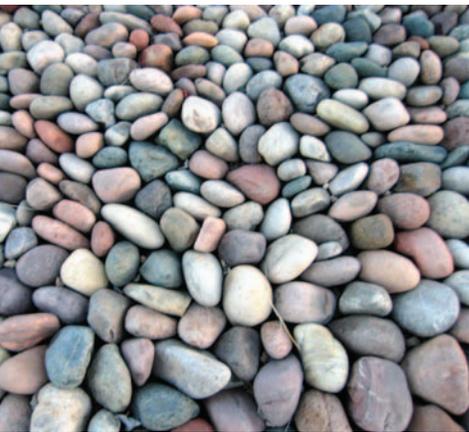
Communities with "Buy Local" campaigns saw an average increase in revenue of 7.2% for independent businesses. That compares with a 2.6% revenue increase in communities with no such campaign (Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 2012 Independent Business Survey). For our printed materials and websites, these logos can really help a buyer know they are making a responsible choice.

But once those flowers are set apart from the marketing materials, we can still have visual cues that continue to educate. How do we stamp a flower? We can't. (Well, technically we can, but of course we won't!) We can, however, stamp our design work by using found items that evoke our regions. Think of these items as your floral arrangement's identity badge, part of your brand,

What gifts does your local landscape have tucked away, and how will they vary throughout the seasons? If you are a grower who sells to florists, start to see items you find as potentially valuable. Can you offer a box of perfectly formed pine cones or bright white strips of birch bark?

Think of these found items as your floral arrangement's identity badge, part of your brand, announcing loud and clear "We are fresh.

We came from land that reminds you of home. We are different, and that difference matters greatly."



announcing loud and clear "We are fresh. We came from land that reminds you of home. We are different, and that difference matters greatly."

Most people don't spend nearly the amount of time outdoors that the members of the ASCFG do. We are infinitely fortunate in that way. But the average American is often yearning for the woods and the prairie, the water and the trail. He is craving that unplugged time to spend exploring as he did as a child, smelling the earth, feeling the sun and the wind. Being able to provide a floral design that captures a small glimpse of that experience is an honor. Folks in nursing homes and hospitals, the blind, and even new parents are particularly pent up indoors, but unfortunately almost everyone else is nature-starved as well. Think of the impact your designs can have and carefully consider the tone. The traditional floral accoutrements such as ribbons, tags and plastic floral picks remind a buyer of mass production, imports, and landfills. A natural found item will remind them of the outdoors, freshness, and authenticity. Shelf fungus on a vase evokes an autumn walk through the woods to reach the open rows of flowering kale. A birch bark-wrapped vase whispers of an canoe on the nearby Wisconsin River long ago. At the least, a found item can make a buyer smile; it can be a conversation piece at her dinner party. But at the most, it can be a subtle way to educate people about the floral industry, and ultimately change the way people buy flowers in this country.

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Tips and Cautions when using found items

- Always be aware of your local regulations. Some beaches have restrictions on the removal of driftwood. Robin egg shells, for instance, cannot be bought or sold because of the Migratory Bird Act.
- Know your buyer. Using a found antler or feather could cross a line if you are selling to a vegetarian!
- Avoid a crafty look. Too many pine cones, glue, and overworked items can all defeat the purpose of evoking freshness and nature. Most found items can be inconspicuously tied to a vase or tucked into an arrangement without a cost to the elegance and sophistication of your work. Tiny clear rubber bands found in the hair accessory section of a drug store are great for hooking a pine cone to a twig in an imperceptible way. Use some dabs of honey to wrap birch bark around a vase so the buyer can easily wash it off later.
- There are lots of tips online that will give you easy ways to clean and sanitize found items that need extra care before sale. For instance, you can microwave Spanish moss for 20 seconds to kill any chiggers or spider mites. Soaking shells in a 50/50 mix of lemon juice and water for an hour will neutralize the fishy smell.
- Don't be afraid to use "nuisance" items. Sure, cicadas, barnacles, and zebra mussels can be challenging creatures, but in a floral design you have a unique chance to highlight their beauty. In Greek mythology, cicadas represent reincarnation and evanescence. Put aside your prejudice and give them a moment to shine. Imagine a beaver-gnawed branch tied to a vase of carnivorous flowers. A touch of whimsy can help any landowner take his wildlife-frustration down a notch.

Plugging Along Without a Greenhouse: The Unbeatable Boreness of Lighting

Joe Schmitt
Fair Field Flowers



I don't have a greenhouse. Or a hoop house, high tunnel or low tunnel, for that matter. And even if someone gave me one (free, of course, and installed), I'm not so sure I'd use it even then, not for starting plugs at least. It's about the light. Those structures are all, out of necessity, pretty thin-skinned affairs, which of course is what it takes to let that light in, when (and if) the sun shines. But this is Wisconsin, 44 degrees North latitude, and I gear up for an early start and a short growing season in the cold, dim dead of winter. Thin skin doesn't get you very far here, and the sun doesn't shine through goose down or wool.

What I do have, however, is a nicely insulated, unheated, unfinished basement, a water supply unfazed by freezes, and a steady source of clean, affordable energy. We pay a 2 to 4 cent premium for 100% green energy, a total of about 18 cents per kilowatt hour (KWH). Yours may cost a little more or a little less, but when used wisely, it is still a good deal. Last year, for example, to power one germination chamber, 160

square feet of lighted plant shelving, an air circulation fan and 3 to 4 small space heaters for my 4 cold frames as the weather moderated, I spent \$608.64 on 3250 KWH of power. And for that, from January to May, I produced 350 trays or about 84,000 plugs. That's an energy expenditure of \$1.74/tray (averaging 240 plugs each), less than a penny a plug, and not at all bad as I see it.

I can't imagine getting away that cheaply burning LPG in a hoop house, though I don't have the data to support my argument, but I'll bet many of you do. The advantage I have, of course, is explained by the use of an insulated building and the efficient use of vertical space, something that can't be done in natural light. Just in case you're wondering, all of my expendable inputs exclusive of labor (seed, soil, paper chain pots, miscellaneous materials plus electricity) averaged \$9-\$10/tray or about 4 cents/plug. That's also exclusive of the propagation setup, which easily paid for itself some 15 years ago, but the details of which, you will soon understand, are mostly irrelevant.

The other advantage I have is a totally controlled environment for my plugs, from temperature, to moisture, to air circulation, light levels and day length, an advantage but also a weighty responsibility. I, a non-plant form of life, have to figure out what's best for those plugs, and frankly, finding good information can be pretty crazy-making. Generally I prefer to learn from those who have been there, done that, as they say. And, arguably, that would be the largest, most successful group of indoor growers to be found (though not literally), cultivators of *Cannabis*. But there's a problem. While reading their forums and blogs can indeed be addicting, much of what is written is too often either contradictory or overly pricey and, shall we say, pretty hazy at best. That leaves us at the mercy of horticultural lighting manufacturers, each with an agenda to promote their own particular technology and products, and university research, which is scarce for this application.

Long Day's Journey into Night

Where university research can be most helpful is on the subject of optimal day length for your crop, whether it is a long day, short day or day-length neutral plant, and whether that response is obligate (as in "I'll hold my breath until get my way.") or facultative (as in "Yeah whatever, we'll get there, no big whoop."). One caution is that much of university lighting research has been devoted to getting bedding plants to bloom in cell packs at three inches tall, not exactly the advice a cut flower grower wants. For a reasonably understandable exposition on the topic, from Michigan State University see: Use of Lighting to Accelerate Crop Timing, by Erik Runkle and Matthew Blanchard.

In practical terms, however, most of what we grow will benefit from 14 to 16 hours of light a day. It's the "little light lie" that has your plugs thinking, "April already? Who knew?" Meanwhile it's 6 degrees



Strip light detail - note PVC rails



Shop-lite array detail - note reflective surfaces



Stage 2 shop-lite array



Strip light array nearly full

outside and the sun actually set at 4:30. The effect of that extended light on most plugs is considerable. They grow faster, stockier, stronger and even better rooted, all very desirable attributes in a transplant, making them pullable earlier as well, freeing up bench space and boosting your efficiency. They will also, in many cases, come into bloom quicker than plants that have not received this treatment.

There are a few exceptions to this rule, generally confined to early-blooming hardy annuals and first-year blooming perennials, both triggered into bloom by somewhat shorter “long days”, if that makes any sense. Spring-sown bachelor buttons (*Centaurea cyanus*) is a notable example. These I place in cool conditions and natural light (12-hour days) immediately, to keep them vegetative, to “bulk up” before shifting to a blooming stage. That produces a plant nearly matching fall-sown plants in size and side breaks, but timed to bloom just as fall-sown plants are winding down. On the other hand, these same plants could also be cleverly manipulated by long day lighting to produce single stem cuts in a lot fewer days under high density greenhouse conditions. See this intriguing study out of the University of Kentucky: <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/CDBREC/bachbut.htm> (now I’m sorry I turned down that free greenhouse—is it too late?).

The ideal lighting for vertical growing is a fixture thin in profile, cool enough to be close to the plants, bright but spread out over a large area, cheap and efficient. And it should also be suitable for damp environments. For years I have used both supercheap 4-foot, two-tube fluorescent shoplights and 8-foot, two-tube high output strip lights, but that doesn’t really matter. I might as well be using whale oil lamps. They’re both history.

Brother Knows Best

As of Bastille Day last year (July 14 - you don’t celebrate?), the manufacture of T-12 fluorescent tubes and also fixtures stopped, in compliance with the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA) and the latest Department of Energy efficiency standards. You could, I suppose, still rush out and buy them today (they continue to be sold while inventories last) and one of the reasons for dumping them is one of the reasons I like them, the “waste” heat they produce. A significant part of enhanced growth from plant lighting can be attributed to that “waste” heat. But that would be short-term thinking and a truly wasted opportunity to do something even better for your bottom line and trim your carbon footprint at the same time. So what are some viable alternatives? To answer that, I went straight to my source for questions like these, my big brother Tom.

Tom says, “T-5 fluorescents.” Specifically, four foot F54T5 high output, cool white, single-tube strip lights. While using almost exactly the same number of watts per foot as my 8-foot high output 110W T-12 tubes, they produce twice the light (though very little heat) and therefore should require only half the number of tubes. So, my 2-tube 8-foot fixture is replaced by 2 single-tube 4-foot fixtures installed end to end (I assume T5’s are not made in 8 foot lengths because of how thin they are, only 5/8 of an inch). The initial cost ends up being remarkably similar. And, according to one manufacturer, Sunlight Supply, plants love them: “T5 lamps provide the ideal spectrum for plant growth. Photosynthesis rates peak at 435 nm and 680 nm. A 6500K T5 lamp has a spectral distribution with relative intensity peaks at 435 nm and 615 nm. This equates to very little wasted light energy in terms of plant growth”.

If you really want to delve into nanometers of wavelength or degrees Kelvin of color temperature, check back with the *Cannabis* boys; they give those subjects much more than...uh... a token pass? Me, I’ll take Sunlight Supply at their word.

Tom also had a good word for several other technologies. Did I mention that he’s a lifelong Master Electrician, and has never lied to me? LED has been getting

Random Representative Sources

(no endorsements implied)

T5 horticultural fixtures
www.sunlightsupply.com

LED retrofit tubes
www.EagleLight.com

General horticultural lighting
www.PARsource.com

High tech LED solutions
www.lighting.philips.com

Horticultural induction lighting
www.indagro.com

* <http://p-12140-sunblaster-t5-ho-fluorescent-strip-lights.aspx>

a lot of attention lately for horticultural uses, and may well be what we'll all be using in years to come. But it remains so specifically tuned to particular crops that I can't help feeling it's the equivalent of making a super-vitamin to replace all human nutritional needs. How do you know you aren't missing something important? Besides, fuchsia-colored light does nothing for my complexion. That said, there are companies offering affordable LED tubes to retrofit into old fluorescent fixtures, at 33W/8 foot tube, cutting your electric bill in half yet again. "You'll have to bypass the ballast," says Tom. "And you may have to swap out the tombstones." Those are the little white plastic tube holders at the ends of fixtures. For growing plugs, by the way, always choose the Cool White option, the one with the higher color temperature (Don't ask, just take Tom's word for it.). There are also other LED configurations specifically for plant lighting, but all seem to me prohibitively expensive.

The rest of your plant lighting options are much more suited for use as supplements in a natural light setting, in a greenhouse or hoop house, by virtue of their physical size and the intense concentration of their light down to a small point source. With outputs from 200W to 2000W and prices to match, they are usually suspended well above a crop to allow the light to spread over as wide an area as possible. Examples include metal halide (MH), high pressure sodium (HPS), and high intensity discharge lighting (HID).

However, the one to really keep an eye on in coming years, according to Tom, is induction lighting. In a case of Steampunk meets Star Wars, this 19th century invention of Nikola Tesla is finally getting the attention it deserves. Adaptable to all of the lighting technologies I've discussed so far, it simply removes the electrodes from inside the bulb and instead excites the gasses or phosphors from without, with radio frequencies or magnetic fields. This allows for more options in light quality, very high conversion efficiencies and up to ten years of lamp life. Very pricy for the time being but remember, you heard it here first (and if you already knew, welcome to the Nerd Club).

Well, you may have nothing better to do, but I need to go rotate and water my plugs. I forgot to mention that one of the down sides to T12 tubes is their uneven light from end to end. To keep my plugs from reaching toward the center, I rotate my trays every day. That's not supposed to be an issue with T5's but I'd probably continue to shift trays nonetheless. I use PVC pipe rails under my trays to allow them to air-prune, so pulling out one tray and sliding the rest down is quick and easy. Besides providing a good opportunity to pay closer attention to your plants, it also compensates for any bad habits you might have in your watering technique. The end result (usually), picture-perfect plugs.

*Joe Schmitt is a member of Fair Field Flowers
in Madison, Wisconsin.
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Growing for Market

cut flowers in every issue



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

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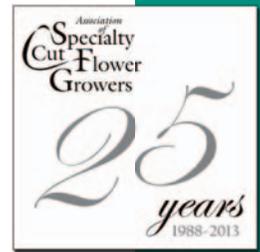
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“From Seed to Sale”
October 7-8, 2013
OSU-OARDC Shisler Center
Wooster, Ohio

Plants. It’s all about the plants. Follow each speaker as he or she discusses the processes used to produce a flower crop, starting with variety selection and scheduling, through planting , growing-on, pest and weed control, harvest, postharvest handling procedures, all the way to marketing, pricing, and design. Field and hoop house options will be covered.

The Secret Arboretum is a gem in the middle of Ohio’s scenic Amish country, and makes the perfect setting for plant enthusiasts. Wooster is an easy drive for those in the Midwest, Southeast, and Mid-Atlantic states.

Wrap up your 2013 season with inspiration and information!

Monday, October 7

1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Tour of Secret Arboretum with Director Ken Cochran

Ken Cochran is the perfect tour guide for the ASCFG. Not only are woody ornamental plants his life’s blood, his research provides a valuable experience for “what works” as a cut flower.

6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Reception in Secret Pavilion

Tuesday, October 8

Shisler Auditorium

8:00-8:15 a.m. Welcome

8:15 a.m. Sunny Meadows Flower Farm Review Steve and Gretel Adams are young flower growers who farm just outside Columbus. Learn the secrets of their production and marketing successes.

9:00 a.m. Winterberry and Other Branches Ken Cochran, OSU/OARDC, Wooster. Ken Cochran will lead a panel discussion on winterberry and other cut branches. Growers will talk about production and marketing, research, and use in event design.

10:00 a.m. Lily Dave Dowling, Farmhouse Flowers & Plants, Brookeville, Maryland

11:00 a.m. Willow Kent Miles, Illinois Willows, Seymour

12:00 p.m. Lunch included

Concurrent Sessions

1:00 p.m.

Hydrangea
 Tom and Elaine Kavanagh
 Cottage Gardens, Hermitage, Pennsylvania

Peony
 David and Jill Russell
 Boreal Peonies, Liberty, Indiana

2:00 p.m.

Sunflower
 Kent Miles, Illinois Willows,
 Seymour

Dahlia
 Bob Wollam. Wollam Gardens
 Jeffersonton, Virginia

3:00 p.m.

Dianthus
 Joe Schmitt, Fair Field Flowers
 Madison, Wisconsin

Lisianthus
 Steve and Gretel Adams,
 Sunny Meadows Flower Farm,
 Columbus, Ohio

From Seed to Sale

An Update on Sunflower Daylength Sensitivity Screening

Chris Wien

Many sunflower varieties used for cut flowers are sensitive to the daylength they experience in the seedling stage. Varieties in the Sunrich and Sunbright series, for instance, will flower 2 weeks earlier if they were sown in 12-hour daylength than if they are planted in

the long days of midsummer. This means plants will be short and have small flowers at flowering, and have a profusion of small flower buds on the stem. Many other varieties are not sensitive, and will produce similar-sized plants regardless of the daylength. To make sure new

varieties are characterized for their daylength response, we have screened them as they are introduced. Our technique consists of sowing the seeds in 72-cell trays, exposing them to either 12 or 16-hour daylength for 3 weeks on a light bench in a greenhouse, and then transplanting them

to the field, where we note the date of flowering, and plant height, flower diameter and bud number.

The 2012 screening included 10 new varieties and the two standards, 'Procut Lemon' and 'Sunrich Orange'. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Reaction of 12 sunflower varieties to short or long days, imposed for 21 days after seedling emergence. Plants were then transplanted to the field.

Name	Daylength ^Z reaction	Days to first flower		Plant height (cm)	
		Short day	Long day	Short day	Long day
Brilliance	Neutral	60	60	99	89
Coconut Ice	Neutral	64	58	114	107
Dafne	Strong SD	52	74	70	128
Double Quick Orange	Mod. LD	84	72	153	111
Frilly	Mod. LD	78	66	168	116
Giant Sungold	Neutral	99	97	170	169
Goldy Double	Neutral	86	89 ^Y	162	146 ^Y
Procut Lemon	Neutral	61	56	105	94
Sunbright Supreme	Strong SD	47	72	69	144
Sunrich Orange	Strong SD	50	70	68	127
Vincent Choice	Mod. SD	47	56	77	81
Vincent Fresh	Mod. SD	47	55	73	87

^ZDaylength reaction = Neutral: less than 7 days difference in flowering between short and long day; Mod. SD: Plants flower 8-20 days earlier in SD; Strong SD: More than 21 days delay with LD treatment; Mod. LD: 7-14 days delay with SD treatment.

^YData from one replication only

Nearly half the varieties tested (40%) were insensitive to daylength. In both treatments, flowering dates and plant heights were similar. Slightly more (42%) were moderately or strongly sensitive to short days, flowering sooner on smaller plants when started in short days. Two varieties ('Double Quick Orange' and 'Frilly') were delayed 12 days in flowering under long day treatment, and were therefore classed as moderate long day plants. The pictures show the flower heads of 'Frilly' taken on July 25, after seedling daylength treatment in early June.

We have been testing sunflower daylength reaction for 7 years, and have found that of the 56 varieties tested, nearly half are day-neutral, but 30 % are strongly short day sensitive. Stay away from the latter, if you plan to grow sunflowers under short day lengths.

Acknowledgements: I am grateful for the competent technical help of Priscilla Thompson and Gretchen McDaniel in the 2012 trials, and the seed supplied by NuFlowers LLC, Harris Seed Company, Johnny's Selected Seeds, and Sakata Seed Company. The ASCFG National Seed Trial also provided seeds and encouragement for this work.



To see the summary table of these results, go to my research page in the Dept. of Horticulture, Cornell website:

<http://hort.cals.cornell.edu/cals/hort/research/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=702432>.

For results of our other cut flower trials in 2012 and previous years, visit:

<http://hort.cals.cornell.edu/cals/hort/research/wienresearch.cfm> and click on the individual year's results.



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Trends with Benefits

Gay Smith

If you are reading this article, it's obvious you rely on *The Cut Flower Quarterly* as an important source of information, but what other magazines do you turn to for insights? I have several favorites, not all relating to floral, but all of which devote considerable space to trend watching. It's the first section I scan because I'm curious about the next big thing. Who isn't? In our industry,

set trends or be a slave to them, rather we need to talk about current trends and how they relate to floral choices. Another article written by Tim Huckabee (February 2013) shared a quote from a *New York Times* interview with Gene Pressman whose family owns the iconic New York luxury department stores Barneys. Pressman says, "Barneys has never been about giving customers what

When it comes to floral, it is safe to say that the United States follows European trends with a lag time of 5 to 7 years.

it's critical to know what colors, products, conveniences and materials trigger consumer purchases and make changes accordingly.

When it comes to floral, it is safe to say that the United States follows European trends with a lag time of 5 to 7 years. Green flowers were trendy in Holland long before the American consumer could break out of the color's association with St. Patrick's Day and accept green roses, dianthus, bupleurum, molucella, amaranthus, and chrysanthemums in designs. Feathers, wire and beads were showing up in Dutch designs in the early 1990s, but took another 10 years to catch on here. Until a few years ago, any shade of orange was relegated to a tiny sales window between September and Thanksgiving.

Over the past few months, *Floral Management* magazine has featured several viewpoints on trends that are spot on. J Schwanke (August 2012) says that floral professionals don't need to

they want. It has been about education, expanding horizons, presenting the unexpected. The fact is (customers) don't know what they want. Finding out what they want is one reason people still go to stores. One doesn't search Amazon for ideas and inspiration."

The same comment can be made of people buying flowers. They want to convey a feeling or sentiment with flowers, but rarely know what blooms they want, how long they will last or how to properly care for them at home. It is our job as flower experts to guide and educate consumers. I thought the Arnoskys did just that in the slide show presented at the March meeting in Blanco. By the time the barn-raising slides appeared, it was clear that a sense of community is one of the keystones of the philosophy of Texas Specialty Cut Flowers.

The idea of expanding horizons and presenting the unexpected fits so well with all things floral, so why then are sales efforts often lackluster? Regardless



Depending on the bride's style, non-floral materials include everything from burlap, felt and muslin to crystals, metallic wire, pearls and other "bling".

who's selling to whom, the conversation generally starts with a flat question like "Do you need anything today?" Any salesperson worth her salt knows it is a big no-no to start the conversation with a yes/no question. Another big mistake is selling customers what you they think

Gypsophila is resurging as the trendy filler for brides leaning toward a nostalgic design style.

they want. I've been guilty more than once of rolling my eyes at crazy tinted orchids, painted poinsettias and sparkled roses only to find out they are top sellers!

How do you know what customers want? Shelter magazines are great sources of all things trendy, but also check out Pinterest. The site allows customization of specific topics so you can scroll non-stop through trend-setting ideas shared among all age groups of enthusiastic social networkers. Attend wholesale shows whenever possible—especially if there is a design show offered. Wholesalers welcome vendors who will set up a trade booth to show off products. At a recent Northwest wedding design event, floral designer and event specialist Loann Burke recommended Pinterest to the 100-plus audience of florists as the go-to location for trends. She shared her interpretations of this year's wedding trends that include bouquets and arrangements with cyclamen, hydrangea, clematis, callas, garden roses and anything cascading. Berries and foliage were hot too. According to Loann, gypsophila is resurging as the trendy filler for brides leaning toward a nostalgic design style. Depending on the bride's style, non-floral materials include everything from burlap, felt and muslin to crystals, metallic wire, pearls and other "bling".

As J suggests, rather than trying to predict the next big thing, work with what you know. Customers are hungry for information about what you grow, eco-friendly methods used from seed to market, how blooms are handled after harvest, and how they can get the most vase life at home. Turn ideas into profits. Knowledge is power and unlike a visit to Amazon, people do visit farmers' markets for ideas and inspiration!

Gay Smith
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If you're interested in furthering the goals of your organization, working with interesting people, and visiting cut flower farms around the country, please contact the ASCFG office for more information.

What is Happening with Garden Impatiens in 2013?

Karen Rane and Stanton Gill

Garden impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*) may not be a cut flower but many cut flower growers sell them at farm markets. They are relatively easy to propagate, making them ideal for spring sales. It's hard to beat their diversity of flower colors, shapes and textures. Garden impatiens have represented over 25% of spring sales of plant materials from commercial greenhouses, and have dominated landscapes for years.

Unfortunately, a new disease problem in the impatiens world will impact your choice of annual plants in 2013.

For years this group of plants was considered pretty disease resistant and fairly durable. That is, until 2012 when downy mildew devastated garden impatiens on the East Coast. Downy mildew had been reported in greenhouses but it was not highlighted as a major problem in landscapes until the last couple of years. This strain of downy mildew has the potential to overwinter outdoors in landscapes.

If your plantings were infected in 2012, you may have problems if you use impatiens in the same beds this year.

Many defoliated garden impatiens samples were submitted to the University Extension Plant Diagnostic clinic in 2012. The most frequent question was "Why did these plants drop all their foliage?" Pictures sent to us at CMREC showed impatiens looking like green sticks with naked stems sticking straight up. If you had infected plants, all plant material should have been removed from the area, but this is a nearly impossible job when most of the foliage dropped off into the mulch where the fungus can overwinter.

In Florida and Georgia, where the bedding plant season is already in full swing, they are seeing downy mildew showing up in many landscapes. The spores can be blown on the winds and as we start receiving trade winds from the south we may well see spores blown into our area.

At the 2013 MANTS show in Baltimore, a special meeting was held by the Maryland Greenhouse Growers, Syngenta Company and Ball Company. The purpose was to discuss the impact of the destructive downy mildew that inflicted damage in multiple states, including Maryland, in 2012 and what the horticultural industry should be doing in 2013.



Impatiens with downy mildew closeup of spores.



Impatiens downy mildew infection in landscape bed.

Plants are Affected Quickly

First off, this is not the regular, run-of-the-mill downy mildew. This disease, in the right weather conditions, infects a plant and forms spore within 5 days, sickening the plant and often resulting in foliage drop, leaving stems looking like bizarre, unattractive, art deco pieces. While there have been sporadic reports of this disease in production greenhouses in the United States since 2004, widespread regional outbreaks of impatiens downy mildew were observed for the first time in North American landscapes in 2011 in several states. Impatiens downy mildew was confirmed

in an increased number of the states in 2012. The disease was the “hot topic” at winter meetings for greenhouse plant suppliers and greenhouse growers. All varieties and intraspecific hybrids of *Impatiens walleriana* are susceptible to impatiens downy mildew, including both vegetative- and seed-produced *I. walleriana*. There are no noticeable differences in susceptibility among varieties. So selecting a resistant variety is not an option at this point.

What to Do In 2013?

The majority of the greenhouse growers attending the meeting at MANTS decided to not grow garden impatiens, or to greatly reduce their inventories in 2013 and concentrate on providing other plants that perform well in shaded situations.

One alternative is fibrous begonia. Although fibrous begonias do not have the spreading habit like garden impatiens, the foliage colors are great with white, pink and red flowers available. The prices tend to be similar to garden impatiens so

if your margin line is tight this would be a good choice.

Dragon wing begonia is a full plant with great foliage and fantastic flower display that is an excellent substitute for garden impatiens. The Whooper series has bronze foliage and bright red flowers. Tuberous begonias are another choice and do well in partial shade.

This would be a good year to get creative with coleus. With coleus you are growing the plants for the foliage and there are a wide range of foliage colors available. ‘Trusty Rusty’ has excellent yellow-gold foliage, and ‘Redhead’ and ‘Lava Rose’ are also colorful.

Don’t discount caladiums. They do not do well with the cold in spring but take off in summer. The hotter the summer the better caladiums perform. The foliage colors are fantastic with strong reds, variegated red, pinks, and white variations.

One interesting impatiens with resistance to downy mildew is *Impatiens repens*. The foliage does not look like a garden impatiens and the yellow flower is shaped like an Indian peace pipe. It

flowers well in spring but slows down in the heat of the summer. The foliage is attractive, plants thrive in heavy shade, and they’re easy to propagate.

Downy mildew on garden impatiens showed up in Florida and California in early 2013. The greenhouse growers and garden center group attending the meeting asked us to get the word out on this disease, and explain why garden impatiens are not a good choice for 2013. Spend a little time exploring alternative plant material.

Karen Rane is Extension Pathologist and Director of the Plant Diagnostic Clinic, University of Maryland Extension. Contact her at rane@umd.edu.

Stanton Gill is Extension Specialist in IPM, University of Maryland. Contact him at sgill@umd.edu

Photography by David Clement

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Megan Bame

Strengthening Peony Stems with Silicon

In addition to flower shape, color and fragrance, mechanical strength of the inflorescence stem is an important factor in determining the quality of a cut flower. While aesthetic attributes seem to drive peony breeding, it seems that selections often result in weak inflorescence stems. Silicon, the second most abundant element in the earth's crust, is not considered an essential element for plant growth, but

has been shown to improve plant environmental stress tolerance and enhance disease resistance. This research evaluated the effects of silicon application on the mechanical strength of the inflorescence stem in *Paeonia lactiflora*.

Foliar spray treatments of 0, 100, 500, 1000 and 2000 µg/mL sodium silicate were applied once a week from leaf expansion until full bloom stage. Plants were sprayed to the point of runoff.

Evaluation measures included using morphological indices, observation under scanning electron microscope, cell wall materials fractionation and lignin content determination, gene expression analysis, and X-ray probe microscopic analysis of silicon content

This research suggests silicon applications could significantly enhance the mechanical strength of inflorescence stems in *P. lactiflora* by enriching the

cortex and xylem. The rate of 500 µg/mL sodium silicate was the most effective treatment concentration.

Zhao, D., Z. Hao, J. Tao, C. Han. 2013. Silicon application enhances the mechanical strength of inflorescence stem in herbaceous peony (Paeonia lactiflora Pall.) Scientia Horticulturae, pp. 165-172.

Evaluation of Postharvest Dry Storage

Dry storage saves room in coolers by allowing more stems to be stored in a small space, but it can be more labor intensive and costly due to packing and recutting after storage. Stems stored in water maintain good turgor and do not need to be packed, but they require more space, the buds may open more quickly and there may be more opportunity for pathogen contamination. Considering there are pros and cons of each method, the greatest determining factor is

how species perform in each storage environment. This study evaluated lisianthus, zinnia, rose and marigold in wet and dry storage.

Cut stems were stored in either a standard cardboard storage box lined with newspaper, or in a bucket with tap water. Both treatments were placed in a cooler at 2C. for 1, 2, or 3 weeks. Following storage, the stems were recut and placed in vases in a postharvest evaluation room. A control treatment consisted of stems placed in tap water

in a postharvest evaluation room with no storage. Data collected included vase life, prestorage initial fresh weight, post-storage fresh weight, termination fresh and dry weight, water uptake, final solution pH and EC, initial and final number of buds and flowers (lisianthus only), flower opening at day 7 (roses only), and reason for vase life termination.

Marigold performed well with dry storage. Roses performed similarly in dry storage as they did in wet

storage. Zinnia and lisianthus performed poorly after dry storage. The species-specific responses highlight the need for further evaluation of the effectiveness of dry storage on additional species and cultivars.

Ahmad, I., J.M. Dole, A. Amjad and S. Ahmad. 2012. Dry Storage Effects on Postharvest Performance of Selected Cut Flowers, HortTechnology, pp. 463-469.

Cork vs. Vermiculite as a Germination Top Coat

Cork oak is a forest tree species whose cork cambium in the outer bark is harvested for cork production. Cork, as such, is considered a natural and renewable raw product. Waste cork, low-quality cork and virgin cork (rough and irregular cork bark coming from the first harvest) are used to produce cork granulates. This research compared cork granulates to the common substrate

component vermiculite, specifically for use as a top coating in seed germination.

Using an amended peat substrate in a mini-plug tray, seeds of the following crops were sown: 'Rutgers Select' tomato, 'Dazzler Lilac Splash' impatiens, 'Orbit Cardinal Red' geranium, 'Better Belle' pepper, and 'Cooler Grape' vinca. The seeds were covered with a 4-mm top coating of either vermiculite

or cork granulates. Days to germination, germination percentage per plug tray, dry shoot weight and dry root weight were some of the parameters measured.

Although cork granulates held less water and had a higher air-filled pore space than vermiculite of a similar particle size, no deleterious effects related to germination were observed for the species in this experiment. In fact, in some

species a decreased number of days to germination and an increased number of seeds germinating were observed with cork as the top coat.

Bozzolo, A. and M.R. Evans. 2013. Efficacy of Cork Granulates as a Top Coat Substrate Component for Seed Germination as Compared to Vermiculite, HortTechnology, pp.114-118.

Low Temperature Storage and Sucrose Pulsing in Lily

Though chilling injury is rarely found in cut flowers, it has been suggested that lily inflorescences are susceptible to chilling injury manifested by buds not opening. This study examined the difference between dry and wet cold storage with respect to chilling injury and the effect of sucrose pulsing prior to cold storage.

Stems of *Lilium* 'Brindisi' were harvested when the lowermost bud showed some color on the outer tepals. Those stems that received a sucrose pulse treatment were placed in water containing 20 or 100 g/L sucrose and held at room temperature for 20 hours. The pulse treatment group and a non-pulse treatment group were then placed in a cold

room (2.5C) for 5, 10, 15 or 20 days. In cold storage, all stems were held upright, in bunches, though half the stems were held in water and half were held dry. A control group was held at room temperature. Observations included: number of buds per inflorescence, time to bud opening, number of desiccated buds, number of malformed flowers, time to tepal senescence and time to tepal abscission.

The cultivar evaluated demonstrated chilling injury when stored at 2.5C in water for 5 days or longer. When stored dry, the injury occurred more quickly. The observations of damage in young floral buds, though not in older, still closed buds,

suggests a higher chilling sensitivity in younger tissue. No buds opened during cold storage (even after 20 days), indicating a greater temperature is required for bud opening.

The 100g/L sucrose pulse treatment alleviated some of the signs of chilling injury (slow bud growth, lack of bud opening and bud desiccation) in those stems stored at 2.5C in water. However, tepal senescence and abscission appeared to be unaffected by the pulse treatment.

Assuming that a vase life of 7 or more days is desired, this study suggests stems harvested in summer and late fall can be stored in water at 2.5C for 5 days, or up to 10 days with a 100g/L

sucrose pulse treatment prior to storage. Likewise, stems harvested in summer can be stored dry for 5 days at 2.5C with a prior sucrose pulse treatment for a minimum vase life of 7 days. Summer cut stems stored dry without the sucrose pulse and winter-grown stems stored wet, with or without the sucrose pulse demonstrated a vase life less than 7 days. Winter-grown stems exhibited significant leaf-yellowing in storage.

Prisa, D., G. Burchi, W.G. van Doorn. 2013. Effects of low temperature storage and sucrose pulsing on the vase life of Lilium cv. Brindisi inflorescences, Postharvest Biology and Technology, pp. 39-46.

Megan Bame

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GROWER PROFILE

Paula Gilman, Fernwood Farm

It's not uncommon to find farmers attached to their land. It's more than real estate to be bought and sold, more than a parcel of property to hold as an investment; "the land" is a part of who they are. Paula Gilman is one of those farmers. She came to live on the land that is now Fernwood Farm when she was 10 years old. Her mother had passed away and she and her 4 younger siblings were split up. Paula and a brother came to live with her maternal grandparents and helped farm the land using horse-drawn implements. Paula fell in love...with the land. After decades of family "discussions" and negotiations, on February 29, 2000, Paula signed the deed (requiring 10 other signatures of transfer) on the 53 acres in Gilmanton, New Hampshire, that represent her heaven on earth.

Considering the Land

She got busy right away clearing the land and building a house. By 2004 she was ready to get serious about her flower beds. She started with peonies, reasoning that they are hardy to zone 2, drought tolerant once established, not appetizing to deer, low maintenance and high return. And no one else in the area was growing peonies to sell. Since her initial installment, she's tried to add 100 to 120 new plants, from bareroot stock, each fall, ensuring they get plenty of water from the snowfall. By next fall she'll have more than 500 plants representing 50 varieties.

During the 5-week bloom period, Paula is able to sell all her peonies locally. She also gives away lots of bouquets, consisting of the smaller blooms on the younger plants. She hopes to take the next step toward specializing in peonies this summer by building a walk-in cooler. She learned from fellow ASCFG members that buds harvested in the "marshmallow stage" can be stored dry and rehydrated to prolong the availability of this once-and-done crop.

In addition to peonies, she grows lilies, willows and hydrangeas along with an assortment of annuals, herbs and wildflowers. She is currently utilizing only field production, but hopes to put up a hoophouse (or several) soon. Lack of water is a limiting factor for Paula, with a well that offers only three gallons per minute at over 600 feet deep. She is in the process of applying for her third grant with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This grant will offer assistance to drill a well for drip irrigation. A previous effort included building a pond to support 3 acres of drip irrigation, but ultimately the pond wouldn't hold water and she had to withdraw from that project. Once an irrigation well can be established, she hopes to expand production with hoophouses.

Time is another limiting factor. In 2006, Paula almost lost the farm in a divorce from her husband of 25 years. He and his attorney suggested that she could subdivide the land and sell parcels to pay off debt. She looked the attorney in the eye and said, "Over my dead body, and he knows that," pointing to her ex. Instead, she refinanced and went back to work full-time as a paralegal for a non-profit law firm. In 2011, Paula put her land into a Conservation Easement and donated it to the town. While that process required another refinance, she can rest assured that her land will never be subdivided and developed. Furthermore, as a condition in the Conservation Easement deed, whoever owns the land after



her must maintain it as Certified Organic. Paula says, “There have never been any chemicals on my land and never will be.”

She started down the path of becoming an event facility. In fact, she hosted one wedding, but recalls, “It was horrible—not for the bride, but for me.” She contracted with an event planner to handle the details and jumped through tons of hoops with the town to get a variance, even getting the town to change its zoning ordinance to include the definition of “agritourism.” However, putting the land into Conservation Easement brought the event hosting to an end as it was considered commercial use. Paula says, “I am much happier simply growing flowers and having the brides come to me just for their flowers.”

She markets her flowers to brides by advertising in a bridal magazine and being a member of NH Made. She hopes to start a subscription program soon. She donated a subscription for a fundraiser and it seemed to generate a lot of interest. In addition to the bridal magazine, Paula relies on word of mouth and her website as her marketing tools.

Following Her Dream

Paula felt like she had found herself when she began her pursuit of an advanced horticultural degree, but her path to that revelation wasn’t exactly a direct route. She married at age 19 and was in the medical field for more than 20 years before becoming burned out as an office manager at a busy ob-gyn practice. She obtained an associate degree in plant and soil technology at Southern Maine Technical College. “My professor, mentor, and now friend, Rick Churchill who was chair of the program, lit a flame in me that I never knew existed,” she says. “Earning my degree gave me a level of confidence I never had.” She even graduated *summa cum laude*.

She decided to pursue her B.S. in Environmental Science and Policy at the University of Southern Maine, but at 51 years of age, became a college dropout. She was halfway through the program when the stars aligned and she was able to acquire the family land. Despite loving the degree program, she felt that she had to seize the opportunity to make her dream of owning the land become a reality.



Few will argue that she made a poor decision. It may have taken longer for her to realize her dream of owning the land, but perhaps it came at just the right time. While she had always gardened, it was only after recognizing her passion for horticulture and pursuing her education that the land became hers. Paula asserts, “I LOVE my land more than anyone can imagine. I am Fernwood Farm and Fernwood Farm is me.”

Megan Bame

*is a freelance writer in
Salisbury, North Carolina.*

Contact her at meganbame@yahoo.com

How long have you been an ASCFG member?

Since 2006. It is the best investment I have ever made. Chas Gill from Maine initially told me about the ASCFG, but at the time I simply could not afford it. Finally, I bit the bullet and LOVE IT... simply cannot live without being a member. The resources are INVALUABLE!!! I LOVE THE ASCFG!!!

Paula Gilman, Fernwood Farm

This project is funded in part by the ASCFG Research Foundation

Effect of pesticide mixtures on the western flower thrips (*Frankliniella occidentalis*) associated with cut flowers

Raymond A. Cloyd
Kansas State University

Introduction

A pesticide mixture is a combination of two or more pesticides in a single solution applied simultaneously. Producers apply pesticides as mixtures to reduce labor costs because fewer applications are required. In addition, pesticide mixtures may expand the spectrum of arthropod (insect and mite) pest activity; thus mitigating populations of multiple arthropod pests encountered simultaneously. Furthermore, there is the possibility of synergism occurring between pesticides used in mixtures. Synergism refers to the toxicity of the pesticides used in the mixture being greater to the target pest when combined, compared to if the compounds were applied separately. However, problems may occur when mixing pesticides including antagonism in which the level of efficacy (based on mortality) is reduced when pesticides are combined.

Cut flower producers, in either field or greenhouse environments, commonly mix

together various pesticides including insecticides and miticides into a single spray solution. This expands the activity of an application thus making it possible to manage the multitude of arthropod pests encountered during the production of cut flowers. However, producers may be inadvertently applying pesticide mixtures that are less effective compared to making separate applications of pesticides or producers are using pesticide mixtures that are harmful to crops (=phytotoxic) resulting in plant injury and economic losses. Furthermore, producers may mix together pesticides with similar modes of action, which may potentially lead to arthropod pest populations developing resistance to the individual pesticides in the mixture. As such, more information is needed to assess the pesticide mixtures that are effective against one of the major insect pests of cut flowers, the western flower thrips, *Frankliniella occidentalis*. Therefore, the objective of this research

was to determine pesticide mixtures that are effective in controlling populations of the western flower thrips on cut flowers under greenhouse conditions.

Materials and Methods

There were a total of three experiments designed to evaluate specific pesticide mixtures and determine those which demonstrated efficacy against the western flower thrips. All experiments were conducted in a glass-covered greenhouse, and the procedures were similar for the three experiments. Yellow cut transvaal daisy, *Gerbera jamesonii* flowers were used in all three experiments. Each cut flower was artificially infested with approximately 15 to 20 adult western flower thrips. All flowers were sprayed with the appropriate treatments using a 1-quart plastic spray bottle two days after post-infestation.

The three experiments were conducted with different treatment combinations (mixtures), and there were five

replications per treatment and treatment combination. The treatments and combinations, and rates used for each experiment are presented in Table 1.

Results and Discussion

For experiment one, all the spinosad (Conserve) and abamectin (Avid) treatments and combinations provided sufficient mortality ($\geq 90\%$) of western flower thrips whereas the other treatments were less effective against western flower thrips with mortality $\leq 50\%$ (Figure 1). The treatments and treatment combinations associated with experiment two that were effective against western flower thrips were abamectin + bifentazate (Sirocco), abamectin (Avid), abamectin (Avid) + bifentazate (Floramite), pyridalyl (Overture), and pyridalyl (Overture) + petroleum oil (Pure-Spray Green) with mortality $\geq 80\%$ (Figure 2). For experiment three, both spinosad (Conserve) and pyridalyl (Overture), and all of the treatment combinations

including those containing the fungicides fenhexamid (Decree) and azoxystrobin (Heritage) provided sufficient mortality ($\geq 80\%$) of western flower thrips (Figure 3). Overall, all the pesticide mixtures evaluated were effective in controlling western flower thrips in cut transvaal daisy flowers with no evidence of antagonism.

This study has shown that most of the mixtures evaluated in the experiments were not antagonistic in regards to inhibiting mortality of western flower thrips populations. Therefore, our data indicates that these pesticide mixtures may be used by cut flower producers without compromising effectiveness against populations of the western flower thrips.

For more information, or to see the tables associated with this report, contact Raymond at rcloyd@ksu.edu

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NORTHEAST

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Lately I've been doing something that I have wanted to do for years but never prioritized. Making Marketing Plans. I haven't prioritized doing this before because I am so familiar and comfortable with 'winging it' that it hasn't seem necessary. But the more I learn about planning and being a

leader of my farm business (rather than a passive recipient), the more I understand a Marketing Plan's value.

For example, you might look at the demographics of your shoppers and recognize that there is a holiday with a certain flower accompaniment, like orange marigolds for the Mexican holiday Day of the Dead. Or, you recognize that you always have a hard time selling sunflowers in June because no one wants to be reminded of autumn yet. You find them an easy thing to grow, so you aren't willing to axe them from your crop plan. You decide to run a 'Thank-A-Teacher Sunflower Sale' in June, with signage like: "Teachers are the sunshine of our future", "Students who shine have teachers that shine", etc. Sure enough, everyone knows a teacher that needs a sunflower, and you have no trouble moving those June sunflowers!

A sure benefit of a Marketing Plan is that you will have a plan to follow when you are totally absorbed in the routine of growing and harvest and prep and delivery! You don't have to try to concoct creative marketing ideas when you are already busy enough. Look at your plan, and follow through with it. My friend Laura tipped me off on that idea. She comes up with the whole year's fun and exciting marketing slogans and writes them in on her calendar. Then she hits the cruise control and sails through the season, creative all the while.

Here's the layout that I used for each farmers' market and each of my larger wholesale accounts, including one that will be new this year. I didn't write a book for each plan, but even the quick notes jotted down and the props that are now ready to use are a huge positive leap from my wing-it style of the past. This list is modified from several business plan templates, and I have adapted it to the key vantage points for growers. I hope this helps jump start anyone who, like me, has procrastinated from creating a Marketing Plan for their flowers. It's an ace up your sleeve, as long as you put it there!

Marketing Plan

Market/Account:

Name, location, year.

General Analysis: Brief description of this sales environment, what the competition is, the general vibe of success or decline and thoughts on why.

Customer Analysis: Description of the type(s) of customers at this location, including demographics, lifestyle, psychographics, and their expectations and uses of their purchases; describe your products, your display, your stand, your rack, your business (everything!) from a customer-centric view point.

Competitor Analysis: List major business competitors at this location and what makes them strong, as well as where they lack; description of how the physical location or set-up is successful or limiting; description of your business's unique aspects or advantages.

Trade Area: List geographical area for customer base, why this area is important to sell to (why you choose to sell to/at this place).

Market Size and Trends: Current size of customer base and thoughts on potential customer base; describe the trend for this sales environment and why.

Market Potential: Use income data from years past, or estimate sales if it is a new venue; describe any assumptions you used to come up with this year's goal income.

Product Potential: List any advantages or disadvantages you may have with your production or ability to sell. This is a real check point, since it will validate (or negate) your ability to meet your Market Potential. This may also help generate creative ideas as to how to change certain things to better meet your Market Potential.

Market Strategies: Strategies relating to the venue. Is there anything about the location or type of venue to amplify, or are there any dates that should be planned for? Refer back to your descriptions above to target your customer groups, amplify your advantages, and areas/times you want to sell more.

Product Strategies: Strategies relating to the product itself. You might want to group your items, or pick out your key products here. For example, I used Pre-Made Bouquets, By-The-Stems, and Custom Bouquets as my product groups for my farmers' market stands, but you might want to pick out a few key varieties that have their own crop-specific marketing

strategy. List marketing slogans, packaging specifics, or other branding ideas. Order any specific labels, create signs, etc.

Price/Quality Relationship: Describe relationship between the product and the price at this venue, and customer perception or feedback. How does your pricing and your quality compare to your competitors? Describe how this can be explained to customers, perhaps in signage or advertising, if you think it will be advantageous.

Promotion/Advertising Strategies: List specific advertising plan: what to target and when. List each month and the marketing focus, or each week if you are really ambitious! Transfer this to your calendar for easy reminding. Plan how to measure/check effectiveness.

Public Relations/Social Media/Social Networking/Miscellaneous Promo: Describe how, what will be done, how often, and who will do it. This could be direct-to-customer connections and/or be something that creates advertising for you. List a few ideas that are planned and a few that could be used spontaneously. For example, inviting a newspaper reporter to photograph a bed of sunflowers when you have a glut of them, and have the caption be your farm name and hours of your farm stand. Get the reporter's name and phone number now, so you have it handy when you need it.

Please plan on attending the Grower's Business School in Rhode Island this November.

Not only will it be a fantastic opportunity to see ASCFG President Polly Hutchison's farm (Robin Hollow Farm), but it will be a great mix of hands-on growing tutorials, networking, and business workshops. Business workshops sound really un-glamorous, but *au contraire, mon ami*. These will be exciting, engaging, and will send you home with several practical tools to use for your farm's success. Give your business a chance to grow! Call the ASCFG office a.s.a.p. to sign up for the November Grower's School!

Cheers to Ace-ing your growing and marketing season!

MID-ATLANTIC

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In March, the ASCFG Board of Directors traveled to San Antonio, Texas for our spring meeting. Being on the Board has shown me a whole new side of this organization. As I boarded my connecting flight in Charlotte, I was inching down the aisle trying not to hit anyone with my carry-on bag when someone squeezed my arm. I looked up to see the smiling face of Southeast Regional Director Charles Hendricks. We exchanged "see you in a little while" greetings and I took my seat.

Once in San Antonio, we shared a cab to the hotel and talked flowers and growing. It never gets old. When we arrived at the hotel, I was sleepy from being awake past my 9:00 bedtime and Charles was exhausted from an extremely long day of traveling. We walked into the lobby to enthusiastic "hellos" from the rest of the board members who were seated around a table having an informal pre-meeting to maximize our brief time together. We joined in and I was re-energized hearing about ASCFG President Polly Hutchison's recent trip to our nation's capital (with several other ASCFG growers) to better the cut flower industry.

The next morning I enjoyed a peaceful 45-minute stroll—something I never seem to find time for at home—enjoying San Antonio and proving that I can find a Starbucks anywhere. I returned with latte in hand, ready for our 8:30 meeting, and was greeted by hugs and the smiling faces of Polly and Mike Hutchison, Josie Crowson, Barbara Lamborne, Paula Rice, Rita Anders, Judy Laushman, Jeriann Sabin and of course, Charles. Missy Bahret joined in via online connection (with new baby cooing on occasion), as did Kent Miles.

All of these folks I barely knew two years ago, I now consider friends.

We proceeded to spend the day covering numerous topics including regional reports that told of a better financial outlook in many areas with the economy looking a little brighter, although lots of drought and tough weather for flower growers was also in the mix. Our agenda was lengthy and Jeriann kept us on task. Making our community of growers stronger and more prosperous was the overlying theme and directed most decisions we made that day. We talked hoopouses, crops, and life as a grower over a quick lunch out in the San Antonio sun, and then deliberated over grant proposals and scholarship applications in the afternoon. Each board member brought great perspective to the conversations, as all of our farms, climates and demographic areas are quite different. A Monday morning meeting back home kept me from being able to join the rest of the board and about 100 other ASCFG growers at the Arnosky's farm the next day, but I heard it was absolutely amazing.

There is so much that goes on behind the scenes in this organization. Judy and Linda are in the office daily gathering information to compile *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, keeping our website up to date and doing 1,000 other things to make this organization awesome. Our board has had our first series of virtual meetings this year, with both our budget committee and full board meeting online during the off-season. Regular email conversations hash out the details of conference planning and our Northeast Regional Super-Meeting for this fall is shaping up nicely. I am really looking forward to traveling to Polly and Mike's Robin Hollow Farm for a growers' school style mini conference.

I'm so glad to be a part of this organization and would encourage all of you to get more involved. Attend some of this year's meetings to take advantage of our new conference format for the year and get to know some other growers. Submit ideas for articles for the *Quarterly*, or better yet, write an article! Your life as a grower will be better for it.

SOUTHEAST

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As I write on March 20, the first day of spring, as always Mother Nature has the last laugh because we're expecting a hard frost tonight. Still, the tulips and ranunculus have been blooming, the seeds are in the trays, and the promise of even warmer days mean another growing season is on the

way, with all the excitement, disappointments, delights, and aggravations that go along with being a farmer.

March was super busy. Early March brought a trip to San Antonio for the ASCFG Board meeting, and luckily I was able to combine that trip into attending the super regional at the Arnosky's farm in Blanco, Texas. Then, March 17 and 18 was our own super regional in Raleigh. Whew! No rest for the weary, though—it was right back up and back at it on our farm.

This report will be a brief recap of those two events. I say brief because if I wrote everything, it would take pages.

The weather and setting at the Arnosky Farm were ideal. Fifty acres of flowers and 26 hoophouses were just amazing to see. The wide variety of flowers reminded me of the need to try new varieties, while also staying true to what I grow best. Frank told us that he uses the foliage of the flamingo feather more than the flower heads, which blew my mind since I never have done that. I want to try Gloeckner's 'Superior Sunset' sunflowers after hearing Frank say how well they do. I also want to try incorporating cottonseed meal into the soil as fertilizer. By seeing the Arnoskys', I was inspired to try remay to get an earlier start on the season. Another tip is to grow dianthus 'Rose Magic' and 'Purple Magic' in the hoop over the winter, to get really long stems. I plan to try that too.

Would you believe that Pam Arnosky can make 45 bouquets in an hour—that could be a record! Pam and Frank's hospitality was exceptional, and the program was great. Judy has posted the Arnoskys', and Dr. Mengmeng Gu's talks on the ASCFG web site. Many thanks to Rita Anders and to Frank and Pamela for a first class program!

Now for Raleigh, where we had a super turnout of 95 folks—some old friends, and many new ones. We had participants from many parts of the country, some of whom had also attended the Texas meeting. Sunday morning at breakfast at the Ramada, we enjoyed meeting Amy Priestley and her friend Ed Forman from Labor of Love Flower Farm in Rochester, New York (hang in there, Amy!), and sisters Margaret and Mary Ellen from Muth Farm Flowers in Williamstown, New Jersey. As has been said many times, these face-to-face chats are the beating heart and soul of the ASCFG.



Sundays tours were a whirlwind of drive, jump out, tour, jump back in your car, drive some more, tour, and drive again. It was fun and information packed for sure! Leah Cook and Mark Thomas at Wild Hare Farm grow as many as 18,000 tulips a year that they are constantly trying to keep (along with their other crops) from being gourmet meals for the deer. Many participants got the idea of using ladder wire for low tunnels (thanks to Cathy Jones of Perry-winkle Farm for that tip).

Everything on their farm was built by Leah and Mark, a true labor of love for sure—or maybe just a lot of labor! Mark gave a talk on Monday about his Watchdog computer system that monitors temps in all his greenhouses, and sends alerts if temps are outside the proper levels, all for a cost of \$250. Quite a bargain!

On to Peregrine Farm, where Alex and Betsy Hitt have a system of moving tunnels, a Haygrove, a passive solar transplant house, and a new processing barn. (Well, they have a whole lot more than that, but remember this is supposed to be a brief recap.) The moving tunnels were quite interesting. The tunnels are rolled from one section of the garden to another once a year. The pros to this system include keeping the soil healthy by the use of cover crops when resting from the flower crop. Alex grows two cover crops before the rotation happens. The Hitts highly recommend *The Solar Greenhouse Book* by James McCullough, which they used as a guide for their passive solar transplant house. We ordered this book used from Amazon for 1 cent + 3.99 shipping—can't beat that. We want to look into Winstrip flats, which have lasted the Hitts for 15 years as an alternative to flimsy and easily breakable plastic trays. Alex and Betsy grow half veggies and half flowers, with 70% of sales at farmers' markets, with other sales to restaurants and stores. They do very little florist business. Something Alex said hit home: "You can't be everything to everyone. Do what you do best."

Monday was a jam-packed day of speakers and information sharing. The title of our meeting was "Knowledge is Flower Power", and boy was a lot of knowledge shared! The faculty and grad students of N.C. State really showed their stuff: from new cuts to plant problems to weed control to harvesting to postharvest care, there was something for everyone. Many, many thanks to John Dole, Alicain Carlson, Julia Kornegay, Halley Granitz,

Brian Whipker, Jared Barnes, Joe Neal, and Iftikhar Ahmad of North Carolina State University for the wealth of information that is so vital to growing the best crops we can. Thanks also to Polly, Linda, and Judy.

Fellow grower and ASCFG member Lisa Zeigler enthusiastically shared many time-saving tips used on her farm, located smack dab in the middle of Newport News, Virginia. Lisa showed a video of her bedshaper that has revolutionized her life and saved countless days of bed prep. We want one! We also want to try more fall-planted flowers for a spring crop through the use of low tunnels. We were also intrigued by Lisa's use of soil blocking instead of trays to start seedlings. Lisa swears by this method, which eliminates transplant shock. Johnny's Selected Seeds has the soil blocker supplies. Lisa also swears by Biotello 6 mil biodegradable earth friendly plastic for row cover. Go to Lisa's website for lots of info, including videos. <http://www.thegardenersworkshop.com/>

Our friend Pat Murray shared some beautiful bouquets that she put together as examples and shared her tips and suggestions for design work. Pat was engaging and friendly as she answered many questions. What we love about Pat is how



she can use a gum ball, or a tulip bulb, or a jasmine vine, or anything with an interesting texture, right alongside tulips, ranunculus, peonies, or any other flower to create something unique and one of a kind. Pat loves anything different and is always willing to borrow from the wild to add to her designs. She is a cut flower grower's dream designer. We want to also thank our friend Orchid Ed

for his donation of many gorgeous orchids for Pat's designs. At the end of the day, it was fun to give away the arrangements for folks to take home.

Now, as if we had not had enough, we stopped at the flower farm of our friend Melrose Haas in Smithfield, North Carolina to visit with her for a bit, and to pick up some tuberose bulbs. Melrose had an amazing crop of tuberose last year, so we are anxious to try our hand at growing this beautiful and fragrant flower. That's another example of the giving spirit of flower growers: willing to share product, experiences, and advice!

We finally arrived home around 11:00 p.m. Other than Patty leaving her favorite pillow at the Ramada Inn, it was a total success! Hope to see you all soon!

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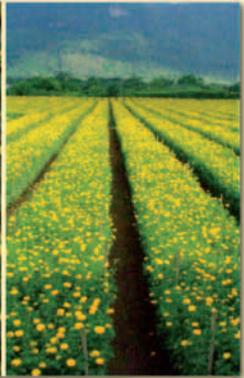
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MIDWEST

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Where did winter go this past season? Here in central Illinois we just did not have the usual snowfall. Once again we were bypassed

and other areas got dumped on. In the Northeast, a lot of growers got hit with above-average snowfalls and storms. Damage reports were in the news from landscapers, nurseries, and cut flower growers. Here we had mostly dustings, with our largest snowfall over a weekend with three inches total. As March rolled in, temperatures were more normal. By mid-March last year we were sowing our first bed of sunflowers and enjoying the mid 70s to low 80s. Yes, tee shirt and shorts time.

This past winter we worked on a few new ways to increase sales. Our Holiday Market (November and December) was expanding to The Middle Market (January-April), the third Saturday of each month. We are able to keep our product in front of the public year round now. The outdoor market starts the first weekend in May. This Middle Market gives us the opportunity to offer items that we would normally move thru wholesalers and retailers this time of year.

We also have been making fresh flower wreaths and pussy willow wreaths, which we have not offered before at markets. They have been selling very well.

Another way we are increasing our sales is by offering willow cuttings. An ASCFG member asked us in January if we would sell willow cuttings. We had never considered doing that before as an item for winter sales. This is an item that we will promote much more next fall and winter. Our willow cuttings have been shipped to Oregon and Washington

in the West, to Maine and Virginia in the East, with several states in between. Think about ways you can offer product which you grow and how you can propagate and sell them, e.g. bulbs, cuttings, divisions, etc.. If you have not thought of the possibilities of sales with using your plant material, give it some thought.

Finally, if you have a web page for your farm and do not have an e-commerce page, think about adding a page to your site to offer products. Keep adding pictures and dialogue/updates so you can continue to getting your message (brand) out to the public and growers. Keeping the demand (growth) for your products on the web will expand your customer base. So this spring and summer take photos of what you are doing on the farm whether it be planting, weeding, harvesting or packaging your flowers. People want to see what you are doing. Share them on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs, Pinterest, YouTube, and get your farm out there. Keep the BUZZ going.

With Blanco and Raleigh meetings completed, our attention turns to the next two meetings. Our October 7-8 "Seed to Sale" event in Wooster, Ohio is shaping up to be a very informative program. On Monday, October 7th we will have a tour of the Secrest Arboretum with its director Ken Cochran. If you are thinking about adding or increasing the woody production on your farm, Ken is the go-to man for what will work in your area. On Tuesday, we will have a full day of speakers, with Steve and Gretel Adams starting us out. They'll show us how use succession planting at their Sunny Meadows Farm, as well as their successful marketing methods. Following them will be a panel discussion on woodies. Speakers on lily and willow production will end the morning session. Afternoon sessions will be concurrent with hydrangea, sunflower, dianthus, lisianthus, and others. Speakers will speak on these flowers as to their experiences they have in producing the crop. Sources, varieties, production methods, harvesting and market area will be addressed.

Like previous programs, we are looking forward to members outside the Midwest to attend. Looking forward to seeing you in Ohio this October! Have a very productive spring and summer.

SOUTH-CENTRAL

Rita Anders

Cuts of Color

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Spring is well underway and we are already thinking of those hot unbearable days of summer. What to plant, when to plant, how many of

each and what will grow in this regions heat. On March 4th almost 100 growers descended on the Arnosky farm in Blanco, Texas. After hearing all of Frank and Pam's weather-related stories, you wonder if we can grow any flowers here in Texas but with an unending desire you can. The Arnoskys know their farm well, and have picked out the best areas to make beds. They manage to pump out loads of flowers despite floods, droughts, insects, deer, rabbits, wild hogs, high winds, and flying T-posts. It's one of those stories that Frank told so well.

The morning started off with an overview of all they grow. After a delicious lunch provided by a local caterer we were dispersed off to their separate growing areas. Frank and Pam have 22 greenhouses and switch out crops for different times of the year. I posted some pictures on the Community Network for those of you unable to make it. There were about 40 members just from our South and Central Region at the meeting and it was so nice to meet so many of you. I was really intrigued to see their farm because my market has changed since last year and I mainly sell to a retailer in Houston and had a lot of questions about their mass marketing scheme.

The market you have for your flowers seems to denote the crops you grow. While I was selling at the farmers' market, the way I sold my flowers was different in the way that a grocery chain likes straight bunches. Their own designers like using the flowers in their designs and it seems that the public, at least in our area, is buying a lot of monochrome straight bunch items. Making straight bunches is a lot easier than trying to make bouquets. We still sell a lot of bouquets, but after we make all our straight bunches.

I know I talk a lot about the Karma dahlias I grow but after trying 12 different colors this year, I wanted to give an update of which ones are the best for me. Karma 'Naomi', 'Ventura' and 'Lagoon' week after week produce tons of saleable stems for tall straight bunches. 'Serena', 'Irene', 'Prospero' and 'Thalia' have beautiful blooms but not as many. 'Chocolate' is not prolific but oh my if you love chocolate, you will love this bloom. 'Amanda' has too short of internodes and the flower is surrounded by stem growth higher than the bloom. 'Bon Bini' is pretty but not many blooms. 'Fushiana' is a beautiful purple-pink color but again not many blooms.

This year I bit the bullet and decided to try tulips again. I decided on parrot tulips and chose three varieties: 'Weber's Parrot', 'Salmon', and 'Flaming Parrot'. I ordered 5 degree tulips from Gloeckner and planted 30 per crate, about 2" deep. I planted half of the 1500 in a minimally heated greenhouse and the other half in an unheated greenhouse. This was enough to stop them from blooming all at once. In three weeks from planting, I started picking my first tulips. 'Weber's Parrot' was the first to bloom followed by 'Salmon' and then 'Flaming Parrot'. I was able to pick tulips over a three-week period and they did fill in a slot when I didn't have a lot of flowers and they were beautiful.

We harvested with the bulb on and sold them like that in sleeves of 5 tulips and we were able to get \$1.00 per stem.

The bulbs with freight were an average of 42 cents each. I had planted them in crates that I had grown lilies in and just planted them on top of the lily bulbs that were in the crate from last year and now last year's lilies are coming up behind the harvested tulips. I watered them in with fish emulsion when I planted them and once during their crop time. This is the only fertilization they received. One of the designers at the store where I sold them said they were magnificent and couldn't believe how large they opened up to and that they lasted really well.

We all wish and hope for a flower grower to be near us so that we can talk flowers to no end and that is what has happened to me. Denise Taft, Freyburg Flower Farm has moved into my area to retire. Her lovely new home is surrounded by contoured flower beds. Imagine: she is retired and is growing flowers. Denise attended our Regional Meeting last year along with her husband Richard and after that meeting she started working for me on Wednesdays when we do all our picking and packing for our weekly sales. She wanted to come by and pick my brain about flower growing and I told her better yet, why don't you come work for me. Denise is so excited about growing and does everything according to the book or directions. She read Lynn Byczynski's book and constructed Lynn's germination project. She gets excellent germination using her setup and watches those little seedlings like little babies. She also has 10 grandchildren which she is often babysitting. She is a very caring person and it transfers to her love for plants.

Denise nourishes her plants with Garrett juice from Howard Garrett in Dallas, a.k.a. the Dirt Doctor. Her recipe for Garrett Juice is 1 cup compost tea, 1 oz. liquid molasses, 1 oz. apple cider vinegar, 1 oz. fish emulsion and 1 oz. liquid seaweed to one gallon of water. She sprays this mixture on the foliage every other week. She believes it also enhances her soil. She makes her compost tea by filling a five-gallon bucket half full with compost and the rest water. She uses a fish bucket aerator

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to mix and put oxygen into the tea and does this for 24 hours and then strains off the tea. Denise also makes 25 gallons of Garrett Juice at one time and uses a 25 gallon sprayer to apply. To make a large batch she uses 1 gallon compost tea, 1 pint seaweed, 1 pint apple cider vinegar, 1 pint molasses and 1 pint fish emulsion. She uses 1½ cups of concentrate per gallon of spray. She also uses 2 oz. of orange oil per gallon of water to spray for fire ants. She does this separately from her fertilization program.

The officers and directors held their spring board meeting in San Antonio the day before the meeting at Arnoskys, and I feel we had an awesome board meeting. We discussed the 2014 conference which will probably be held near Philadelphia, with a stop at Longwood Gardens. We have some very active growers working with our government to promote American Grown Flowers and I see some very positive things coming from their efforts. I hope all this leads to American Flower Power and will educate the general public to buy LOCAL.

WEST and NORTHWEST

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Last *Quarterly* I talked about my pricing strategy to grow my customer base and how, over time, by noticing their purchases and meeting changing demands, my customers started driving me. But now I'm ready to go to the next level and so this discussion brings me to my real dilemma: I want to change my pricing around to somehow entice each customer into bigger purchases.

I remember years ago I was at Seattle's Pike Street Market, and I purchased a hair thingy for ten dollars. Something "magical" happened before my purchase was over. The lady had introduced me to the "combined deal" she offered for which, because I had bought ONE, I now had the option to get TWO MORE more for the same price. End of story? My \$10 purchase turned into \$20 for her because of her witty price point and special offer. Sales add up much quicker when the purchases are \$20.

My thinking? I can do this! But what is that "magic price point" at which you are able to get a little more money out of each sale? And how can I encourage more \$20 sales while still respecting the fact that people are financially stretched and I don't totally know what to expect this summer?

My ultimate goal is to get more \$20 transactions. I got some feedback from some fellow growers here in the West and Northwest (let me tell you we have got some smart cookies over here) and I have sprinkled their thoughts in here.

I would like to move toward selling more straight bunches and make my booth more like a European market.

Straight bunches are way faster to process and less time-consuming than bouquets, so naturally they could be more profitable from a streamlined labor perspective, and you might catch me swimming with the kids at the lake more often. You could price them at eight dollars per straight bunch, or 3 for \$20. (Notice the "magic price point"?)

But I grew my business with bouquets, so they are here to stay at some level. Switching over to the straight bunch idea is going to take time and it may not even work in my area. Maybe bouquets are the American way?! I will need to watch my customers closely.

Ideally, if I could sell a bouquet for \$12 my magic price point would be a snap; I could say "Or buy 2 for \$20." The glitch in all of this is that nasty \$10 price point that I have already established. Everybody loves it and I can't figure out a way to get rid of it. I am hugely hesitant to change my price this year, especially after a long-time (20 years) grower in the Seattle area shared that, "Before the infamous crash we had three people churning out \$10, \$15, and \$20 bouquets as fast as we could make them and we sold more big ones than small ones. Lately (though), not so many big ones, mostly \$10 boks." Hmm... okay, if that is going to be my lot for this year, how about buy two bouquets (\$10 each) and get the third bouquet half off, making it a \$25 sale?

Now a good hedge against economic downturns is a large customer base, and I have spent the last 5 years focusing on strategies to build that customer base. But even as my customers push me, I want to continue growing an even bigger customer base. Last summer I sold a lot of flowers to people I had never seen before, so I am hopeful going into this season. That being said, I am still predicting a need for a small price point; I don't want to forget to continue to grow that customer base through some introductory pricing (a.k.a. "Try me, I'm cheap!"). And, like another grower in the West who offers two price points explained, "The idea behind the Posy

bouquet (smaller) is to turn a reluctant buyer into a loyal customer." One grower here in the West has decided to try offering more straight bunches of six stems for five dollars, or five bunches for \$20. (This is not the first time I've heard of growers offering smaller-sized bunches to provide a low introductory price point for people.) In fact another grower mentioned customers asking for half bunches and made them smaller for \$5 or 3/\$10. (I really like that "Magic Price Point".)

But lower price points do come with some warnings: A couple of growers shared stories where they offered lower priced smaller bouquets and basically felt like they were sabotaging their bigger sales or felt they were "cannibalizing their own sales by offering these." I can relate here – I always take one of my kids with me to market and will let them make a few "lower priced bouquets" to sell and earn some blow money. I finally put a limit on how many they could make because their "cheap" bouquets always sold and I would lose my \$10.00 sale to their \$4.00 sale. The main strategy here to protect yourself is that, IF you offer a low price point, your labor into it MUST match that price - or you're shooting yourself in the foot. That is why I like these growers' choices of a smaller \$5 straight bunch - keep it simple and handle it minimally to justify the lower price. In my opinion you cannot create a "bouquet" for \$5.00 and think you're making ends meet - not at a farmers' market at least. Remember my talk in Tacoma – farmers' markets are expensive sales venues. Your expenses to get there and be there can easily run you 30+% of your total sales. And if it's a rainy day, that just gets uglier. For me, I think I'll stick to the streamlined, quick and easy ½ straight bunch as my bottom priced introductory flowers.

This article was hard to summarize, I think that the "Perfect Pricing" is the "Perennial Dilemma" that affects every business owner when it comes to sorting out expenses, economy, and trends. But I did come up with something.

Paula's "Magic Price Point" summary:

Here is my ideal "Magic Price Points",
what I wish I would have started out doing:

Mini Straight Bunches
\$5 each or 3 for \$10

Straight Bunches
\$8 each or 3 for \$20 (\$4 savings)

Mixed Bouquets
\$12 each or 2 for \$20 (\$4 savings)

Bodacious Bouquets
\$20 each, add a straight bunch for only \$5

Bigger bouquets made to order.

But raising prices is hard to do and I'm hesitant. The below seems like a happy medium....I just don't think my Price Points are as "magical".

Here is my "Happy Medium Price Points",
knowing how popular the \$10.00 bouquet is.
(Maybe I can sneak the \$12.00 bouquet in another year.)

Mini Straight Bunches
\$5.00 ea or 3/\$10.00

Full Straight Bunches
\$8.00 ea or 3/\$20.00

Mixed Bouquets
\$10.00 ea or 3/\$25.00

Bodacious Bouquet
\$20.00 ea add a full straight bunch for \$5

Bigger bouquets made to order.

I don't start my farmers' market until June, so I have some time to mull this over. If you read this and have an inspiration or a great idea, shoot me an e-mail, beehavenflowers@gmail.com I'd love to hear from you. After this goes to print, I'll post this to the bulletin board under "Bouquets - Magic Price Points" so you can check in on all the ideas and experiences that others may have. Wishing you all a "magical" season.



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Gilroy, CA @ Mecca, CA @ Castroville, CA

The ASCFG Welcomes a BUMPER CROP of New Members

Katharine Baker, Schoolhouse Gardens, Orford, NH
Nancy Bauchspies, England Acres Farm, Mt. Airy, MD
Tamara Beltz, Rice, WA
Lyn Benson, New Kent, VA
Angi Black, Angi-B's Blooms & Berries, Fulton, IL
Emilie Boisvert, Sherbrooke, QC
Elizabeth Bryant, Rose Hill Flower Farm, Portland, OR
Mary Buckmaster, Sammamish, WA
Renee Clayton, Wild Scallions Farm, Timberlake, NC
Emily Conable, White Hall, MD
Beau Cribbs, Beaumont, TX
Torrey DeLoach, Chickamauga, GA
Ariel Dixon, Weaverville, NC
Midge Dreelin, Gordonsville, VA
Elizabeth Eggers, Wye Mountain Flowers and Berries, Roland, AR
Jennifer Elliott, Tiny Hearts Farm, Poughquag, NY
Martha Farner, Newburg, PA
Nicole Farrell, Tall Grass Farms, Medical Lake, WA
Mary Sue Foote, Monroeville, NJ
Ed Forman, Labor of Love Flower Farm, Palmyra, NY
Jessica Hall, Harmony Harvest Farm, Weyers Cave, VA
Susan Haney, Long Lane Flower & Garden, Millheim, PA
Jesse Hasstedt, AmeriSeed, Inc., Solvang, CA
Julie Hay, Red Fox Gardens, Elk Rapids, MI
Lois Hoffbauer, Duluth, MN
Chris Hoke, Rising Moon Farm, Middlebourne, WV
Jane Holder, Hillcrest Farm, Advance, NC
Erica Hope, Austin, TX
Jennifer Hovis, Asheville, NC
Karen Hurtubise, Qualla Berry Farm, Hayesville, NC
Emily Jackle, Mile Creek Farm, New Lebanon, OH
Bill Johnson, Old Cape Cut Flowers, Stafford Springs, CT

Carmen Lowery, Portland, TN
Leslie Marcon, Simply Yummy Farms, Kenai, AK
David Martin, Martin Farm, Gracey, KY
Carlos Martinez, Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., Inc., Harrison, NY
Lisa Mauro, Windy Hill Flower Farm, Honeoye Falls, NY
Mary McCabe, Glenmoore, PA
Terry Motsinger, Motsinger Farms, Winston-Salem, NC
Rebecca Nunnally, Marble Falls, TX
Mandy and Steve O'Shea, 3 Porch Farm, Comer, GA
Debbie Parsley, Coupland, TX
Janell Patterson, Burien, WA
David Pruitt, Ball Tagawa Growers, Arroyo Grande, CA
Suzanne and Robert Rivera, Honolulu Gardens, Grifton, NC
Katie Savalchak, Sacred Bough Farm, Sullivan, ME
Val Schirmer, Winchester, KY
Kathleen Schwallie, Orinda, CA
Jason Simpson, Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, PA
Randy Statham, Laurel Hollow, NY
Kim and Joel Stearns, Nutty Brown Farm, Austin, TX
B.A. Stefanyshyn-Cote, Saskatoon, SK
Deb Stoneman, Columbia, VA
Jenna Sweeney, Groton, MA
Debbie Thornton, Tomball, TX
David Toohey, Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., Inc., Foster, RI
Michelle Verville, Perbellus Flower Farm, Cedar, MI
Lix Villarga, Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., Inc., Harrison, NY
Marcel Weatherford, Dawsonville, GA
Van Weldon, Wood Duck Farm, Cleveland, TX
Jeff Werner, Werner Farms, Rush, NY
Rita Wollmering, The Herb Farmacy, Salisbury, MA
Isamu Yokoyama, Midfield Farms, Midfield, TX

Thanks for the Good Word!

You connected some of our new members to the ASCFG.

Rita Anders

Allan Armitage

Frank Arnosky

Pamela Arnosky

Missy Bahret

Lynn Byczynski

Billie Clifton

Ken Cochran

Leah Cook

Melanie DeVault

Becky Devlin

Dave Dowling

Erin Flynn

Jane Henderson

Barb Jewell

Marc Kessler

Ko Klaver

Barb Lamborne

Barbara Liedl

Michael Makinajian

Gail Parlatore

Debra Prinzing

Joe Schmitt

Joann Scholtz

Kim Stearns

Diane Szukovathy

Michael Wells

Chris Wien

2013 Grower Grant Winners

Lisianthus is one of the most popular flowers grown by ASCFG members, and *Botrytis cinerea* is one of its most common pathogens. It is difficult to manage because it is ubiquitous in the environment; the spores easily blow in wind and redistribute. Systemic fungicides are often used in conventional florist crops, but populations of *Botrytis* have become resistant to several products such as Benlate.



Jana Lamboy

When Thea Folls posted a query on the Bulletin Board asking for help with botrytis gray mold on lisianthus, Jana Lamboy contacted her. Together they created a project in the field to compare microbial treatments for disease prevention. The objective of this study is to compare the efficacy of a new botanical product Regalia®, two biofungicides, an actinomycete bacterium, and the fungus *Trichoderma*, and compost tea treatments in improving plant survival rate, cut flower quality and yield.

Their proposal for a Grower Grant was approved by the ASCFG Board of Directors. Jana and Thea will conduct their studies in the 2013 growing season, and the results of their research will be published in *The Cut Flower Quarterly*.



Thea Folls

2013 Scholarship Winner

An excellent grade point average, a wide range of extra-curricular and academic activities, and years of experience on a cut flower farm earned Janos Arnosky the 2013 ASCFG Dave Dowling Scholarship. Janos is a junior majoring in horticultural sciences at Texas A & M University. He's been involved with the university's Horticulture Club and the American Society for Horticultural Science. He

earned his private pilot license when he was a freshman, and is currently working on his instrument flight rating.

Janos' plans include study at the Universidad de San Francisco in Quito, Ecuador, where he'll attend classes and tour cut flower operations. Given his years of experience on his family's cut flower farm in Texas, the Ecuadorian growers will learn as much from him as he will learn from them.



Judy Laushman

As Linda and I pulled together photos for the 25th Anniversary collage on page 39, I found this letter from Joe Seals. It's an actual hand-written letter—well, typed on a typewriter—on actual letterhead stationery, and sent through the U.S. postal service. It served as the genesis of the ASCFG.

Joe's conviction that "what most growers, particularly the beginners, wanted was a clearing house for information—references, resources, research, etc.—to continue what the conference started." has always been the cornerstone of the ASCFG's foundation.

As Joe wrote in one of his messages as ASCFG President: Our essential goal, simply put, is to help growers of specialty cut flowers and foliage produce a better crop.

At the risk of sounding like an old fogey (which I guess I already do, referencing antiquities like typewriters and the post office) imagine trying to produce a crop, better or otherwise, without information on where to get seed, how much of it to plant, how to grow it on, when to cut it, the best way to sell it, and what to charge for it. If you were putting in roses or carnations, you could pick up any number of textbooks, but try asking your extension agent (another soon-to-be antiquity?) for tips on *Eryngium* germination.

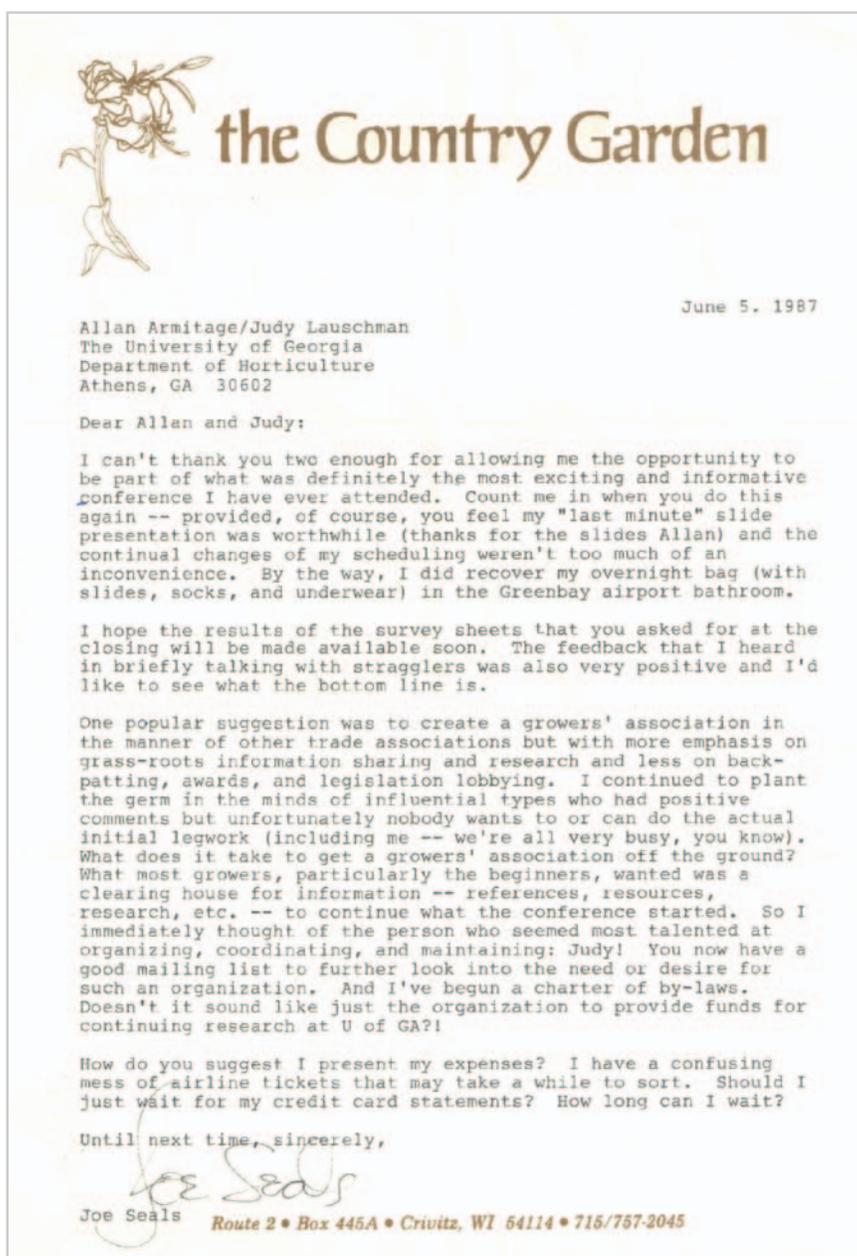
It's interesting to note what these growers told us they needed. In 1989, this is what members wrote when asked "What do you need from this association?": "Sources for plugs and seeds." "Trials of new plants." "Honest exchange of ideas with other growers." "Technical information of growing and harvesting." "Pest and weed control for field production." "Knowing we're not alone in our efforts—encouragement!" "All and every kind of information!"

Sound familiar?

What we know now is this: The books that have been written on cut flower production, and the conferences, seed trials, online forums created to inform and update growers across America and beyond, are certainly helpful. But the real education comes from real growers.

It's you ASCFG members who provide input for those books, speak at those conferences, trial new varieties, and post on online forums. It's the new farmers showing up at Regional Meetings to learn from those who've been doing it for a while. It's those who've been doing it a while continuing to attend those meetings, "Because you always learn something new from someone else."

I'm not sure it can get more grass roots than that.





“Fall Growers’ School and More”

November 3-4

Robin Hollow Farm

Saunderstown, Rhode Island

Check out these highlights of this dual-purpose meeting:

Business Track

Missy Bahret

Goal Setting and Business Decision Making: Tools to create sound business goals and assess need for change.

Suzanne Nolter, Carolyn Snell, Erin Windham

Growers’ Seasonal Tour Panel: Pictures speak a thousand words, and these mini slideshows from three established growers through the seasons will be worth millions! Photos will be of organizational systems, growing systems, marketing styles, harvesting styles, transport, extended season and more!

Mike Hutchison

Hutchison’s Tips: Tricks of the trade, gleaned through years of on-farm experience.

Chris Wien

Best Crops for Productivity: Getting the most stems from your plant choices.

Becky Devlin and Jim Kelly

Marketing Strategies and Implementation: Examination of two marketing styles.

Roxanne Boisse

USDA Microloans: Producers can apply for a maximum of \$35,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoopouses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation, delivery vehicles, and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses.

Growers’ School Track

Hands-on examination of seeding systems, greenhouse systems, soil health, bed prep, mulching, and irrigation at Robin Hollow Farm.

Tour of Robin Hollow Farm

For both tracks, with a focus on season extension and extended-season products, as well as the farm’s overall operation.

Complete schedule available soon!

FROM the MAILBOX

FROM AN OUTGOING MEMBER

Dear Judy and Linda,

I haven't renewed my ASCFG membership because we will be retiring within the next few years and I'm in the process of winding down my industry commitments which also includes memberships, subscriptions etc. Although we would probably be considered a large grower by most ASCFG members we have still benefited from our membership over the years. It is amazing how many small, often obscure ideas that we first learned about from ASCFG members that we have tweaked a little to help our business perform better.

A great example would be ornamental kale, which I first saw on the farm tour at the conference in Vancouver. We now produce 200,000 stems annually in greenhouses that weren't being used at that time of year and it would never have hit my radar screen if I wasn't a member and attended that conference! Although still a small crop for us, it has by far the best margins of anything we grow!

I still have fond memories of the meeting in Athens, Georgia (pre-ASCFG) that probably was part of the seed for the formation of ASCFG. This is where I first met Allan and Judy and assorted other characters. I was amazed at the crazy enthusiasm these people had for growing specialty cut flowers! I remember thinking at the time that this was going to end up either in a huge disappointment or something very unique and positive for the cut flower industry. Fortunately; it was the latter, and continues as a testament to the hard work and enthusiasm of so many characters over so many years.

Well done ASCFG! May your row be long, straight, and weed free!

Best Wishes,
Wayne Houtby
Penglard Farms
St. Catharines, Ontario

FROM AN INCOMING MEMBER

Hi Judy,

Thank you so very much for my New Member Packet which was waiting for me when I returned from the Tacoma conference. The conference was amazing and potentially life changing for me. I have to tell you that your warmth and encouragement when I called last minute made a huge impact on my decision to attend, THANK YOU! I have not slept much since the meeting, I'm so excited about all the possibilities. Thanks too for all your hard work at conference!

Sincerely,
Katie Fleet
Kirkwood, Missouri



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Steve and Gretel Adams • Joe Schmitt • Mike and Polly Hutchison • Kent Miles

FARM TOURS • CLASSES • DEMONSTRATIONS • SOCIAL EVENTS

“From Seed to Sale”

October 7-8
OSU-OARDC Shisler Center
Wooster, Ohio

“Fall Growers’ School and More”

November 3-4
Robin Hollow Farm
Saunderstown, Rhode Island