

Volume 28, Number 2 Spring 2016

# *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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Anemone 'Cristina', 'Marianne Blue',  
'Panda', 'LaBelle Deep Rose'; ranunculus  
'Amandine', from Le Mera Gardens,  
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## Every Head is a World

Frank Arnosky



*Cada Cabeza es un Mundo.* That is a favorite *dicho*, or saying, of ours here at the farm. It comes from Mexico and means “Every Head is a World”, or more figuratively, everyone sees the world their own way. I have struggled with this concept for the past two years while serving as ASCFG President. I’ve come to realize that the world in my head is not the same as the world that most of the ASCFG Board of Directors sees, and I have decided to step down as President of the Board.

I’d like to take the easy path and tell you that I’m just too busy to continue working on the Board, that I can’t keep up with both the farm and the ASCFG. True as that may be, that would be a lame excuse at best. No one on this Board works any less than I do at their farms, businesses, and professions. They’ve probably worked a lot harder than I at making the ASCFG a success. Josie Crowson was instrumental in creating the Local Flowers, Local Farmers video. She conceived the project, found the

filmmakers, coached and guided them and pushed the final cut to completion. She deserves an Oscar. Barbara Lamborne and others spent hours working to put together the Shopify-based ecommerce site. They worked on a shoestring budget to build a web-based sales site we all can use. And at the recent Grower’s School, if the speakers all looked familiar, it was because it was mostly Board members presenting their knowledge and experience. The collective wisdom of the Board and their willingness to share it is what makes this group as valuable as it is.

The ASCFG is experiencing unprecedented growth, approaching 1000 members. When I served on the Board in the early 2000s, I would have never believed that possible. Back then we struggled to build membership. Now local flowers are a hot item and the farmer-florist is riding a wave. But as the ASCFG grows, I find myself on a divergent path. While some members search for information, network with other growers,

and develop new markets, my farm struggles with other issues such as labor costs and immigration, regulations, rising input costs, and the effect imports have on my ability to make a living. On some of these issues I have not seen eye-to-eye with the Board.

I have to thank Judy and Linda for the incredible job they do. I hope everyone realizes what we have in these two people. They put together everything you see and hear about the organization, from printing publications to booking conference hotels, from writing the budget to sweeping the floors. We couldn’t do it without them. Take time at the next meeting to tell them you love ‘em!

So I’ll be moving on. Serving on the Board was a bit more political than I was prepared for. I must remember what Jim Hightower, former Texas Ag Commissioner and columnist, says about politics: “One day you’re a peacock, the next day you’re a feather duster.” I’ve got some dustin’ to do back on the farm.

It’s great to be back at the helm of this terrific organization. As you can see from Frank’s letter, he has stepped down as President. I’d like to thank Frank for all he’s done for the ASCFG, as President, Regional Director, and as a regular member hosting meetings at his farm, sharing valuable information from a Texas perspective, always framed in his great southern wit. I’ve been to the Arnosky farm for many meetings and learned some-thing new with each visit.

You may ask “How did Dave become President again?” Here’s the explanation. The ASCFG bylaws state: “In the event that the President is unable to serve for the full term, the Vice President becomes President and shall appoint a member to serve the remainder of the Vice President’s term.”

Current Vice President Jennie Love felt that with just a little over two years on the Board, she wasn’t yet ready to be President. So the Board did some shuffling around and came up with a transition plan that should make everyone happy. The new President, Jennie Love, appointed me as Vice President. Jennie then resigned, making me President, whereas I then appointed her as Vice President. To those old enough to remember how Gerald Ford became the 38th U.S. President without ever being elected, even as the Vice President, know that this transition in no way involved wiretapping, plumbers, or anything close to Watergate. Honest. The pool of potential ASCFG Presidents is limited to members who have already served on the Board. None of this going straight from business owner to the

Presidency stuff! You must work your way up in this organization.

By the way, every member is eligible to serve a term on the Board; candidates for President and Treasurer must have previously been on the Board. While being on the Board may not always be fun and games, and it does take some time and effort, it can be very rewarding. The perks can be pretty good too. You get to work with a great group of people and help guide the ASCFG as membership increases each year. You can be involved in conference planning, promoting cut flowers, and more. Next time there is an opening in your Region, consider running for Regional Director, or even Secretary or Vice President. You’ll be glad you did.

*Dave Dowling*

# Fresh Cut Flower Farm turned a patchwork of lots in Detroit into a thriving flower farm.

Sarah Pappas, Fresh Cut Flower Farm  
by Jodi Helmer

In urban Detroit, a patchwork of once-vacant lots is bursting with color.

Cosmos, ageratum, dahlias, larkspur, and poppies are among the dozens of varieties of flowers thriving in the heart of the Motor City, thanks to Sarah Pappas.

After working with organic farms and food justice organizations in New York and California, Pappas moved to Detroit in 2011 to work for a non-profit. When she purchased a home with a small orchard and enough land for large garden, she decided to use her organic farming background to grow cut flowers.

“I could see from what was happening in the Northeast and Pacific Northwest that local flowers were gaining momentum in a mainstream way,” she recalls.

In 2014, Pappas started selling blooms, turning Fresh Cut Flower Farm into a full-time business. As the farm grew, so did her need for land. Like other growers in Detroit who were turning vacant lots into thriving urban farms, Pappas decided to take advantage of the empty lots in her neighborhood.

“In several neighborhoods, there has been a lot of vacant land for a long time and, for many people [who are growing food on those lots] it’s been an important part of their survival,” she explains.

For Pappas, the vacant lots were essential to the success of Fresh Cut Flower Farm. Although the trio of lots provides under an acre of land, Pappas turned the space into a profitable addition to the farm. But she also recognized that farming on lease-less land came with a lot of risks.

“I’m in an area that’s having a lot of economic development and that makes me nervous,” she says.



While Pappas doesn’t think there is an immediate threat to the land or the flowers growing on the lots, she hopes to purchase it as soon as she can cut through the bureaucratic red tape and convince the City of Detroit to sell it. In the meantime, she relishes the role of caretaker. Last season, she invested in much-needed tree trimming and amended the soil with truckloads of compost.

Farming on borrowed, lease-less land is just one of the unconventional things Pappas has done to grow Fresh Cut Flower Farm.

### Creating Opportunities

When she started growing cut flowers, Pappas believed most of her business would come from florists ordering her blooms for custom arrangements. It didn’t take long to discover that local florists lack the flexibility to work with a small grower. She needed to change directions and build the business to fit with the local opportunities.

Pappas sold her flowers at local farmers’ markets and started a CSA program, offering two 10-week sessions between May and October.

“I hang out under the apple trees making bouquets and listening to music,” she says. “And there is a weekly cadre of people who buy from us, love us, and recommend us to their friends.”

Despite the success of both ventures, she needed more revenue to make the farm sustainable. To her surprise, weddings became a big portion of her sales.

Fresh Cut Flower Farm sells buckets of flowers to DIY brides and offers design services featuring gorgeous, non-traditional arrangements.

“I thought I’d be starting a flower farm and selling raw products and that’s not the case,” she says. “I’m selling more design services.”

But Pappas was determined to sell raw product too.

Knowing Fresh Cut Flower Farm was too small to fill sales at a wholesale market, Pappas got creative. In 2015, she started a dahlia cooperative, partnering with two other growers to sell to Mayesh Wholesale Florist just outside of Detroit.

The wholesaler purchases dahlias from the cooperative on Mondays and Tuesdays, giving the growers a much-needed early week outlet for their flowers at a higher price than the dahlias would command at the farmers’ market.

“It’s really paved the way for growth,” Pappas says.

In fact, the first season of the cooperative was so successful that Pappas plans to invite additional growers to participate this spring and hopes it’s the start of a thriving cooperative model among Detroit growers.

### Community Gardening

Pappas favors a community-centered view of the farm and hopes that participating in grower cooperatives and providing flexible jobs will help support the community. While Pappas technically owns the farm, she’s the first to admit that it’s not a solo operation.

Last summer, pregnant with her first child and exhausted, Pappas hired four workers to spend one-half day per week on the farm. They weeded and watered beds and picked fresh blooms to ensure there were enough fresh flowers for the weekly market and CSA orders.

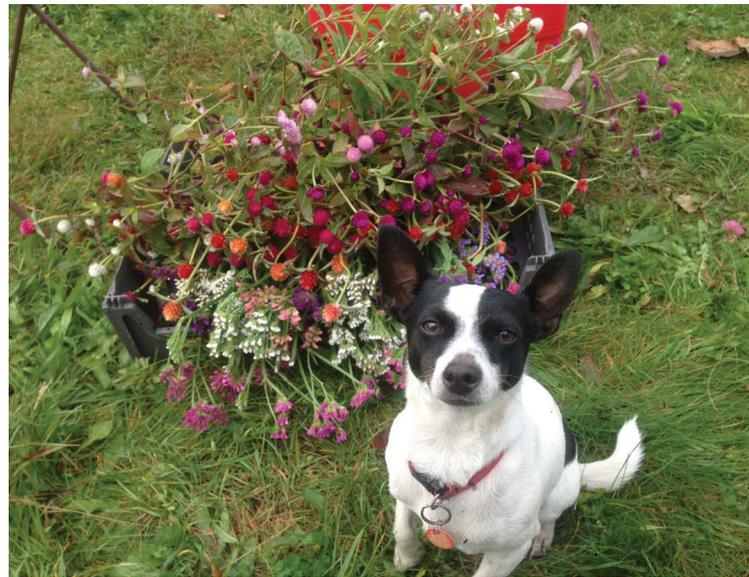
“It was clear that I couldn’t do it alone,” she recalls. “It felt good to look for ways to get people involved.”

Moving forward, Pappas hopes to hire a business manager to tackle the operations side of farming, freeing her up to focus on production. “It would help me make more strategic decisions and not rely so much on my gut,” she says.

In the meantime, Pappas is appreciating the business she built. In a recent blog post, she wrote, “Getting to know someone as your regular customer is such a unique joy. They appreciate your ongoing work, you appreciate their ongoing support...and I feel proud that I have grown flowers and made bouquets that they continue to value.”

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## Blood, Sweat, and Tears

Dave Dowling, Ednie Flower Bulb

As a new growing season takes shape, now is the time to plan ahead and make sure you're ready for a great year in 2016. Growers need to fine-tune their operations each year to realize the best return on the investment of time, sweat, money, and tears that they put into their cut flower business year after year. While it may be a job you would do for free, you need to make enough money this year to be able to "do it again next year".

Investments of time are best when enough time is spent to do the job correctly the first time, without cutting corners and doing a sloppy job. How many times do you need to add more support to fix that netting before you'll just do it right the first time? Remember to put in the extra support needed for heavy crops when they are planted, not when you're trying to pick up flowers flattened by a summer thunderstorm. How many times do you need to pull the row cover out of the neighbor's trees before you'll learn to anchor it sufficiently

when putting it out? How many times do you need to let the weeds take over before you'll realize that prevention and early intervention is the key to effective weed control? How many times do you need to \_\_\_\_\_ before you \_\_\_\_\_? I'm sure you can fill in the blanks yourself.

Investments of sweat equity can be those workdays that are not part of the usual routine. Things you don't do on a regular basis, like prepping a new field for production, building a high tunnel or greenhouse, or planting a bed of long-term perennials like peonies, or woodies like willow or hydrangea. These projects may seem like a big investment up front, but the big payback is in future years when they will be producing income with little in the way of new investment. Investments in new plants can give a great return.

Each year you should find some new flower varieties to try. If you don't try at least a couple new flowers each year, you may be stuck in a routine that needs to be shaken up a bit. Your customers will buy more, if you offer them more. You can start with the new varieties shown each year in the Winter issue of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*. You'll also find lots of "new to you" varieties to try when you visit other growers, either as part of an ASCFG meeting or on your own. Visiting other flower growers can be a great little side trip while on vacation. Most growers are happy to have the occasional visitor. It lets them show off their farm to an appreciative audience, and it may give them a chance for lunch or dinner out with a visitor. That could be your "payment" for the "Grand Tour".

The investments of tears are when you try your best, but still get beat back by that "100-year flood" that happened two years in row. Or another year of drought. Or the tears you may shed when deer get through your ten-foot deer fence and eat all the lilies. And the sunflowers. And the phlox. All in one night. Do they ever eat the weeds?

Whatever form your farm "investments" may take, be sure you make wise, informed decisions whenever possible. It will make for a better season, and a happier life. Like everyone's father says, "Work smart, not hard."

---

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## Biological Control Systems Cut Flower Growers Should Consider

Stanton Gill

Several insects and mites will attack young cut flower seedlings as they're started in greenhouses. If you start your season early, biological control is a very viable option. This involves starting plants that will serve as insect-infested crops on which predators and/or parasites are released, and ideally, increase in number. The beneficial organisms migrate off the banker plants and kill the insects feeding on your cut flower seedling plants. This involves a little foresight but is very practical and cost effective for most growers.

### Papaya Banker Plants for Whitefly Control

Ashton Dickey, Lance Osborne, and Cindy McKenzie published a paper in 2011 on infesting papaya plants with papaya whitefly, *Trialeurodes payaya* (syn. *Carica papaya*). This whitefly limits its feeding activity to papaya and plants in its family, which are not generally grown in a greenhouse environment. You can purchase papaya fruit from the grocery store, remove the seeds, and start the plants in pots. The papaya plant is then infested with the whitefly. The parasitic wasp *Encarsia sophia* (*transvena*) is released on the plants; the females sting the sessile stage of the whitefly and lay eggs inside. The banker plant is then moved into the greenhouse where the parasitic wasp adults migrate search and sting sessile stages of *Bemisia tabaci*, silverleaf whiteflies, which infest many greenhouse-grown cut flowers.

Biological supply houses are now investigating what is required to ship out papaya whitefly to states other than Florida where it already exists. Once this hurdle is crossed we will have a

potentially very good banker plant system to deal with whitefly in greenhouses. Check with biological suppliers to see if they can ship these in 2016.

### Grass Mites for Two-spotted Spider Mite Control

One pest doing major damage to cut flower and other greenhouse crops is the two-spotted spider mite. Growers raise field corn plants in pots and infest the foliage with Banks grass mites (*Oligonychus pratensis*), which feed only on monocots such as corn and other grasses. Once the mite population is established they release two predatory mites, *Amblyseius californicus* and *Phytoseilus persimilis*, onto the corn plants. These two predatory mites feed on the grass mites, reproduce, and when the banker plant is moved into the greenhouse, they migrate off the corn and search for spider mites on plants in the greenhouse. Grass mites are found in many states so shipping them from biological supply houses should be a smaller obstacle to hurdle.

### For More Information

In February of 2016 the University of Maryland Extension published a new issue of the 440-page manual entitled "Total Plant Management for Greenhouse Production with Emphasis on IPM". This manual is loaded with information on biological and chemical control (latest label updated) for plants grown in greenhouses. It not only has insect and mite control but also disease management, weed control, and fertility management information. The manual is \$30 plus shipping. To obtain a copy send an email to me at [Sgill@umd.edu](mailto:Sgill@umd.edu)

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## Can We Prevent “Club foot” Celosia?

Chris Wien, Emeritus Professor, Cornell University

Well-grown crested celosia should form a spade-like triangular shape topped by a wavy edge. Under Ithaca (Zone 5) summers in both high tunnel and field, we frequently got irregular, misshapen flower heads that remind one of a club foot rather than a crest. This disorder is particularly prevalent among varieties that were selected for the well-regulated conditions of greenhouse culture, such as the Bombay group.

Research indicates that the crest shape can be influenced by daylength, but the occurrence of this disorder is too sporadic to be explained by the regular progression of the duration of light. Temperature fluctuations are a more likely causal factor, and they vary widely in our growing season. Accordingly, we chose to manipulate the temperature under which the celosia seedlings were being raised, to see the effect on crest shape.

Beginning 2 to 4 weeks after sowing, we transplanted seedlings of ‘Bombay Sunshine’ into 4 in. pots and placed them in either a growth chamber set at 60 F day and 50 F night temperature, or left them in a 72 F greenhouse. At the same time, we looked at the growing points of the seedlings under a microscope, to see if the growing point had changed, from a round dome producing leaves to the distinctive rectangle of the flower initial. We thought that exposing the plants to the cold shock at the time the flower head was forming would produce the distortion we often saw in our plantings.

With our first try, we thought we had hit the jackpot: the warm-treated plants had regular combs, and the cold-treated plants looked really ugly (see photo 1). We should have quit while we were ahead. In the second run, in the warmer growth conditions of later spring, the plants

had already formed flowers by the time we started the cold treatments, and none of the plants showed the malformation. In the third run, although we timed the cold treatment exactly to coincide with flower formation, even the warm-treated plants were malformed (see photo 2).

Although it is tempting to say that experiments should never be repeated, it appears that there are factors other than temperature fluctuations causing the disorder. In particular, we think that irregular watering in the period before the temperature treatments were started were another factor. For celosia growers, the results reinforce the advice that careful variety selection, avoiding lines poorly adapted to your growing conditions, is of key importance.



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# Yoga

## for Growers - Part Two



By Jeriann Sabin  
Bindweed Farm

As farmers working the land, we live in tune with the seasons and the natural world. Often we are more aware of sunlight, daylength, temperatures, and weather forecasts than politics or the current community buzz. Responsible for living things, we are attuned to their needs, but how in tune are you with your own body's needs?

There are 26 bones, 33 joints and over 100 ligaments and muscles in our feet. Feet are a miraculous feat (sorry, couldn't resist) of physical engineering and yet I'll bet you don't think about them until they ache or malfunction. I didn't.

I abused my feet for years, standing on cement floors processing orders for hours, walking over acres of uneven surfaces, squatting and duck walking while transplanting plugs, and driving hundreds of miles without cruise control. Then one evening at the end of a long walking tour in Prague, I got a stinging sensation in my heel. It felt like I had a thorn in my boot but I didn't, and before we were near our hotel I was limping. Limping!

Fortunately the next day we had a long train ride so I put my feet up and began to research. I'm not a doctor but it was obvious that I was suffering from plantar fasciitis. I got a crash course in "home remedies" before reaching Budapest, then managed the next two weeks taking ibuprofen, avoiding cobblestones, and resting when possible—thank goodness Europe is full of gorgeous spots for espresso/wine/beer/food.

Once home my recovery began with a small fortune in new footwear (sadly, not cute, but functional and supportive) and a regular routine of foot exercises or toe yoga, aka "toe-ga". I do these exercises at least once a day to keep my feet in shape and pain-free all through our farm season. Last year I went to Warsaw, Poland to spend the Christmas holiday with our daughter and I did the following routine twice daily. I am happy to report that I logged over 80 miles walking to and from cafés, shops, and restaurants, in and out of museums, castles and towers, up mountains of stairs and miles and miles of cobblestones (Seriously, I love Europe, but enough with the cobblestones already).

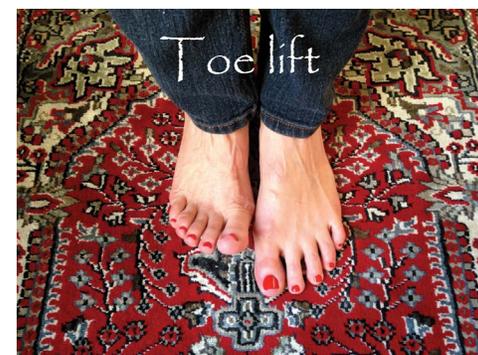
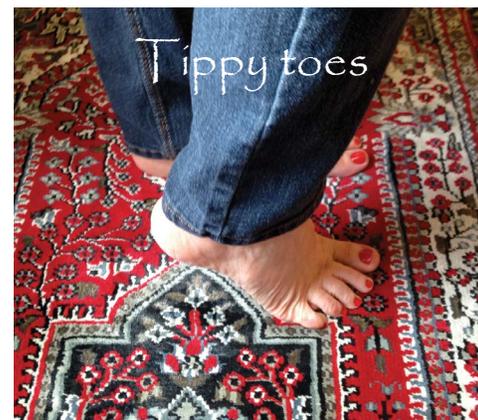
To prepare for the farming season just around the corner try this routine every day. In these exercises, like all yoga practice, you are looking for sensation. These exercises may feel awkward or uncomfortable and that is okay. If you experience pain, that is not. Pain is the body's way of telling you to stop immediately. Sensation, especially sensations of stretch, indicates movement and growth, so be aware of your feet as you work through these simple exercises.

### Toe lift

Standing barefoot on a hard, even surface (not cobblestones), with feet directly under your hips, lift the toes of your right foot off the floor and then release down, like your toes are waving. Now lift the toes of your left foot and release down. Do twelve repetitions on each side.

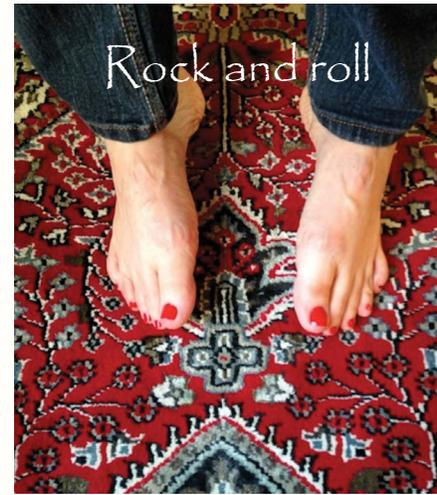
### Tippy toes

Lifting your right heel up, come onto the ball of your right foot, letting your weight shift to your left leg. Release and lower your right foot to the floor. Shifting your weight, lift your left heel, coming onto the ball of your left foot and then release and repeat the lift on the right side. Do twelve repetitions on each side. If your balance is not good you can hold on to the back of a sturdy chair, counter top or table to secure your balance.



## Rock and roll

Stand with your weight evenly between both feet, then roll your weight to the outsides, the pinky toe sides, of your feet. Now roll your weight back to the insides, the big toe sides, of your feet. Repeat this movement twelve times, shifting the weight from the center of your feet, to the outsides, back through center and then to the insides of your feet.



## Arch stretch

This exercise is especially satisfying on a rubber yoga mat but does the same job on a hard surface. Standing with your feet directly under your hips and your weight evenly distributed, pull the toes of both feet towards your heels, as if you were trying to drag something towards you, like a rug, a towel or a yoga mat. You are looking for a sensation in your arches; they will lift slightly as you activate and strengthen the muscles in the arches. Release and repeat twelve times.

## Toe coordination

Standing again with your weight evenly distributed and your feet hip width apart, lift the toes of both feet. Now touch your big toes to the floor, then the index toes, then the middle toes, then the ring toes and finally the pinky toes. Repeat this twelve times. Then reverse the exercise, lift all the toes, then touch down the pinky toes, the ring toes, the middle toes, the index toes, and finally the big toes. Do this six times.



## Building ankle strength

Walking in and between rows in uneven soil conditions can be taxing. I am always leery about twisting an ankle, especially when carrying a load of sunflowers that throws off my center of gravity or when hauling massive bundles of grass that obscure my sight. To ensure strength in my ankles and surety of footing I do the following exercises.

You will need a chair, a towel and a hard, even floor. Sitting comfortably in the chair, lay a towel lengthwise on the floor in front of your right foot. Now just reach out with the toes of your right foot and pull the towel towards you, using much the same movement used in the arch stretch exercises above. Keep repeating this movement until you have pulled the entire length of towel to you. Repeat five times with each foot.

For the next exercise lay the towel out perpendicular on the right side of your right foot. With your heel on the floor, pivot your foot to the towel, grab it with your toes and drag it as your pivot your foot back to center. Repeat this movement until you have pulled the length of the towel to you. Repeat five times with each foot, moving the towel to the left side when switching to your left foot. When this exercise is easily accomplished you can add a weight, like a heavy book or a can of soup, to the end of the towel, creating drag.

At the very least you should warm up and open your joints before heading out for a long day of farming. As you sit to lace up your boots, extend your feet, rest your heels on the floor, and lifting your toes, clench and unclench them several times. Now point and flex your feet five or six times and then rotate your ankles half a dozen times, clockwise and counterclockwise. Making these simple movements warms the muscles in your feet, lubricates the joints, and moves fluid that accumulates during sleep and inactivity.



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# FARM INSURANCE

Don't Blow it Off

TONY NOYE

When I talk to folks either wanting to get into farming or who have been farming, the last item discussed is risk management. However, it is my belief that this should actually be one of the first items we should be thinking about.

Farmers encounter risks every day through many if not all of the activities associated with farming. These activities can be in the field, working with animals, selling products, operating equipment, and dealing with employees. It may also be a risk we can't see coming such as a barn fire, a hailstorm or just everyday living.

The first question one needs to ask is simply, "Do I need a farm insurance policy?"

Keep in mind most homeowner policies exclude any farm activities. Three questions that should follow are:

- Is income generated from the farm?
- Am I traveling on the road with equipment, making deliveries, etc.?
- Do I have livestock?

Insurance coverage can be very confusing to a farm business owner, so having some basic understanding is important. The four main areas of coverage are:

1. Dwelling, contents, and maybe even a detached garage
2. Farm personal property such as machinery, supplies, and product
3. Farm outbuildings
4. Liability

For this article I want to focus on items to consider as you choose insurance coverage for your farm, personal property, and farm outbuildings. Property coverage is what most of us think about first. Generally there are three categories of coverage for loss.

Basic coverage would be things like windstorm and hail, fire and lightning, explosion, sinkhole collapse, smoke, theft, vandalism, vehicles.

Broad coverage includes basic coverage plus incidents such as accidental discharge and leakage of water systems, accidental shooting of livestock, attacks on livestock, breakage of glass that's part of a building or structure, bursting of heating or water systems, flood loss to livestock, freezing of plumbing, or weight of ice, snow, and sleet.

Special coverages would possibly provide coverage for risks of direct physical loss to eligible property.

These are only examples. Your coverage may differ so you should fully discuss your options with your insurance representative. It is very important to know what type of coverage you have on all your property.

## OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

Some property considerations include insuring for actual cash value or replacement cost. Actual cash value pays the cost to replace the property at the time of loss, reduced to reflect depreciation. Replacement cost pays the actual amount to replace the damaged property at the time of loss, with materials of like kind and quality, without deduction for depreciation. Payment is capped at the limit of insurance shown for that piece of property.

Co-insurance means you agree to insure your property for a minimum amount. If it is insured for a lower amount, the company pays only a percentage of the loss, determined by dividing the limit of insurance purchased by the amount that should have been purchased to comply with the minimum.

This would include such things as:

- Farm machinery and equipment. Coverage is typically provided for farm machinery and equipment, including tractors, combines, cotton pickers, hay rakes, and planters. It may also cover farm office equipment, portable irrigation equipment, portable fences and structures, as well as tools and supplies.
- Livestock. Coverage is available to cover livestock under your farm policy. It may cover death by accidental shooting or from being struck by a train or a vehicle. Farm policies do not provide coverage for losses caused by livestock disease or from old age or natural death. Farm policies typically provide a special limitation on the value of any one animal (higher limits may be available). Specialized coverage, known as Livestock Mortality, protects against livestock disease, old age, or death by natural causes. This usually requires your agent to acquire a separate policy from another insurer.
- Farm products. It's important to consider the causes of loss that apply to different items of farm personal property. For example, check your policy to determine if it covers grain stored in the open.

Most farm policies allow you to insure your farm personal property on either a scheduled or a blanket basis. Scheduled property is listed individually by item with a separate limit stated for each piece. Blanket coverage covers all farm personal property at the insured location other than those listed as "not covered". There may be some property subject to exclusions.

Other things to consider would be if you borrow farm equipment from a neighbor or you rent equipment seasonally. Check with your representative to see how it may be covered.

Does your policy consider rental reimbursement on farm equipment? An example may be if a piece of equipment is damaged in an accident. You only have so much time to get the crop planted or harvested so it may be necessary to rent equipment while yours is getting fixed or replaced.

What about newly acquired farm equipment and livestock? Review your policy to know what coverage limits there may be and any reporting requirements to have them included on your policy.

### FARM STRUCTURES

Your farm policy should cover loss or damage to buildings and structures used in your farming operations. This include barns, confinement facilities, dairy parlors, silos, portable buildings, pens, chutes and corral fencing, building materials intended to be used on farm buildings, private telephone and electric apparatus, and fixed irrigation equipment.

Equipment breakdown. Regardless of the cause of loss selected, many farm policies do not provide coverage for mechanical breakdown of the systems in your farm structures: milking parlors, ventilation systems, and other machinery subject to mechanical breakdown.

New construction. Check your policy for coverage on newly constructed farm structures. If you add a building, what do you need to do to be sure it is fully covered?

Growing crops are generally not covered in your farm policy. This is a specialized type of insurance which can be obtained from a certified crop insurance agent.

Cargo coverage is generally not covered under your farm policy. This is generally covered by the cargo carrier provider. However, some companies can provide some coverage of your own crop or poultry when you haul it in your vehicle to a grain elevator or processing facility.

Optional coverages one might look into with an insurance provider include:



Disruption of farm income. The base farm policy provides coverage for physical loss to your farm structures. If you have a covered loss which disrupts your income, this endorsement may help mitigate the resulting income loss.

Peak season endorsement. If your inventory of farm products fluctuates throughout the year, this endorsement allows you to indicate the periods when you have higher volumes on hand.

Temperature-sensitive Farm Personal Property. This endorsement broadens coverage on refrigerated farm products and supplies. These include damage caused by spoilage due to a change in temperature resulting from electrical interruption or mechanical or electrical breakdown of a refrigeration system.

There may be other optional coverages available and they may or may not be available by your insurance provider. They may also be identified by a different title. Again, sitting down and

talking with your provider is critical to getting the best risk coverage. It is recommended to have your insurance agent complete a walkthrough of your farm in order to ascertain your insurance needs.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN SELECTING A FARM INSURANCE COMPANY

While the premium cost is an important part of your insurance agent selection, quality service and adequate protection tailored to your needs are equally critical. Other factors to consider when choosing a reliable farm insurer include:

- Financial stability. A financially strong and stable insurer will serve you well long term. The A.M. Best Company is the nation's leading independent analyst of insurance company operations. You can find them at the following website: <http://www.ambest.com/>.
- Commitment to the agricultural market.
- Farm-related expertise. Look for a company that has highly experienced agronomists, property engineers, claim handlers, loss control resources, and professional farm underwriters.
- A local dependable agent. Working with an agent you know and trust is critical. Look for an agent who meets your farm insurance needs and can address your full range of financial protection through life insurance and investment products. A comment I have heard often is an agent that does not provide contact information for 24-hour service may not be the agent you want to work with.
- Product needs. Look for a company that offers coverage protection specifically tailored for your farming operation so you only pay for coverages you really need.

Insurance can be an important part of the risk management plan for your operation. There is more to your risk management coverage not discussed in this article. Don't forget your home and liability coverage. Take time to go over your business plan with your provider and see what they may be able to provide you that is the best fit for your operation. Remember, one insurance plan does not fit all operations and insurance providers are not all the same.

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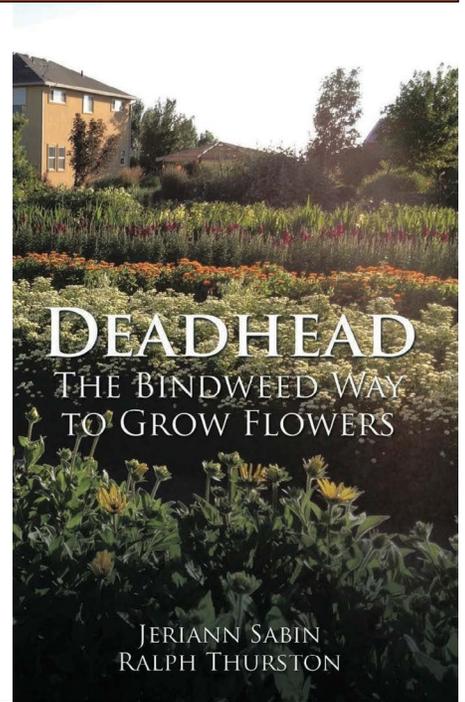
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# 5 TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR COMPANY'S LIMITED LIABILITY STATUS

## Brian Zlimen

Job site accidents, business deals gone bad, slip-and-falls. Business liability can come from a frightening range of events. Fortunately, there are many tools to help business owners protect their personal assets from business risk. One tool that should be a basic element of any business plan is using a limited liability business entity.

### Business Structures

Business owners have the ability to choose the structure their company will operate in. Business structures include sole proprietorships, general partnerships, LLCs, Corporations, and more. These structures can be divided into two groups: personal businesses and business entities.

Personal business structures involve one or more people doing business as themselves, whether under their own name or an assumed name. Examples include sole proprietorships and general partnerships. In this situation, the business and its owners operate as one, meaning that the owners' personal assets can be exposed to the business's liabilities.

By contrast, a business entity is a separate structure from its owners. It will have its own name, its own assets, and its own debts. When properly formed and maintained, these entities can serve as a shield between business liabilities and your personal assets. The most common types of business entities are corporations and Limited Liability Companies (LLCs).

### Five Steps That Can Help Maintain Limited Liability

If you are doing business or plan to do business using a business entity, there are steps that you should take to ensure that your company's liability barrier is as strong as possible.

First, be sure that the company's registration is current with your state's registering agency. Most states require business entities to file annual business renewals to keep the business registration active. These renewals are generally quick, easy, and either free or low-cost to file, so there's no excuse for losing your liability shield due to non-renewal.

Second, be sure that your business's finances are kept separate from your own. Every business entity should have its own tax ID number (EIN), and that number should be used for all of the company's financial transactions, including banking. The business should have its own bank account, and all business income and expenses should flow through that account. You must not deposit business funds into your personal account or pay business debts out of your personal accounts. Likewise, do not pay for personal expenses out of the company's accounts. By not keeping your finances separate when the business is operating, you run the risk of a court determining that those funds should not be separated when it's time to pay a business debt. Instead, if you need to infuse some

cash into the company, you should do so by transferring those funds from your personal accounts to the business's account, and then paying the expenses out of the business account. Likewise, if you wish to distribute funds from the company to its owner(s), you should do so by transferring from the company's account to the owner's personal account, then having the owner use those funds from his or her account.

Third, business entities must use registered business names only. When you create your company, you register your business's name (e.g., Sue's Garden Supplies, LLC). If you wish to use another name or any variation of that name (including "Sue's Garden Supplies" without the LLC tag), you need to register that name or variation with your state agency as an assumed name or d/b/a. Failure to do so can lead to being treated as a sole proprietor or general partnership for all transactions conducted under the unregistered name.

Fourth, each state has requirements for records that must be kept by businesses registered in that state. For corporations, these requirements tend to be fairly detailed and include copies of the business's formation documents (articles, bylaws, etc.), meeting minutes, corporate resolutions, stock ledgers, financial statements, and more. LLC laws vary greatly from state to state, but generally require at least the business's formation documents to be kept on file. Some states



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allow business entities to modify record-keeping requirements in the company's bylaws or operating agreement, so be sure to check your state's laws for specific requirements.

Fifth, be sure to use written agreements and invoices on all jobs and sales. These documents should make it clear that the customer is dealing with your business, rather than you personally and gives you the opportunity to add other liability limitations through your terms and conditions.

## Yes, You Still Need Insurance

One question that I get asked frequently is whether a limited liability entity needs to have insurance. The answer is an absolute "YES." Your business entity status should be your last line of defense against liability; a commercial general liability (CGL) or other insurance policy should be your

first. In addition to covering your business for most types of liabilities that may be incurred, most policies include provisions requiring your insurer to defend the business against claims. By providing a defense, the insurer can save your company money by preventing claims from becoming liabilities in the first place.

## Get to (Paper) Work

With a new season starting, now is a great time to review your business structure and practices to ensure that you're maximizing your personal liability protection. Take a moment to get familiar with your state's business entity requirements and make sure that your business is up to speed. If you need assistance, contact a business attorney licensed in your state who can advise you on the laws and regulations that affect your business.

This article provides general information on business matters and should not be relied upon as legal advice. An attorney licensed in your state must analyze all relevant facts and apply them to your state's law to any matter before legal advice can be given. If you would like more information regarding business law, collections, or other legal matters, please contact Zlmen & McGuiness, PLLC at 651-331-6500 or [info@zmattorneys.com](mailto:info@zmattorneys.com).

*Bryan Zlmen is one of the founding partners of Zlmen & McGuiness, PLLC. His law practice focuses on assisting Green Industry businesses and their owners.*

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# Timing Flowers

## for Weddings

Sylvia van Oort, Sylvia's Plant Place

Sitting here by the fire surrounded by seed catalogues, as usual trying to resist the lure of too many new varieties and colours, it seems like a good time of year to reflect on timing. We grow a lot of varieties in a relatively short season and attempt to extend it at both ends with hoopouses and early branches and bulbs. We still really have to get it right for the main 16 weeks in the middle!

Wedding flowers make up 25% to 40% of our revenue so getting the timing right is pretty important. About 20 years ago a good friend came to me with an idea: she had two children being married that July, and wondered whether I would plant a few rows of flowers in my then large vegetable garden, to cut from for the celebrations. It sounded like a great challenge and it was the beginning of my ever-growing cut flower business, innocently started with two little rows and now about 3 acres of perennials, woodies, bulbs, annuals, and

greenhouses. It actually turned out very nice that first summer, and not without surprises, something that I have kept in mind ever since.

I suppose the most important thing to know when you are starting out is what blooms when naturally in your area, even before you have an established garden. What would you find in the gardens, fields, and ditches around you during the different weeks and months of the year?

I always keep the above in mind when meeting with couples. Regardless of their colour scheme or theme, we must work with what is or can be made available on their wedding date. My initial consultations ideally take place at least 3 months, and sometimes a year or more, before the actual wedding date. We look at pictures and discuss colours and designs, and if there is something to see in the fields we take a walk outside. Some people need reassurance that the farm is established and

“legit” before booking. I like to send brides home with something small every time, even if it is only bunch of pussy willows.

The best scenario is if they are here on or around their date a year ahead of time, so we can make an actual test bouquet of what will most likely be in bloom for them. The timing definitely starts during the initial consultation, for example: “Sorry, dear, peonies are not a September flower, but this is what dahlias look like!”

Many of you may have noticed that (young) brides for the most part have little or no experience with flowers and are truly grateful if you sound like you know what you are talking about. They usually are greatly influenced by trends and/or what friends or acquaintances have done. There are so many decisions to be made, and I suppose we local flower growers must also see ourselves as taking on an educating role as to what it entails to use locally grown flowers for one's wedding.

Although it takes a lot of time, I always book another consultation with the couple, ideally on the Monday or Tuesday right before the wedding date. For this I encourage the couple to invite whomever they would like to join them in their walk through the fields to “pick” their actual flowers. I explain that not only is it a wonderful experience but we may at that point encounter some of those famous “surprises” and add something really cool at the last minute! At this point I always explain that circumstances beyond our control may cause certain flowers to not be available, and we might have to make some substitutions. Most brides are fine with this as it is part of the “local” experience.

Over the years the walk-through has become a lovely tradition, and we have had up to 10 people in the field at any one time: couples, bridesmaids, mothers, visiting relatives, and even babies.

I have learned my lesson, and now I make a point of sitting down the minute the bride leaves the initial consultation, no matter how busy I am, and make notes of all the flowers she liked, the containers we talked about, and just my general sense of her expectations. The last few years I have tried to have someone who works with me join in on the consultations, as two sets of ears are very valuable for picking up details. After the walk through the fields I make detailed lists of the flowers that were picked out for the bride, bridesmaids, bouts, etc. For the larger containers we are not as specific. Most couples are fine with the guaranteed size, container, style, and colour we will use.

I do at this point keep the size of their vehicle in mind if the flowers are being picked up. Initially I was so scared of not being able to come up with the goods at the right time. Maybe it’s a combination of age and experience, but through careful planning you can be sure that every bride will be satisfied!



These are my notes on timing:

- Always sell flowers you know are available for their date.
- Get organized well before the spring rush hits, and write things on calendars.
- Plan on more than you need for the wedding. You can always add the extras to your market or wholesale bouquets.
- Time annuals to be started from seed with an extra two weeks, and stagger seeding to make sure you won’t be caught out by unforeseen weather.
- Try lots of new varieties every year—see “surprises” above—and keep careful notes on when they were seeded, planted out, and started to produce.
- Keep notes on when perennials are in bloom. In my garden at least, those dates are pretty steady, even in exceptionally warm springs.
- Know and grow the trendy flowers and colors; this is important for those last-minute wedding bookings.
- Experiment a lot with holding blooms such as lilies in bud. The perfect time to bring flowers out into room temperature depends on situation and variety and time of year.
- Keep varieties in mind when planting fall bulbs for spring weddings. I like to grow lily-flowering tulips, but these could be too late for early May.
- If I need a certain colour of tulips, I will plant 2 or 3 different types of, say, light pink varieties, just to be sure there will be lots! I grow all my tulips in the ground and pull them in bud. I hold tulips and daffs for up to several weeks in bud in the fridge, dry wrapped in newspaper.
- There is much manipulation possible for woodies with cold storage in bud and timing the blooms on demand. They won’t necessarily last as long, but if they

last the wedding day you're laughing. Last year, we had a bride set on apple blossoms. All our trees started to bloom really early, so we picked in bud two weeks before the wedding, kept them at 33 degrees in the cooler, and they were beautiful on her (hot) day in late May. I have also stored hydrangeas and lilacs for up to two weeks in the cooler. I have forced forsythia in a crazy cold March in my bathtub by running the hot shower on the branches a couple of times a day. Not to be recommended if you share a bathroom with many others! Oh, the lengths we flower farmers go to.

- For late summer and fall weddings, I rely heavily on my hoopouses, once again putting in more than I need, although one could go overboard on this. For example: I planted 12 tithonia (Mexican sunflower) plants inside for a late September wedding last year, and they grew 6 feet tall with hundreds more blooms than we needed. Two plants would have more than done the job! Oh well, it was calming spending early mornings deadheading those "trees", and pretty spectacular to show the bride on her walk-through day. Plus it was pouring rain that day, so we spent quite a bit of quality time among the tithonia!
- Know your neighbours' and your friends' gardens; when you're really stuck it is important to be able to source even a few blooms to make it happen.
- Always do your morning walk through the fields with weddings in mind, and make sure harvesters know which are the special flowers that are being saved for which date. We do quite a bit of pinching and deadheading with that in mind.
- If all else fails, call your local wholesaler or florist!



I had the idea for this article because the question I am most often asked by anybody who knows about my business is: "How in the world can you give brides the flowers they want right in time for their wedding day?"

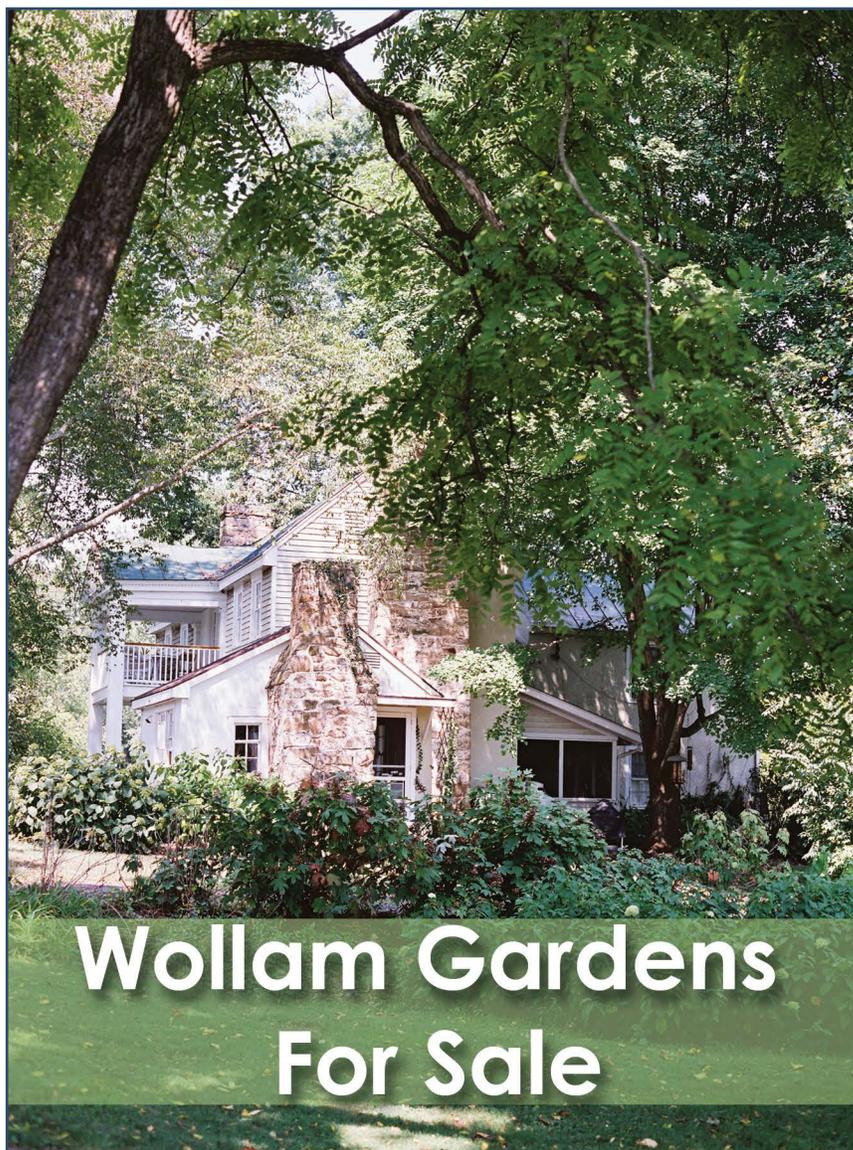
The above answer is not a short one, but not an impossible one either.

I love growing flowers, I love making brides happy with my flowers, and I hope to do it for many years to come.

---

*Sylvia Van Oort is owner of Sylvia's Plant Place, Perth, Ontario.  
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# Interest in Interns High Among ASCFG Members

John Dole and Rebecca Dunning  
North Carolina State University

*Businesses that host student interns can gain enthusiastic help while providing valuable hands-on experience to those soon to enter the industry.*

Are you thinking about offering an internship? If so, you are in good company. Last year we surveyed the 850 members of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers about internships. Of the 72 responses, 25% already offered internships and an additional 54% were thinking of starting to offer one (Table 1). North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington had the most respondents to the survey, with 27 states represented.

**Table 1. Companies or institutions offering internships**

QUESTION	RESPONSES	
	No.	%
Currently have internships.	18	25
Don't offer an internship, but are thinking about offering one.	39	54
Don't offer an internship and do not have an interest in offering one at this time.	15	21

Fifty-six percent of businesses with internships offer them during multiple seasons of the year, and another 42% do so primarily during the summer season (Table 2). Most businesses with interns have 1-2 per year (66%). Another 25% had 3 to 4 interns per year and one business reported up to 30 interns per year. Wages range from minimum wage to \$15/hour and the provision of benefits differs widely, from none to housing, classes, workshops, field trips, and for at least one business, one week paid vacation. Table 3 lists the responses to give you an idea of what various businesses are providing.

Not surprisingly, most of the respondents were cut flower producers selling retail or wholesale (Tables 4 and 5). The diversity of the ASCFG membership was represented by a broad range of crops and business models. Forty percent of all respondents had sales of \$50,000 or less, while five respondents had sales or income of \$10 million or higher. Of the 21% of businesses responding that they did not have an interest in offering internships, all had sales of \$100,000 or less.

During the winter and spring we receive many requests from businesses for interns. Considering the drop in student numbers at many horticulture programs, we wondered how many businesses were having difficulty getting enough interns. Of those businesses in the survey that currently offer internships, the majority were able to get enough applicants to fill their positions. However, about one-fourth of businesses offering internships were not able to get enough applicants. This topic would be a great one for the ASCFG Bulletin Board, where members could discuss what works for them in terms of finding interns.

**Table 2. Season(s) during which internships are typically provided.**

QUESTION	RESPONSES	
	No.	%
Primarily Summer	22	42
Primarily Fall	1	2
Primarily Winter	0	0
Primarily Spring	5	10
Multiple seasons or year round internships	18	34
Multiple internships take place at different times of the year	6	12

**Offering an Internship.** From our experience here at NC State University, any position can count as an internship for a student as long as it provides a broad range of experiences within your company. Obviously, the type of experiences will vary with the size and nature of the company. Management and decision-making experiences should be included in the internship as much as possible. It is important to be upfront with interns about what you can offer. If an intern wants retail experience and you only grow wholesale, he or she obviously will not get any retail experience. We also hope the student will do more than just pull or spray for weeds for 12 weeks as that would provide relatively little additional educational experience. In addition, we hope you will pay the students sufficiently well that they can save some money for school (if the student is so inclined!). Students seem to be most concerned with where they might live during the internship. Anything your organization can do to facilitate housing for the intern (provide or help find) will likely increase the number and experience level of the applicants.

**Writing an Internship or Job Announcement.**

If you have not created an internship before, the announcement should contain the following:

- Name of business
- Contact information
- Desired dates of employment
- Duties of position
- Location of position
- Desired qualifications (may be minimal for basic positions)
- Salary
- Any perks that you might be able to provide such as assistance with housing.

As mentioned previously, housing can be a major limitation for students. You don't necessarily need to provide the housing, but provide information that, hopefully, will help a student easily find housing.

Post the announcement on your web site and send it to local schools (NC State maintains a list of internships and would be happy to post yours). Another avenue is to post it to Craig's list, especially when trying to get local interns. Other websites you may want to use are the ATTRA site (<https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/internships/>), which is especially good for sustainable ag, and Ecojobs (<http://www.ecojobs.com/environmental-internships.htm>), which focuses on environmental science. The ASCFG also hosts an "Interns and Apprenticeships" page on its web site.

**Table 3. Average wage and benefits for internships offered by respondents**

- Minimum wage (3 responses)
- Minimum wage and a place to live
- Pending skill level & experience: minimum to \$10+
- \$8/hr, seminars, field trips, work with florists
- \$8/hr
- \$8.00/hr, no benefits
- \$8/hr + FICA
- If interns proved valuable, would pay \$8-\$12
- Depends on if we provide housing, which is limited, \$8-12/hr
- \$9/hr
- \$9/hr to start, one week paid vacation in early August
- Mostly student volunteers or students that only work a few hours a week with class schedules at \$9/hr
- \$10
- \$10/hr plus \$100 month stipend due to no on farm housing. We do a weekly class that provides more detailed growing information, 8 sessions.
- \$10/hr, lodging
- \$10, plus meals and boarding
- \$10-12/hr (2 responses)
- \$12/hr
- \$12-20/hr depending on experience
- \$13-15/hr, housing a possibility
- \$15/hr, don't know benefit rates
- Depends, some university students need the experience more than the wage. Minimum most likely.
- No pay, provide food and course credit
- Interns are provided living accommodations in our farmhouse, all food, and a \$30 a day stipend.
- Room, board and \$250 stipend
- Undetermined. Pay at end of season depends on revenues. No benefits
- Room, some board, \$800/mo for ~40 hrs week of work, classes, workshops, fieldtrips
- We are thinking of offering housing and a wage or a percentage
- Depends on the job but competitive hourly
- TBD, but we would have housing available onsite
- NA (2 responses)

**Table 4. Crop types grown or services provided by respondents (multiple responses allowed)**

QUESTION	RESPONSES	
	No.	%
Fruits and/or vegetables	13	19
Nursery crops	3	4
Landscaping	2	3
Public gardens	3	4
Cut flowers	60	87
Greenhouse, garden center, other floriculture operation	8	12
Others	16	23



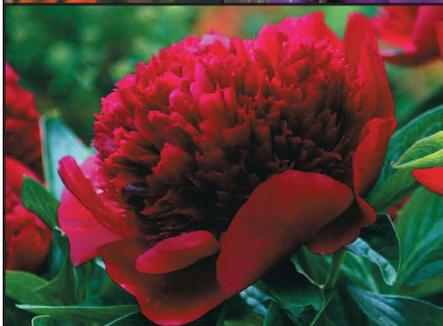
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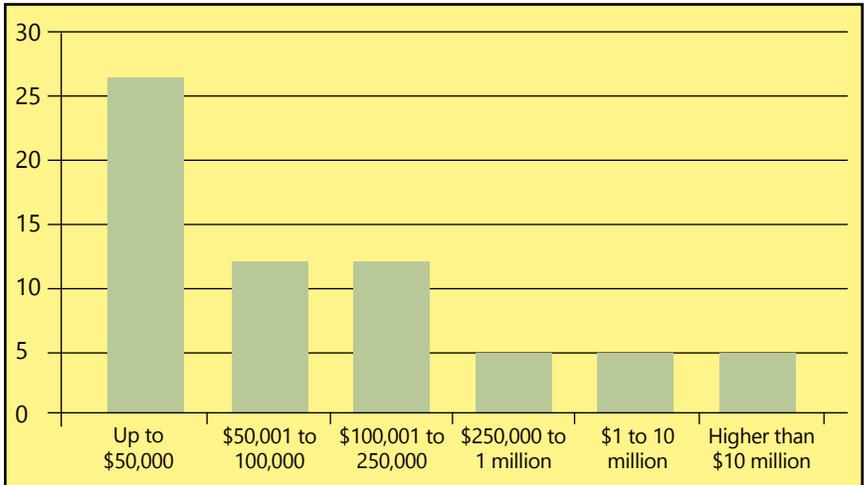
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**Table 5. Type of business of respondents**

QUESTION	RESPONSES	
	No.	%
Mostly production, with crops sold direct retail	18	26
Mostly production, with crops sold to processors, wholesalers, retailers, landscapers, community groups, etc.	30	43
Mostly post production, i.e. processor, wholesaler, retailer	1	2
Mostly a supplier to one or more horticulture industries	2	3
Mostly a public garden	2	3
Mostly a landscaper or landscape design	2	3
Other	14	20

**Table 6. Estimated annual gross sales (if a private business) or annual operating budget (if a non-profit) of the respondents.**



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<https://youtu.be/PEXs9UUgqqg>

# ASCFG Grower Grant Report

Research Supported by an ASCFG Grower Grant

## Blogging 101 – Sharing Peony Production Information

Rita Jo Shoultz, Alaska Perfect Peony

Rita Jo Shoultz of Alaska Perfect Peony was awarded a Grower Grant for the creation of a new section on her existing web site, with the intention of educating growers specifically in the production and marketing of cut peonies, and save them from making costly mistakes. This information is now found in the blog at [www.alaskaperfectpeony.com](http://www.alaskaperfectpeony.com) which is updated weekly.

I don't need to tell you social media marketing is it these days. Every article you read talks about online sales out-distancing in-store sales, 70% of the millennials are purchasing from their mobile devices, and smart phones are now a staple in life along with designer coffees. If you want to be successful in any market, you must participate in social media. How you go about doing that is your only choice, not whether or not you participate.

I envy the Millennials growing up with a computer as their first "toy". They are not intimidated by Instagram, Twitter, podcasts, or any of the social media programs. My six-year-old great-granddaughter is already a whiz and has absolutely no trepidation or reservations. The joke about asking your grandkids for help is really no joke.

The marvelous part about all this is when you do overcome your fears and do step into this new world, there are no limits. While it's true you need to constantly keep your postings fresh, some parts can stay the same for a couple of years. Your basic web site, once mobile responsive, has parts that can have historic value, though that lasts probably only a few years.

Blogging with how-tos can be a way to establish yourself as an expert in your field and a great way to draw attention to your company. I compare how-to blogging similar to writing a book with an index and chapters. I make an outline for a series before I write one word. I know fresh postings are a must. I was thrilled to learn about scheduling: I can write all my social media articles in one morning, and schedule them to be posted throughout that month during our non-harvesting months. During our shipping season, I post more often and keep more current. The main thing is to keep posting throughout the year.

Writing is an art, and you need motivation and the "mood". When the mood hits me, I start writing. I try to keep blogs around 500 words, always including a few pictures. It's okay to repost something another expert has posted. There are hundreds of articles about how to write a blog. Take a minute (or a couple of hours) and start searching.

Once you write your blog, not only will it be a part of your site, you can post it simultaneously on all your other social media outlets. When we asked the ASCFG for a small Grower Grant to explore posting how-tos on our web site, I had no clue how to get started. But once I started writing about what I do every day, I started building up my confidence.

When we've finished our how-tos for this series and established ourselves as experts, our next series of blogs will be targeted for marketing. I've already started the first blog focusing on what to do when your box of peonies arrives via Fed Ex.

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Blog

**Starting a new farm: Irrigation Continued**  
March 21st, 2016

Keeping your peony fields irrigated is critical for growing large flowers. You probably would not lose all your plants if you don't water, but you'd have less than acceptable flowers and the plant itself would suffer, perhaps for more than one season. Therefore another consideration about whether you can be a peony grower is, where ... + read more

**Starting a new farm: Laying out Your Fields – Irrigation**  
March 14th, 2016

We run T-Tape on both sides of each raised row for irrigation and fertigation. More on all the hook-ups later, but for now you need to lay out the T-Tape throughout the field. Check with Drip Works. These guys will work with you to lay out exactly what you need for irrigating your fields from ... + read more

Recent Posts

- Irrigation Continued
- Laying out Your Fields – Irrigation
- Laying out your field continued
- Laying Out Your Fields Single or Double Rows
- Soil Preparation in Fields

Archives

- March 2016
- February 2016

Categories

- Starting a new farm

<http://www.alaskaperfectpeony.com/blog>

## NORTHEAST

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



### Diana Doll

StrayCat Flower Farm  
diana@straycatflowerfarm.com

“Everybody always *talks* about the weather, but nobody ever *does* anything about it!”

By the time you’re reading this, we’ll all have a better sense of how this “non-winter” has affected our spring season, if at all. Will the lack of snow cover have adverse effects on our perennial crops? Are deer having picnics as they cavort through the uncovered fields? How will the lack of snow melt runoff affect our spring-flowering shrubs? What about those bulbs that are already poking through the ground—did they bloom before your markets opened, or did March come in like a lamb and then return to “normal” to freeze them solid? Same goes for flowering shrubs—what did they make of this odd winter weather? And, when was the last time you’ve saw a winter like this one?

I imagine some crops might be suffering, while others will bounce back as if winter actually did happen. I’d like to think it’s all even in the end; a bad year for one crop might be balanced by a bumper year for another.



That’s certainly true for us this winter. The high temperatures have meant less propane used to keep the greenhouse minimally heated, and we’re seeing happy ranunculus and anemones blooming their pretty little heads off, while the tulips and narcissus do not like the swings in greenhouse temperature

at all. They’re confused. It’s 35 degrees at night and then 70 degrees on a sunny day. Too many degrees of separation for them to produce reliably—they want a steady 55 degrees. I’m feeling haunted by that Chiffon margarine ad from the 70s: It’s not nice to fool Mother Nature.

One nice thing about the seasonal shift in workload is the time winter affords us to get in touch with wider industry liaisons and pick their brains about all those questions that pile

up during the growing season. I contacted Gloeckner’s northeast rep, David Toohey, about winter production, low-watt LED lighting, and organic seeds and liners sources. He was quick to respond and has been great at keeping the conversation going.

I’ve heard from a few other “Nor-easters” (an infrequent but infamous weather pattern off the Atlantic Ocean that slams into New England and Atlantic Canada every now and then—my definition) about recent connections they’ve made as well. A group of folks in the Hudson Valley have been connecting with Cornell Cooperative Extension to arrange site visits and to hone in on some localized issues they’re encountering, for one. I think we get a lot of leverage when approaching Extension (or any other organization) by identifying ourselves as a group of growers from the ASCFG.

Bailey Hale of Ardelia Farm coordinated with Geo Seed and Gro ‘n Sell for certain lisianthus varieties bred by Sakata, but shown only on their European and Japanese sites. Geo agreed to bring the seed in only if their minimum could be met, so he contacted Gro ‘n Sell to see if they would be willing to grow plugs for a group order. Success! 325 plug trays were special-ordered and those luscious lissies will be hitting the streets this summer.

There’s been a flurry of posts about a group order of ageratum ‘Blue Sensation’ seeds on the Bulletin Board lately. The source is Muller Seeds (Germany/Netherlands), a seed-breeding company that also sources from breeders all over the world. Some folks simply ask their stateside company (in this case Gloeckner) if they can get such seeds for them; others report on being able to order through a Muller rep, as long as the minimum is reached. If one attempt to source a specialty cut flower seed (or plug) doesn’t pan out, there are other avenues to try, and the Bulletin Board is such a great resource for tapping into conversations like these.



Ageratum ‘Blue Sensation’

And then there’s the recurring topic about the need for more organic seed sources, as well as bulbs, plugs, and plants. The veggie industry paved the way by creating a demand for organic producers, and the flower industry is hankering for the same. Generally speaking, if growers document that they attempted to find certified organic producers but came up short, they are allowed to use “conventional” (non-organic) sources without jeopardizing their certification.

How about we have a panel of several certifying agencies at upcoming ASCFG meetings to hear about what growers are looking for? Can certifiers work (with growers and producers) toward building a list of approved sources for growers to buy

from? How and why do the requirements vary by state and by certifying agency? Canadian rules don't allow flower seed to be certified, because "flowers aren't an edible product", although they can be labeled "organic". In the U.S., growers shouldn't use the word "organic" in their marketing unless they have the stamp of certification. Lots of questions, lots of answers?

## MID-ATLANTIC

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



**Lisa Ziegler**

The Gardener's Workshop  
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While everyone is busy planning their season I wanted to give a big ol' plug for the simple annual. Annuals can have a big impact on your bottom line. They will keep you in blooms that can float a florist and bouquet business and make you an instant flower farmer. And all this with little investment. So, this is my story of annuals on a flower farm.



Growing annuals means getting the most blooms from every square foot.

In the beginning of my farming career, I naturally gravitated towards annual flowers. I had virtually no start-up funds, so I needed to find a way to produce as many flowers as quickly as possible. Enter annual flower seeds.

At first I searched out those seeds that met my criteria: easy to start because I was totally inexperienced, strong growers outdoors in a garden, and of course a good cut flower. Once

I figured out how to gather this information, I was overcome with choices.

Almost overnight I went from having no flowers to being on my way to producing lots of flowers. This was about as instant gratification as you are going to get in a garden, and for very little investment.



There is no shortage of beautiful, easy-to-grow annuals to choose from.

Another amazing result of planting annuals, they produce for only one season. So after a season of harvesting, you get to mow them down along with the weeds that you lost control of and can start over! This may sound like more work than perennials, but I challenge you to consider the value of annuals.

Most annuals produce for many weeks or even a whole season versus a shorter window of harvest with most perennials. Also to be considered is the level of maintenance required to keep perennials weeded year round, and lifted and divided every three years to keep them producing.

Annuals can be a strong asset for those with limited space like me. They are great for minimizing the amount of field space to maintain while maximizing the production. Their



Endless selections of celosias.

shorter life span means that you regularly have a clean slate to try new things. What’s more, you are able to ditch last year’s mistakes with few repercussions.

Annuals can allow 2-3 plantings in the same bed in a year. This trait really ramps up the \$\$ per square foot your field can yield. We plant a bed of sunflower transplants (1280) a week for 26 weeks. We start off with designated beds for sunflower planting, but 6 weeks into our season we start using beds as they come available when a crop ends. Sunflowers make for quick cash in just 40 days or so of garden time. This allows enough time for yet another planting in the same bed to follow.

I’m not implying annuals are better than perennials. I am merely suggesting that they can and should play a very strong role on a flower farm. I have come to believe that they are the key to jump-starting a commercial flower farm.



Our field is in a constant teardown and replant mode.

My urban farm’s total garden production area is one and a half acres. I have no hoopouses or greenhouses. Most of the area is in annual production; I’ve devoted a little less than a quarter-acre of it to permanent plantings. I have planted peonies, tuberose, and dahlias. All three of these have proven worthy in our markets to live in precious garden space year round.

Outside of our garden space, there are other permanent plantings: the hydrangea grove, the 150-foot hedge of pussy willow, and a 450-foot planting of native trees, shrubs and pollinator perennials. All of these benefit and are natural companions to annuals.

The hydrangea production is definitely a benefit. Hydrangea blooms serve as filler, as stand-alone fresh bouquets, and as a dried product. Pussy willow for us creates a quick-growing summer screen. Deer don’t eat it and we harvest it during the winter to generate a little pop of cash. Our native border installed in 2015 won’t be harvested; its role is to be a windbreak and a habitat for native creatures. It is growing into a screen that has already proven to be highly beneficial.



Tender and hardy annuals tend to overlap in production in June and July which really creates abundance.

Pushing the limits of and making the most of tender and hardy annuals can have your farming operation producing full force in just a season. Having the timing and production in line keeps the flowers coming on strong from the field for three continuous seasons.

On our little farm, this all seems to work together for the overall good. Annuals are our cash cows, and the perennials and woodies are nice little unexpected boosts.

Annuals—as welcome as flowers in April!



Speaking of cash cows, marigolds and sunflowers are in demand every week we have them.

## SOUTHEAST

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



### Tanis Clifton

Happy Trails Flower Farm  
cliftonchiro1@gmail.com

I am constantly amazed at the diversity of members in the ASCFG. You are bound to find someone in this amazing group who is likely in the same boat as you are, or has been there. You can count your lucky stars that you potentially have access to experts in every facet of the floral world, just by being a member. Our membership is comprised of beginning farmers, veteran farmers, backyard gardeners, floral wholesalers, florists, educators, event planners, plant breeders, plant material distributors, researchers, nurserymen, seed suppliers and more. You should take it upon yourself and make an effort to make contacts and show interest, and you will find this membership to be very open, generous and happy to share. Even those with years in this field have opportunities to learn here. I have heard from many of our Southeastern members and am passing along some really great information to share with you. Take this opportunity to learn from their feedback.

### Sue Ellen Claggett, Petal Pushers Flower Farm, Princeton, Kentucky

“I have been growing cut flowers since 2002, have tried it all: farmers’ market, subscription, etc. have settled on selling to florists for about eight years now. I sell to twelve florists and do a lot of traveling as I cover a lot of small towns. I get so nervous this time of year because I have such grandiose plans, ordering way more seeds than I ever use, so many plugs I think I’ll never get them all planted, and on and on. Sitting here in my chair I know I can do it all! I’m 65 and have just my dear hubby to help.



“I am so in love right now with scented geraniums and keep trying many different varieties. I would be so happy just growing foliage and grasses! The frustrating part for me is once the

season gets going there is no time to do anything except keep up with the flower farm. We are planning a trip with our grown kids in July to Costa Rica and I am already worrying about the watering of plants which at this point are still in the seed packs! It is so all consuming and leaves little time for other things. I simply cannot find a good balance. I continue to sell evergreens until middle of December.”

### Mary Frances Brosemer, Brosemer Farm, Huntsville, Alabama

Mary Frances suggests a great way to increase your cut flower shrubbery is by taking cuttings. In February, she takes eight-inch cuttings of hydrangeas and pussy willows from her existing plants, and roots them. Over the years she has attempted many methods but has found one that has given her almost 100% results. She



puts about 3-4” of potting soil in a very large pot (15+ gallon tree pot). She adds 2-3” of sand, and tops that with another 3-4” of potting soil. She dips each cutting in rooting hormone, then sticks them into the soil so that the ends of the cuttings reach the sand level. She says the soil on top keeps the cuttings evenly moist. Placing these pots under a shade tree and watering very frequently has given her great results. She is able to get about 50 cuttings in each pot using this method. Sometime between July and September she repots the rooted cuttings into individual pots. These will then be planted in the field in the fall. Last year she added 250 hydrangeas to her existing stock and continues this process every year. She cautions, however, that this process is not allowed with patented and trademarked plant varieties. We are fortunate here in the South that almost everyone’s Grandma has an old hydrangea that we can take cuttings from.

### Betsy Webster, Mt Ulla Gardens, Mt. Ulla, North Carolina —ASCFG member since 1990!

“After 25 years I am retired from growing. I still cut and sell what happens to bloom in my garden. I am turning my two-acre annual field into a wildflower meadow. The rows of woodies are still productive. I sold pussy willows for Valentine’s Day to the flower shops I used to see weekly. Our farm should continue to bloom for many more years. The old shrubs and perennials beds are still productive if I want to go out selling.”

**Annette McGuffey, A Country Rose, Tallahassee, Florida**



“I have been a florist for over 30 years. Three years ago after Valentine’s Day I treated myself to a tiller. I planted a veggie garden to include one row of zinnias. The veggies all died; however I cut on that small row of zinnias for months. I got hooked.

“I love the ASCFG; I just need to utilize it more. I am in zone 8b and very close to 9 in north Florida. I grow just for my flower shop. The

biggest issue I have is knowing what to plant and when. The next is why some of my plants won’t bloom. I did finally realize a soil test is a must so I have sent that off last week. (I guess that would be my aha moment.) I have just read Lisa Ziegler’s *Cool Flowers* too—can’t wait until fall to plant all those cool flowers. I have had a lot of trial and error. Way too much error.”

**Stan and Kathy Fitts, Reeves Floral Products, Woodstock, Georgia**

“I’ve been in the flower business all my life—fortunate for my family. Unfortunately for the local grower, I’m one of those guys who buys flowers from South America, Holland, and Canada, and sells to flowers shops and event folks. It wasn’t until about a year ago that I really started to see what could be grown locally. My wife and I have always grown quite a bit of stuff but mainly for our own enjoyment and use.

“It wasn’t until we decided to try to grow and sell locally that we were given the Association’s information by a supplier. I was asking questions when she said “The first thing you need to do is join the ASCFG”. I said “Yes, ma’am!” Once I looked you guys up and joined I couldn’t stop researching growing flowers. From there I started to truly understand what the local flower farmer could mean, as distributors like us are somewhat “frowned” upon. We are so excited to get this “off the ground”, so to speak, and have really been educated in the last several months on local growing. Just because you’ve been around flowers all your life doesn’t mean you know “Jack” about growing them, as I soon found out!

“Maybe I’m trying to do too much at one time but with running another company while trying to get this started I fall asleep most night with some book on growing or my iPad on my face from reading the posts on the ASCFG website.

“I have also contemplated trying to find someone in our area with the desire to farm but who doesn’t have the resources quite yet to go into business for themselves. I thought if someone had the education they could fine-tune their skills while furthering their knowledge in helping us figure out what we’re doing. I’ve contacted a few schools but with no success.”

**Teresa Biagi, Hazelfield Farm, Worthville, Kentucky**

“Things are coming on quickly here at the farm. Hellebores are blooming, along with witch hazel and some forsythia I forced for a flower arranging class at our local library. My orchids are blooming, and I will cut peaches and some magnolia to force.



“One of my favorite new things, which I learned about at the ASCFG meeting last March in Athens, was a wreath machine. I usually made about a hundred wreaths by hand for the holiday season, but the machine over-doubled my output and saved my hands and wrists! It paid for itself the first day of use. Thanks for that class!

“I turned over my website and wedding coordination work to my daughter this past year and having her do that has freed up my time for planting, cutting and arranging—my favorite jobs! We have a lot more weddings booked for this time of year than ever before, and I credit social media advertising for that. We have also teamed up with nearby Idlewild Butterfly Farm to design some fantastic creations for butterfly releases at weddings and events, including large netted spheres with arrangements and/or plants in the bottom.

“We continue to add about 100 peony plants per year to our farm and never seem to have enough. We store them through June for our brides, and it is really nice to have them packed with the bride’s name on the box, and know we can just pull them from the cooler a few days before the wedding and everything is ready to go.

“We only sell flowers only for weddings, parties, and farmers’ markets. We are a family farm and have found over the years that keeping a bunch of other people employed is just not our thing, and not profitable for us. I still can’t figure how others can sell a bunch of flowers to a supermarket at \$8 wholesale and make any profit at that. They must have a sharper pencil than I!

“I started growing flowers for resale over 25 years ago and have come a very long way since then, and have seen such a great and encouraging movement for local flowers in the last 10 or so years here in Kentucky.”

Hope you enjoyed hearing about several members in the South. I bet you caught yourself relating to lots of those comments. Have a fantastic season.

## NORTH AND CENTRAL

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



### **Mimo Davis Duschack**

Urban Buds City Grown Flowers  
citygrownflowers@gmail.com

Start your engines, the season has arrived! Seed catalogs start gathering dust on the shelf from the plumes of soil as we frantically plant all those seedlings that were once sparkles on a page that caught our eye. Now we let the flowers do their thing while we kick into high gear, getting our buyers pumped up and excited about the amazing blooms coming their way. Most farmers I know love growing flowers but view selling them as a necessary evil, and one of their least favorite jobs. I have embraced selling the flowers as much as growing them. I knew right off the bat that I’m a people person so it makes sense for me to look at direct sales marketing. If I wasn’t a people person or growing one specialty crop, wholesale might have been the perfect outlet for me. The only thing I like as much as growing cut flowers is talking about cut flowers, and that’s the key to our sales.

Recently I read an Instagram post that said “People do not buy goods and services. They buy relations, stories, and magic. Seth Godin.” This statement struck a chord with me because it expressed something I have never been able to put my finger on. I love selling our flowers because I love the relationships that I have with the folks who buy them! The freshness of our flowers, the unusual varieties, the local interest in local products, and our transparency about our sustainable growing practices are the “magic” and the flowers sell themselves. Sometimes it feels as though it

happens almost without me; they just need me to drive to the florist or the market. I bring the “story” and that builds the relationship.

The key to our successful marketing is a combination of offering a long-lasting, high quality product coupled with a compelling story. And we have an awesome story. Our urban flower farm is in the heart of St. Louis. It was a flower farm dating back to 1870, and is now restored to production. Two women, one black and one white, are farming in a city recently rocked by race-based violence. Our growing practices are eco-conscious, meaning we use sustainable practices on our farm such as planting cover crops that attract beneficial predatory insects. We are beekeepers, and the sensitive, threatened insects are our on-farm auditors, proving that methods support sensitive life. We view the farm as our experimental research station to broaden the palettes of flower products our customer can choose from. Oh, and did I mention most of our flowers cut and delivered within 12 hours?

Every single self-help book in the country says the key to building successful relationships is communication. The first step is building a relationship with our customers in person. We show a genuine interest in their business and lives. It sounds elementary, but it’s not! Consider keeping a note card about each of your florists in your delivery truck with important professional and personal information on them, if you can’t remember it all. We use Facebook and Instagram (this year we will be adding Pinterest) enabling our customers and florists to follow us over the winter (November to March, and we are closing the gap each year) so they have literally watched the crops grow. Participation builds anticipation! This also allows them to have a more in-depth view of all the work we do before arriving on their doorsteps with bountiful buckets of

*Miranda has a real knack for remembering market customers and facts about their lives. I hear her say things like, “Susan! How did the fava bean and carrot recipe turn out for your dinner party with the physicists from Azerbaijan?” That really happened! How she keeps it straight I’ll never know.*

flowers. Maybe this also helps explain the cost of the flowers, which are always higher than what they can get from our local wholesaler.

Last winter, we visited our florists, bearing gifts of a sample jar of our honey with a laminated list of our year flower availability identified by month. What a success! The unintended outcome was they loved the list, which hangs prominently on the walls of several shops with our logo on it big as day, and they requested that the honey be added to the weekly delivery route, with offers to sell our honey in their shops.

During the season we communicate with the florists with a weekly availability and price list which is emailed on the same day, and very close to the same time of day, each week. We deliver the flowers the same day each week, and the next step will be to deliver at the same time each week. The more dependable you are, the more dependent they become.

Last year we hosted a field day in the spring, and tour in the fall, for our florist and market customers. During these events we teach the group about farm operations. We enable them to be a part of our “team,” our network, so that they are as invested in the success of the farm almost as much as we are. Does this translate into more flower sales? Yes, it does.



Miranda greets every market customer by name.

Farmers’ markets are similar to florist sales, but it is much more physically and emotionally demanding. We have only four hours once a week to sell as many flowers as we can, and you must be a people person to do it! We develop personal relationships with the people who frequent our booth. Now I must admit that have a harder time with this one! Miranda has a real knack for

remembering customers and facts about their lives. I hear her say things like, “Susan! How did the fava bean and carrot recipe turn out for your dinner party with the physicists from Azerbaijan? ” That really happened! How she keeps it straight I’ll never know.

It really makes a world of difference when they realize you took a minute to remember and care. Some basic market booth etiquette really helps on those hot summer days when we are worn to the bone: 1.) No sitting in the booth. 2.) No eating in the booth. 3.) Greet people waiting in line. 4.) The only cell phone we are looking at is the Square card reader confirming the sale.

All of these create an atmosphere of attentiveness. Farmers’ markets are the perfect locations to advertise our wedding services. Wedding work is new to us and so far the bulk of our weddings has come from our market customers. This year we will print brochures and photos of our designs to keep at the booth to share with our prospective clients.

Finding bridal customers through our farmers’ market has been perfect, as it allows us to enter this “Brave New world” slowly, and at our own pace. We carefully select which brides we feel confident in our ability to facilitate her dream wedding. For example, if a bride requests garlands dangling from the ceiling, or out-of-season flowers, we are quick to give her a referral to one of our favorite florists who buys our flowers. It may sound crazy to turn down money, but we are clear about our current abilities and no money in the world is worth the incredible stress that would cause in our lives. At this point, anyway, but I don’t see that changing any time soon!

Florists and market customers are hungry for information about plants and gardening. When I first started in this business 25 years ago I was shocked by how little florists really know about the care of their flowers. We are constantly finding ourselves educating our peeps about this. They are so appreciative of the information and that puts us in the “Experts in Our Field” category in their mind’s eye. Does all this translate into more flower sells? Yes it does!

This also helps get paid speaking engagements at conferences and education events. This past winter we presented to seven different groups in the span of two months. These organizations included organic farmers, members of the state nurserymen association, and beginning farmers. The topic is usually cut flower production, but we also present on business planning, beekeeping, and the impending changes to the urban agriculture legislation in St Louis. Both Miranda and I are educators so this is a natural fit for us, it helps promote sustainable farming, and gets us even more involved in the community. What can you do this season to build better relationships with your customers?

I wanted to give you an update as promised from last *Quarterly*. The oats cover crop indeed winter killed, and the photo is the bachelor buttons growing up through the residue. This worked really well, and I love the idea of not having to get in there with our stirrup hoe! Every time I can save on labor just puts more money in our pockets.



Bachelor buttons grow up through a mulch of oat cover crop.

## SOUTH AND CENTRAL

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



### Rita Anders

Cuts of Color  
ritajanders@cvctx.com

We had some beautiful weather earlier this year; so perfect for growing. I'm pretty sure we broke every record here on the farm for most stems produced the first two months of the year. Endless sunshine has resulted in blooms, blooms, and more blooms.

This past December I contacted several growers within 90 miles of me and set up three grower get-togethers. I also traveled over to New Orleans to meet with another group. Our first group was with Mike Milligan of Prickly Pair Farm; Gretchen O'Neil, Petals Ink Floral; Joel and Kim Stearns of Nutty Brown Farm; and Erin Flynn of Green Gate Farms. We started the day off at Nutty Brown Farm, where we saw a great startup greenhouse and fill with cool-season annuals such as sweet peas, snaps, dianthus, and delphiniums. Outside, under magnificently constructed caterpillar tunnels, were ranunculus, anemone, and other spring annuals. This is Kim's first year and she is off to a great start. Kim did a joint order with another grower for fall-planted spring flowers, and this was really working out nicely for her.

Next we drove north up to Prickly Pair Farm, where we were blown away by an awesome large house of 'La Belle' ranunculus. They were the healthiest plants I had ever seen, and Mike was picking tons of blooms. Mike has four greenhouses and several outside growing areas; all were filled with fall-planted spring annuals. He will be producing an abundant amount of blooms. Mike also grows outside salad mix in his gardens and sells them to restaurants and farmers markets in the Austin area. Mike is a very

focused grower, and is devoting much of his time to growing and improving his business. He and some other growers have started a small group that is sharing a lot of information between them to build a better business for all of them by learning from each other.



Ranunculus at Prickly Pair Farm

Finally, we drove back to Petals Ink Floral to tour her lovely farm with a newly-constructed greenhouse, and her farmhouse that dates back to 1900 and earlier. Gretchen has a studio in the Austin city limits and does a lot of weddings and events and is really excited to be growing flowers to use in her designs. We didn't get to see Erin's farm because it is in the middle of a fight to stay where they are due to developers trying to force her out. I sure hope everything works for her farm as she has been in business a long time and really is devoted to organic production and educating others of its benefits.

Our second farm visit included Gita Van Woerden of Animal Farm; Kim Haven of Billabong Fresh Flower Farm; and Debbie Thornton of FM Flowers. We started out at Kim's place early in the morning, touring her impressive tool/workplace and her two greenhouses and gardens. Kim showed us some beautiful anemones, and lots of other starts for her spring season, as well as a bulb-planting gadget she made.



Anemones at Billabong Fresh Flower Farm

After Kim's place we went on to Gita's organic farm. Gita raises mainly vegetables but she does have a nice amount of flowers planted for sale at Urban Harvest Farmers market where Gita and Kim both sell their flowers. Gita is trying to grow different flowers than Kim so their bouquets would have different contents. Gita shared a tip of buying some 4" annuals from a producer in the area and fills in her gaps with these nice-sized annuals such as Belladonna delphiniums, 'Connecticut Yankee' delphiniums, and 'Champagne Bubbles' poppies. Gita has many rows of direct-seeded winter-sown annuals.

Her crew was also constructing several greenhouses to grow flowers and vegetables. Gita sells to many restaurants and several farmers' markets. Debbie Thornton is just starting out and sells to a farmers' market in Tomball, Texas. Debbie worked full time and just recently quit her job to follow her dream of growing flowers. After touring their farms we came back to my farm and finished the day looking through all our greenhouses and gardens. It was a good day of sharing and visiting.

Our third farm visit was with Melinda Studinka of Meem's Garden; Cynthia Alexander, Quarry Flower Farm; Mary Marston of Plum Nelly - A Flower Farm; and Cindy Oliver of 3 Oaks. We all met at Melinda's and shared slides of our farms. Melinda has a fairly new greenhouse, starter house, and some beautiful beds of annuals, perennials, and roses. We spent the morning at the farm and then we drove over to Chamblee Rose Nursery



Low tunnels at Meem's Garden

for a guided tour of their facility. We also purchased some roses and learned the right way to plant and prune roses. It was a very nice tour that we all enjoyed. Melinda had some nice low tunnel constructed for her winter annuals.

January was a great time to plan all these farm visits and I really think it

brought the farmers together and created some great little sharing groups which will help them all down the road, and nurtured some great friendships.

I wasn't done yet. I finished up the month by taking a road trip over to New Orleans. We were there the week before Mardi Gras but still were able to see some of the festivities with the parades and crowds of people. We were able to meet with Denise and Megan of Pistil and Stamen Flower Farm. We enjoyed a lovely dinner at a



Denise Richter of Pistil and Stamen

local restaurant where we discussed flower growing. The next morning Denise showed us several gardens within the city.

Each farm was amazing and so much was being grown on lots scattered through the city. We went to New Orleans on our honeymoon and my husband's 50th birthday years ago

so this city is special to us and Denise gave us an awesome after-Katrina tour of the city which we really appreciated.

We were once again back in Louisiana for the Growers' School in Baton Rouge. I was so happy to see how well it was attended by so many first-time growers, and many experienced growers as well. All the presentations will be posted in the Members Only section of the ASCFG site most likely by the time you are reading this. Take the time to view these and enjoy. Also check out the ASCFG Members Only Facebook page. I know all of you are busy harvesting all those springs blooms so flower on and wish you a great season.

## WEST AND NORTHWEST .....

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**Lennie Larkin**

B-Side Farm

lennielarkin@gmail.com

### Goings On in the West and Northwest

The farmers in my region were busy last winter! My calendar has been chock-full of meetings, events, workshops, dinners, and conferences as people peel their creaky bodies out of office chairs and crop planning to gather and talk nuts, bolts, flowers, and dollar dollar bills. These are just the meetings I've been a part of, and these are just my thoughts on these meetings; there are surely other perspectives and take-aways out there. Let me know what I'm missing.

### Farm Financial Viability Meeting—December

**In attendance:** About 20 small farmers gathered in Oakland at Joanna Letz' house to talk MONEY. Most there work on one-acre farms within two hours of San Francisco. Some run their own businesses and some are the flower managers at larger vegetable farms.

**Breakdown:** How were people feeling after the 2015 season? Who made money? Who didn't? What did numbers look like compared to 2014?

**The verdict:** The meeting set out to answer the question of whether or not farms like ours seem to be making it and surviving past a few years. There was some good news in the room: sales that increased (and almost doubled) year to year, growing skill sets. But there was also a lot of disheartening news—signs to me that we need to step it up as business people and as advocates for local flowers. Many of these newer growers (I put myself in this category and am speaking broadly about those having farmed flowers for just around 5 years or less) seem happy, produce beautiful flowers, and seem to be keeping busy with sales. BUT, as we pried into one another's finances, we learned that no one is actually making a "living wage", and most were deep into the routine of heavily subsidizing their own labor as well as setting their price points according to a general sense of what the conventional market can bear, NOT based on the cost of production. Most were therefore running businesses

that seem, to me, unsustainable (again, myself included). It's only so long that you can work under the poverty line. This got me thinking even more about truly understanding our cost of production, valuing our labor appropriately, and making long-term plans with sound financial models. Many of us in the room were farmer-florists, and I can't stop thinking about how florists in general are so much better at this aspect than farmers are. That general rule of thumb that says florists need to mark up their flowers three times in order to make a profit—have many small, new farmers made similar equations for our work? If I told the world how many \$5 bunches of flowers I need to sell each year in order to make a profit, we would all laugh—it would be an impossible number. That's just not how new farmers start out. I guess you could say that I'm on a mission to change that.

*Many of us in the room were farmer-florists, and I can't stop thinking about how florists in general are so much better at this aspect than farmers are. That general rule of thumb that says florists need to mark up their flowers three times in order to make a profit—have many small, new farmers made similar equations for our work?*

be bringing in more farmers but is finding creative ways to work with us small guys, featuring a “farmer of the month” for one. I love it.

**OSU Small Farms Conference—February**

**Breakdown:** Day-long conference with a cut flower track broken into 3 sessions: Cut Flower Production As Part Of A Whole Farm System with Shannon Algieri from Stone Barns Center; Business Planning and Marketing with Diane Szukovathy from Jello Mold Farm, Molly

Sadowsky from the Seattle Wholesale Growers Market, and Joan Thorndike from La Mera Gardens; and Season Extension with Denise and Tony Gaetz of Bare Mountain Farm, Vivian Larsen of Everyday Flowers, and Kendra Neveln of Glenwood Farms.

**In attendance:** There were a whopping 100+ people signed up for each flower session, which was pretty remarkable and really gives you an idea of how many new growers there are out there.

**The verdict:** I was blown away by the flower farmer community in the PNW. In addition to all the new growers that came

**North Bay Flower Collective Varieties Talk—January**

**In attendance:** 30 or so NBFC members, both farmers and designers.

**Breakdown:** Seed swap, discussion on what varieties our florists want and can't find, farmers' open Q & A on variety-specific questions, official unveiling of the new and improved Sonoma Flower Mart, work trades/who's hiring/looking for work, internal NBFC infrastructure work, planning for two-day visit with Debra Prinzing.

**The verdict:** Our group has seen a lot of one another this winter, but there's often so much work to be done surrounding the infrastructure of the group itself that it feels rare to have a meeting like this one dedicated mostly to the thing that unites us: flowers! Florists asked for more foliage and vines, farmers asked one another what varieties we were expanding upon, adding or dropping for the coming season. We found out who needs what kind of help this season, who might be available to do it, and I now have a solid list of farm-sitters on hand and am planning a summer weekend getaway (is it bad news that I'm already looking forward to it?). Nichole from the Sonoma Flower Mart broke down her new structure for us: more hours, more customers, and more farmers. With just a short season under her belt as a trial, she's already made some huge improvements that will streamline ordering and availability lists. She'll



Joan Thorndike, Diane Szukovathy, and Molly Sadowsky share their flower farming experiences.

out of the woodwork, the area is rich in veteran farmers who joyfully pulled themselves away from successful farms for the weekend to speak, lead discussions, and take part in this really great weekend of professional development and farmer community building. Erin McMullen of Raindrop Farm invited me to represent the ASCFG and take part in the weekend, and she and Elizabeth Bryant of Rose Hill Flower Farm acted as my (gracious, amazing, talented!) hosts. The presentations were thorough and managed to reach both newbies and seasoned farmers both—no easy feat. Some big take-aways for me from the day included the newest tricks to Tony and Denise’s hoops (to be implemented on my farm imminently—I was stuck in version 1.0 without knowing it!), some great woodies to try out, and tips for success in building a wholesale market. And then there were the after-parties. And pre-parties. And in-between-parties. I’m talking bars full of flower farmers in small groups and duos picking each other’s brains on every aspect of their operation—it was incredible (and I’m still tired, actually).

**PNW Flower Farmer’s Meet-up—February**

**Breakdown:** But it didn’t stop there! The conference was followed by the 2nd Annual PNWFF Meet-up, which focused on a number of different topics broken into roundtable discussions facilitated by farmers versed in those areas. They included farm infrastructure, marketing, crop planning, record keeping, and season extension, among others.

**In attendance:** 65 local and semi-local farmers!

**The verdict:** The topics were decided by surveys taken after last year’s event, and the schedule was packed and tightly organized. It’s hard to imagine so much information packed into one day, but it happened. To sit with a group of growers (all with valuable information to share) and fully tear apart one topic at a time—it was a dream come true. There’s always so much to talk about and it’s hard to jump into the details, but the event was organized so that we didn’t waste time on the pleasantries and got down and dirty right away. My kind of meeting. Oh, and there were sponsors and prizes and swag!



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I will say, getting a behind-the-scenes look at the farms of many people I got to know was enlightening and surprising in ways. Many of these farmers are highly successful, have streamlined so many processes over the years, and pump out tons of great quality flowers with detailed and evolved crop and marketing plans. But it seems that every winter is still a time to take a hard look at finances and see how to shake things up to make a little more money in subsequent years. A lot of farms are still struggling to get ahead, financially. This isn't surprising, we all know it's an uphill battle, but it did stand out to me. In the wake of many of these winter meetings I've been ruminating on how we can further affect change in our industry by educating the public and our markets on the value of local flowers (and therefore raising our prices, which is the content of most of my soapboxes lately), and really hammering financial literacy and planning into the minds of our new farmers.



Lennie leads a discussion between growers and designers.



### B-Side Farm & ASCFG Designer Panel - March

**Agenda:** I hosted a talk at my farm by Sarah Ryhanen of Saipua, Nicolette Owen of Nicolette Camille Floral Design, and Debra Prinzing of Slow Flowers. The topic of the night was how farmers and florists can develop relationships and work closely together, and how farmers can start to think about tailoring their crop plans to work with high-end designers.

**In attendance:** Indoor space during the last night of a rainy stretch limited us to 40 people, and we packed in and got cozy. Half farmers, half designers, some I knew and some I didn't, from up here in Sonoma County, a handful from San Francisco, and two farmers from Reno (thanks for making the trip!).

**The verdict:** It's hard for small farms to diversify their growing plans to accommodate both specialty design trends and mass-market needs. It's tricky (for me, at least) to plant out sunflowers every week for supermarkets while also tending to my slow-growing columbine or finicky such-and-such; I feel like I need

two distinct personalities to be doing both well. Know what I mean? I planned this talk with these issues in mind, based on a similar panel that Sarah was a part of at the ASCFG National Conference in Delaware in 2015. So for this talk we focused on some hard-to-find but (hopefully) not-too-hard-to-grow varieties that we farmers can start to incorporate into our plans. The speakers answered many great questions from the captive audience, and we left with some exciting ideas: pick a few buckets with one designer in mind, really focus on cultivating relationships with designers so that you can almost read their mind, and, well, find a way to get rich and grow bearded irises!

Until next time, when I'll be focusing on the process of scaling up my dreams, processes, and neuroses by moving from a half acre to three for this season. Here's to hoping I come out on the other side!

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## Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

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**Summer Badawi**, Ladyfern Flowers, Minneapolis, MN  
**Shelley Barnett**, Amherst, MA  
**Greg Berger**, Spring Ledge Farm, New London, NH  
**Katherine Bigler**, Orrtanna, PA  
**Tracey Blackwelder**, Cincinnati, OH  
**Rebecca Bodicky**, Alice Blue Collective, St. Louis, MO  
**Jill Braddock**, Mt. Pleasant, SC  
**Teresa Brown**, Rooster Ridge Farm, Bryan, OH  
**Pam Bryan**, Pucker Brush Farm, Shelocta, PA  
**Kasey Butler**, Blue House Organic Farm, Pescadero, CA  
**Carroll and Richard Candler**, Wildcraft Flowers, Sharpsburg, GA  
**Matt Carson**, 934 Farms, Milliken, CO  
**Rachel Carter**, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Winslow, ME  
**Julia Cauthen**, Lexington, KY  
**Carin Celebuski**, Ladybrook Farm, Silver Spring, MD  
**Gloria Jean Cestero-Hurd**, Germantown, NY  
**Carol Collier**, Portland, OR  
**Julie Cort**, Cottonwood, CA  
**Katherine Creswell**, Moose Meadow Farm, Lincolnville, ME  
**Elise Cusano**, Four Root Farm, East Haddam, CT  
**Agnes Cwalina**, Hori Hori Flowers, Seattle, WA  
**Xenia D'Ambrosi**, Sweet Earth Co., Pound Ridge, NY  
**Mariah Dale-Anderson**, Triple M Farm, Clinton, IL  
**Jacob Delahoussaye**, Blazing Star Farm, Lafayette, LA  
**Julie Eisenberg**, Bay Village, OH  
**Jill Elmers**, Moon On The Meadow Farm, Lawrence, KS  
**Deborah Fiddymment**, Gloryland Farm, Lincoln, CA  
**Elizabeth Foose**, Carthage, MS  
**Jeanine Fore**, Perkinston, MS  
**Elizabeth Fox**, Columbus, OH  
**Amy Frye**, Boldly Grown Farm, Mount Vernon, WA  
**Sarah Funk**, Boone, IA  
**April Gast**, Gast Family Farms, Jarrettsville, MD  
**Katarina Goldenberg**, Cambridge, MA  
**Maureen and George Goss**, East River Farm, Guilford, CT  
**Dani Graham**, Earth's Gift, Duvall, WA  
**Joanna Brown & Guy Gautreau**, Jolivent Farm, Memrancook, NB  
**Anne Harding**, Maplewood, NJ  
**Melanie Harrington**, Trenton, ON  
**Heather Henson**, Boreal Blooms, Cold Lake, Alberta  
**Julie Hill**, Southern Wild Garden Design, Greenville, SC  
**Beverly Hill**, Beverly Hills Garden & Nursery, Burnsville, NC  
**Jane Hodge**, Let's Get Farming, Chester, NY  
**Joan Jach**, Champaign, IL  
**Katrina Karlsen**, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Winslow, ME  
**Sharon Kelley**, Modesto, CA  
**Cindy Kellogg**, Our Farm Ltd., Volo, IL  
**Jennifer Kenmotsu**, Downers Grove, IL  
**Julie Keshenberg**, Sweet Earth Co., Brewster, NY  
**April Kinser**, April Flowers, Kingston, NY  
**Micah Koehler-Marsh**, Cutler, IN  
**Moira Lawrence**, Pennington, NJ  
**Jessica Lennon-Desimone**, Peti Flor, Pittsburgh, PA  
**Debra Lindell**, Lindell Flower Farm, Hartford, CT  
**Elizabeth Marcellus**, Sayville, NY  
**Anne Matthews**, Flowerpower VT, Ferrisburgh, VT  
**Sharon McBride**, McBride's Organic Farm, Oro Station, ON  
**Roxanne McCoy**, Lilies of the Field, West Falls, NY  
**Megan McGuire**, Red Daisy Farm, Brighton, CO  
**Megan McHugh**, Pistil and Stamen Flower Farm, New Orleans, LA  
**Susan Miller**, Fort Collins, CO  
**Diane & Mark Mills**, Indianapolis, IN  
**Amber Mills**, Willow Acres, Danville, KY  
**Ruth Morgan**, Color Your World, Mebane, NC  
**Christy Muck**, Wild Blossom Hollow, Cherry Creek, NY  
**Sarah Murphy**, Indigo Bunting Farm, Marshall, NC  
**Kristen Nagel**, Louisville, KY  
**Sarah Neeb**, Gild the Lily Too, Etna, WY  
**Jacquelyn Nooney**, Flower Co., Eliot, ME  
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**Sarah and Steve Pabody**, Triple Wren Farms, Ferndale, WA  
**Keli Perrin**, Withy Hollow Farm, Erieville, NY  
**Denise Peterson**, Abingdon, VA  
**Sara Plack**, Osage Hollow Farm, House Springs, MO  
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**Barbara Popolow**, Derby Farm Flowers & Gardens, Arlington, MA

## Thanks for the Good Word



*You connected some of our  
new members to the  
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**Brandon Pugh**, Delta Sol Farm, Proctor, AR  
**Penelope Rembe**, Los Poblanos, Los Ranchos, NM  
**Jay Renninger**, Renninger's Farm, Royersford, PA  
**Laura Rice**, Stonehouse Flowers, Pennsylvania Furnace, PA  
**Nancy Richgruber**, Livengood Farms, Eddy, TX  
**Barbara Rietscha**, Stow Greenhouses, Stow, MA  
**Katy Ripp**, Mad Lizzie's Fresh Flowers, Cross Plains, WI  
**Leah Rodgers**, Rockwood Urban Farm, Portland, OR  
**Michael Rodriguez**, The Flat Lander Farm, Dexter, MI  
**Amanda Rose**, Roseroot Farm, Scottsburg, VA  
**Shari Russell**, Worthington, OH  
**Elizabeth Sainte**, Bluegrass Blooms & Botanicals, Winchester, KY  
**Tina Sawtelle**, Pinewoods Yankee Farm, Lee, NH  
**Nicole Schenkel-Zureikat**, Rox & Rose, Wolfstein, Germany  
**Ronda Schlumbohm**, Salcha, AK  
**Mary-Michael Sekulic**, Wakeman, OH  
**Amy Shum**, Home, KS  
**Mindy Staton**, Two Little Buds, Hamilton, OH  
**Pooh Stevenson**, Owosso Organics, Owosso, MI  
**Nathan Strange**, Strange Girl, East Point, GA  
**Dave Thomas**, Shady Oak Farm, Medina, OH  
**Bonnie Thompson**, Blackberry Bog Farm, Astoria, OR  
**Susanna Thornton**, Thornfield Farm, Fincastle, VA  
**Teresa Tibbets**, Lander, WY  
**Carlos Tinoco**, Soldiers Grove, WI  
**Mary Van Noordennen**, Westerly, RI  
**Elizabeth Varas**, Mystical Gardens Cut Flowers, North Stonington, CT  
**Elaine Walker**, Vibrant Valley Farm, Portland, OR  
**Shannon Wallace**, Mai's Gate Flower Farm, Nacogdoches, TX  
**Stephanie Webber**, Midlothian, VA  
**Jeremy Wells**, Brighton, TN  
**Veronica Wendt**, Cadiz, OH  
**Megan Westervelt**, Folsom, LA  
**Maegan Williams**, Gilsum Gardens, Gilsum, NH  
**James Wilson**, Wild August Nursery, Harlingen, TX  
**Kelly Wilson**, Ortonville, MI  
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Laura Beth Resnick  
Beverly Schaeffer  
Joe Schmitt  
Tom Sereduk  
Kate Smaglinski  
Carolyn Snell  
Ralph Thurston  
Abbie Turner  
Bob Wollam

## Dave Dowling Scholarship Winners



Julia Ann Wendelken,

“In addition to developing my floral design skills, I strive to be the best-educated and most well-rounded florist I can be by studying and practicing the art and science behind growing cut flowers.”

Julia Ann Wendelken, halfway through her bachelor’s degree in Sustainable Horticulture at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, has already put this ethos to work, as an assistant grower and

floral designer at LaSalle Florists, as well as a designer at two other Massachusetts florist shops. These were accomplished as she made the dean’s list several semesters in her academic career.

These qualities earned Julia one of 2016’s Dave Dowling Scholarships, for which she’ll receive \$1000, a one-year membership in the ASCFG, and complimentary registration to the National Conference in Grand Rapids.

“In my view, flowers aren’t just a luxury, they are a piece of art that expresses an emotion of care, joy, sorrow, or pleasure.”

Elizabeth Tanner will graduate in 2018 from North Idaho College with a degree in Sustainable Crop and Landscape Systems, with an environmental horticulture emphasis. She spent three years at BeeHaven Farm, working in the fields, as well as designing and delivering floral bouquets.

She hopes to start her own cut flower business one day, and given the praise her previous employer had for her, it seems she’ll be successful.

Elizabeth will also receive a 2016 Scholarship and its benefits.



Elizabeth Tanner

Congratulations to these two outstanding women. We welcome you to the ASCFG.

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Do you have any ugly peonies?  
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Gray Mold

Leaf Blotch

Anthracnose

Tobacco Rattle Virus

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The WSU Ornamental Plant Pathology program has partnered with the ASCFG to conduct research to identify peony diseases in the United States.

If you grow peonies and see symptoms you think may be associated with a plant disease... ▶



Linda Doan and Sarah Ervin

## Let's Catch Up With Our Mentors and Mentees

Tanis Clifton, Southeast Regional Director

had a good start on planting schedules, and is using a table from Paula Rice's conference presentation. Sarah taught Roy and me how to use Google Drive and we are now sharing documents.

We visited their farm February 22-23. We were so impressed with the potential their property holds: nice flat fields, pretty wooded areas, log house with great porches. We walked their fields and discussed drainage, or lack of. We discussed options of how specifically to lay out fields for easiest harvest and what to plant where. We admired their low hoops and beds they have ready for dahlias. We saw their germination house and seed starting operation. If their ground ever dries out they can even plant them! They're using soil blocks and I may give those a try myself.

We also discussed possible sites for a cooler and a staging/bouquet-making area. The cooler is Matthew's next project. Then we planned a date for Sarah to help with a two-day workshop on our farm. On the second day we drove to Atlanta together and bought containers at Accent Décor and talked more flowers.

We know how much hard work there is ahead to get from where they are now to where they want to be but believe they will get there. They have determination, energy, positive attitude, physical space, and desire and those things are hard to beat! And they're young!

And we are so thankful to ASCFG for pairing us and for providing funds to help facilitate travel and workshop attendance. Sarah and Matthew are going to Baton Rouge and that's coming at a good time! We'll be anxious to hear about all they learn there. We text regularly and follow each other on Instagram and I think we both enjoy those avenues.

### From Sarah and Matthew Ervin

I was so excited to learn that Linda was going to be our Mentor. We had actually connected previously at the Athens meeting in 2015, and they had us out for a visit, so we had already been learning from them. Roy and Linda are so generous with their time and knowledge, but to open it up to an official Mentor/Mentee relationship gave me the go-ahead to bug Linda more often. And she hasn't complained once!

We visited their farm again in January to go over the business side of things and plan for the year. I was even able to sit in for a bridal consult Linda had, which is perfect as I am hoping to transition into more weddings this year. We left with renewed inspiration and a better understanding of the business end of the farm, along with a solid to-do list from Roy.

They have also been able to visit our farm, which has been helpful in our layout planning. Being a new farm, we have so many questions. I have really found that having someone there to answer the little questions that pop up on a sometimes daily basis has been the most valuable. I know each farm is unique but Linda helps me to cut out the guesswork, teaches me from their experience, and gives me peace of mind in knowing I am on the right path.



Sarah and Matthew Ervin

The Southeast Region is thrilled to have two great pairs of growers who were awarded one of the 2015-2017 Mentor/Mentee pairings. Linda and Roy Doan of Aunt Willie's Wildflowers, Blountville, Tennessee, are mentoring Sarah and Matthew Ervin of Southerly Flower Farm, in Graysville, Tennessee. Look what's happening for these growers:

### From Linda and Roy Doan

Sarah and Matthew visited our farm in January and were able to spend the weekend with us. We met this early in the year so we could take a look at last year and plan for this year.

Here is the summary so far: We talked about what they felt they enjoyed and were successful with last year: they both like hard work and being in the field (good thing) and enjoyed the farmers' market and meeting people there. They felt they needed to improve on organization and just being better ready for what comes; this past was their first year to grow). We asked where they would like to be in 5 years. They said doing strong farmers' markets, a flower CSA, full-service weddings, and possibly grocery stores.

Roy talked with Matthew about tax forms and all things financial. I shared handouts including things like our planting and bloom schedule, what and how to succession plant, our favorite foliage and flowers etc. We talked about things they might do: improve their website, get involved with NRCS, photo shoots, build a cooler and hoophouse, evaluate cost/time efficiency of different ideas, create planting schedule for year. Sarah is very organized. She already

### Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Postharvest\*

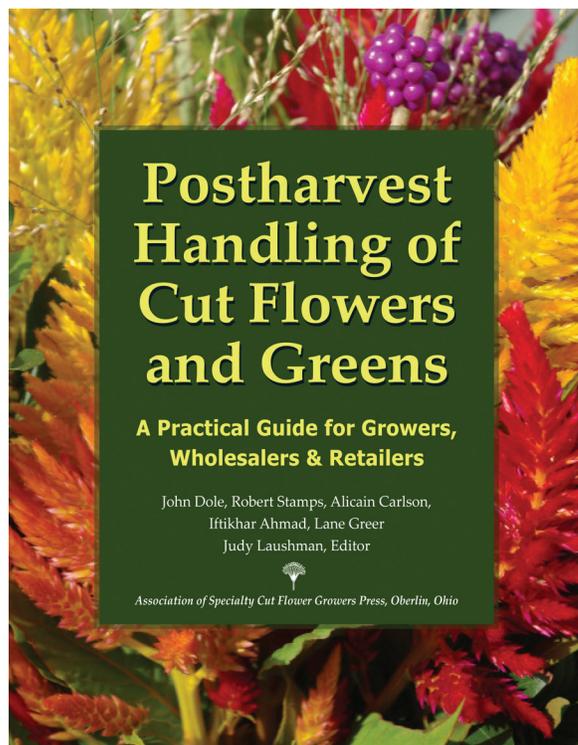
Judy M. Laushman



The ASCFG was created as an outshoot of research conducted at the University of Georgia, way back in the previous century. The investigations were mainly concerned with variety trials, spacing and shading options, and planting dates, but occasionally we conducted informal postharvest testing.

It's fun to remember those experiments now, as I read chapters and chapters each night on serious postharvest research.

*Postharvest Handling of Cut Flowers and Greens—A Practical Guide for Growers, Wholesalers, and Retailers* will be published by the ASCFG later this year. It's written by a group of top floriculture researchers assembled and guided by John Dole. John needs no introduction, but you may want to know about the other contributors.



Now retired from the University of Florida, Bob Stamps is an expert on tropical plants, especially foliage used in the floral industry. His knowledge of the production and postharvest handling of cut foliage is encyclopedic.

Iftikhar Ahmad is an Assistant Professor of Floriculture and Landscape at the Institute of Horticultural Sciences, University of Agriculture in Faisalabad, Pakistan, where he specializes in floriculture research and teaching. He worked in John's lab as a post-doctoral student for four years.

Alicain Carlson, familiar to ASCFG members as John's graduate and post-graduate student who has spoken at several of our meetings is now Technical Scientist, Customer Solutions team at Syngenta in California. She conducts greenhouse technical trials to optimize the production and postharvest life of potted floriculture crops to provide technical knowledge to customers.

Lane Greer is currently on the faculty of the Department of Plant Biology, Ecology and Evolution at Oklahoma State University. Also one of John's graduate students (do we sense a pattern here?), she co-authored the immensely popular *Woody Cut Stems for Growers and Florists* with him.

Each of these authors contributes an enormous body of knowledge to the project, and his or her unique writing style makes editing the text an exercise in conscientious reading.

What is most remarkable is the range of floral material covered in the book. There are the standards (though "standard specialty cut flowers" seems a little oxymoronic) like lisianthus, sunflowers, and hydrangeas. Then there are tropical plants for foliage like *Monstera* and *Zamia*, flowering woodies such as *Pieris* and *Kerria*, and the proteaceous *Grevillea*, *Banksia*, and waratah.

Given the wide range of climates our membership grows across, everyone will be able to find information applicable on several crops. And regardless of your climate, why not tuck a few palms or tropical ferns into the warmer sections of your greenhouse? You can never have too much green foliage. Given the rate of climate change, northern growers may soon be able to leave them outside all year.

The collaborative production makes this a book all growers will value.

Another collaboration I found invaluable was mine with past ASCFG President Frank Arnosky. Until you're on the Board of Directors, and unless you're President, you truly don't understand the scope of all the Board discusses, decides, and directs. Given the recent membership growth, and the increased number of projects the Board has taken on, there are a lot of balls in the air, and Frank handled them with admirable grace and humor. When several of his and Pamela's hoopouses were damaged by a tornado last month, leaving the new crops inside vulnerable to a killing freeze, he wrote "I think I'm going to sign up for courses at the Bartender's School of America and take a career change."

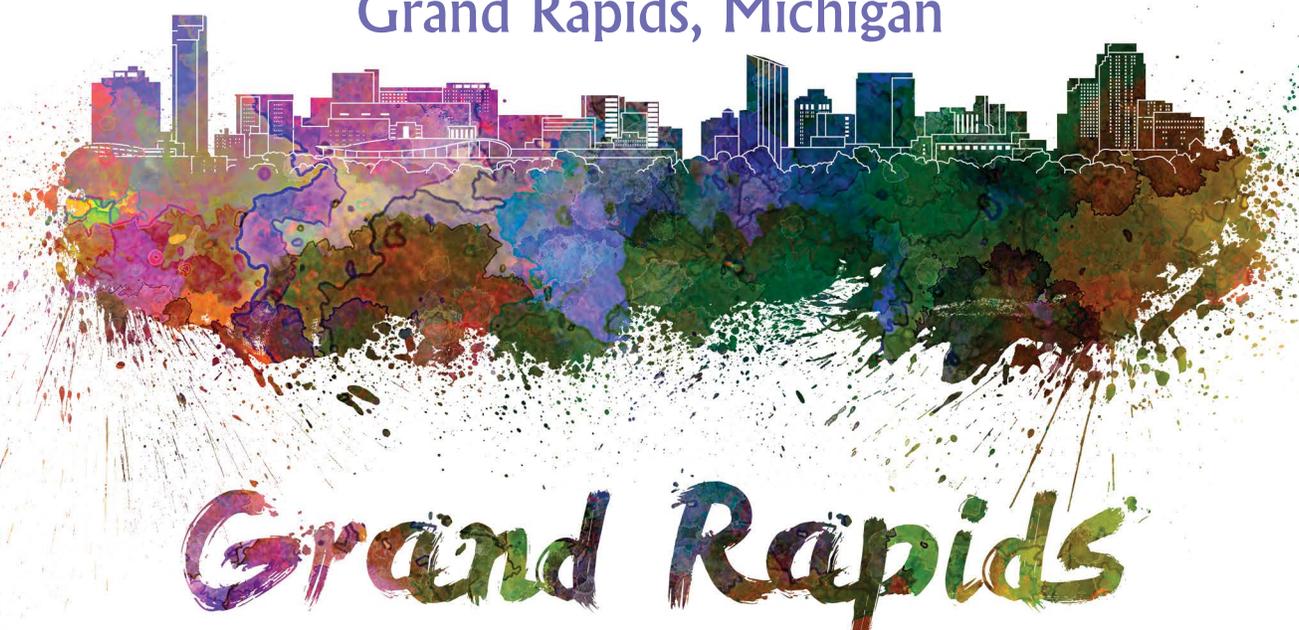
I'm happy that he's seeing the glass as half full.

\* But Were Afraid to Ask

# ASCFG 2016 National Conference

## November 6-9

### Grand Rapids, Michigan



Grand Rapids

## WHERE

## WHEN

## WHO

Doubletree by Hilton  
4747 28th Street SE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
(616) 957-0100

SUNDAY  
Growers' School  
MONDAY-TUESDAY  
Sessions  
WEDNESDAY  
Tours

Learn from some of  
the top names in the  
cut flower world!

Program and registration details to be announced—watch your inbox and your mailbox.



Be sure to apply for an absentee ballot for the November 8 election! Visit the web site for your state's Board of Elections or Secretary of State to download an application. They are also typically available at public libraries.



Association of Specialty  
Cut Flower Growers  
M.P.O. Box 268  
Oberlin, Ohio 44074

# Join the New ASCFG Members Only facebook Group!

**Debbie Thornton**  
April 1 at 10:48am

I just want to thank ASCFG for all the hard work in addition to running farm etc. I especially appreciate the videos from the conferences for those that can't attend. Thank you to all the speakers. I'm enjoying the presentations from Baton Rouge. A big thank you to the board members for putting it all together.

**Jessica Hall**  
April 4 at 5:22pm

Speaking of anemone can someone explain the variance within the panda variety. Both the blush one that is closed and the white fully opened one came as panda corms. I want more of those blush colored ones! Any else see this? Pardon the devey look they were just sprayed with crowning glory.



**Laura Dison**  
March 31 at 11:13am

Any recommendations for a summertime living mulch to sow in my walking paths? Can anyone talk about their experience with white clover for this purpose? Zone 7. Thanks!

**Dave Dowling** Get in touch with the Amoskys They are Blanco Texas growers that have purchased a farm Minnesota just for growing peonies ship back to Texas.  
<http://www.facebook.com/Amosky-Family-Farm/>

**Nicole Schenkel-Zureikat**  
March 28 at 3:14am

My ranunculus are coming in - leaves have had some issues which I thought was frost damage, but maybe disease instead. Now many flowers have light speckles. Does anyone recognise this problem?




**Benjamin Pincus**  
April 4 at 8:51am

Can someone recommend software to track inventory for flowers from field to cooler, or to track inventory in the cooler? Excel or google sheets are possibilities -- cooler inventory would be networked with our sales computer. I was also wondering if anyone uses specialized software for the cut flower/agriculture industry.

**Jeriann Sabin** With a little help from a hoophouse, you can overwinter Dusty Miller and Sage Berggarden for greenery. Fressia has similar growing needs as anemones and ranunculus, too.

**Debbie Bosworth**  
Yesterday at 10:48am - Cedarville, MA, United States

I just received my members packet so I thought it was a fitting time to pop in and say hoidy from my backyard flower farm in Plymouth, Ma I've been a gardener for 25 years and I started growing cut flowers in 2012. I fell in love and launched my boutique floral business last summer. I love providing local flowers for Eco conscious couples. I'm looking forward to learning and sharing with all of you 🌸

**Tanis Clifton**  
March 25 at 11:25pm

I need to order some Felco #2 . Anybody know of a good source at a good price? Best price I can find is \$43.90



**Lisa Mason Ziegler** We use the smaller blocker almost exclusively- 2" sweet peas, and other larger seeds. Here is my FAQ for more details.  
<http://www.thegardenersworkshop.com/faq-seed/>

**FAQ: Seed Starting with Soil Blocking**  
FAQ: Seed Starting with Soil Blocking Share I have soil blocking since the beginning of my flower farm  
[THEGARDENERSWORKSHOP.COM](http://www.thegardenersworkshop.com)

**Bailey Hale**  
March 29 at 7:54pm

I am looking for brand recommendations of 128 and 72 c They must be heavy duty for multi season use and self s tray). Deep cells are also appreciated.

**Joe Schmitt** You can take measures to prevent plants from freezing wherever they are. I have a cheap (\$20) milk house heater in each of my cold frames. In addition to that I use Tak-Foil as temporary insulation on nights when the temps are in the 20s. Add a remote temperature monitor and you can check on your plants from inside your house.

**Joe Schmitt** I store larkspur seed in the freezer as well, but I also don't moist prime it a week in the fridge (not freezer) before sowing. To do this, measure out the seed you'll need (1), put it in a sandwich bag, add a tiny amount of water, massage the seeds in. See More

**Lennie Larkin**  
March 29 at 9:39pm

This here is a ninebark question. I have some gallons that I had left for dead last year, now sprouting new growth. Worth planting or will they always be stunted? Woodies are somewhat new territory for me. Thanks!

**Jennifer Wilson**  
March 24 at 7:24pm

I got a little ahead of myself on this one. I was just trying to get a pretty photo of our Easter centerpieces posted so people could start ordering. I just set the oasis down in the container and assumed I'd be able to find a plastic liner that would fit later on. I still can't find one. Any advice? I've also got similarly sized wooden trays. They're about 12" long and 8" wide.

