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The **Cut Flower**

Q U A R T E R L Y

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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Frank Arnosky

Lessons Learned at Phil's Bar-B-Que

There used to be a little barbeque joint here in Blanco, Texas named Phil's Bar-B-Que. Phil was a nice guy; friendly, served on the city council and so on. But if you came in to get a sandwich, he would go catatonic. Customers scared him to death. I'd order the chopped beef sandwich. "A chopped beef sandwich!?" Phil would yelp. My wife Pamela would order the same thing. "ANOTHER chopped beef sandwich!?" Phil would panic. Then two more customers would come in and Phil's eyes would bug out and beads of sweat would appear on his brow. You felt sure that he was never going to be able to handle this.

One day a large group of customers came in, clearly from out of town. They all ordered barbeque, except for one woman. She ordered the crab salad sandwich. Why Phil offered a crab salad sandwich in a barbeque joint in Central Texas, and why anyone would ever order it, is a real mystery. But at any rate, this threw Phil into a tailspin. After a long interlude during which nobody was served, Phil came out to the group's table and asked the woman if he could borrow her car keys. He explained that he actually had no crab meat on hand, and would need to run down

to the grocery store to buy some canned crab, but his car was broken down. Amazingly, the woman handed Phil her keys and off he went, leaving the restaurant unattended and customers in line.

We gave up going there, and so did everyone else. It wasn't too much longer until Phil closed his doors. His barbeque was fine, but his service was terrible.

What Pamela and I sell most is the promise that we will be there every week, all season, on the same day, at the same time. The stores know what to expect, and we make it happen. No excuses.

I have seen flower growers look a bit like Phil when you mention that they should explore selling flowers to grocery stores. Sort of like they've been asked to make a crab salad sandwich out of barbeque. But the fact is that the real growth in our industry is in mass marketers, and we have ceded that segment over to foreign growers with barely a yelp.

The good news is that these retailers really want to buy local flowers. Their

customers are asking for them, and retailers want to be seen as supporting local farms. The secret is to learn how to navigate the world of the large retailer and keep your local farm identity. And your sanity.

Many people think that selling flowers to a retailer such as Whole Foods Market is the end goal, that when they deliver the flowers they are done. But harsh as this may

sound, here is the real truth. Whole Foods Markets (nor any other store) doesn't want to buy your flowers. Nope. They want to sell your flowers. It may seem like I am splitting hairs here, but if you understand this one concept you will be successful: you sell service. You sell the service of providing merchandise (flowers) for the retailers to sell. Do it within their framework, provide them with a differentiated product (local flowers), and they will love you.

Pamela and I have been selling to grocery stores for over 20 years. What we have learned is that while they really want to work with local growers, the stores have little patience for growers who ask for their car keys to make it happen. They will help you get started, but you have to be a fast learner. Here are a few key points you have to excel at to provide the level of service to sell to grocery stores.

Consistency. Remember, these stores want to sell your flowers, not buy them, and you have to be there when you say you will. Floor space in a grocery store is high-dollar real estate, and they want it filled with things they can sell. Empty shelves are unacceptable. What Pamela and I sell most is the promise that we will be there every week, all season, on the same day, at the same time. The stores know what to expect, and we make it happen. No excuses. One time I was out during a tropical storm harvesting sunflowers in a 50 mph gale. They were all lying flat on the ground. We picked them up, packed them, and were at the store by 2:00 p.m.

Standards. Local flowers don't need to look like the imports, but they must look the same as they did last week, or last year. The stores have to



know what to expect, and that they can expect the same thing each time. Our sunflowers are always a minimum size and height. They are all cut at the same stage and delivered just about to open. We can't ship big, open flowers one week and small, tight ones the next.

Preservatives. Believe it or not, the stores are not always up on the best methods for holding flowers. We had trouble with one retailer for years. The flowers wouldn't last. We finally convinced them to have a consultation with a major floral preservative supplier, and a year later the main buyer told us that their shrink for *all their flowers* was down 30%! We ship in preservative and we help educate the individual stores on how to handle flowers.

Communication. Most grocery stores order flowers through a main procurement office in the company. Flowers are ordered at least two weeks in advance off an "order board" provided to the stores. When we email our stores on a Monday morning with the week's availability, they have already done most of their ordering two weeks ago. They may have spent their budget. You'll need to convince them that they should hold open a slot in their flower-buying budget for your flowers every week. This is why you must be consistent. If they hold open a spot for you and you don't deliver, they can't quickly replace your flowers. We communicate both directly with the individual stores, and with the main buyers. This gets a little hairy when you have 40 stores in a company, and they all order individually, but again, remember, you are selling service, not flowers.

There are plenty of things about grocery stores that will make you feel like Phil when four customers have just walked in. Bar coding. Insurance. Branding and signage. Pricing. Deliveries and back-dock politics. Yikes!

Lucky for you, these and much more will be covered at this year's National Conference in Wilmington. Pamela and Lisa Ziegler have a long session to present every opportunity and pitfall they know about when selling to grocery stores. Keith Cramer of Cramers' Posie Patch will tell you all about working with wholesalers. And an all-star lineup of Barbara Lamborne, Joe Schmitt, and Diane Szukovathy will present their stories about creating and selling through cooperatives. I think the marketing segment of the conference is the strongest we've had in years, and the rest of the schedule matches it. The conference committee has done a great job lining up the best of the best, and I'm looking forward to it. See you there.



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Local Flowers - A National Perspective

Gay Smith

Seven years ago, Amy Stewart made fur fly in the flower world with *Flower Confidential: The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful in the Business of Flowers*. The book resulted in posturing between those involved with selling imported flowers versus those heralding U.S. grown product. Stewart raised challenging questions which dovetailed nicely with the rising interest in certification programs for sustainable flower production. She asked "...should we care that roses have lost their scent? Or that most flowers are sprayed with pesticides? In a global marketplace, is there such a thing as a socially responsible flower?"

Has anything changed since then? Are wholesalers and florists clamoring for stuff grown down the road rather than across the ocean? I've been thinking about this as I watch the development of the locally grown flower movement. To gain insight, I surveyed colleagues outside the ASCFG family circle for input on how local products relate to their business. But first, a little more background.

What Was Happening Then?

Flower sales were flat in 2006. An oversupply of product depressed prices (and margins) as sales stalled. Rising energy costs, questionable job security, and the housing bubble about to burst all made consumers skittish about spending discretionary income. 2007 saw some improvement, but the recession in 2008 ground flower consumption to a halt, as we all scrambled to make sense of derivatives and banking debacles. The economic black cloud affected the burgeoning appreciation for home-grown, sustainable, low carbon footprint flowers. Company consolidations, store closures, internet sales, expanded floral options in box stores, and aggressive revamping of floral departments into lifestyle centers among a few leading supermarket chains continued to change the face of flower sales.

Stan Pohmer is CEO of the Pohmer Consulting Group, and Executive Director of FPO, the Flower Promotion Organization, an alliance of Colombian and U.S. cut flower producers devoted to increasing the consumption of flowers. He has written that the industry experienced "channel chaos"—many companies trying to find ways to cannibalize a shrinking pie to gain a larger share.

Although floral channels and revenues were experiencing chaos, sales of organic and/or sustainable foods were not. Sales in this category have increased by more than 10% every year since 2006, and a 14% increase is predicted from 2013 to 2018. The number of farmers' markets have doubled across the country over the past five years, from 4,685 in 2008 to 8,144 in 2013, according to the USDA statistics.

Following in Amy Stewart's footsteps five years later, Debra Prinzing wrote her book, *The 50 Mile Bouquet*, celebrating the beauty of seasonal, home-grown blooms, and celebrating interest in the concept of "slow flowers" describing it as "...the artisanal, anti-mass-market approach to celebrations, festivities and floral gifts of love. I value my local sources." Her web site SlowFlowers.com connects consumers with growers and helps raise the bar about the beauty of local flowers in much the same way Michelle Obama's interest in nutrition stimulated interest in backyard gardening.

How Does it Translate to Business?

I turned to my industry peers—floral wholesalers, retail florists, and growers—with these questions:

1. Is the desire for locally grown and/or U.S. grown flowers affecting your buying decisions?
2. Can you measure the success of the slow flower movement, California Grown and American Grown programs through sales increases, stronger prices, or pre-order requests?

The replies are interesting and insightful.



Tacoma, Washington Wholesaler

Yes, the locally grown movement is gaining some traction. We are seeing more local product in the cooler and it sells well. I think it sells well due to the fact that our sales staff uses the “locally grown” aspect as a selling point rather than customers asking specifically for it. If we take the time to tell them where it is coming from, then it matters. We have several customers who would always prefer to purchase locally sourced product, but the majority have not been vocal about it. Few specifically ask. It is still a struggle here to get (my staff) buyers on board. No one wants to cut off (Latin American) vendors who are able to supply us all year and with whom we have standing orders, even when I can show that it saves money and increases our shelf life. It can be a hard sell.



Metro Dallas, Texas Retailer

Although we would prefer local or U.S. grown stems, it is not a trump card in our decision-making process. We would be willing to pay a little more for the local. For us, size and quality are super important. Some flowers like roses are just bigger and better from South America.



Princeton, New Jersey Retailer

Yes, I am noticing a bit more interest in U.S. grown flowers, although, I have to say, as the owner and main purchaser, I am passionate about wanting to buy American flowers whenever possible. I also try to educate my customers and when time allows, we put little American flags on the price tags of American grown flowers so the customer knows. Interestingly though, when I’ve tried to buy flowers grown in New Jersey, I was very nicely told that they don’t sell to retailers, only to big box stores. We didn’t even get to talk about how much I would buy, they just said they don’t sell to businesses like ours.



Oxnard, California Grower/Bouquet Maker/Shipper

In our world it has made an impact in sales only in the mass market arena (Whole Foods) with a request for labeling promoting locally grown. Our wholesale sales are across the country so the CA GROWN label has impacted better than locally grown. Hopefully American Grown will help us across the country.



Ferndale, Michigan (Detroit suburb) Retailer

We do have some requests for local “Michigan grown”; in fact we actually purchase garden flowers locally from a couple of farmers during the farming season. There is a very large and active local farmers’ market in Detroit, the Eastern Market. Its biggest draw is that it is very regional. Therein lies the attraction. I don’t know that the “U.S. grown” has really had any stronger promotion. With the right push, if the prices are not extremely higher than imports, then I think it would be something that might be of interest.



Watsonville, California, Grower/Shipper

Company President: I believe “local” is like “organic”. All things being equal, many customers would prefer local. “All things being equal” means price and quality. However, most traditional wholesalers and retailers couldn’t care less; the ones who care are supermarkets and event people. I see flowers as in the same category as produce. Locally grown is very sexy in produce, we are trying to get on that bandwagon.

Company Sales Manager: I polled the salespeople and only one mentioned that they had a customer who preferred “local” product when available and of equal price and quality. For almost all wholesalers and retailers it is a non-issue. This is true of almost all of our event customers also. Their main priority is availability, followed by quality, then price. The only time the issue comes up is from those enthusiastically pushing the program.



Portland, Oregon Wholesaler

The short answer is yes, customers are increasingly asking for more local products. We have two local growers who bring us product every week, both have their own spots on the sales floor. Every week customers will often wait until the product arrives before they do the remainder of their shopping. Almost always we sell out of everything that comes in. We have also noticed that floral purchasers will ask “Can you get these roses from (local grower)”, or “Can you get lilies from (local grower)?”, so not only are they asking for local products, but often are requesting a specific farm they are familiar with.

That said there is still the demand for “I need what I need”. While the first choice may be local, if it’s not available most are willing to take product from wherever we can get it to “please the bride”. I think the “slow flowers” trend is gaining popularity and is likely to remain a hot trend as more attention is being focused on it.



Butler, Pennsylvania Grower/Retailer

I have the privilege of seeing both sides of the coin, so to speak. As a florist creating flowers for weddings and events I have had a number of brides come to me with the desire to source local flowers wherever possible. The farm-to-vase look that is trending is a leading reason for this, as brides want that natural yet lush look. On the other hand, I am growing cut flowers on about a half-acre in the field plus a few thousand square feet in greenhouse space. I have been selling to florists, groceries, and to consumers with great success. I hear from more florists that they like to get local whenever possible. Partly this is to get better quality product, especially for items that don't travel well (dahlias, zinnias, fresh herbs, etc.), but also just because it holds better and looks better than the long-distance flowers.



Eugene, Oregon Retail Florist

We have great sources in Oregon. Even down here in Eugene we get a lot of wonderful product locally, starting in January through the fall. We try to buy local when we can. The products from our sources are exceptional. Sometimes they are a little higher priced, but the quality outweighs any concerns of whether they will sell or not. We also carry product from California. Yes, we are seeing more and more people asking if we carry local or grown in America flowers and plants, and on a daily basis we are proud to say "Yes, we do!" We love helping local businesses as well.



Seminole, Florida Retail Florist

In regards to flower buying, I love, love, love it when I can get locally grown flowers. I have a couple vendors who bring us glads and snaps which are grown within 30 miles of my shops. They are the best glads and snaps ever—particularly the snaps—grown by an old farmer who doesn't realize that he is producing a spectacular snapdragon. But that's it. Honestly, I think that if we at the retail level had consistently high sales throughout the year, we might start to become more selective about where our flowers come from. But that seems like a luxury. For me, with the way business is, I have to purchase the best possible quality flowers for the best price.



Williamsville, New York Retail Florist and Garden Center (Buffalo suburb)

We get a lot of product grown locally (within 100 miles) but it does come from Canada. We purchase from a company that offer truck routes where you can pre-order or buy off the truck, gerbera, snaps, anthurium etc. but we also get pomps and lots of minor crops. This year for Mother's Day we went exclusively with Canadian pomps and while we pay a premium price for them, the freshness cannot be beat.



Wholesaler in San Francisco Flower Mart

If my clients say their clients want it, we need to get it, at any cost. We do have clients who notice and appreciate the whole CA GROWN or LOCAL thing but I do not see it as a defining factor in whether they purchase the item or not. It's still color, flower, look, uniqueness. When people ask "Where is this coming from?", it's often for their knowledge or because they have contracts with vendors that state the flowers must be labeled with origin. And if a product is not available, the first thing they ask "Can you get it from South America (or wherever)?" I would be out of business if I only followed the "local", "slow", or "organic" movement. And while I do believe and support the movement when I can, I see it as nearly impossible as weather, transportation and so many other factors affect crops. How can a florist in Detroit or Green Bay expect to buy local in January? I do think there is a niche and a need but I don't see it as taking over our industry as a whole.

THE TAKEAWAY

All things being equal, many customers would prefer local. "All things being equal" means price and quality.

Yes, florists are interested in purchasing local whenever possible. Quality and longevity are the driving factors.

Yes, local product sells well when presented as local. Customers don't always ask, but they do respond positively when told.

Yes, customers are increasingly asking for more local products. But "I need what I need." still drives many decisions.

Sales driven by "everyday" rather than "gift" purchases would allow florists more flexibility to buy local. Considering holiday peaks and valleys, purchasing is all about getting the best possible quality flowers for the best price at the time they're needed.

Yes, there is an uptick in brides asking for local flowers wherever possible. The farm-to-vase look is pushing that trend. Brides want that natural, yet lush look.

Change happens, but not in a vacuum. Interest in local flowers requires ongoing assertions, and connection and discourse by growers and vendors alike describing the attributes of local flowers as fresher, sustainable, and seasonal. I respect Debra Prinzing's sentiment of "Having a relationship with the grower who planted and nurtured each flower is nothing short of magical..." but I think she's the exception rather than the rule. As creatures of habit, wholesalers and retailers are used to California and imported flowers dominating product offerings. They know the patterns of ordering and delivery logistics, and may not be clamoring for stuff grown 50 miles down the road simply because they don't know what it is, how to handle it, or when it's available.

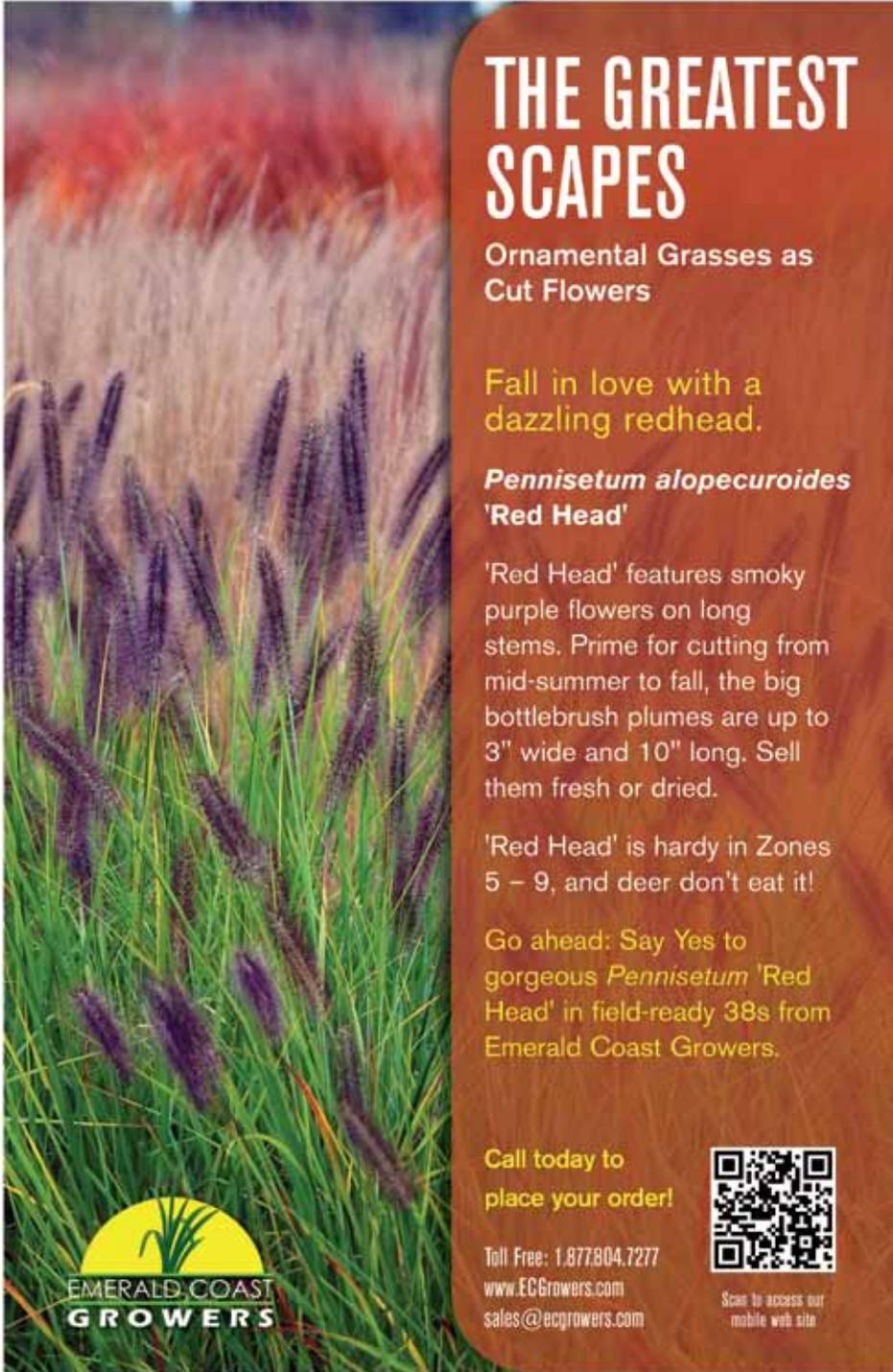
Regardless, awareness of all things local continues to flourish with help from lifestyle marketing campaigns, fascination with cooking shows, the boom in farmers' markets, and the pull-through power of consumer purchasing dollars. Boxes of inanimate carnations and scentless roses will likely predominate in mass-market venues.

Local flowers will not replace imported product in national chains, but just as organic produce is now displayed side by side with conventional produce, the allure of local, seasonal flowers is far from waning. Local continues to capture consumers' interest and their discretionary income.

Gay Smith

*is the Technical Consulting Manager
for Chrysal USA.*

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Resendiz Brothers Protea Growers

Megan Bame



There's a new flower trend among brides, it seems. Diana Roy, business manager at Resendiz Brothers Protea Growers in Fallbrook, California, reports that orders are pouring in for King protea. It's showing up in bridal magazines, bridal blogs, Pinterest, Instagram, and elsewhere, catching the eyes of brides who often carry a photo to their florist saying, "I don't know what it is, but I want it." The King protea (*Protea cynaroides*), a South African native, is a statement flower, with a single flower head diameter averaging eight inches. They are not cheap (up to \$20 per stem from a wholesaler), but they have a three-week vase life and a single stem can make a big impact.

Diana is the marketing guru at Resendiz Brothers, but she is also a flower farmer herself. Ismael "Mel" Resendiz started Resendiz Brothers in 1999 when Zorro Protea Farm, where he had been farm manager for many years, closed in favor of real estate development. Mel knew Diana as a flower farmer who bought plants at Zorro, but also knew she had a background in corporate marketing, having worked for Marriott Corporate. He asked her to run the office full-time in 2001, and she's been hard at work promoting protea and pincushions and other exotic flowers ever since.

A Family Affair

Resendiz Brothers farms 150 acres of its own property, and through various arrangements with neighboring farmers, produce their flowers on an additional 75 acres. In southern California, the only affordable land is often a steep hillside that would not otherwise be suitable for building homes or businesses. Resendiz Brothers has turned acres of undevelopable land into a floral paradise of exotic blooms. While mature protea plants are drought tolerant, all are on drip irrigation, and once established can be productive for 15 or more years.

Resendiz Brothers propagates these Australian and South African natives in greenhouses, then moves them to a nursery area where they grow in pots. It takes about 18 months for protea to go from propagation to field, and three years from propagation to harvestable production. The company also sells plants at the potted stage to landscapers and other commercial flower growers.

While flowers and foliage are harvested year-round, the peak season is November to May, when 25 to 30 workers are employed full-time. From summer to early fall, the staff is around 18, more than half of whom are family members of the four namesake Resendiz brothers: Mel, Porfirio, Raul, and Ramon. Finding seasonal labor is a challenge; the steep hillsides make for hard work. But more than labor, the greatest challenge facing even this drought-tolerant crop

is the severe drought gripping southern California. Water is expensive and they have a lot of acres to irrigate. Monthly water bills upwards of \$20,000 are not unheard of.

Protea do not like nutrient-rich soil. Once plants are established, weeding and pruning are the only required maintenance, aside from harvesting. The field teams prune as they harvest, so they don't have to revisit the field for that specific task before the next season. They cut based on orders that have been received to ensure the freshest product is going to their customers. Cut stems are placed in fresh water in the field and transported by pick-up truck to the cooler. Flowers are graded, packed, and shipped to destinations across the United States, Canada, Japan, and Korea. The majority are sold to wholesalers, some to mass markets, and a few directly to florists in cases where there is not a wholesaler in their area. The weeks leading up to Valentine's Day and Mother's Day are not surprisingly their busiest with more than 500 boxes shipped per week. A more typical weekly average would be between 30 and 100 boxes.

Plants from Down Under

In addition to protea, Resendiz Brothers specializes in Proteaceae genera *Leucospermum* (pincushions), *Banksia*, *Leucadendron*, *Telopea* and *Grevillea*. Kangaroo paws (*Anigozanthos*) are also a major offering, a unique flower because it is most colorful in bud stage, where the fine hairs covering the bud provide its brilliant colors. They also grow filler flowers such as *Chamelaucium* (wax flowers), *Calycina*, *Leptospermum*, *Boronia* (also offering a lemony fragrance), and rice flower; and foliage including eucalyptus, conifers, and variegated *Ligustrum* (privet). Never heard of some of these? They are largely natives of South Africa and Australia, many of which were collected and brought to the United States by Dr. Peter Sacks, one of the founders of Zorro's, who was himself a native of South Africa.

Protea has many distinctive species, each with its own common name. For example, *P. cynaroides*, is king protea, *P. magnifica* is queen, and *P. obtusifolia* is jester. There are nearly 200 species of *Banksia*, admired for its colorful, cone-shaped blooms and its hard, woody fruit. Diana sends a photo sheet with each availability list to help familiarize her customers, recognizing that these flowers are not as commonly known by name as other specialty cuts.

When Diana first joined Resendiz Brothers she felt that protea had not been given much attention by wholesalers, florists, or the general public. In large part, she attributed this to "poor quality and boring photos," that represented these specialty flowers in the trade. The first effort she made was to increase awareness and recognition. She would set up at trade show with an educational approach—bunches of each exotic flower they offered labeled with the plant name, on one side of the booth, and examples of bouquets and arrangements filling the rest of the booth. She entered the SAF Outstanding varieties competition, and often won. They have a presence at garden shows, on farm tours, and Diana says, "I'm always very cooperative with trade magazines."

She maintains electronic and social media outlets including www.resendizbrothers.com, a blog, a monthly newsletter for their customers, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. Wherever people are looking for flowers, Diana wants protea to be seen. It wouldn't be a far stretch to give Diana at least some of the credit for starting that latest bridal craze. King protea may be getting all the attention right now, but it will no doubt be a window of opportunity to introduce florist and consumers, and perhaps even a few fellow growers, to other exotic beauties that offer unique textures and rich colors.

Megan Bame
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Showcasing Protea

In a recent blog post, Diana explained how she had sent three floral designers a box of protea, fillers and foliage and asked them to create something beautiful. The designers in Pennsylvania, Washington and California each produced not one, but multiple stellar arrangements, including a floral headpiece suitable for a wedding. In her blog post, Diana linked to each designer's Facebook page and credited each [gorgeous] photo submitted by the designers.

While protea may need this extra marketing savvy to gain attention of floral designers, the idea could easily be borrowed by any grower for mutually beneficial exposure.

For more photos (and a great example of using Pinterest to promote your flowers), visit <http://www.pinterest.com/dianalroy/>.



Megan Bame

Narcissus Vase Life Improved with Essential Oil Preservative

Researchers in Iran studied the effects of transport temperature and thyme essential oil on cut narcissus. Thyme essential phenolic oil is known to have antibacterial, antimycotic, and antioxidative properties, making it a potential natural additive to vase solutions for prolonged vase life.

Treatments of the cut narcissus stems consisted of two temperature settings: 4C (39.2F) and 16C (60.8F); and five levels of thyme essential oil (0, 1, 2.5, 5 and 7.5%). Vase life was terminated when 50% of the flowers had senesced, characterized by loss of turgor followed by petal wilting. Fresh weight and solution uptake were also measured.

At 16C, the highest observed vase life was 11.5 days, with the 5% thyme treatment, compared to a vase life of 8.75 days with no thyme essential oil. At 4C, the treatment with no thyme displayed a vase life of 35.25 days indicating temperature alone has a significant effect on vase life. The longest vase life, an impressive 58.75 days, was observed at 4C with 1% thyme essential oil.

Sardoei, Ali Salehi, G.A. Mohammadi and M.Shahdadneghad, 2014. Interaction effect of temperature and thyme essential oil on vase life of cut narcissus flowers, European Journal of Experimental Biology, 4(2):82-87.



Factors Influencing Opening of Cut Iris

While most flowers require elongation growth of the petals, *Iris* floral buds require elongation growth first of the ovary and pedicel to lift the floral bud to a position where the two uppermost green leaves no longer block the flower opening. This research looked at the effect of temperature and light on flower opening during dry and wet storage.

Flower stems of *Iris x hollandica* Tub. 'Blue Magic' were harvested at the commercial cutting stage, with the tepal tips just visible. Stems are stored vertically, either in deionized water or dry, at temperatures 0.5, 1, 3, 6, 11, 15 and 20C. After treatment storage lengths of 3, 6 and 9 days, the stems were placed in DI water at 20C (68F) in a climate-controlled room. Five different experiments were conducted to evaluate the effect of storing flowers in light or darkness, stored wet or dry. Data were collected for pedicel elongation, flower opening and fresh weight.

During the first 3 days of storage, the growth of the pedicel +ovary was positively correlated with the storage temperature for wet and dry storage, although growth was considerably less for those stems stored dry. This study showed cut iris flowers (specifically 'Blue Magic') can be stored in darkness for up to 11 days in water at 3C (37.4F). Flowers stored at 0.5C (32.9F) did not open. Dry storage only produced acceptable results when storage duration was only 1 day at temperatures of 15C (59F) and 20C.

Van Doorn, W.G., I. Dole, F.G. Celikel, H. Harkema, 2014. Opening of cut Iris x hollandica flowers as affected by temperature, dry storage, and light, Postharvest Biology and Technology, 89:40-43.



Cut Flower Potential of *Ptilotus nobilis*

Ptilotus species, in the Amaranthaceae, are nearly all indigenous to Australia, where several selections have been developed, including *P. nobilis* 'Passion' (dark pink inflorescences), and *P. nobilis* 'Purity' (white-green inflorescences). *P. nobilis* displays long stems, extended harvest times, and numerous fragrant inflorescences over a two-year period. Australian researchers have recently evaluated its potential as a cut flower, specifically targeting ethylene production and response, respiration, fresh weight changes, and volatile productions during vase life.

Stems of *P. nobilis* 'Passion' and 'Purity' were harvested at 45 to 70 cm length with the bottom two whorls of florets open and mature. They were recut and evaluated in a postharvest room (22C, 60% relative humidity, 12 hours of daily light from cool white fluorescent tubes). Inflorescences were examined daily for changes such as browning, abscission and wilting. The proportion of the inflorescence open was determined by measuring the length of the rachis bearing open florets as compared with the entire rachis length. Vase life was determined as the period of time required for florets along 70% of the rachis, from the base, to have opened.

Florets of both cultivars continued to mature and open at 22C, displaying an average vase life of 12 days. By 18 days postharvest, the inflorescences appeared to be dehydrating, based on tip drooping, browning of the lower florets and some abscission. Ethylene did not appear to play a significant role in postharvest physiology of *P. nobilis*; rather, respiration rate and maturity of the florets within the inflorescence seemed to be vase life determinants.

Multiple volatile compounds were identified, most considered appealing to humans, based on their presence in other fragrant plants. Fragrance did not decline until after the end of vase life, lending further stock in *P. nobilis* cvs. Passion's and Purity's potential as commercially viable cut flowers.

Able, A.J., H. Smyth, D. Joyce, 2014. Postharvest physiology and volatile production by flowers of Ptilotus nobilis, Postharvest Biology and Technology, 88:61-71.

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Overwintering Snapdragons in the High Tunnel

Chris Wien



Snapdragon trial on May 28, 2014.
Note also the *Eucomis* lily trial in the adjacent row.

Snapdragons are usually an early summer crop, with first harvests in mid-June in our zone 5 climate. This past year, we happened upon a painless way of advancing harvest by a month that might be of interest to you.

We planted a fall crop of seven varieties in our high tunnel, sowing the seeds on June 4, and transplanting into the tunnel on July 15. In the high tunnel conditions of midsummer, the first flowers are usually too small to be useful, so we pinched out the main stem at transplanting.

Harvest began in late August, and continued into late October. Yields varied from 7 to 13 stems per plant at 9 x 9 inch spacing (see table). We provided no special protection over winter, and expected to uproot the plants in time for the spring planting season. But in spite of the harsh winter conditions that we experienced in the Northeast this year (January through March temperatures averaged 20F, 7F below the long-term average), stems on many plants remained green, and in March they resprouted at the base. Plants made vigorous growth, and we are actively harvesting now (at end of May).

Winter survival, however, was quite variable, with the early varieties (Maturity groups 1 and 2) having higher mortality than the later types (see table). Winter survival appeared to be lower for the higher-yielding early varieties, perhaps because flower production reduced their storage reserves and made them more susceptible to winter injury. That theory will need to be tested in future trials.

The concept of summer-planting snapdragons for fall and then spring harvest in a high tunnel is worth exploring further, and might be enhanced by providing additional winter protection by use of low tunnels or a thick layer of straw mulch. Give it a try!

| Variety (Source) | Maturity type | Stems per plant 2013 | First harvest (days after sowing) ^z | Winter survival % |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Chantilly Velvet (Takii) | 1-2 | 13 | 78 | 63 |
| Purple Twist (PanAmerican) | 2 | 10 | 83 | 8 |
| Trumpet Pink | 1-2 | 11 | 81 | 44 |
| Madame Butterfly Mix (GeoSeed) | 3-4 | 6 | 93 | 72 |
| Snappy Tongue | 3-4 | 8 | 88 | 80 |
| Supreme Light Lavender (Gloeckner) | 2-3 | 7 | 85 | 66 |
| Potomac Lavender (PanAmerican) | 3-4 | 7 | 94 | 98 |

^z First harvest time in late summer/fall 2013, in days from sowing

Thanks to Liza White and Priscilla Thompson for their valuable technical help.

For a more complete summary of our 2013 trials, visit <http://blogs.cornell.edu/hort/2014/03/02/2013-cut-flower-trial-report/>

Chris Wien is Professor of Horticulture at Cornell University. Contact him at hcw2@cornell.edu

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Some of the most creative and important designers on the East Coast will be sharing their visions on Monday afternoon. Don't miss this chance to learn from the best!

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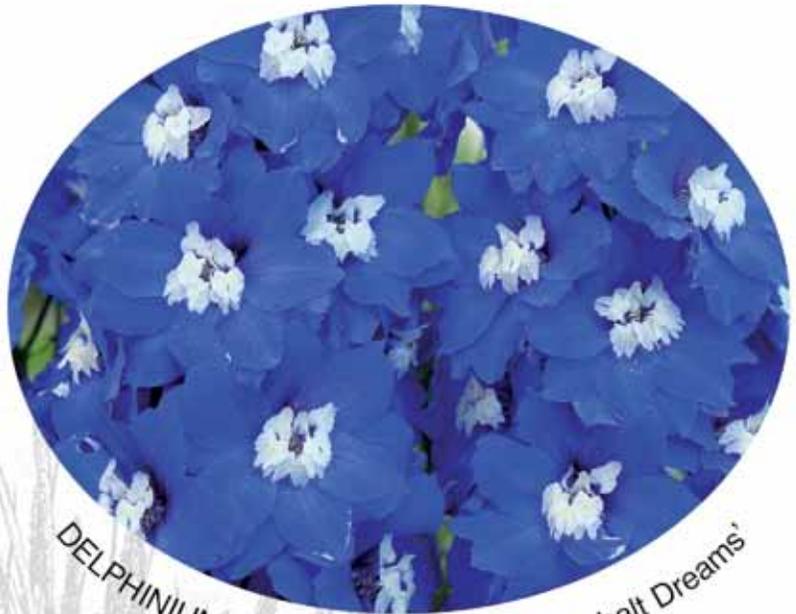
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For 75 years, Floralife has been solving the postharvest care and handling needs of the cut flower industry. We support the entire cut flower distribution chain from harvest to home; from growers to wholesalers; and from supermarkets and retail shops to the consumer. Our products provide an ultimate enjoyable experience for the end consumer with solutions for pretreatment, hydration, transport & storage, and flower food solutions for nourishment & conditioning.

William Bussert—a successful commercial rose grower— and James Sykora, Sr.—a cut flower wholesaler of Amling Co. in Chicago, Illinois—set things in motion with a joint venture in 1938. Floralife got its start with the invention of the very first fresh cut flower food. In 2007, Smithers-Oasis Company—a worldwide leader in floral foam and design accessories—acquired Floralife. With expanded distribution and research capabilities across the floriculture industry, our family of companies now offers the full circle of flower care and floral design products.

Floralife headquarters is set among the tall pine trees of Walterboro, South Carolina where we have manufacturing, operations, research, sales and marketing. We make all of our product for the North American market here in South Carolina. Our Floralife research staff of PhD.

The Cut Flower Quarterly

scientists and research specialists is also located in Walterboro, dedicated to research and development of product for optimizing the quality of fresh-cut flower life. We have facilities around the world where flowers are grown. In each location, we work closely with the local farms to solve their particular challenges.

Along with our product, Floralife offers numerous types of services to ensure proper care and handling results in higher customer satisfaction throughout the flower chain.

- Training of customer service and sales staff
- Temperature and relative humidity controls/tests
- Bacteria and ethylene level controls/tests
- Checking and cleaning of dosing systems
- Initial setup and procedure for independent flower trials
- Troubleshoot and audit for flower quality problems
- Education on new research and developments in care and handling
- Diagnostic services; i.e., water tests, flower vase life tests, ethylene presence
- Company flower audits and reports for postharvest handling

scientists and research specialists is Floralife has a long history of involvement in the floriculture industry and is recognized for its active role as a leader in the cut flower industry. We have a real focus on postharvest care and handling and most of our resources are dedicated to research and development in this area. With such focus and dedication we are able to continually deliver real solutions to our customers. We stand behind our product with on-the-ground customer service and problem solving assistance. We are dedicated to finding innovative approaches and seek to stay ahead on new developments along the entire flower chain. Moreover, as part of the Smithers-Oasis family, Floralife provides customers a full floral solution—harvest to home, post-harvest care, to design and decoration.

We want to help people express and experience emotion by adding value

Our goal is to provide solutions and assistance throughout the flower chain so that when the flowers get to the final consumer they are beautiful, healthy and bring enjoyment for a long time.

to plants and flowers. We have a passion for flowers and are dedicated to working alongside the entire flower chain to help bring beautiful, full, lush flowers into the lives, hearts and minds of everyone on the planet.

Join us in the conversation about cut flower care and handling on our website and “like us” on facebook and LinkedIn. Too, see lots of ideas about flowers on our Pinterest page. Just go to www.floralife.com and you will find links to all of these, with conversation and the exchange of ideas about flowers. And now, you can buy our product on our webshop.

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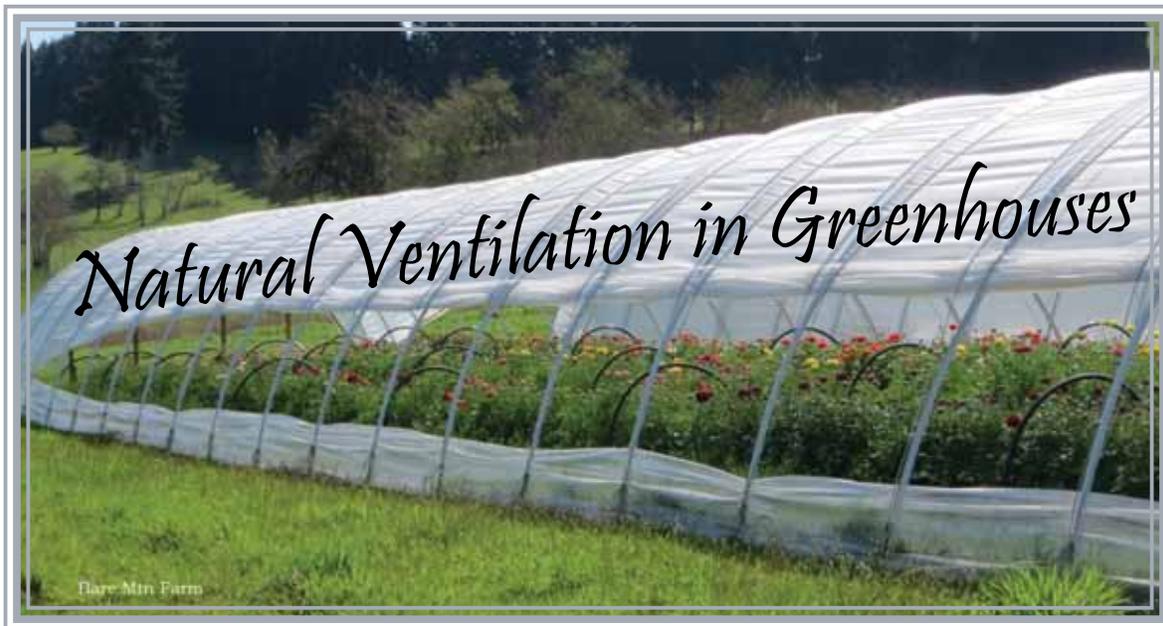
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Also, our website is full of tips and information on postharvest care and handling. Join daily conversations with colleagues, clients and enthusiasts across the country and the world on our Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest pages and our YouTube channel.



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John W. Bartok, Jr.

The concept of cooling a greenhouse with thermal buoyancy and wind goes back to the beginning of controlled environment. All greenhouses built prior to the 1950s had some form of vents or louvers that were opened to allow the excess heat to escape and cooler outside air to enter.

When polyethylene was developed with large sheets covering the whole roof, placing vents on the roof proved difficult. Engineers then came up with the concept of using fans that draw outside air through louvers in one endwall and exhaust it out the opposite end. With thermostatic control, this was, and still is the accepted method for cooling many structures where positive air movement is needed.

Proper design of a fan-cooled greenhouse is to provide a summer ventilation capacity of 8-10 cubic feet of air per square foot of floor space. This will give about one volume air change/minute which will keep the temperature difference between the louver end and the fan end to 7-10F. Besides the initial investment in a large number of fans, the increasing cost of electricity to run them has growers moving to adopt the natural ventilation system in new greenhouses that they build.

Growers with hoophouses have found that roll-up sides work well for warm season ventilation. Both manual and motorized systems are available. A location with good summer breezes and plenty of space between houses is needed. It helps to have greenhouses designed with a vertical sidewall up to the height of the attachment rail to reduce the amount of rain that can drip in.

Greenhouses with roof and sidewall vents operate on the principle that heat is removed by a pressure difference created by wind and temperature gradients. Wind plays the major role. In a well-designed greenhouse, a wind speed of 2-3 miles/hour provides 80% or more of the ventilation. Wind passing over the roof creates a vacuum and sucks the heated air out the vent. If sidewall vents are open, cool replacement air enters and drops to the floor level. If there are no sidewall vents or if the sidewall vents are closed, cool air enters the bottom of the roof vent and the heated air escapes out the top of the vent. The transition zone between the two moving air streams slows the air movement and reduces cooling somewhat.

Buoyancy, the effect of warm, moist air rising, also aids ventilation. Heavy, cool air near the floor becomes lighter as

it is heated and rises towards the roof. On cool days the large temperature difference creates excellent air exchange. On hot days the temperature difference can be only 5 or 10 degrees and the buoyancy effect is almost non-existent. The trend toward taller greenhouses has helped in that it gets the hot air higher above the plants. Horizontal air flow fans should be shut off to avoid destratifying the warm air.

Roof and side vents on conventional greenhouses need to be large enough to get good air movement. The American Society of Agricultural & Biological Engineers recommends that the combined sidewall vent area should equal the combined ridge vent area and each should be 15 to 20% of the floor area. The best orientation for the greenhouse is to have the normal summer wind direction blow over the ridge so that it creates a vacuum on the leeward ridge vent. For summer ventilation, the windward sidewall vent opening should equal the leeward ridge vent opening.

Until the development of the open-roof greenhouse concept, cooling large gutter-connected structures was difficult, especially in southern climates. Area for sidewall vents is usually limited, and passing cool outside air and

warm inside air through the roof vents usually results in uneven cooling.

Open-roof greenhouses are available from most major manufacturers. Most designs use standard vent hardware and controls to operate the roof system. Some have roof panels that are hinged at the gutter and open upward. Others have panels that are hinged at the ridge and one gutter and slide sideways on Teflon bearings. The size of the opening can be controlled from 0% to about 75%. Most designs use rubber gasketing to seal the joints.

Open-roof greenhouses have several advantages.

- During warm weather, the temperature inside the greenhouse can be maintained within a degree or two of outside temperature with little or no energy needed. Many growers have found that this shortens production time and produces a better quality plant.
- In the spring, plants can be hardened off by opening the roof on nice days. This saves considerable labor of moving plants outside.
- Energy costs are reduced. Fan ventilation can use from 0.5 to 1 kilowatt hour/sq ft/year.
- Depending on design and orientation, the crops may receive more light during the middle of the day than in a conventional greenhouse or less light in early morning or late afternoon due to more layers of glazing that it has to pass through. Further research is needed in this area.
- Reduced irrigation due to more uniform temperature and the potential for natural rainfall.
- Adding side vents allows cooling and air movement when high winds

or rain prevent the roof from being opened. The guillotine vent, available from a couple of manufacturers eliminates the conventional vent with arms that interfere with inside or outside work area.

To get adequate cooling on hot, sunny days, a shade system may be needed. It should be porous so that the heat generated below can escape up through the shade material. Evaporative cooling, either a fog system or portable evaporative coolers can give added cooling. A large number of hanging baskets tends to reduce natural cooling. Further research is needed to determine air exchange rates and ventilation patterns within open-roof structures.

Continued developments in the design of natural ventilation systems are giving growers better control of temperature and humidity at lower cost. Proper sizing, orientation and operation can provide better control than with fan systems.



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Found Money

Dan Kuipers

Bitter cold and snow will be one of the things that many growers will remember from the winter of 2013-2014 as they prepare for the upcoming spring. While this weather certainly may not have been ideal, it did come with a positive side in that it has prompted many growers to evaluate their operations and look for areas where they can be more efficient. Let's face it—combine long spells of cold weather with rising fuel costs and profits can be hard to come by.

But as with most capital improvements, the question arises of where the money comes from. This is where incentives come in to play. An incentive, generally speaking, refers to grants, utility rebates and/or tax credits that are offered to help growers become more efficient or more sustainable in their operations.

Utility Rebates

Many utility companies, both natural gas and electric, offer some form of assistance in the form of a rebate when new equipment is purchased that's more efficient (and usually more expensive). These rebates are offered as a means to incentivize growers to take action and make purchasing decisions above and beyond standard practice. There are typically

two major types of rebates.

The first type is largely known as a prescriptive rebate. Simply put, these are check-the-box type of applications in which a grower is given a standard sum of money to purchase a particular piece of equipment. The amount of money provided for each piece of equipment is published and available directly from the utility company. In order to collect your rebate, a grower must simply show that it's been installed and paid for.

Usually, this is accomplished through a standardized form where a box is checked showing which piece of equipment has been purchased. Additional documentation in the form of an invoice showing that it's been paid for is often required. Given the ease of accessing this type of incentive, it's always recommended to contact your utility company to obtain a list of available equipment that can be prescriptively incentivized.

The second major type of rebate often deals with more complex systems or whole building retrofits and is known as a custom rebate. These rebates will often require the grower to document and show expected energy savings so that a calculated or negotiated rebate can be derived. While this extra work may seem cumbersome, the upside is

that custom measures often provide a larger percentage of funding available to help pay for the equipment itself.

Growers must recognize that grant programs can be a time-consuming affair, and that the value of receiving a potential grant must be weighed against the amount of time that may be spent simply preparing the application.

Grant Programs

Grant programs are offered by local, state and federal governments and differ substantially from rebates. Grant programs are almost always competitive in nature and require the most amount of work to obtain when compared to the other incentives discussed. These programs typically have a firm deadline by which all applicants must apply and require that all applicants follow a very defined set of rules and requirements for their submission. In order to be competitive in the grant selection process, growers need to understand the rules of grant programs in great depth, including how their application will be scored.

For many grant programs, these submission requirements will include detailed background information about the applicant, as well as detailed information and a narrative

explanation describing how the intended equipment will meet the requirements of the grant program. For example, if a grant program was aimed at promoting the reduction of natural gas consumption and a grower was planning to install a more efficient heating system, a common narrative would include information on where the equipment was coming from, timelines for the installation of the system and how it would ultimately reduce natural gas consumption.

Growers must recognize that grant programs can be a time-consuming affair, and that the value of receiving a potential grant must be weighed against the amount of time that may be spent simply preparing the application. Additionally, since most grant programs will provide a percentage of the project cost with the grower providing the rest, the utilization of grant programs might best be reserved for larger dollar value projects.

Tax Credits

A less talked-about incentive often used in projects that deal with renewable energy (solar, wind, biomass) is tax credits. Tax credits are usually provided by state or federal governments, and typically offer a fixed percentage of the project cost as a tax credit against the

grower's tax liability. These credits can be carried forward through multiple years until the full value of the credit has been realized. Since tax credits are garnered with very little effort—standardized forms submitted as part of annual tax preparation—they should always be evaluated when making purchasing decisions. Currently, federal guidelines offer a 30% tax credit for the purchase of renewable energy equipment, which can be applied against a grower's federal taxes. Additionally, in some states, further credits are available for renewable energy or energy efficiency improvements.

Eligible Equipment

Now that we've distinguished between different types of incentives, it's important to understand what types of equipment are commonly incentivized. Greenhouses and controlled environment structures use energy in a unique way and have many options when it comes to reducing energy consumption. Here's a list of commonly employed grower centric technologies eligible for incentives:

- Condensing boilers
- Hot water distribution systems
- Energy/shade curtains
- Condensing unit heaters
- Variable speed drives
- Environmental control systems
- Renewable energy systems, including solar, wind and biomass
- LED lighting
- Re-glazing
- Natural ventilation structures

While this list is not comprehensive, it should provide a good place for many growers to start when considering how to become more efficient with their operations. In almost all cases, if you are making an investment in your energy future and are considering one of the above technologies, incentives will be available and should be explored.

Where to Start?

Finding applicable incentives for your upcoming project is the first step in the process. A great resource, which breaks down available programs in all states, is located at www.dsireusa.org. Once the appropriate programs have been identified, growers should contact and reach out to program administrators to clarify any questions they may have about deadlines, program requirements and available funding. It's important to keep in mind that multiple incentives can be stacked on top of each other and, in most cases, there's nothing that prohibits a grower from utilizing multiple funding sources for the same project. Keeping the requirements and paperwork straight for different programs can be challenging, but it's manageable if started early enough in the decision-making process.

A Final Thought

Incentives can be tricky and the process can look intimidating at times. However, in many cases, the use of incentives is critical to the long-term sustainability of your operation. By purchasing equipment that's more efficient, growers will save money year after year. However, if the upfront costs are too much, growers won't make the initial investment. But this is where incentives come in. When considering your upcoming capital expenditure budget, evaluate all of your options and perform forward-looking calculations outlining how much money can be saved by using more efficient equipment in a five-to-seven-year timeline. Then factor in the upfront value of incentives. In many cases, you'll be happily surprised to find that the use of incentives will allow you to become more efficient now, while saving dollars years into the future.

Farm Bill Update

Earlier this year, the 2014 Farm Bill was signed, providing five years of support to valuable programs that includes one major grant program that can specifically help growers become more efficient and sustainable. The Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) is a federally funded grant program administered by the USDA, which offers grants in the amount of 25% of total project costs for both energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Details regarding final program rules and deadline won't be available until the official announcement of the program in the Federal Register. However, it's been widely reported that a mandatory \$50 million will be available for this competitive program. Historically, this announcement has occurred in the late winter to early spring with a 60-day period of time before the deadline, so keep your eyes open for this important announcement.

*Dan Kuipers
is Technologies Grant and Incentive
Specialist for TrueLeaf Technologies.*

*Reprinted with permission from
GrowerTalks March 2014.*



The Northern coast of Italy is often called the ‘Riviera of flowers’ and that is exactly where a new breed of ranunculus and anemone hybrids are coming from. San Remo-based Biancheri Creations has created many new ranunculus and anemone varieties, such as the Elegance®, Festival® and Mistral® series as well as the cloned and very unique Success® and PonPon® varieties (also known as Clooney Ranunculus).

Remarkable for their many petals, large flowers and high productivity, ranunculus are long-lasting cut flowers and are available in many brilliant colors and shades. Typically, Italian ranunculus and anemone are available only from October through May.

Before these beautiful flowers brighten up your life, San Remo growers bring their flowers in small batches to the market where brokers, flower auctions and exporters in Europe ship

to importers and distribution channels and wholesalers in the U.S.A. and Canada. A journey that may take several days, but there are better options.

Recently, Biancheri Creations and Onings Holland, Inc. of Paso Robles, CA, a renowned flowerbulb company and front runner in the lily industry, have agreed to exclusively market, sell and distribute Biancheri’s ranunculus and anemone bulbs to professional flower growers in the US and Canada.

“Ranunculus and anemone can be grown in limited or non-heated greenhouses during the winter in most parts of the U.S. and that is exactly what my customers are looking for,” according to Henk Onings. “I always thought ranunculus are too short and small headed flowers until I was introduced to

Biancheri’s eye-catching varieties. The Italian ranunculus grow rather tall and are very easy to grow. Because these can handle warmer temperature fairly, some of our Californian customers are now growing them year-round!”

Onings Holland partners with Abbott-IPCO in Dallas TX. While Onings is focused on the cut flower segment, Abbott-IPCO handles the pot plant and landscape market. Please feel free to contact Onings Holland Inc. by phone (805) 227-6198 or info@usa.onings.com. Or visit their website: www.onings.com





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Greetings fellow growers and floral designers, seed producers, plant breeders, agriculture educators, policy makers, wholesalers, writers, and everyone else connected with the production and distribution of fresh cut flowers. Here in the northeastern states and Canadian Maritime Provinces we've had a luxuriously long spring. Steady weather has allowed for prolonged harvest of flowering branches, early bulbs, and winter annuals. Highlights for us have been star magnolias (white, pink, and yellow), two months of tulip harvest, and several nigella varieties that grow strong and tall in these cooler temperatures, but bolt short and weak when the weather heats up fast.

Fortunately, nigella is not attractive to the voracious pill bugs that love the environment in our greenhouse beds. Our greenhouse functions as both in-ground season extension space and benches for seedlings. The in-ground beds produce early season crops; the benches hold seedlings until they're strong enough to be moved outside to harden off. We had a plague of pill bugs that colonized the in-ground beds, decimating some crops (tuberose, star-of-Bethlehem, saponaria), while

not at all interested in others (lily, agrostemma, nigella, crocosmia). They especially love saponaria stems – every morning we'd find several plants toppled over and a pile of pill bugs huddled at the base of the stem.

Then we noticed holes on the leaves of the young ageratum transplants. Inspecting the leaves' undersides revealed armies of pill bugs, happily munching away in broad daylight. Though the ageratum plants would successfully grow past the infestation (the leaves of more mature plants

aren't appealing to the bugs), still it was time to get serious. We tried three approaches to minimize their impact:



1. Sluggo. The active ingredient is iron phosphate, a compound that breaks down into fertilizer. Once the bugs have consumed the Sluggo, they cease eating and crawl off to die from iron overdose. Although Sluggo is approved by OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute), several sites question the safety of this product, based on an unlisted 'inert ingredient' called EDTA. Google 'sluggo inert ingredients' to read all about it!
2. Diatomaceous earth is a naturally-occurring siliceous rock that is crumbled into a powder and sprinkled on the soil surface. The silica is supposed to act as a mechanical insecticide, due to its abrasiveness that causes the bugs to dehydrate. However, we saw pill bugs marching across the stuff without any aversion, since it appeared to be quite sodden after taking on moisture from the soil itself.
3. Beer. Save lots of tuna or cat food cans, set them into the soil, fill with any type of beer you don't mind parting with, and you'll be thrilled with your daily catch—a can full of drowned critters. Empty daily before they ferment into a new micro-brew. Obvious results, most cost-effective method—I recommend it.

Even though all the greenhouse crops (except saponaria) survived the pill bug plague, the beer diet hasn't completely eradicated them. Dig around and there they are, lurking beneath the edges of the landscape fabric, waiting for the next mini-keg to arrive and the party to continue. Our plan is to put chickens in the greenhouse once the early-season crops are finished, then sit back while they dine on pill bugs and fertilize the beds. But first I'll trial the idea by tossing a few handfuls of roly-polys to the chickens to be sure they find them palatable.

PILL BUG FUN FACTS

A pill bug goes by many names: roly poly, wood louse, armadillo bug, potato bug. They curl into tight balls when threatened, hence the nickname roly poly. Their ability to curl up distinguishes them from another close relative, the sow bug.

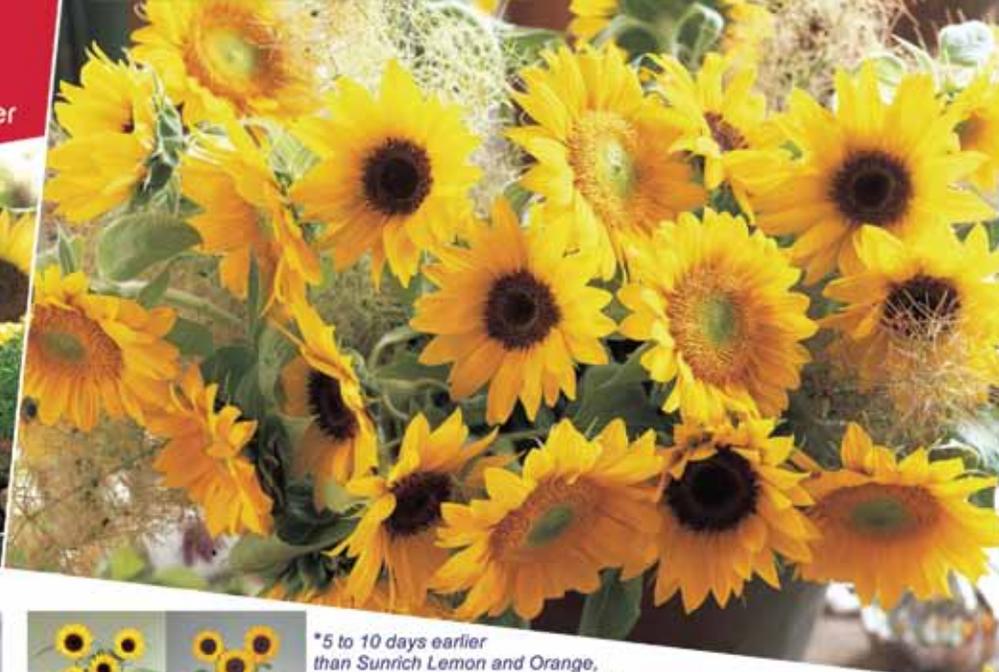


Pill bugs are crustaceans, not insects. Though they're often associated with insects and are referred to as "bugs," they actually belong to the subphylum Crustacea. They're much more closely related to shrimp and crayfish than to any kind of insect.

Their blood is blue. Many crustaceans, pill bugs included, have hemocyanin in their blood. Unlike hemoglobin, which contains iron, hemocyanin contains copper ions. When oxygenated, pill bug blood appears blue.

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MID-ATLANTIC



Jennie Love
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Reconsidering the Tulip

When I first started flower farming, I heard a lot of experienced growers talk about how there was no money to be made in tulips. I could see that. Walk into a supermarket in April here in Philadelphia, and you can grab a decent looking (albeit boring) bunch of tulips for less than six bucks. When you do the math on that, a typical small-scale farmer who can't order in such bulk that the bulbs are mere pennies is unlikely to make a profit on selling tulips to grocery stores, farmers' markets, or even florists. I ignored tulips for my first two seasons as a result.

As I got more immersed in wedding work, I needed reliable and easy early spring blooms. So I circled back to tulips and decided that if I was going to grow them, I'd pick the ones unlikely to show up at the supermarket, so that my couples would still feel they were getting something really unique. The bulbs for these varieties are not cheap. The range for my order this year, when buying in quantities of 500-1000 per variety, was 18 to 45 cents per bulb. Tack on shipping, and it's a bit of an investment.

If you're doing wedding work with your flowers, growing unique tulips is a no-brainer. You can easily recoup the cost of the bulb and your time growing, plus make a tidy profit. The key is to pay attention to the color trends and/or book your weddings as far out as possible so you know what you are planting is going to be an easy sell to your brides. Peach, white, cream, and soft yellow are always popular for spring weddings so those are safe bets.

If you are selling your flowers to florists, farmers' markets, or grocery stores, you may still be thinking tulips are not for you. Granted, it's not going to be a huge money maker, but there is some merit in it, I promise! I discovered purely by accident how great a crop they can be for just such sales outlets.

My first season of growing tulips for cuts I didn't really know what to expect or when they would be ready. I sheepishly admit to not believing the experienced growers who told me they'd all be ready at once, literally come and done in about a week unless I had chosen varieties carefully to extend that window. So one warm day I walked into my field and realized I had about 1000 tulips all ready and nowhere to sell them! I did not have a cooler at the time so holding them all was not an option. The wedding I had grown them for was the following week, and I figured I could save the tightest blooms for that in a refrigerator I had in my basement. But I still had about 800 fairly open tulips that needed a home. They were beautiful lily and French varieties in complementary shades, and all were a good three feet tall, some taller. I could not let such a great crop go to waste!

I called up my only grocery store at the time, to which I had only sold a handful of bunches previously, so I was decidedly nervous. I knew that tulips were going to be a hard item to push. The buyer said to bring them over and she would take a look. The moment I pulled them out of my van, she was sold. They were like nothing she had seen before and she was confident customers would love them. I sold them too cheap that year, just to get them off my hands. I sadly was not a good record keeper at the time so I do not have an exact number, but I think I sold 10-stem bunches for \$3.50. Needless to say, that did not make me any profit.

But! BUT! It had a magical effect on the customers at that grocery store. They were smitten. They clamored for more! The buyer begged me to grow more that following year. And tulips have become a consistent, sold-out, spring crop for us as a result.



Gudoshnik and Menton (top rt.)
 in arrangement



Gudoshnik



Renown Unique

They are what some might call a “loss leader”. Those of you with marketing or retail backgrounds know this term already. Basically it’s a technique sometimes employed by businesses to suck in customers. It is an item, usually in abundance, that is marked at a low price, sometimes at a true loss, but ideally not so with tulips. The idea is that a customer will come for that inexpensive item and get hooked on your business, or buy a lot of other stuff at the same time, and then as a whole will bring the business more profit. My friends, tulips are “loss leaders” and you should embrace them!

With tulips you will reach your customers earlier in the season so they will get into the habit of buying from you instead of someone else. Tulips have an incredible vase life that is pretty foolproof so customers will think you have the most amazing, long-lasting blooms. And tulips can be growing all winter long in beds that would otherwise be empty, then plucked out to sell and the bed immediately turned over into a new crop with very little downtime. Planting them tightly in trenches is relatively fast and easy (we plant thousands in one afternoon) and picking/processing is also super fast and easy.

If you are selective in your varieties and invest in some of the more unique (and, yes, pricier) ones, like “peony” or double tulips, you can charge a premium price, especially if you sell to florists who are very excited by the double varieties. Parrot tulips can also be a good investment, but they are becoming more mainstream for florists so choose colors that are unusual and not likely to be available from their wholesalers.

There are quite a number of bulb suppliers, and I have used several. Ednie is great and not as pricey as some, especially if you live on the East Coast so shipping isn’t as expensive. Not to mention Dave Dowling to give you great advice when you order! Gloeckner, Botanical Trading Company (Ko Klaver), and Netherland Bulbs are also suppliers to look into. I have personally enjoyed working with Our American Roots out in Washington

State. Great customer service! Check on shipping to you before ordering, though, as that may make the price per bulb more than you want to pay. Shop around and find the right combination of varieties and prices, and then order from one supplier so you can get quantity discounts. Bulbs should be ordered late spring or early summer so order soon if you have not already.

I suspect most of you know, but for newer growers who have not tackled tulips before, you harvest by *pulling* them out of the ground, not cutting. This gives you added stem length and makes bed clean-up easier. If you are really determined, you can try to save the bulbs and get them to come back, but the quality is never good and many will die. Do yourself a favor, and just compost those old bulbs and order more for the next season. Tulips should be rotated to avoid disease buildup in the soil.

Tulips can be stored for quite a long time in the cooler. I have kept them in the cooler for over a month to use for weddings in that “dead zone” of early June when all there seems to be is peonies and baptisia around here and I want a different shape for my designs. Pick them at “color crack” (just when the bud opens enough so there is a slit of color) for longest storage life. We store ours wrapped tightly in newspaper standing straight up in a Procona bucket, no water. We jam as many into a Procona as possible to help them keep their stems straight. Then we put them in the darkest corner of the cooler where the light from the door opening won’t hit them as much. When ready to use, we pull them out a day ahead and snip an inch off their stems and put in a deep bucket of cool water so they get a really good drink. Remember that tulips will continue to grow in the vase so if you are designing for a wedding, put your tulips way down in the arrangements so when it’s “show time”, they’ll be at the right height, not towering oddly over the other flowers.

So, will you reconsider the tulip?

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SOUTHEAST



Tanis Clifton

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As flower farmers, we have discovered that ingenuity is a must in order to accomplish some tasks. In this article we want to share some resources, tips and tools for the flower farmer.

Super Resources

Get on the internet and sign up for the Harbor Freight Newsletter (harborfreight.com). Here's why: they have some super deals on things you need for the farm. If you get their newsletter, you will be notified of all of their sales plus great coupons and even free stuff. Below are just a few things we have found there which we use all of the time.

- Garden wagon (item 38137). This wagon will fit exactly three bulb crates just flawlessly, plus it is great for hauling buckets of flowers out of the field, etc.



- Greenhouse (item 69893). This 10' x 12' greenhouse is an ideal size for starting plugs and for growing on. Little tip: about once per year these go on sale for \$599.



- Moving dollies (item 69566). Bulb crates fit perfectly on these dollies. We always plant our lilies in bulb crates and then store in the cooler for rooting. We can easily manage 5 crates stacked on these dollies and just roll the entire stack into and out of the cooler. It is a real back saver. I am sure there are other great uses for these dollies.



Get on the internet again and sign up for the newsletter from Repurposed Materials, Inc. (repurposedmaterialsinc.com). This company acquires recyclable and discarded material from industries and other sources. The site offers materials, and has suggested uses for the material. Below are just a few things we have found there.

- Conveyor belt. We use this material between flower rows to make a smooth walking surface, to suppress weeds and to cover and keep crops such as dahlias and tuberose warm and dry in winter.



- Billboard tarps. We mix a lot of our own soil so we use our 20' x 60' billboard tarp to keep it covered and dry. This would also be great to store wheat straw and other garden supplies. This billboard is thick plastic and much cheaper and more durable than standard tarps.

More Recycled Materials

You may have these kinds of things around your farm, or can find locally.

- Used carpeting. Carpeting makes an excellent smooth surface and weed barrier. We use it all the way around our high tunnel and between flower rows. We turn it bottom side up. Most carpeting places will be happy for you to take old carpet off their hands.
- Deli frosting buckets. You must have something to hold your harvested flowers. Many buckets available for this purpose can be pricey. Grocery store deli departments often get their frosting, pickles, etc. in five-gallon buckets. In many cases they will just give them to you. We pay a mere \$0.99 each for ours at the local Piggly Wiggly.
- Floral buckets. Most grocery store flower departments get some of their flowers in three-gallon black plastic buckets. They often receive so many of these that they just throw them away. Check with them to see if they will give these buckets to you.
- PVC pipe. Check with your local plumber or builder to ask if he will save the short pieces of PVC for you. The large diameter PVC (2" to 6") makes great support inserts inside buckets. If you stack these pieces inside your bucket it will keep long-stemmed flowers like delphinium, snaps, and sunflowers from leaning against the edge of the buckets, and from potentially breaking or bending.
- Used drip tape. What to do with all of that used and leaky drip tape? I have the answer. It makes excellent flower support line. We tie it to our metal fence posts, rebar, or bamboo stakes and surround some of the flowers that like to flop or lean outside their beds. We use this around flowers that Hortonova netting makes it hard to harvest and weed through like dahlias, lilies, yarrow – the list goes on. It sure beats sending it to the landfill.

Tools

- Cement mixer. We found a great deal on a really heavy-duty cement mixer at a rental place that was going out of business. We use this to mix our soil for pots and bulb crate planting. It does a great job of mixing all the heavy ingredients like sand with the lighter ingredients like compost and sphagnum peat.

- Drip tape dispenser. We built a hose reel to store and dispense drip tape. Ideally we would mount this on a two-wheeled dolly or hand truck. We have even considered mounting it to an old wheelchair so that one person can just wheel it out to the field and unroll the tape single-handedly.
- Bucket hook. Have you ever had the problem of stacked buckets sticking together? It is almost impossible to get buckets pulled apart, especially when you're trying to do this by yourself. This has ALWAYS been the bane of my existence! We finally installed a large screw hook into a beam in the barn. Loop the handle of the top bucket on the hook, and pull down on the bottom bucket of the stack. Voilà!

As flower farmers, it is great to find resources and tools that make our job easier and help to run our farms more efficiently. We would love to hear about recycled materials or tools that you find helpful and just can't live without.



NORTH AND CENTRAL



Kent Miles

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After the crazy winter we had (long and cold), it seems that our spring is getting shorter each season. Our spring crops like flowering cherry, snowball viburnum, apricot, plum, and lilacs ended up being about two weeks behind a normal season. Our late portion of curly willow and pussy willow ended up in demand for wholesalers and retailers, which helped clean up a few rows of product in the field. The weather cooperated with our tulips, iris, and peony. Peony went very well at markets for four weeks.

Looking forward myself to the ASCFG National Conference October 19-22 in Delaware. We have an interesting line-up of speakers and farm tours for this conference. For the newbie or seasoned grower, everyone will pick up new information to bring back to their farms.

If you are involved with social media like Facebook, Twitter or blogging, lots of chatter has been going on and some very interesting topics. Seems that those who follow us have been interested in knowing about our wreaths that we design for farmers' markets and customers directly. We design three types of wreaths: dried flowers, fresh wintergreen, and willow.

I'll run through the basics with you on how we offer them and construction.

Dried Wreath

Two sizes, 24" and 36", are made using an 8" metal clamp ring. Our farmers' market prices are in the \$50-75 range for the 24", and \$75-125 for the 36" wreath. Difference in prices for each size depends on the amount of material used. For several years back we used chicory for starting the base and the last four years changed over to pennycress. The pennycress gives us a thicker wreath to start with. As some of you know, I don't use a wreath-making machine to construct the wreaths. I have been looking into finding a machine (foot pedal) and will be getting one this fall. I found a manufacturer about an hour away and they also make the metal rings in several sizes. I'm still doing them the old-fashioned way with pliers and a hammer. I still have all my fingers!

I've gotten some friendly ribbing (comments) on Facebook as to the way I make the wreaths. It's all good folks.

With the base made, take eight bunches of pennycress (1 bunch per clamp section). We let our mood go with the picking out of materials, colors and textures to use in each wreath. Starting in the spring throughout the season I hang extra crops grown just for wreaths up in the barn. They are just hung on first floor and second floor rafters. I try to gather 200-300 bunches of pennycress each season. Pennycress dries to a nice straw color, so sometimes I enhance the color to more of a basil tone. Some flowers may fade in the drying process so the natural color maybe returned with a floral spray.

Wintergreen Wreath

Same as the dried flower style: 24 or 36 inches. The new property needed some windbreaks. I decided to use white pine, spruce, Douglas fir, and balsam fir. After about 5-7 years, when they got some height to them, I decided to make some money on them. I began the last few years offering white pine, Douglas fir, and balsam fir bunches to wholesalers and retailers. Our basic wintergreen wreath has a base of boxwood, pine, arb, fir, and balsam. To that combo I add accents like dusty miller, dried peony, bittersweet, sea holly, rose hips, dried peppers, and cones.



Oh, by the way, “No Ribbon Bows “ on our wreaths. I was in retail before growing and everyone wanted a bow or some sort of ribbon added to their wreath, got so burnt out. So if someone wants a ribbon treatment they can do that themselves. Our prices for the wintergreen wreaths are in the range of \$30-50 for the 24”, and \$50-75 for the 36”. Depending on your market , prices may vary as to the amount added to the base mix. Each season we do more and more for the holiday season. It’s great to have customer purchase every year. Sometimes we’ll do special wreaths such as all boxwood or all holly.

Willow Wreath

Willow wreaths are our largest seller and we’ve been offering them for the last 7-8 years. We offer them in three sizes: small, 24”, medium, 36”, medium 40-52”, and large, 60-72”. We have been shipping these to several repeat customers over the years for their homes, businesses and holiday house walks. Small, medium and large are made with the 8” ring. Custom sizes we’ve done are in the seven to ten feet diameter. These are made on a 36” ring and are for commercial orders.



Take a look at the photos and if anyone has any questions drop me an email. Our wreaths are an income that I did not consider when I started to first grow flowers. The last few years, they have been an important part of our offerings at the farmers’ markets mix of product. If I forget to bring a few wreaths to the summer markets, customers will ask “Where are the wreaths?”, or “I thought you made wreaths.”

If you are not offering wreaths at your markets, give it some thoughts to adding them. At the beginning few weeks when our product is low at the market, I’ll hang them from the van side. Later (June - November) I purchased a 16’ cattle panel at the local farm supply store, cut in half (8’) section and use them running down the sides of our booth spaces at the market. Can hang 3-5 per panel depending on size. When the market moves inside for the holidays, I zip tie both panels together so they will stand on end (8’) high . Then you can use both sides to display your wreaths.

Seems that most of our customers who pick up a wreath are getting them for gifts to others. We always move a few each Saturday off and on at the outside market. The majority of the wreaths move from October through December.

Have a great summer!

SOUTH AND CENTRAL



Rita Anders
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Wow what a spring! The crazy weather this year broke records and so did our farm. We managed to out sell previous years by almost double due to mostly the weather. Rain came when it was needed and lasting cool temps into May were so wonderful. Kind of got a taste of what northern growers experience.

Last fall I purchased an Earthway seeder and had lots of fun planting many rows of larkspur. Timely rains and a cold winter sure helped. I had so much larkspur and it grew so tall and beautiful thanks to advice from a friend, Charles Hendrick of Yuri Hana Flower Farm in South Carolina. He told me to chill the seed in the fridge for a couple of weeks and then take it out and pat it dry, place it in the Earthway seeder and get to planting. I went down and up the row six times in a four-foot row in November and just left it alone. It sprouted and grew into tall beautiful plants. There was so much of it that we just started cutting off at the ground and bunching into 10-stem bunches. My favorite colors were the white, purple and blue of the Qis and Sublime Series.

In January I was trying to get a jump start on sunflowers, as I wanted some for early bouquets. I planted two seeds into a 4” pot and planted several trays of pots every week. This worked great in a minimally heated greenhouse. I had the thermostat set on 34 just to keep everything from freezing. The sunflowers were perfect for bouquets. As early as the last week of February I planted some outside thinking winter was almost over and boy was I wrong. They were sprouted when the sleet storm arrived, but luckily I covered them with a double row of row cover; they made it and I had the earliest ever sunflowers. I’ve found that sunflowers will take the cold pretty good as long as they are used to it. Last fall we went through several frosts and it didn’t get them till we had a hard freeze. In March I started direct seeding sunflowers with the Earthway seeder by using the plate that is for Swiss chard and beets, and taping shut every other hole. It still puts out a few more seeds than I want but I use the ones that are planted too close together for bouquets and straight bunch all the rest.

It may seem early, but it's already past the time to order your ranunculus and anemone bulbs for this fall's planting. You can still put your orders in but optimum time to order them is as soon as you are done with the past season. This fall I will be adding a new variety of ranunculus to my flower list. It's the Elegance Series, available from Onings Holland. Elegance is like La Belle from seed production, but with newer varieties and fewer viruses. Henk Onings of Onings Holland says that the Elegance, compared to La Belle are just a bit better, larger size flower, better yield, taller and stronger and straight stems and brighter fresher assortment of colors. The Italian varieties—like Elegance—get better prices on the Dutch auction.

They will be offered in 100 packs, minimum 600 bulbs per order to specialty cut flower growers by Onings Holland. The Italian ranunculus grow rather tall and are very easy to grow according to Onings. Because these can handle warmer temperatures fairly well, some of the Californian growers are growing them year around.



Burgundy Quinoa



Achillea 'Summer Berries' and 'Cerise Queen'

Last year when Joe Schmitt shared his growing schedule, I noticed an interesting plant on it called quinoa. It comes in burgundy and green varieties. I tried both and especially loved the burgundy. It grew to be about three feet tall, and has seed pods that I describe as a tiny eucalyptus plant. It looks cool paired with sunflowers, zinnias, and lily bouquets.

Two years ago when I grew achillea 'Summer Berries' and 'Cerise Queen', I'd bring a few bunches into the store with my deliveries. Buyers begged me for more, floral designers and customers love them, so this year I

planted more. I sell it in 10-stem bunches for 5.00 to my store account. It doesn't seem like much in a bunch but it sells quickly. I've found that if you are able to straight bunch flowers for your

customers, you will make more profit than making bouquets because if you are like me, you add more to your bouquet just because you think it needs more and it cuts into your profits. Our process is to pick out the best and make straight bunches and then use the rest to make bouquets.

The ASCFG Bulletin Board and Community Network are great places to share your successes and failures because it helps us all to share flowers that have worked or not. Sometimes it's just a step you are not doing right and when you share, someone will know the answer and then everyone benefits from their ASCFG membership. Check the ASCFG web page for the National Conference schedule and other important information about the October meeting.

WEST AND NORTHWEST



Paula Rice

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I have this dream where I have so many peonies that I sell them from a huge pile out of the back of my pickup truck. The sheer massiveness of it would be so "in your face" awesome, you'd just have to buy some. That would be really cool.

Since I began flower farming, I have diligently purchased peony roots every year to increase my supply and let me tell you—it takes forever! Especially when you do it a little at a time. So far I have about one-third of an acre planted with the first ones finally cashing in. I love, love, love them. *Life is so easy and beautiful when peonies are around.*

I've put a lot of thought into a perfectly planned peony field and I am picky about what varieties will go into it and where. That's what I'm going to share with you in hopes that you too can someday sell peonies from the back of your truck.

I have drawn out my phantom peony field and organized it according to color and bloom time so that we would naturally harvest from one section to the next. This field would be divided into an early-season section, a mid-season section, a late-season section, and a very-late-season section. Each section is further divided by color. So you have the reds, pinks, whites, corals, and miscellaneous colors all planted into the same groups/rows. And naturally you have them planted according to variety. (Or no, if you are buying a little each year and adding on, but at least it is in the correct bloom-time and color section of your field.)

I have been particular about choosing varieties that have a long vase life. Did you know that some peonies can have a vase life of up to 9.5 days? If you want to "wow" your customers, stick to varieties that will astound them with long vase life. While



long vase life isn't the only determiner, it ranks seriously high for me and I try really hard to stay with peonies that have this characteristic. I do have lots of 'Sarah Bernhardt', with a recorded vase life of 5.6 days which isn't as high, but because her stem count is so awesome, my brain could not stop doing the math ($\$ \times \text{stem count} = \text{profitable}$). Other determiners might be you simply need to have something early for your market or you don't care about long vase life, just having variety for your wedding customers. The point is to choose the characteristics you want and organize the field in a way that is progressive and makes sense for you.

Unfortunately there isn't a whole lot out there on the vase life of peonies; usually the best we can get is that it is recommended as a "good cut". A really great list and resource that I have followed pretty closely is the one done in 1995 by Kansas State University extension specialist Karen L.B. Gast. This list is in Lynn Byczynski's book *The Flower Farmer*. If you can connect with an experienced peony grower, they can help you determine which varieties will be best for you based on your needs and expectations.

This spring I was able to organize a group-buy within my Region for an ASCFG peony farmer who decided it was time to retire and wanted to liquidate his field inventory. This farmer was willing to sell entire root balls for a great price if we were willing to come and get them all on the same day and share the expense of the backhoe. Basically, he took individual orders within my group so that he knows how many total of each variety needs to be dug. On "dig day" (this fall) we will all arrive, be handed our orders (pick tickets), go to each pile, pull our number of root balls per that variety, and then choose to stay and divide our roots (with some supervision from the owner) or just leave and do it at home. I know these babies can be large and difficult to handle, but I'm up to the task. I have been dreaming of an acre peony field since the beginning of my flower farming career and this is going to put a serious dent in it.

Next winter, plan to draw out and organize your Phantom Peony Field and next spring you'll be ready to make an order for fall of 2015. Heck, you may even be able to start this fall. If you search for "peony" on the ASCFG Bulletin Board you'll come up with oodles of suppliers. I'm looking forward to my fall peony digging and planting. I can't wait to meet everyone, learn the ins and outs of "hands-on" dividing peonies and ultimately, turn a dream into reality.

What Our Members Tell Us

A huge shout-out to fellow member Carolyn Snell. My western Maine farm is at least two to three weeks behind and my first wedding of the season was this week. This was my first wedding where I was doing all the bouquets and bouts, etc. Normally I just do table arrangements or sell buckets so I was pretty nervous anyway! A quick email to Carolyn and she was able to supply me with all the fresh local flowers I needed for this wedding. Everything came out beautiful, the bride is thrilled and my reputation is intact. Thank you Carolyn! This one experience was worth my membership fee to ASCFG. So glad I joined.
Cindy Creps, Meadow Ridge Perennial Farm, Hebron, Maine

I value the access the ASCFG gives me to the best and most current information and resources pertaining to growing and selling cut flowers – this includes all of the amazing members!

Audrey Blecha, Ted's Last Stand Farm and Gardens, Gordonsville, Virginia

The primary reason I'm an ASCFG member? Endless information.

Nicole Farrell, Tall Grass Farms, Medical Lake, Washington

I'm glad to be an ASCFG member so I can increase the quality and diversity of my flower offerings, and increase sales!

Renee Clayton, Wild Scallions Farm, Timberlake, North Carolina

We've been ASCFG members for 20 years, and appreciate the networking and access to information of all kinds.

Tammy Ford, Perennial Favorites, Leopold, Indiana

I love being part of this community of growers. We are diverse, but we have so much in common. It's fun and has really helped my business grow.

Carolyn Snell, Carolyn Snell Designs, Bar Mills, Maine

Congratulations to Members Celebrating Ten Years with the ASCFG!



Rita Anders



Sue Ellen Claggett



Paula Harman



Charles & Patty Hendrick



Galen Kalbach



Sally & Doug LeFevre

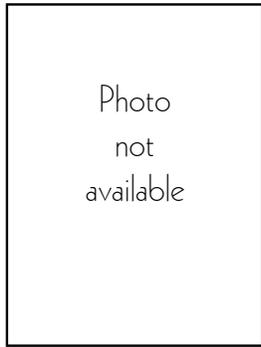


Photo
not
available

Gay Marini



Linda McCall



Elizabeth Ann Ruppert



Eiddwen Thomas

The ASCFG Welcomes its Newest Members

Amy Acevedo, Painted Lady Flowers, Franklin, MA
Gloria Battista, GBC Style, Montebello, NY
Ron Beck, Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., Clackamas, OR
Denise Bliss, Bliss Haven Farms, Noblesville, IN
Lauren Brown, Sweet Root Village, Alexandria, VA
Jane Capron, Austin, TX
Sallie Constant, Sequim, WA
Mary Coombs, A Garden Party, Elmer, NJ
Diana Cowdery, Mae Flowers, Beacon, NY
Lisa Derx, Amaranth Gardens, Dayton, MD
September Dykema, September's Herbs and Produce, Montague, MI
Karen Gesa, Midsommar Farm, Lovettsville, VA
Jackie Greenfield, Good Scents Herb & Flower Co., Hendersonville, NC
Andrew Grootendorst, Addy's Sunflowers, Coloma, MI
Conor Hickey, N. Waterboro, ME
Paul Hildebrant, AAA Mercantile, Woodburn, OR
Sarah Ingalls, Cape Cod Hill Farm, New Sharon, ME
Kathryn Jackson, Belle's Flower Co., Decatur, GA
Kristie Kapp, West Barnstable, MA
Jen Kellen, Northern Sun Farm, Shevlin, MN
Jacqueline Korell, Edgartown, MA
Tannis Kowalchuk, Willow Wisp Organic Farm, Damascus, PA
Roxy Marcy, Birch Forest Farm, North Pole, AK

Annette McGuffey, A Country Rose Florist, Tallahassee, FL
Emily Monahan, Cooperstown, NY
Jennifer Nelson, Humble Pie Farm, Northfield, MN
Jodie Nord, Fox Flower Farm, Elgin, IL
Peggy Heath Ogilvy, Windsor, VT
Henk Onings, Onings Holland Flower Bulbs, Paso Robles, CA
Kathy Overby, Daisies 'n Denim, Henderson, NC
Pam Percy, Pampered Produce, Milwaukee, WI
Mary Perry, Winterberry Farm, Belgrade, ME
Martha Pineda, Martha's Gardens, Dubuque, IA
Kelly Preslar, Signal Mountain, TN
Dru Rivers, Full Belly Farm, Guinda, CA
Chloe Roy, Frelighsburg, QB
Sandy Sandlin, Bumblebee Flower Farm, Port Washington, WI
Dana Simpson, Cat Run Ranch Flower Farm, Mount Vernon, OH
Kimberly Smith, Upper Black Eddy, PA
Beth Spaugh, Rehoboth Homestead, Peru, NY
Sam Stampport, West Columbia, TX
Katy Thelen, Happy as a Coneflower Farm, Cary, NC
Maureen Titus, Elizabethtown, PA
Mary T. Turner, Salt Farm Flowers, Bangor, ME
Sylvia van Oort, Sylvia's Plant Place, Perth, ON

2014 Election

An electronic ballot will be sent to members later this summer. Please review all the information below, and when you receive the email, take just a few minutes to cast your vote. Your participation is important.

Board of Directors

In 2014, ASCFG members will elect a Secretary and a Treasurer (two-year terms), and Regional Directors for the North and Central and South and Central Regions (three-year terms).

We are fortunate to have several qualified candidates on this year's ballot. Current office holders Barbara Lamborne (Secretary), Josie Crowson (Treasurer), Kent Miles (North and Central Regional Director), and Rita Anders (South and Central Regional Director) have all agreed to run again. Mim_o Davis-Duschack and Emily Watson are also on the slate for North and Central Regional Director.

Secretary

Barbara Lamborne, Purcellville, Virginia

Flower farmers are such special people, because we grow food for the soul. The ASCFG brings us flower people together in so many ways, but when I'm at a Regional Meeting or Conference, that amazing energy that we embody is indescribable. I have tried to use my position as Secretary on the ASCFG Board to help capture and channel that passion we have for flowers to help each other mature as business people, and to grow new farmers. To that end, in collaboration with fellow board members this past year, we revisited our mission, goals, by-laws, and roles and responsibilities. We also continued to refine and enhance our programs and services to better respond to and serve our members. I'm committed to continuously improve our board and association, if re-elected, so we can further spread the magic that flowers bring to our customers and communities.



Treasurer

Josie Crowson, Fredericksburg, Virginia

I would be honored to serve as ASCFG Treasurer again. I have enjoyed this job immensely these past two years. As a former economist and something of a numbers-nerd, the Treasurer's duties are right up my alley. I actually LIKE reading balance sheets and income statements and working on the budget. Besides, serving on the Board helps me stay in touch with the wonderful flower-growing people of ASCFG. After almost a decade of flower farming (and serving as Regional Director during the last three years of that period), I retired from flower farming in late 2011 and moved from Texas to Virginia. Serving as Treasurer has allowed me to remain fully connected to our organization even though I no longer have a flower business. I would love to continue in that role, and hope to help with some of the initiatives that your action-oriented Board has begun or has planned for the next couple of years. I believe that the ASCFG is poised to make some great progress.

North and Central Regional Director

Mimo Davis-Duschack

I remember attending my first ASCFG Conference (Raleigh, 1997) like it was yesterday! It was a life-changing event for me. As a new farmer transplanted from New York City I had a lot of questions and no answers. Here in the Midwest everyone knew about corn and soybean but no one seem to know about cut flowers. It wasn't my thumbs that were "green" but more like behind my ears!

Since then the ASCFG and its members have become family to me. We are an amazing cast of characters doing phenomenal, creative, entrepreneurial work promoting this industry. Not only has the membership grown, so has the demand for our product.

I'm the co-owner of Urban Buds: City Grown Flowers, in St Louis, just south of the Gateway Arch. Our one-acre farm dates back to 1870's; through most of its history it was a flower farm. We are rehabbing the property and continuing the flower growing tradition, by using the remaining glass greenhouse and field space. We sell at the Tower Grove Farmers' Market and direct to florists, and service a few selected events. And that's just the half of it! I spend my days as a Horticulture Specialist for Lincoln University Cooperative Extension, providing technical and educational assistance to urban and rural small commercial farmers and community gardening projects.

If I'm elected, I'll have a second opportunity to serve as your Regional Director. I will work to promote a mentorship program for young farmers, and maybe not so young but those new to flower farming. I mentor several farmers now, and often feel I get more out of our conversations than they can imagine. I'm grateful for my own mentors who are now dear friends and who continue to nurture me. Helping one grower at a time improves our efforts worldwide as a locally grown, American grown industry.

If elected not much will change for me; I will continue to service in whatever way I can to an organization I love.



Kent Miles

I have been involved in the horticulture field since 1980 in several areas: designer in retail, shop owner, fresh cut salesman for wholesaler, designer at University of Illinois, and presently owner of Illinois Willows.

Our markets are to retail florists, wholesalers in the Midwest, farmers' markets, event planners and internet sales.

I am running for my second term as Midwest Regional Director. I would be honored to continue in this position serving the membership in my region. Bringing new ideas and growth to our members builds on this great organization.

Happy flowers bring happy growers and happy growers bring us all the beauty.



Emily Watson

I began Stems Cut Flowers in 2008, with experience in both landscaping and retail floral. I had started to get this idea in my head: I should grow cut flowers for a living! I asked my grandpa if I could borrow a little land (he's got quite a lot), and then I signed up for the Wisconsin Cut Flower Growers School that winter. One of the very first things I did when I got home was to join the ASCFG. It was absolutely the best decision I made for my business, without this organization I can honestly say that I would have quit flower farming after the first year. Well, I am pretty stubborn, so it might have been after the second year.

My business has grown and transformed so much since that first year. When this all began I did not want to do weddings at all. Now that is where most of my business comes from and I enjoy it... most of the time.

As I am heading into my seventh year as a flower grower I am finally starting to feel comfortable and more in control of my business. For that I have so many past and present ASCFG members to thank. So I thought maybe it was time for me to start giving back some of that goodness that I have received over the years.

South and Central Regional Director

Rita Anders

I joined the ASCFG ten years ago after being a vegetable grower for 26 years. That was the beginning of my flower growing company, which has evolved into a thriving business selling to a major retailer, florists, local events, and doing lots of weddings. I'm also a wife, mother, and grandmother of 6 (soon to be 8) grandchildren who all keep me very busy. During this time I learned so much from other members and made so many friendships that will last forever. I feel so lucky and blessed to be able to get up each morning and be happy with what I'm doing and finding much reward. Three years ago I was asked to run for election for the North and Central Region, and so glad I did because it gave me the chance to give back to an organization that has helped me so much. This year I was asked to run again for Director, and would be delighted to continue to serve. I would also like to continue on the board to keep furthering the development of the Buy Local/American Grown movement, educational meetings, and avenues to help our members be successful. I really enjoy helping other growers in their own business and it would be an honor to be your Regional Director again.



ASCFG Bylaws

The Board reviewed the bylaws and found they were in need of a facelift. Under the excellent guidance of Josie Crowson, the Board has streamlined and updated them to better serve the existing organization, and to be more flexible as needs change. For example, the proposed revision allows the Board to change the composition of the Regions as the geographic distribution of the membership changes, rather than having to amend the bylaws. Officer terms have been changed from two to three years, to allow for better long-term planning (this will take effect in 2015).

Find the current bylaws, and the proposed revisions, on the ASCFG web site.

Cut Flowers of the Year

Fresh

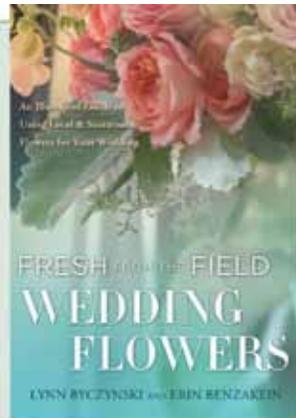
- Celosia 'Kurume Orange-Red'
- Celosia 'Sunday Orange'
- Dianthus 'Sweet Black Cherry'
- Hibiscus 'Mahogany Splendor'
- Millet 'Purple Majesty'

Woody Cuts

- *Abelia mosanensis*
- *Caryopteris* 'Longwood Blue'
- *Cornus* 'Midwinter Fire'
- *Cornus* 'Royal Purple'
- *Syringa* 'Purple Fire'

Cut Bulb

- Calla 'Captain Paris'
- Lily 'Belonica'
- Lily 'White Express'
- Ranunculus La Belle Series



A NEW BOOK PROMOTING THE USE OF LOCAL FLOWERS FOR WEDDINGS

Created for the eco-conscious couple who wants to have a greener wedding, floral designers who want to jump on the locally grown trend, and specialty cut flower growers who want to enhance their floral design skills.

- Four in-depth videos totaling 75 minutes teach you the basic mechanics and overall thought process involved in creating lush, seasonal wedding flowers.
- Four step-by-step photo essays demonstrate how to make a hand-tied bouquet, boutonnieres and corsages, mason jar centerpiece, and tall arrangement.
- Dozens of photographs of local flowers used in real weddings.
- Information on growing more than 100 flowers, foliage, and other botanicals for weddings.

SOFTCOVER, 7"X10", 112 PAGES, DVD WITH VIDEOS. \$40 (\$32 TO GFM SUBSCRIBERS) + \$5 S/H. GROWINGFORMARKET.COM; 800-307-8949



Judy M. Laushman

Our Natural Resources

How many times have you attended a class or conference session on marketing whose take-home message was “Tell your story.”? Whether yours is a version of “I always dreamed of starting my own flower farm.” or “I’m continuing my family’s floral company.” everyone has a unique story behind the evolution of his or her business.

Most everyone loves to hear stories of how businesses get started, and a business that grows cut flowers—who could resist?

Some growers have virtually captive audiences for these stories: farmers’ market customers, retail florist buyers, even members of wedding parties are interested to learn how cut flower farms got started, and how they’re maintained.

The neat thing about sharing your story is that you have the opportunity to not only explain your own journey, but also to share a little about the emotional benefits of flowers and plants in humans’ lives; the difference between your fresh and fragrant flowers, grown a few miles down the road, and commodity flowers, brought in from thousands of miles away; and, to those who seem to have a little more interest than others, that an organization exists to inform and unite growers just like yourself.

Every year the ASCFG welcomes several new members directed to us by current members. No matter the size of our web presence or the number of conference brochures we print and mail, our best resource for sharing the organization’s message is you. It’s gratifying to read “I was talking to one of your members about flower growing and she said the first thing I should do is join the Association.”

The passion all flower growers share for their profession, and that our members seem to share for their organization is infectious. Thank you for sharing this benevolent affliction, and the story of how you contracted it. Let them discover for themselves that once you’ve got it, there’s no cure.

Cut Flower Tour
September 9, 2014
8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.



Locations

Belvedere Farm
Fallston, Maryland

Bauer’s Greenhouse
White Hall, Maryland

Sponsored by

University of Maryland Extension

Maryland Greenhouse Association

Association of Specialty
Cut Flower Growers

Registration & Information

(301) 596-9413

\$25 registration fee
includes lunch

Checks made payable to
University of Maryland
11975 Homewood Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Cut Flower Tour

September 9, 2014

8:30 Registration at Belvedere Farm

2840 Pleasantville Road, Fallston, MD



9:00 Introduction

Stanton Gill, UMD Extension Specialist IPM and Entomology

9:10 Growing Peonies and Bulb Crops

Ko Klaver, Botanical Trading Company

9:40 Extending the Season without Tunnels

David Dowling, Ednie Bulb Company

10:10 Tour Belvedere Farm

Belvedere Farm evolved from a dairy operation to a PYO pumpkin patch to a cut flower farm. Flowers are sold at farm markets, to a wholesaler, and through on-farm sales.

11:00 Dealing with Deer in Cut Flower Operations

Ginny Rosenkranz, UMD Extension Educator

11:15 Diseases of Cut Flowers

David Clement and Karen Rane, UMD Plant Pathologists

11:30 Water Management in Cut Flowers

Andrew Ristvey, UMD Extension Specialist Horticulture and Nutrient Management

11:45 Coolers: The Best and Least Expensive for Cut Flower Growers

Chuck Schuster, UMD Extension Educator

12:00 Insect Control in Cut Flowers

Stanton Gill, UMD Extension Specialist IPM and Entomology

12:15 Catered Lunch

1:00 Using Old-fashioned Roses as Cut Flowers

Maria Price-Nowakowski, Willow Oak Farm

1:30 Travel to Flowers by Bauers & Greenhouse

4601 Harford Creamery Road

White Hall, Maryland

2:00 Tour Flowers by Bauers

Greenhouse production of snapdragons, sunflower, dianthus, and stock for more than 30 years. The Bauers are masters of production space utilization. They have added lettuce production to their mix and they will share how they market this along with their high quality cut stems.

THE ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALTY CUT FLOWER GROWERS

PRESENTS

Growing GROWERS

The ASCFG 2014 National Conference

OCTOBER 19-22, 2014

NEWARK, DELAWARE

GROWERS
SCHOOL

SESSIONS ON:
SUCCESSFUL WHOLESALING
DESIGNING & WEDDINGS
GREENHOUSE MANAGEMENT
HIRING & MANAGING CREW
~ AND MUCH MORE! ~

TOURS NEW
VARIETIES

TRADE SHOW