

Volume 27, Number 3 Summer 2015

# *The Cut Flower*

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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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## From Dominoes in Texas to Peonies in Illinois

Frank Arnosky

Frank remembers the Texas farmers who served as his first mentors when he started out in horticulture, and finds similarities with the ASCFG today.

When I moved to Texas back in 1982, I'd never been south of the Mason-Dixon line or west of the Mississippi. I had sent an application for graduate school to Texas A&M, and promptly forgot about it. I was working as a lab tech at my alma mater Michigan State through the winter. That spring, Texas A&M called me out of the blue and said they were expecting me down there that fall. That was the first I'd heard of it! I asked them what the funding looked like (Michigan was out of money back then) and they told me a characteristically Texan tale of new buildings, expanding departments, oil wells, and lots of funding. It sounded like they were lighting their cigars with hundred-dollar bills down there.

I agreed on the spot, bought an old truck, loaded up and headed south late that summer. I didn't know a soul in Texas. It was 104 degrees the day I arrived. The last town I hit before College Station was called North Zulch, and as they say, "There weren't nothin' there." I thought I was miles from nowhere. There was one small strip of restaurants and bookstores on the north side of campus, and a bar called the Dixie Chicken. There were four horses tied up to the porch railing outside the bar. No lie.

Feeling like Dorothy in Oz, I landed with a thud in the Pomology lab on the outskirts of campus. It was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. Running the lab was a Texan named Jim Kamas. His family was part of a sizable

population of Czechs and Moravians that settled the hilly areas west of Houston generations ago. Many of them still spoke with a strong Czech accent. Jim instantly became a mentor to my education in horticulture and Texas culture.

"That's Almost Czech!"

Jim had a 20-acre peach orchard in Nelsonville, Texas, where his granddaddy still ran a general store. I would help in the orchard on the weekends, and learned to play dominoes in Tom Kamas' store, where the old Czech ranchers would sit in the back and drink fifty-cent Shiner beers and play dominoes all night long. When they found out I was Hungarian, one of them smacked the table with his hand and said "That's almost Czech!" and invited me to sit down and join them. That's where I learned to be a Texan.

Through Jim, I got to meet some old-school Texas nurserymen. They were my inspiration and I considered them gurus. One man, Peter Guinn, ran a citrus tree nursery outside of McAllen. Jim and I slipped out one Saturday afternoon from the national ASHS horticulture meetings in McAllen and sat on buckets in the middle of Mr. Guinn's trees and talked about life. Another man, George Madden, had a pecan nursery. He was almost blind, but he would run up the rows of his trees, showing me how to dis-bud the trees to force branches out at better angles. He

couldn't see the buds, but his fingers worked up and down those trees expertly.

Most memorable was a man named Vernon Wilson. He and his wife Ruby Jewel ran a fruit tree nursery about 30 miles east of Texas A&M. A group of us, all pomology students, would go out and see him on weekends. East Texas was like another planet to me. Mr. Wilson was a small, thin man, probably in his 80s and he always wore a khaki shirt, khaki trousers and a big pith helmet. He had thick glasses that magnified his eyes so that, together with the pith helmet, they gave him an animated look of an inquisitive explorer. He had been a nurseryman all his life and he knew plants like no one else. Ruby Jewel made the sweetest iced tea in East Texas, and would always have us in for a glass.

We would work with Mr. Wilson in his nursery, but soon he would get to talking and we would all stop and listen. I learned from Mr. Wilson that horticulture was really made up of three branches: horticultural science, philosophy, and religion. To Vernon Wilson they were inseparable. The same went for Mr. Guinn and Mr. Madden. They inspired me to eventually start my own nursery, and from that grew a thriving cut flower operation. I used to wonder sometimes if I would ever be good enough to be a real plantsman like these men.

Since those college days, I haven't been able to get out much to meet growers such as those, but last May I

## Breeding Peonies for Flower Size and Quality

We started the tour in a stunning garden of tree peonies, all in full bloom. Juergen said it may be the largest collection of named tree peony varieties in the country. Many of them were numbered seedlings from Don's breeding work, and many of the blooms were tagged with new crosses. Some of the flowers were at least a foot across.

We went out in the fields where I got an eyeful of their breeding stock, along with some beautiful new cultivars just being released. Many of the early types are single or semi-double varieties, but beautiful nonetheless.

A real standout was 'Pink Bubbles', new this year. It had deep, bubble-gum pink flowers on long, strong stems. Another early-flowered winner was 'Dark Promise'. It is a deep dark rose, fully double and very early. Juergen told me that one of the goals of Hollingsworth is to breed for early, fully double varieties. I asked about all the single and semi-double varieties they were using for breeding, and he explained how they used single varieties that were heterozygous for genes for doubleness to breed for doubles.

What that means is that although they are singles, they carry a recessive gene for doubleness, and when bred with other heterozygous single-flowered plants, the genes for doubleness will sometimes be expressed when both are combined in one plant. One of the challenges of breeding double peonies is that sometimes they are so double flowered that they may have no pollen or stigmas. The single blooms are fully functioning flowers, so they are able to produce pollen and set seed.

Hollingsworth Peonies is an online retail nursery, and some of these new varieties can run over 100 dollars apiece. I asked Juergen who the market was for these new varieties. "Collectors," he said. "We have a lot of customers in Russia."



Frank Arnosky with Juergen Steininger and Don Hollingsworth.

got the chance to visit Hollingsworth Peonies in Maryville, Missouri. Don Hollingsworth is one of the best known and most successful peony breeders in the country. As Ko Klaver says, "He is a walking, talking peony Wikipedia." I considered it a real privilege to get to meet him and see the nursery, so I took a side trip from my spring journey to our peony farm in Minnesota.

Don is in his 80s and has retired (sort of) but is still active in the business. Don has a long string of breeding successes, and many of his peonies are well known in the cut flower trade. 'Command Performance' and 'Many Happy Returns' are two well-known reds from Hollingsworth Peonies. But perhaps Don's best-known peony is the beautiful intersectional (Itoh) hybrid 'Garden Treasure'. Itoh hybrids are a cross between woody tree peonies and herbaceous peonies. They are very difficult to breed, but Don has a number of well-known Itoh cultivars to his name.

I got there just as the early peonies were starting to bloom. A huge white barn sits near the house where Don met me at the door. A young assistant named Zach was going over the morning's crosses with Don, and a side room was filled with paper trays full of anthers and pollen. Don was busy with that morning's breeding work, so Juergen Steininger showed me around the farm. Since Don retired, Hollingsworth Peonies is now part of Botanical Trading Company, a long-time supporter of the ASCFG. Juergen is the general manager of Hollingsworth Peonies and is working with Don in breeding new varieties.



Hollingsworth Peonies' new variety 'Pink Bubbles'

Clearly there is a market for these new varieties. One of the new introductions, ‘Early Canary’, was already sold out at \$120 a plant. Too bad—I want one! It is a beautiful, full double yellow. Maybe next year!

Later on I visited with Don in his tree peony garden. One of the interesting things he told me is that he thought there was more potential for raising peonies in the South, and that he knew of people who successfully raised peonies in Florida and southern California. That got me thinking about our Texas farm, and the potential here. I also started looking at how many species of peonies come from warm or hot Mediterranean climates, and I’m getting excited about breeding peonies myself.

Hollingsworth Peonies’ retail website is [hollingsworthpeonies.com](http://hollingsworthpeonies.com). Botanical Trading Company can be reached at [botanicaltrading.com](http://botanicaltrading.com). Ko Klaver is the sales and marketing director at Botanical Trading Company. Ko has a wealth of knowledge himself, and you can purchase wholesale peonies (and a lot more) through him.

I got to thinking about my past mentors and gurus, and how the ASCFG plays that role for many of us. When I was first on the board back in 2000, I shared the job with growers such as Will Fulton, Ed Pincus, Bernadette Hammelman, Bob Wollam, and Ralph Cramer. A board meeting for me was like a session with many mentors. We now are establishing a formal mentoring program, but for years the ASCFG has been an informal network of mentors and mentees, where the mentor/mentee roles can change as quickly as the crop discussed; the expert of one crop is now the student of the next. You can’t put a value on the access to information we all give and receive as ASCFG members.

I also want to thank the incredible board members that we now have guiding the ASCFG. This is an amazing group of volunteers with boundless energy and a real passion for the organization. They are generous with their time and always thinking ahead. They work hard on the big concepts, and they roll up their sleeves and make the conferences and meetings a success. Thanks to all of you for your dedication to the ASCFG.

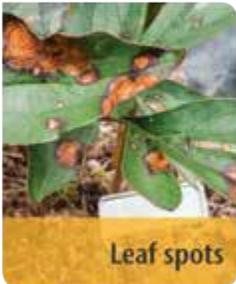
That said, you’ll be receiving an electronic ballot soon to vote on the next slate of board members. As they say in Texas, “Vote early and vote often.”



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## Flowers at Riverside Farm

Richmond, Vermont

By Jodi Helmer

It's a long way from a corporate office to a dairy and cut flower farm. Alison Kosakowski Conant made the journey in just a few years.

Alison Kosakowski Conant never planned to be a flower farmer.

After graduating from college with an English degree, Conant moved to New York to pursue a career in advertising and public relations. She logged thousands of frequent flier miles—and even relocated to Copenhagen for work—to help high-profile clients like Playtex and Hasbro execute their brand strategies.

On weekends, Conant kicked off her high heels and power suits to work with a local florist.

“I have always loved flowers,” she explains. “As a kid, I got in trouble for picking flowers on the soccer field instead of playing the game.”

A part-time gig prepping flowers for bridal bouquets allowed Conant to indulge her passion for pretty blooms. But her plan was to climb the corporate ladder, not spend her career digging in the dirt.

“From the moment I graduated, I was focused on pursuing a corporate career,” she explains. “Growing flowers never occurred to me.”

In 2009, Conant had a dream job working in corporate communications for the transoceanic shipping conglomerate Maersk. It made international news when Somali pirates attacked one of their ships, the Maersk Alabama, and took its captain, Richard Phillips, hostage. The ordeal was the basis for *Captain Phillips*, the 2013 blockbuster hit starring Tom Hanks.

Conant relocated to Underhill, Vermont, Captain Phillips' hometown, to help the family navigate the media frenzy surrounding his capture and rescue. While Conant was



responding to interview requests and sending press releases, she was unknowingly charting a new course for her life.

### “I Fell in Love with a Farmer”

In Vermont, Conant met a local farmer, Ransom Conant. She started spending more time on his 1,000-acre farm, helping with milking the herd of 800 Holsteins and pitching in at the farm stand. Before long, Conant traded her high profile media career and an apartment in New York for the slower pace of life on the farm.

“I fell in love with farming because I fell in love with a farmer,” she says.

The open space and fertile soil inspired Conant to indulge her lifelong love of cut flowers. In 2011, she planted a field of sunflowers and

zinnias to add color to the farm and, to her surprise, the blooms burst forth in the summer; she sold the bouquets at their farm stand, dubbing the venture Flowers at Riverside Farms.

“Growing flowers was a way for me to find my own thing on the farm,” Conant explains.

Experience helped Conant build her confidence to expand Flowers at Riverside Farms. In addition to sunflowers and zinnias, Conant started experimenting with different varieties of cut flowers. This spring, her garden includes Chinese forget-me-nots, godetia, cerinthe, celosia, lisianthus, asters, rudbeckia, euphorbia, gomphrena and strawflowers. The colorful new varieties have attracted new customers who purchase bouquets or buckets of cut flowers from the farm stand.

## Expansions and Aspirations

Although Conant doubled production between 2014 and 2015—she rented space in the greenhouse at the University of Vermont and planted 2,000 starts in the garden this spring—she still considers Flowers at Riverside Farms a small operation. In fact, Conant calls herself an “aspiring” flower farmer.

“Over time, I want to grow the farm bigger,” she says. “In the short term, I want to work smarter, get more experience and get better at what I’m doing.”

Conant, who juggles flower farming with a full-time job as the communications director for the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, believes growing cut flowers is a lot like managing media relations: Both require research, dedication, creativity, and strong skills in crisis management and, in the spring and summer, the whirlwind of sowing, transplanting, cutting flowers and arranging bouquets mimics the hurried pace of life in New York.

*“In farming, so many things that can go wrong,  
even when you do everything right.  
It’s difficult to have a deliberate plan  
because there are so many surprises  
along the way,”*

There is also one stark difference.

“In farming, so many things that can go wrong, even when you do everything right. It’s difficult to have a deliberate plan because there are so many surprises along the way,” Conant says. “You have to be patient and willing to surrender control.”

Surrendering control doesn’t mean being lax about her business. Conant is interested in scaling up to new retail opportunities and has big plans to use her marketing and public relations background to boost her cut flower business.

To meet the current demand, Conant is investing in infrastructure for her farm, including landscape fabric and a tiller. (Although Ransom is a seventh-generation farmer with barns full of equipment to manage the 1,000-acre farm he co-operates with his father, most of their tractors, tillers and other equipment are too big to use on a small-scale flower farm). She’s also working on adding more perennials to the selection of annual cut flowers on the farm. In the meantime, she’s taking great pleasure in her new life as a flower farmer.

“I spend so much of my professional life behind a desk and appreciate the physical work on the farm; it’s such a pleasure to spend all weekend working outside,” she says. “There is a lot of emotional growth that has accompanied growing things but I’ve never been happier.”

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# Snaps—Again!

Chris Wien, Cornell University

Chris continues his investigation of overwintering snapdragons, typically a summer crop, even as far north as Ithaca, New York. See if it works for you.

A year ago, I reported the successful overwintering of snapdragon varieties in our high tunnel (zone 5b). To make sure that this was not a peculiarity of our winter season, we did it again, and after a tougher winter (January through March temperatures averaged 17F, 10 degrees below the long-term average for this site), I feel confident that this is a good way of getting a jump on the spring cut flower season with this crop, thus getting two crops from one planting.

We sowed the seed of two varieties, ‘Supreme Light Lavender’ and ‘Maryland White’ in the greenhouse on June 3 and July 3, 2014, and transplanted them to the tunnel about 5 weeks later. The plants were spaced 9 x 9 in. in 4 rows per bed, and pinched at transplanting. They produced a good harvest in the fall, and were then either left unprotected in the tunnel over winter, or covered with a low cover of spun-bonded material. The covers were removed in late April, and we started harvesting in mid-May, about a month before new transplants in the tunnel would come into flower.

The results, after 3 weeks of spring harvest, are interesting and encouraging. As indicated in the table, winter survival depended most on having a low cover over the plants. There were also significant varietal differences in survival, with ‘Supreme Light Lavender’ having nearly twice as many plants re-sprout in spring than ‘Maryland White’.

Table 1. Winter survival and early yield per unit area in spring of two snapdragon varieties sown in early June and July, 2014. Plants were either left uncovered over winter, or protected by a low tunnel cover from November to April.

Low tunnel cover	Variety	Winter survival, %	Yield of stems per ft2
None	Maryland White	22	0.2
None	Supreme Light Lavender	69	2.0
Covered	Maryland White	60	4.8
Covered	Supreme Light Lavender	90	6.8
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Stat. sign.	Cover	**	**
	Variety	***	**
	Interaction	ns	ns

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Yields in the fall were 12 and 15 stems per ft<sup>2</sup> for 'Maryland White' and 'Supreme Light Lavender', respectively. Early yields in spring depended on survival, obviously, and are shown in the table. If they follow the pattern of the previous year's trial, we expect them to be about two-thirds of fall yields.

There was a trend for winter survival and yield to be better for the later planting, but neither was statistically significant. Taken together, the results of the 2013 and 2014 trials encourage summer planting of snapdragons in high tunnels, and with protection by low tunnels over winter, taking advantage of the additional early yield the following spring. Give it a try!

For the results of last year's overwinter trial, see the summer 2014 issue of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, or look for my annual report on the Cornell Horticulture website.

Acknowledgements: I am grateful for the excellent help of my assistants, Priscilla Thompson, Anna Enockson and Emily Burrister. Financial assistance by federal Hatch funds made possible this work.

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Fig. 1. 'Maryland White' (in foreground) and 'Supreme Light Lavender' snapdragon, September 29, 2014.

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# Flowering Quince

John Dole and Lane Greer

Quince is a flowering shrub you think about only when it's in its brief, early spring glory. Let's take another look at its potential as a cut flower.

With its bright salmon, white, or orange-red flowers, flowering quince (*Chaenomeles*) is one of the first woody cuts to start the season. Depending on the cultivar, flowering can begin as early as Christmas and continue through March in some locations. Flowering quince is easily forced as well, further extending the season.

All species have their drawbacks, and flowering quince has its fair share. The early blooming makes quince susceptible to winter warm spells that can cause premature flowering, followed inevitably by a hard frost or freeze. In addition, plants often produce flowers and leaves simultaneously, and/or produce flowers on the older wood, necessitating the pruning of flowerless ends of the stems.

There is quite a bit of variability in growth habit across the cultivars, varying from upright to spreading to thicket-forming. Plants take three to four years to come into production, with two to three years needed to produce long stems.

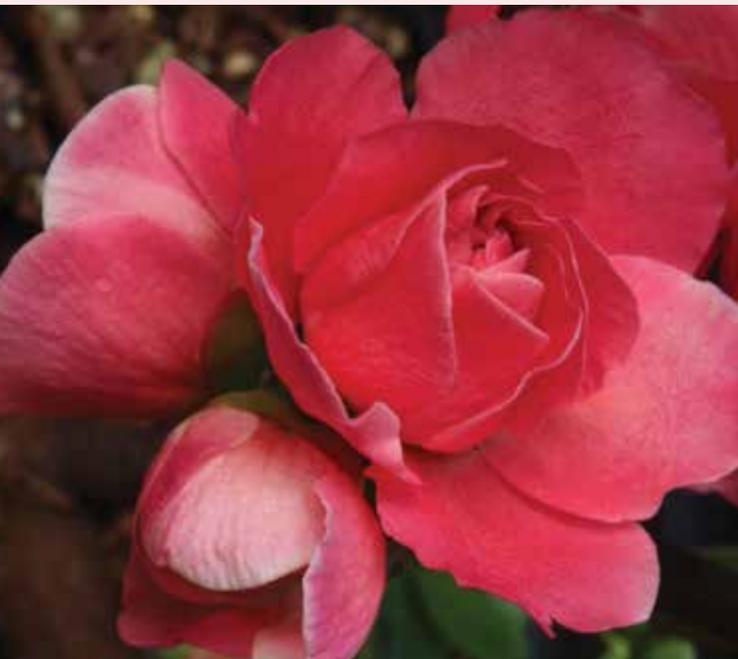
The most annoying characteristic may be the thorns, making the stems dangerous for customers and weeders. While a few cultivars have few or almost no thorns, such as 'Falconet Charlet', 'Scarff's Red', 'Cameo', and 'Texas Scarlet', most cultivars are well armed. Breeders have been successful in reducing or eliminating this characteristic. A new series of cultivars, Storm, is thornless. It was bred Tom Ranney and his colleagues at North Carolina State University.

Three species are available: *C. cathayensis*, *C. japonica*, and *C. speciosa*. Generally, *C. japonica* does not work well for cut stem production, since it tends to grow out rather than up, reaching about 3 feet tall. *C. cathayensis* is a small tree with small white to pink flowers and more thorns than any sane cut flower grower will want to deal with.

Numerous cultivars exist for both *C. speciosa*, which can be upright or spreading in habit with showy flowers, and for *C. xsuperba*, a hybrid of *C. speciosa* and *C. japonica*, which tends to be shorter than *C. speciosa* but often has larger flowers. The Storm cultivars, *C. speciosa*, are not only thornless, but also fruitless and flower closer to the tips than other cultivars. Cultivars in the series include Double Take 'Scarlet Storm', 'Pink Storm', and 'Orange Storm'; all have large, heavily-double flowers.



'Orange Storm'



'Pink Storm'

## Production

*C. speciosa* is hardy in Zones 4 to 8, grows 5 to 8 feet tall and about as wide, with a slow to medium growth rate. The Storm cultivars are hardy in Zones 5 to 8 and grow 3 to 6 feet tall. Place in full sun for best flowering. Plants are fairly adaptable to soils, although dryer soils are preferred and high pH causes yellow foliage. New foliage is bronze-red.

*C. xsuperba* grows 4 to 6 feet tall, has spreading or upright branches, grows best in neutral or slightly alkaline soils, and is hardy to Zone 5.

As mentioned already, most cultivars have thorns, which present a problem during marketing but also with production. Plants tend to grow low to the ground, which makes it difficult to weed under them. With the added problem of thorns on some cultivars, it makes it nearly impossible to weed, so consider using landscape fabric. Space plants 4 to 5 feet.

Pruning depends on the cultivar, as some produce flowers on old wood, or both this year's and last year's wood. Flowers are borne on short lateral stems known as spurs. Young plants produce many leaves, but not many flowers. Spurs that develop on older wood then produce flowers. Older shrubs produce flowers on "young shoots at the end of that season's growth" (Brown and Kirkham, 2004).

For production, very old wood should be pruned out. Dirr (1998) recommends coppicing to 6 inches to enhance flowering, although Brickell (1996) states that the entire plant should not be cut at once.

Flowering quince has no serious problems, although leaf spots, aphids, mites, and tent caterpillars can do some damage to the foliage and new growth.

## Harvest and Postharvest

Stems can be cut in tight bud with no color showing, or just as they are starting to open. Harvest occurs as early as Christmas and lasts through March. Stems cut in tight bud are often partially forced in a warm

or cool greenhouse. The stems are placed in water, then given light and warmth (from 50 to 70F, depending on how quickly you want them to open) for a period of 2 to 5 days. Stems are then sold with flowers ¼ to ½ open. Forced flowers are usually paler than non-forced ones.

After stems are hydrated in water, they can be held dry at 33 to 35F for short periods. For longer periods, store in water. Stems can be shipped dry.

Vase life is normally 6 to 10 days. Individual flowers do not last long, but a stem full of flowers lasts a week.

Buyers look for long stems with lots of flowers and little or no foliage. The non-flowering stem tips can be removed or not, depending on buyer acceptance.

Although harvest can begin in as little as 3 years, plants really need 4 to 5 years to establish. Long stems are produced on 2- or 3-year-old wood.

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Photos by Tom Ranney.

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# ASCFG Customers Shop Hard

Gay Smith

Increasing your flowers' vase life using commercial postharvest solutions can be complicated. Gay Smith helps clear the water. So to speak.

In the Spring issue of the *Quarterly*, I made this statement, "Why commercial formulas are such a turnoff to everyone in the supply chain is a mystery." which elicited a thoughtful response from ASCFG member Dr. Richard Uva of Seaberry Farm in Maryland.

He started by telling me that as a horticultural scientist and a farm owner, working with preservatives has been one of the most frustrating parts of flower farming. Ouch! I hated to hear that comment, but it started the wheels turning in my head about ways to convey information more reliably.

## Grower's Experiences as Valuable as Research

I'm guilty of getting caught up in today's worship of customization and choices. I failed to appreciate the beauty of simplicity. Of course, simplicity in providing recommendations is not as easy as it first appears. In fact, trying to get my arms around the importance of providing one or two postharvest solution options rather than three or four feels as easy as taming a gorilla. The best recommendations go to hell

when research sheds new light on a particular treatment.

But even the most convincing research doesn't come close to the positive impact grower testimonials impart. A huge thank-you to every ASCFG member who has ever mentioned my products in presentations! What is better than hearing about another grower's success with a solution on a crop you grow, which rang true in one of Richard's comments about not having time to test, compare and evaluate solutions while growing 150 crops.

Dr. Uva informed me that "We usually don't see a difference with or without preservatives except in very specific instances. With all the things we grow it seems like they made a difference only once, forcing forsythia." Herein lies the conundrum: postharvest treatments maximize the genetic vase life potential of a flower. Consider vase life as a 24-hour clock that starts ticking when blooms are cut. Maximizing vase performance indicates the success of a treatment, but longevity is tallied at the end—let's say from 7:00 p.m.

to midnight on the vase life clock—long after the product is out of the grower's hands. So without testing, comparing and evaluating, it's difficult to know which treatment made the most positive difference.

Dr. Uva continued: "We use (treatments) on wholesale dahlias too, but the dahlias move fast and I honestly don't know if it matters. I am just

Dr. Uva mentioned "...that environmental conditions, pre-harvest and storage conditions post-harvest usually outweigh the effect of preservative." which is almost completely true. No solution will make a bad flower good. A beloved mentor of mine said it more colorfully; you can't make chicken soup out of chicken poop. Vase success is affected

*Consider vase life as a 24-hour clock that starts ticking when blooms are cut. Maximizing vase performance indicates the success of a treatment, but longevity is tallied at the end—let's say from 7:00 p.m. to midnight on the vase life clock—long after the product is out of the grower's hands.*

doing it for the customer." We all know a satisfied customer is a repeat buyer. David Brown, manager of Boston's Chester Brown Wholesale was quoted in *Floral Marketing* recently, saying "Our customers shop hard." Every flower customer (wholesaler, retailer and consumer) shops hard because flowers are a luxury item and we tend to move to the next luxury fast when flowers disappoint.

by many factors—everything from pre-harvest techniques, the condition of the starting water, cut stage, seasonal light conditions, temperatures, handling logistics, method of packing (dry or wet), and proximity to customer, which is exactly why it's sometimes necessary to provide options. Getting your willow to hydrate rather than crisp up is important whether you're

selling next door or shipping it across the country. But add packing, transit, and additional days involved with getting products to point of sale, and postharvest solutions suddenly become critical. What your customers do to the flowers also makes a huge difference in performance. If the buyer plops your blooms into plain water in a scummy bucket, the flowers flop fast. Flowers that don't hold well are generally considered the grower's fault and customers are not shy to request credit.

### Alphabet Soup

What makes choosing the right product so difficult? Some of the blame lands squarely on flower chemical companies who muddy the water in an effort to win sales. I absolutely agree with Dr. Uva that some product names are a confusing litany of letters and numbers. Our grower treatments are listed as RVB, BVB, or AVB. The VB is an abbreviation of the Dutch word "voorbehandeling", which translates as "pretreatment".

Even my company's name (Chrysal—no "t") is usually mispronounced.

Chrysal's U.S. subsidiary tried to simplify things by designating a professional line targeted to growers, wholesalers, and retailers, but it is confusing because the grower stage is not the only time a hydration solution is used. We also give solutions names to push sales, e.g. "Rose Pro" hydration. This solution does wonders for roses. It is actually our crème

de la crème formula and works great on every kind of wilt-sensitive species. The name is a marketing tool.

A bit of solution vocabulary helps clarify product choices. Hydration solutions turn on flow, lower the pH, and contain no source of energy (sugars). Holding solutions are flower food with a minimum amount of sugar in the mix. Vase solutions are flower food with a maximum amount of sugar to take blooms all the way to the end. Bulb formulas contain minimum sugars and PGS's for leaf quality, bloom opening, and color vibrancy. Gerbera pills are all about keeping the water clean and flowing. No sugar, no acidifier.

For even more clarification, contact me at the [gaysmith@earthlink.net](mailto:gaysmith@earthlink.net).

What about directions on how to use the products? Every product has instructions, but confusion abounds. Pictograms are used for mixing instructions on consumer packets to communicate across cultures. We've tried written instructions as well, but neither is particularly successful. In 25 years of training hundreds of retail florists on flower care, I can count on one hand how many times I've gotten a correct answer to how much water to mix with a 10g flower food packet, yet instructions are on every packet. Need MSDS information? Chrysal and



Pictograms are used for mixing instructions on consumer packets to communicate across cultures.

Floralife both supply MSDS sheets for their product lines.

Dr. Uva made a good point about the lack of information suppliers have about different product use. We sell B2B which means wholesalers are our distributors. They sell flower chemicals to retailers and in some instances, growers, but their interest and understanding are poor—especially for grower solutions. Wholesalers like to be experts about flowers, but not too interested in knowing about solutions. They often simply substitute what they have in stock and what they perceive as equivalent products. They are not.

Uva stressed that our distributors (wholesalers) know very little about our products and cannot help the users. He felt that because of the above, our products come off looking like "cure-alls" or items that can be accessed only by experts. A pity, really. Don't

settle for sketchy information. Feel free to contact me directly for product information, questions and queries. Both Chrysal and Floralife support ASCFG growers.

In summary, Richard said "I think your industry has a marketing problem that could be easily fixed." In response, I must say that I think the entire flower industry has a marketing problem that can be fixed. But I've learned that change happens slowly. Nevertheless, the comments and candor that Dr. Uva shared are extremely helpful in exposing weakness and working toward change.

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# Viburnum Leaf Beetle: Yet Another Invader

Stanton Gill

Viburnum is an important woody shrub for many growers for both cut flowers and foliage. Make sure your favorite species are protected from this pest.

First detected in the United States in Maine in 1994, viburnum leaf beetle (*Pyrrhalta viburni*) has been marching and munching its way west since.



*Viburnum plicatum* 'popcorn'

In 2002, Paul Weston of Cornell University told me about the viburnum leaf beetle and the damage it was inflicting in New York State. It is one terrible non-native invasive pest. Paul studied its life cycle and published several journal and popular literature articles, and most usefully, developed a list of susceptible and less susceptible viburnum cultivars published as a Cornell University fact sheet.

We were recently informed by Gaye Williams at the Maryland Department of Agriculture that the viburnum leaf beetle had found last November in western Maryland in Grantville. It

was found in Elk Ridge Nature Center by Liz McDowell, with damage to the plant, and eggs laid in the stems. Liz said she found eggs in twigs on

*Viburnum acerifolium*, *V. dentatum*, *V. lentago*, and *V. trilobum*, as well as old feeding damage.

It will likely take a while (hopefully) to become a major pest in other states, but let's start preparing for this pest now and understand how to deal with it.

The good part of this is that two of my personal favorite viburnums are pretty much resistant to this pest: *V. plicatum* var. *tomentosum*, doublefile

viburnum and *V. rhytidophyllum*, leatherleaf viburnum.

### Complete Defoliation is Common

Fortunately, it feeds only on viburnums. Paul established that it has one generation per year in New York State. I suspect it will be similar here in Maryland.

From Paul's work we know that adult females lay up to 500 eggs on viburnum twigs in summer and early fall. The eggs overwinter and hatch in spring. Larvae feed on foliage until early summer,

then crawl down the shrub and pupate in the soil. Adults emerge from the soil in midsummer, feed again on viburnum foliage, and mate. From egg hatch to adult takes just 8 to 10 weeks.

Females typically deposit 8-10 eggs into the hole, then seal it with a lid or "cap" made of chewed bark and excrement held together by a special cement. A female will continue up the twig excavating cavities and laying eggs, leaving a distinctive row of caps, usually along the underside of the branch or twig. This is something you use your IPM skills to monitor for in the nursery and landscape.

The early instar larvae feed together, beginning on the underside of tender, young, expanding viburnum leaves. They often start with lower leaves, skeletonizing them, leaving only the midrib and major veins intact. If the infestation is heavy enough, the larvae will completely defoliate the shrub.

Larvae go through three instars (stages). Paul found that in New York State in early to mid-June, when they reach about 10 to 11 mm long, the larvae crawl down the shrub, enter the soil, and pupate. Pupae are very hard to find. They need moist soil. If it's too wet or too dry, the pupae don't seem to survive as well. So hope we have a couple of droughty summers.

In early July, the adult beetles emerge from the soil and start feeding on viburnum foliage. They continue to feed, mate, and lay eggs until the first killing frost. This is the stage where they may migrate to other plants that haven't yet been infested.

## Good News

Paul Weston and Carolyn Jones developed this list of susceptibility to viburnum leaf beetle. Smart nursery owners and cut flower farmers will plant more of the less-susceptible species.

Highly susceptible species are the first to be attacked, and are generally destroyed in the first two to three years following infestation.

- *V. dentatum* complex, arrowwood viburnums
- *V. nudum*, possum-haw, smooth witherod viburnum
- *V. opulus*, European cranberrybush viburnum
- *V. opulus* var. *americana* (formerly *V. trilobum*), American cranberrybush viburnum
- *V. propinquum*\*, Chinese viburnum, Taiwanese viburnum
- *V. rafinesquianum*, Rafinesque viburnum

Moderately susceptible species show varying degrees of susceptibility, but usually are not destroyed by the beetle.

- *V. alnifolium* (syn. *V. lantanoides*), hobblebush
- *V. burkwoodii*, Burkwood viburnum
- *V. x carlcephalum*, Carlcephalum viburnum
- *V. cassinoides*, witherod viburnum
- *V. dilatatum*, linden viburnum
- *V. farreri*, fragrant viburnum (except 'Nanum', which is highly susceptible)
- *V. lantanoides* (syn. *V. alnifolium*), hobblebush
- *V. lentago*, nannyberry viburnum
- *V. macrocephalum*, Chinese snowball viburnum
- *V. x pragense*, pragense viburnum
- *V. prunifolium*, blackhaw viburnum
- *V. x rhytidophylloides*, lantanaphyllum viburnum
- *V. tinus*\*, laurustinus viburnum

Susceptible species are eventually destroyed, but usually are not heavily fed upon until the most susceptible species are eliminated.

- *V. acerifolium*, mapleleaf viburnum
- *V. lantana*, wayfaringtree viburnum
- *V. rufidulum*, rusty blackhaw, southern black-haw
- *V. sargentii*, Sargent viburnum
- *V. wrightii*, Wright viburnum

Resistant species show little or no feeding damage, and survive infestations rather well. Most species in all susceptibility groups exhibit more feeding damage when grown in the shade.

- *V. bodnantense*, dawn viburnum
- *V. carlesii*, Koreanspice viburnum
- *V. davidii*\*, David viburnum
- *V. x juddii*, Judd viburnum
- *V. plicatum*, doublefile viburnum
- *V. plicatum* var. *tomentosum*, doublefile viburnum
- *V. rhytidophyllum*, leatherleaf viburnum
- *V. setigerum*, tea viburnum
- *V. sieboldii*, Siebold viburnum

\*Based on observations at the Van Dusen Botanical Garden, Vancouver, B.C. by Carolyn Jones



*Viburnum tinus* 'San Remo'



*Viburnum trilobum* 'Wentworth'

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## Year-round Greenhouse Production of Cut Sunflowers

Research conducted at the University of Wyoming assessed the potential for year-round greenhouse production of cut sunflowers without the use of supplemental lighting. At 6,700 ft. elevation, Wyoming has abundant high intensity sunlight. With no cut flower wholesale business in the state of Wyoming, the authors suggest sunflowers could be a niche market for local greenhouse producers.

Data collected included stem length and days to harvest in three sunflower cultivars: 'Dafna', 'Procut Bicolor' and 'Sunbright Supreme'. Seeds were sown every two weeks for 14 months, starting November 16 and ending December 12, the following year. Temperature set points were 70F day and 60F night. Stems were harvested when all ray florets were open, but before the disk florets were open. Only stems at least 40 cm (15.7 in.) in length were used in data analysis and considered marketable.

The results show promising potential for year-round container production of fresh cut sunflowers in the Rocky Mountain states, integrating the crop into virtually any greenhouse operation. There were notable differences in days to harvest and stem length in different times of the year. In this study, 'Dafna' and 'Sunbright Supreme' displayed a facultative short-day response, while 'Procut Bicolor' showed a slight facultative long-day response. Cultivar selection or the addition of supplemental lighting can help ensure production efficiency with regard to days to harvest.

*Garfinkel, A.R. and K.L. Panter, 2014. Year-round Greenhouse Production of Cut Sunflowers in the Rocky Mountain West, Hort-Technology, 24(6):743-748.*

## Population Management of Biological Control Agents

Predatory mites have been used since the 1950s for pest control in cultivated horticultural crops. Unlike specialist natural enemies, generalist predatory mites do not depend on the pest as only a food source, but can also use an alternative food, such as honeydew, sugar solutions or egg yolk. Past research suggests a predator population can usually sustain itself for two months or more with very low populations of the intended pest prey. In the early 1980s, research showed that the phytoseiids *Amblyseius barkeri* and *A. cucumeris* can control thrips in greenhouse crops. Furthermore, as generalists, they could be mass-produced on alternative prey that are cheap and easy to rear. Recognizing that these predators can feed and reproduce on sweet pepper pollen, they could be introduced into a flowering crop even before the occurrence of thrips.

As early as 2001, another predatory mite, *Amblyseius swirskii*, was introduced and shown to effectively control white flies and thrips at the same time. Although *A. swirskii* does not depend on the presence of one pest species, it is still desirable

to introduce the predators in the crop before pests occur and supply them with alternative food, especially in ornamentals where economic damage levels are low. Several pepper plants have been identified as suitable banker plants to supply pollen as a food source to a population of beneficials in the absence of the target pest.

When predators and alternative food are introduced in a crop prior to pests presence, the densities of the predators will eventually be limited by the availability of the alternative food. Until this threshold, pest population may be allowed to temporarily increase, though the lack of food will result in the predators feeding on the pest. Research has indicated the predators sometimes perform better on a mixed diet of alternative food and target prey.

*Janssen, A., M.W. Sabelis, 2015. Alternative food and biological control by generalist predatory mites: the case of *Amblyseius swirskii*, Experimental and Applied Acarology, 65(4):413-418.*

# Asiatic Hybrid Lily Production from Bulbils

A new propagation technique may significantly shorten the time required for production of Asiatic hybrid lilies. The current process takes two to three year to produce bulbs from bulblets for greenhouse forcing. The new technique reduces the time from propagation to flowering by one to two years. This research assessed the feasibility of forcing bulbils of *Lilium x elegans* to flower with two to three flowers per stem and a stem length of at least 60cm (23.6 in).

Lily 'Beni no Mai' was the cultivar selected for this research. At anthesis the inflorescence about the bracts was removed to accelerate formation of bulbils. Thirty to forty uniform bulbils formed in the middle of the stem were selected and packed in peat moss. One bulbil was planted per 10cm (4 in.) pot for continued treatments and growing. Continuous and sequential bulb

cold treatments were tested. The effect of bulbil maturity, plant growth regulators and irradiance on growth and flowering were also evaluated.

Success with this technique was achieved by harvesting mature bulbils weighing about 400mg, 40-50 days after anthesis and treating with a sequential temperature treatment 14 to 20 days each at 5C, then 15C or 20C, then 5C. Plants can be produced in about 300 days from potting of the treated bulbils. Further research will need to target breeding and selection of cultivars that produce bulbils and respond to alternating temperatures before and after potting.

*Keun Suh, J., M.S. Roh, 2014. New technique for cut flower production from bulbils of the Asiatic hybrid lily (Lilium x elegans Thunb.), Scientia Horticulturae, 165:374-383.*

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*Labels in flower collage:*  
Lisianthus Mariachi Misty Blue  
Celosia spicata Celway Mix  
Zinnia Pop Art Golden & Red  
Helianthus annuus Premier Orange  
Antirrhinum Legend Yellow  
Lathyrus odoratus Spencer Ripple Mix  
Delphinium culturom Raider Blue  
Dianthus barbatus Sweet Black Cherry

# Suddenly Last Summer

Dave Dowling, Ednie Flower Bulb

Don't let the lazy, hazy days of summer distract you from what needs to happen for a successful growing season next year.

The seasons have changed from the craziness of spring, when there isn't enough time in a day, or days in a week, or available hands to get all the work done on time, to the routine of summer. There is still not enough time to get everything done, but the work is often the same thing, day in and day out, allowing workers to be trained once, and then they can get right to work every day. They know that first thing every day, flower "X" needs to be picked. Or more likely, flowers "A through Z" need to be picked. It often gets to the point where the farm is running on autopilot by midsummer. This is both good and bad. Good because workers can get more done if you don't have to teach them something new, or explain a new process to them every day or two. If you're doing farmers' markets, you've had a few weeks of figuring things out, and now everyone knows where things go when unloading the truck in the morning. You can almost set up in your sleep. Almost.

A bad side of getting in the "summer groove" is that you can forget that you still need to be planning, and planting for the future. It's easy to lose track of time, and then find yourself in the middle of September, when your summer help has headed back to school, and you're not ready for the next season. Did you buy your seeds in time to plant those fall-seeded "cool flowers" that will be your early season income next year? Did you order your spring-blooming bulbs for next spring at the beginning of this summer? How about your other supplies? Do you wait until you're on your last bundle of flower sleeves before you remember to order more? The list goes on:

flower food, harvesting tools, buckets, rakes and shovels, potting soil, etc. The time to be thinking about these things is not when you need it, but in advance, so you're ready when the time comes. Waiting until that first frost is forecast to hit tomorrow night is too late to be looking for your frost blanket or row cover.

The ASCFG National Conference and Grower Intensive meetings are also things that you should plan ahead for. Sure, you'll need to confirm your travel and lodging plans in advance. But you'll also need to plan for your time away from the farm. Who will be harvesting the flowers while you're away? Who will be watering the plants in your greenhouse or tunnel? Do you have someone who can run your farmers' market, or make your florist deliveries? Or will you need to "shut down" the farm for a few days while you go off to learn new things that will make you a better cut flower grower, and will make your farm more profitable?

Many ASCFG members are a "one-person show", where if you don't do it, it won't get done, simply because there isn't anyone else to help get the work done. These are the people that can gain the most from attending ASCFG gatherings. You'll learn some of the most basic things, like how to install support netting, to advanced growing methods that will increase your productivity and income.



Visiting another farm during a meeting, and getting "the tour" can be the most valuable learning you'll ever experience.

Speaking of income, how are you going to pay for that conference? I've often told people to plant an extra batch of sunflowers every week throughout the summer. Just a hundred sunflowers a week can help cover the cost of attending a conference. It's not too late to plant some sunflowers now. That is, if you planned ahead and already have the seed. Sixty-day sunflowers can be planted until two months before your first frost. By my calculations most people can still be planting sunflowers the first week of August.

Now get out there and plan(t) for the future.

---

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## Legal Concerns Around Farm Workers and Employees

by Sanne Kure-Jensen

Reprinted with permission from *Country Folks Grower*, June 2015.

“Ag law is incredibly complex,” said Rachel Armstrong, founder of Farm Commons, a Wisconsin-based organization that works with farmers and growers on legal issues. She is a lawyer and former grower. “Farmers should carefully distinguish between a volunteer and employee. A volunteer must not displace a regularly paid employee doing similar work.”

The largest risk to volunteers is injury, as they often arrive unskilled or untrained in specific farm activities and may not use the same caution as experienced farmers. Armstrong recognizes that consumers everywhere value their connection to the land, wanting to reconnect with the land and with farmers who grow their food. Many farm customers happily volunteer for their favorite farmer. Farmers must manage risks in all aspects of farming. Risk of injury, liability or employment law violations is serious.

### Minimize Your Risk and Liability

Armstrong recommended all farmers purchase a Commercial General Liability (CGL) policy for interns, employees, seasonal employees, and other farm guests who volunteer for compensation. A commercial policy also ensures coverage for off-farm activities (CSA drop sites), value-added processing, agri-tourism, transportation to markets, and for distribution, if you sell anyone else’s products.

Armstrong also recommends a Farm Liability Insurance (like homeowner’s liability policy). This protects the landowner in case of an accident on the farm property. This is separate from a CGL. Shop around and describe all aspects of your business to potential insurance agents.

Be sure you’ve created and are using a clear job description for volunteers and employees, as well as a waiver of liability that outlines potential risks. Many non-farm businesses follow this practice. Be sure to customize the template to your operation and needs. Courts do not like Waivers of Liability, so many are not enforceable, unless prepared by a skilled local attorney.

The second greatest volunteer risk is misclassification. Many volunteers should be treated as employees. Armstrong urged caution when for-profit farms pay volunteers in tomatoes or a CSA share such as with a worker share. Be careful using a volunteer application and asking people to make up missed time. This looks like employment and exposes farmers to employment law, minimum wage, withholding, workers’ compensation, etc.

If your farm offers “worker shares,” be sure the share value covers minimum wage for the hours per week, and be sure to

have workers’ compensation insurance, where required. State labor rules on this vary widely. Some farms offer food, farm products, and/or lodging. This is a great way to train the next generation of farmers. Offering lodging may subject the farm to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) inspections and migrant worker laws. OSHA compliance is required for all farms. The law does not allow routine farm inspections except when a farm provides housing. One of many OSHA rules says that farms providing housing must have bathrooms with hot water. Tents and port-a-johns are not sufficient. States differ on whether employers must offer housing for employee spouses and/or family.

### Who’s an Intern, Who’s an Employee?

Farmers’ internship programs at for-profit farms/businesses must meet all six tests for an intern to be unpaid, paid less than minimum wage, and exempt from receiving overtime pay. Missing even one of these qualifications makes the trainee an employee, no matter what the job title is.

1. The on-farm training and work is similar to training which could be given at a school.
2. The training and experience benefits the intern.
3. The intern may not displace regular paid employees, and the intern works under close supervision of farm staff.
4. The trainer/employer does not gain anything by the intern’s work. Sometimes the trainer’s operation may suffer.
5. There is no promise of a paid job after the training. The training period should have set length.
6. Both the trainer/employer and the intern understand that wages will not be paid during the training.

Armstrong advised any for-profit farm business to treat all workers as employees.

Many interns working in for-profit businesses should be classified as employees. Workers may not sign away their worker rights in any type of contract. College and other approved post-secondary education programs may offer internships with a formal curriculum and course of study. Students typically receive college credits while learning. Students may or may not earn a stipend during their internship. This is different from wages.

Offering training does not mean you can avoid paying minimum wage during a worker’s training time. Manufacturers pay workers to learn how to operate machinery. The same applies for a farmer learning new skills. Consider this the cost of doing business.



By Bob Croft

## What's New with Lisianthus?

germination temperature is 68-72F /20-22C and pre-cooling\* is becoming standard practice. Lisianthus is sensitive to rosetting (induced dormancy) from stress or extended periods of temperatures over 78F/26C. A night temperature of 60-62F/16-17C is recommended. If the day temperature is excessive (>78F/26C), lower the night temperature to (50-55F/10-13C) to provide a lower average 24-hour temperature to prevent rosetting. A light cover of medium vermiculite works well to maintain even moisture and dissolve the pellet. The use of capillary mats is another option to maintain even moisture and provides conditions similar to what is found in nature.

*\*After sowing, plug trays are placed in a cooler uncovered at 50F/10C for 3-4 weeks. Pre-cooling promotes a rapid and uniform germination. After removal from the cooler the trays are lightly covered with vermiculite, then germinated following standard protocol.*

Initial growth is slow and seedlings benefit from a calcium nitrate-based feed at 100-150 ppm N. Light levels should range between 3,000-3,500 foot candles/32,000-38,000 lux. If possible, provide short days (< 12 hours) during the seedling stage to promote vegetative growth and maximize stem length following transplanting. Seedlings are ready for transplanting when four true leaves are present.

### Finishing Stage

Select a cut flower bed with a pH of 6.8-7.2, high in organic matter with good drainage. Work the bed to a depth of 12 inches to promote deep rooting. Transplant seedlings on time (prior to root wrap) for optimum establishment. Set the seedling "slightly high" in the bed to prevent stem rot (rhizoctonia). A spacing of 4 x 6 inches/10 x 15 cm works well and allows for sufficient air movement. Some growers set plants tighter and then leave the center row(s) empty. Following transplanting, apply water overhead for a few weeks or until the roots penetrate into the outer soil. Once established

apply water via drip irrigation to keep the foliage dry. In areas of low humidity, some growers bury the irrigation lines 3-4 inches below the soil surface, which keeps the surface dry (minimizes botrytis) and promotes deeper root penetration.

Fertilize as needed to maintain an EC of 1.2-1.4 mmhos (2:1 dilution). Prior to visible bud, water and fertilize regularly. Then, tone the plants as they mature and flower buds appear by increasing the time between irrigations. Lisianthus develops and flowers based on a combination of temperature, light, and photoperiod. A minimum soil temperature of 55F/13C is necessary for active growth. Once plants are established, higher temperatures, stronger light intensity, and longer photoperiods accelerate development.

For this reason lisianthus is into three groups based on their response to the above factors, similar to forcing snapdragons. The use of high intensity lights and temperature manipulation allows growers to economically force lisianthus year-round in cooler, high latitude areas during the winter months.

In general, plants begin to flower 16 weeks following transplant under natural conditions. For the best quality cut flowers reduce the temperature (< 75F/24C) and light intensity to 1,500-2,000 foot candles/16,000-22,000 lux. Ultraviolet light intensifies the flower color. Cut stems when one or two flowers are open and place in tepid (68F/20C) water and store at 39F/4C. A flower preservative is strongly recommended and increases vase life by 40-50%. Consumers are attracted to lisianthus because of the wide color range, unique flower forms, and long vase life. An American native offering a simple beauty with great sophistication.

*The above information is intended only as a guide and is based on general growing practices. Results may vary based on climate and local conditions.*

Bob Croft is a 22-year veteran of Sakata Seed America, working in technical support and trials. Bob supports growers with culture information and feedback on trials. Contact him at [bcroft@sakata.com](mailto:bcroft@sakata.com)

**Lisianthus** is a long-time favorite of any true flower enthusiast. Today the species is making a comeback and regaining popularity with an array of exciting new improvements in color and bloom size. Doublini, for example, is a new series that offers 1½–2 inch extra-small, rose-shaped double flowers and is available in three striking colors: blue, rose pink and white.

*Eustoma grandiflorum*, commonly known as lisianthus, is native to the wet prairies of Nebraska, Colorado, Texas and northern Mexico. Although lisianthus is native to North America, it is highly prized by the Japanese who initially commercialized it. Today, lisianthus is available year-round in a wide range of colors (including blue) and various flower forms from fully double to single types. The growth and development of lisianthus requires 5-6 months and can be divided into two distinct periods: seedling stage and finishing.

### Seedling Stage

Lisianthus seeds are sold pelleted for ease of sowing, and most often produced in either a 392 or 288 deep plug tray. Plug production time ranges from 8-11 weeks, depending on conditions. Select a medium with good drainage and pH of 6.5-7.0 in order to supply sufficient calcium. The optimum



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Jade

## NORTHEAST

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



### Diana Doll

StrayCat Flower Farm  
diana@straycatflowerfarm.com



I'm making it a practice to do weekly vase life trials with a few leftover stems from our Saturday farmers' market. After the market I grab a smattering of flowers, put them into cups labeled with the trial start date, and leave them out in the barn without recutting

the stem ends or changing the water. The label is crucial since, without clear tags, both the crew and I will likely forget what that odd bunch of leftovers is about, and it will be tossed into the compost.

I want to experience our product from the customer's perspective, since happy customers often become repeat customers. Word of mouth brings us lots of business. When I get a phone call requesting a vase delivery or a bulk order for DIY buckets, I ask how they heard about StrayCat. Most often the response is "From a friend who recommended you.", or "From the farmers' market".

On the seventh day we bring the week-olds out to the picnic table and have lunch. Naturally, some blooms fare better than others. This simple exercise reinforces my constant reminders about proper levels of maturity for harvesting the wide variety of cut material we grow.

Someday there might even be a laminated poster at the clean bucket station, with images and flower names, something like this:

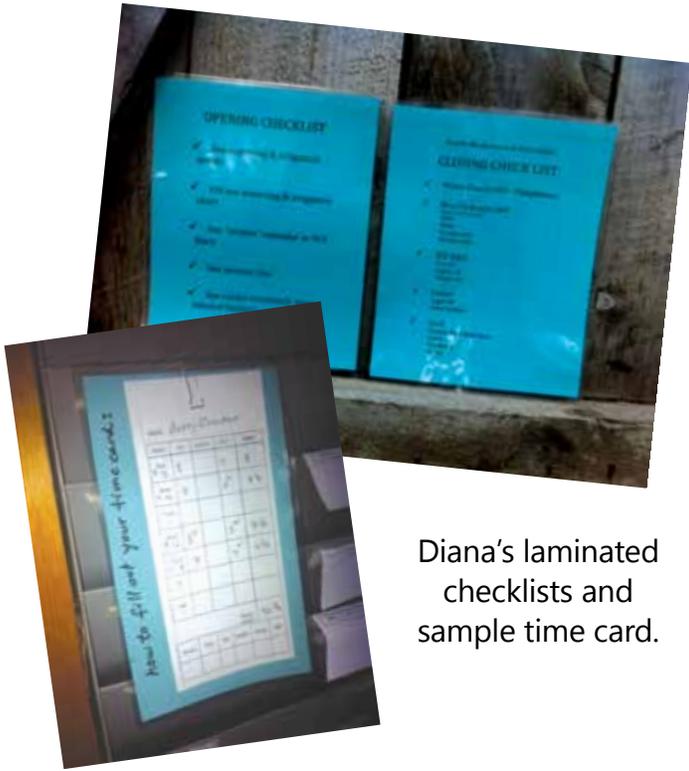
I have a rule that says "All the rules are meant to be broken.", which helps the crew understand why the above maturity indicators sometimes shape-shift depending on the market said flowers are going to. My natural inclination is to harvest suns, lilies, and tulips tight for maximum vase life. Meanwhile, bunches of wide-open blooms from other growers at the market catch the eye of the customers who gravitate toward all that color over the potential of our nascent beauties. Likely they're on their way to a weekend get-together and want to show up with open blooms. I once had a Mother's Day vase delivery customer call back saying the flowers they sent "weren't ready and didn't look colorful". I donned my customer service cap, called back a few days later to check in, and heard that the bouquet had indeed morphed into its full expression: the dianthus blossoms and narcissus buds opened and had a lovely, light fragrance. Still, I mailed them a gift certificate to our tent at the farmers' market, for their trouble.

I'm a big fan of the laminator we've recently come upon at our neighbor's office. I don't use it enough to justify buying one for myself, but that machine has bumped us up a notch in the accountability department. Weekly vase life trials actually happen on a weekly basis, now that the label is encased in that shiny plastic coating (full disclosure – image is pre-lamination era). Time cards are being filled out

consistently now that the laminated sample hangs gleaming next to the time card box. The ASCFG logo, unbattered and weather-proofed, is on display at our market tent.

My farm is on rented land, and has certain infrastructure limitations. The wind and weather creep in through the barn boards and wear on anything that's not nailed down, locked up, or...laminated! Never thought I'd find myself skipping to the office to bring more plastic into the world, but I gotta get back to laminating our opening and closing check lists. Meanwhile, I look forward to seeing ya'll at the upcoming Grower's Intensives. Please introduce yourself and let me know how things are going at your farms!





Diana's laminated checklists and sample time card.

## MID-ATLANTIC

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



### Jennie Love

Love 'n Fresh Flowers  
 info@lovenfreshflowers.com

#### Five Perennial Crops I Could Never Do Without

It's summer and the living is not so easy right now for most of us farmers. The heat and the general exhaustion of the season are starting to wear us down. But it's so important to keep your eye on the ball right now and prepare for big autumn tasks that will set you up for success in the seasons to come. One of the most important things to do in the fall is plant perennials. Fall-planted perennials typically suffer less transplant shock since the weather is cooler and rainier, and they have a whole winter to put on root growth before the next hot summer.

We plant all our perennials in woven black fabric for easier maintenance and moisture retention. Once they are established, we rarely, if ever, irrigate the perennial plantings. I'm of the mindset that they either sink or swim on their own since I would rather have our irrigation system focused on the annual plantings that really can't produce well without it, especially in an extra hot and dry year like we are having this year.

If you're just getting started or want to augment your existing perennial plantings for cutting, here are five that you may not know but that I couldn't live without. My favorite perennial plug supplier is North Creek Nurseries here in Pennsylvania. They happen to specialize in natives to the U.S., and I love that four of my five favorite perennials are such.

#### Mountain Mint

*Pycnanthemum muticum* is a native to the Northeast, and produces robust and abundant foliage, equally perfect for market bouquets and bridal bouquets. It gets at least 24" tall (often taller) and has stiff, slender stems that, unlike typical culinary mints, hold up out of water once they've been hydrated properly. While it's tempting to start cutting this foliage earlier in the spring when you're desperate for filler, it's best to wait until it matures to the silvery bract stage, when it's much sturdier. We typically harvest two big flushes of stems during the season, one in late June and one in early September. In between, there are always a few stems to be had to add that special touch to designs. One criticism of mountain mint you may hear is that it spreads readily. We've not experienced that, likely because we cut it so much that it doesn't have extra energy to run. Even if it did, I'd be thrilled! We never have enough!



#### Blue Mist/Blue Bead Shrub



*Caryopteris* 'Longwood Blue' has been a staple around Love 'n Fresh Flowers since day one. I discovered this fragrant and refreshing little shrub while working at Longwood Gardens and immediately tested it as a cut. Turns out it's awesome! The fine gray foliage on its long slender woody stems is perfect as a fluffer in mixed bouquets. It has a very long vase life. But the delicate, true blue flowers that come at the end of August when everything feels so tired and hot are really the treasures. The flowers should be harvested in bud stage. If they open on the plant too much, they will shatter easily. So you'll find yourself with a lot of *Caryopteris* all at once, but it's never hard to find a way to use it up.

False/Wild Indigo



*Baptisia australis* is another awesome native and one of the hardest-working plants at our farm. In spring, it puts out beautiful flower spikes in shades of yellow or purple. I'm a big fan of the Prairieblues series for its dusky hues. We leave about half the flowers on the plants, though, as we love

the green seed pods that form for our June wedding work. Then the rest of the year we're using the abundant foliage for mixed bouquets and wedding designs alike. The flowers and foliage can be a bit tricky to hydrate, but once they are, they hold for ages in the vase. Harvesting should be done in the early morning, and the flowers and foliage should both be stored in the cooler overnight before being put to use. One criticism of baptisia is that you have to wait at least three years before starting to harvest, but it's totally worth the wait. Once you have an established patch, you'll never know how you lived without it.

Joe Pye Weed



*Eupatorium dubium* 'Little Joe' is another secret native cut flower rock star. It has a delicate umbel of creamy pink flowers in late summer and autumn that are superb in mixed bouquets and design work alike. The first flush of sturdy straight stems is hip-high, and then it re-blooms

throughout the autumn with shorter side shoots. We never seem to have enough even though the patch gently spreads each year. For our purposes, we like the flowers best in bud stage as it's a bit cleaner looking. If you want a more rustic, wildflower look, let them fully open on the plant before harvesting. And if you weren't already convinced, *Eupatorium* is very drought tolerant and a huge butterfly magnet.

Alumroot/Coral Bells



*Heuchera villosa* 'Autumn Bride' is always a surprise to anyone who comes to visit the farm and sees that we are growing a big patch of it. While this native's short stature makes it useful only for design

work, we would be lost without it in late spring/early summer when it's hard to come by good foliage. This particular cultivar is decidedly larger than most *Heuchera*, and it has a good six-inch stem on a wide leaf. It's fantastic for designing centerpieces, particularly because the bold broad leaf is a nice contrast to the other finer, delicate textures of spring. In the autumn, this aptly named cultivar sends up beautiful, tall white flower spikes that are great for mixed bouquets or wedding work.

SOUTHEAST

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



**Tanis Clifton**

Happy Trails Flower Farm  
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In case you haven't noticed, flower farming can be a GIANT time suck! There is a multitude of solutions, tools and equipment for this problem, most of which take money. Anything that can free up your time is a bonus. I can absolutely attest that many times the money you can't spare, or even have to borrow, can make or break your success level in this business.

Think about this scenario: you have tilled all of your beds with a hand tiller, until one day you see the same job done with a tractor and tiller. Hmmm, tractors cost a lot of money but everyone I have ever talked to who made that transition said it was so worth it in time and pain relief. I can personally attest to this; our Troy-Bilt hasn't seen the light of day for years!

Let's go one step further and consider a bed shaper and even a plastic mulch and drip tape layer. My goodness, how many hours were just saved? Think baby steps: all these time savers usually can't happen at once, but you can set goals and budgets accordingly. For instance, consider paying someone with a tractor and tiller, just to test this back saver.

Another time-consuming job is setting out transplants. You can and may do it the old-fashioned way, and bend over or kneel to plant (I feel your pain). Then you may want to graduate to a transplanter such as the Hatfield or the Pottiputki. Both allow you to plant while standing up. There are a few potential issues with the idea behind these types of transplanters. First, the manufacturers recommend that one person operate the equipment while another hands the operator the transplant. The problem here I believe is obvious—what if you don't have that other person? I have tried rigging up a tall cart that I roll along beside me to hold the tray of transplants, but I don't always have aisle space or level rolling area for this. I have also strapped a bungee cord around my waist with the hooks in the cell tray where it is resting down my leg, which is totally awkward. The makers of the Pottiputki have a strap system with a bin, with which I suppose you could take all of your transplants out of the tray and place them into the bin, but aren't we trying to save time here?



Water wheel transplanter

Then there is the cream of the crop, in my opinion, the Rain-Flo Model 1200 Series II Water Wheel Transplanter. Unless you have several thousand dollars lying around, put this on your wish list. Get this: a tractor implement allows two people to sit on either side of an unplanted row. As the tractor rolls down the row at a slow speed, spiked wheels puncture holes into the row cover or planting row, and dumps water into them. Those sitting in the seats can then put the seeds or plants into the watered holes. This beats the heck out of planting on your knees! One can dream.

How about the time-consuming job of seeding trays? I have spent countless hours dropping one little seed in each cell while everyone else is off to bed. Then there are those wonderfully tiny seeds like celosia and amaranth, among others. Have you ever dipped a pencil in water to help pick up one TINY seed at a time to place in the seed tray? Talk about a giant time suck! So we took the big plunge this year and bought a vacuum seeder with all the bells and whistles. Can I say this, "Why oh why didn't I do this sooner?"

We bought a Speedy Seeder from Carolina Greenhouses. If you have never seen one of these in action, you really should go to <http://www.carolinagreenhouses.com> or watch their demo on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ua5kSBEkmJc>



Speedy seeder

This patented seeder has been designed with the grower in mind, and with growers' input, over many years.

The Speedy Seeder is user friendly, accurate, reliable, and fun to use. It is constructed of high quality stainless steel and is able to seed a full range of seed types, pelleted, coated, or raw. Sizes are available to accommodate 10/20 trays. The Speedy Seeder has no vacuum hoses to fight with and the extra seed stay right on the plate. That's the secret! The seed channel attached to the plate holds the excess seed so that you can seed several continuous trays before adding any more seed. This model can be operated singlehandedly. We can't say enough good things about this seeder; it has saved us countless hours and frustration.

There are several other seeders of various quality, cost and time-saving abilities. We have, however not had firsthand experience with all of these. I recommend doing an internet search on seeders to make your own determination. I have listed a few here and am imparting information from their websites.

"The Berry Seeder Company manufactures the Precision Vacuum Seeder. Seeds are poured onto a plate and the operator "pans for gold", moving them around the pan as vacuum pressure collects seeds at each open hole in the plate. The operator holds the seeder vertically while lightly bumping the edge against the table until only one seed remains against each hole. With a seed now held firmly in every seed hole, excess seed are then poured into a container before the seeder is inverted and placed over a soil-filled plug tray; the suction valve is shut, releasing all the seeds at once into their respective cells."

This seeder is a more manual approach than the Speedy Seeder. Other similar seeders include the Seed EZ Seeder, the Evergreen Vacuum Seeder, and I am sure there are others out there.

Another option is to go with a needle seeder. The idea behind this type of seeder is one row at a time is seeded on a tray. These are available in a manual handheld unit up to a fully automated unit with prices varying accordingly.



Needle seeder

Also available is a handheld plunger type seeder, as well as a vibrating hand seeder. These can seed only one seed at a time and are still very time consuming.

If you are a large grower, there are some awesome seeders that fill trays with soil, seed them and practically grow the plugs for you. I recently watched a video from Seeding Line Kappa Soil & Seed and was impressed. These units are way beyond most growers' budgets, however.

There are many innovations for farmers that will make your life a little less painful and free up your valuable time. Make it a goal to improve your farming experience by planning a time-saver purchase this season or next. Good luck to you.

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## NORTH AND CENTRAL

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



### Mimo Davis Duschack

Urban Buds City Grown Flowers  
 citygrownflowers@gmail.com

Wow, this year's growing season seems to be moving at warp speed; we are more than half way through it! I just can't believe how fast it's going! As with most things I always blame the weather. It has been an incredibly long, cool spring with unusually low temperatures and plenty of rain. The temperature is just starting to spike here (mid June). We are still cutting on crops that normally would have melted down by now (delphinium, poppies, campanula,) even the last of our six crops of stock just finished this week. All in all it has been a great season, with sales off the charts across the board for farmers' markets and florists, and this week our flower CSA kicks off with lots of excitement!

We really believe our increased sales are a direct result of a field day we hosted this spring for our customers and neighbors. Our flowers are produced in the heart of St. Louis, and this always seems to amaze our customers who often ask for visits, so we opened the farm one Sunday afternoon and invited everyone! We printed a flyer with our schedule of events for the day, worked with the mosque on the corner to use their parking

lot, and ordered a portable toilet. The week before the open house was spent cleaning and weeding the farm. We missed Saturday farmers' market to focus on Sunday's event.

Our open house started at noon with a band, and a keg of beer from a local brewery. Friendly children kicked off the dancing. Our laying hens and honeybees were on their best behavior, delighting young and old alike. Over the course of the afternoon we had approximately 120 visitors. Our comprehensive farm tour started at 2:00, when the bulk of our guests were present. We meandered the farm talking about the history of our property, urban agriculture, sustainable growing practices we use, and of course every flower in the field. Attendees gleaned what hard work, dedication, and passion we have for our work. Anyone who may have questioned our "high" pricing in the past really got it! We hit them over the head with a bat in subliminal messaging of course!

The farm tour was a huge success and when everyone left we relaxed by sitting on the farm with a beer in hand, enjoying just how clean and beautiful the farm was and dreaming about what more we could do with the property.

*When I go out on deliveries, I find that the relationships with the florists who attended our tour are much closer than the ones who did not. For us closer relationships have translated in increased pre-orders, increased sales and overall better communication.*

Of course a good thing spreads, and the other outcomes of our tour were that a garden writer who attended wrote an article in for a local online weekly paper. A television news reporter read the story and came to the farm and did a story for the local Fox news. This was all free marketing.

Now our customers are a part of our team in wanting success for our farm and the beautiful flowers. When I go out on deliveries, I find that the relationships with the florists who attended our tour are much closer than the ones who did not. For us closer relationships have translated in increased pre-orders, increased sales and overall better communication.

I used to think that our customers had a vision of who we are and what our farm looked like, and having them on the farm could potentially be negative. (Better to leave it to their imagination). How wrong was that idea! When we opened up so did our sales!

If you are considering a farm tour but are nervous like I was, go for it! If you haven't considered it, give some thought to hosting one, matter how small. People REALLY do want to know their farmer.

The fourth Grower Intensive of 2015 will be held in Madison, Wisconsin, October 4th-5th. Now is the time to plan on coming to this event. Roy Klehm of Klehm's Song Sparrow Nursery, and the fabulous team of Joe Schmitt, Carol Larson, Jeanie McKewan, and Emily Watson have planned an amazing two days. Hope to see you!

## SOUTH AND CENTRAL

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



**Rita Anders**

Cuts of Color  
ritajanders@cvctx.com

As I write this article we again have another large line of severe thunderstorms approaching from the west. This has been happening over and over, bringing large amounts of rain. This Memorial Day weekend will definitely be one to remember. Large amounts of rain fell to our northwest. The Blanco River rose way above flood stage and a wall of water wiped out 350 homes and killed several people. One day in May, all but 11 of 254 counties in Texas were under flood warnings.

The South and Central Region covers a large area, with growers from Colorado, Utah, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana to name a few. It doesn't matter which grower I speak with, they all tell me how wet or cold it's been and have greenhouses of plants that aren't planted out for one reason or another.

Jane Hudon of Rancho Verde Flowers in Colorado reported that nothing had been planted outside and it was going to be 27 degrees in the morning we spoke. She had bought a lot plugs and put them in 4" pots to hold them over till she could get them in the ground. Otherwise she has lots of work and she says life is good.

In Okemah, Oklahoma, Jenny Bingham finally got plants into raised beds only to have them drenched with tons of rain. She had a greenhouse full of plants and was just waiting to get things out. She has been under many tornado warnings and so far they have missed her. It's surreal as I'm writing this my phone goes off that we are under a tornado warning along with a flash flood warning.

Mike Milligan from Prickly Pair Farm in Round Rock, Texas says he has had a fairly productive year but the last three weeks have been difficult. The spring crops are still producing well for him but the heat-loving flowers are well behind schedule. So he says the net effect has that he had cool-loving flowers longer, and the heat-loving ones are way behind. He says the last few weeks of rain have stopped him from planting so he will have gaps in production.

Melinda Studinka from Meems Garden in Van, Texas, had a rough spring because of the cold, soil problems in her new greenhouse and like us all, way too much rain. She is hanging in there and she will be all right once the weather straightens out. She has some crops in her greenhouse but due to all the moisture, she is fighting powdery mildew on just about everything.

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In Cat Spring, Texas, Gita Van Woerden at Animal Farm has been able to produce a lot of spring flowers but with all the rain it was hard for her to keep up with harvesting. Market attendance was down as well, because of all the rain during market times. At my last visit to her farm they were installing a new cooler and busy selling her vegetable crops, and Gita had just finished hosting an on-farm meal.

It was really hard trying to put all my thoughts into the article when the rain was coming down so hard and the vicious lightning that night was crackling away. The power would come and go so it was hard to keep up with the weather. My husband burned palms in a dish, an old Catholic tradition we do when the weather is really bad. I unplugged the electronics, because in an earlier storm I had lost my printer and television satellite receiver box which all led to lot more expense and time replacing. We also had our garage flooded, one of the greenhouse roof gutters cave in and lots of plant loss due to standing water. These are all minor losses and just wondering when it will be our time to deal with a much bigger loss.

None of this is strange to any of you as we all take turns as farmers dealing with the weather. My weather app is my most used app on my phone as I'm always checking it to see what's coming next, rain, cold, heat or whatever.

I'm really amazed at how flowers can withstand all the rain, but if we get high winds, hail or standing water, that's harder to come back from. We have been spraying our zinnias and sunflowers with Zero Tol to try to protect them from all the weather-related diseases. The sad thing is that we spray in the morning and within a day or two it's washed off because we've had another round of heavy rain. We also have been planting everything we can in our greenhouses because the weather channel experts have been saying that most of the U.S. is going to be wetter and cooler because of the El Nino; warming temperatures in the Pacific waters and the atmospheric relationship with those temperatures thus leading to wetter than normal patterns. Also all the rain that has already saturated the ground should lead to cooler than normal temperatures.

This all being said is why I'm filling my greenhouses with flowers and vegetables. Normally I don't plant much in the houses as it gets so hot but this year due to all the rain, I'm going to try this and see what happens. Growing in the greenhouse is hard in the summer because the plantings are very prone to powdery mildew. I'm trying to head that off by planting further apart to get more air flow and spray preventively with the Zero Tol . I'm also using 40% shade cloth. Some of the flowers I've been planting in the greenhouses are zinnias, celosia, basil, and lisianthus, as well as dusty miller, several scented geraniums, and some dahlias.

We will keep all these beds working in the greenhouse and succession plant them until we need to get them cleaned out for our fall-planted annuals and bulbs, which happens around

November 1. We get those all ordered now, scheduled to arrive on our farm around October 1.

We still haven't cleaned out our spring beds because the beds are too wet. Some of the crops that I love and reseed every year are Queen Anne's lace, orlaya, nigella, and bupleurum. I normally let them seed out and then remove the



Nigella

plants, and I have gotten tons of re-seeders. I hope they don't rot and I get none next year.



Orlaya

During your next month or two, go over your growing schedule and get all your orders in for your annual plugs or seeds, and all those awesome bulb crops. Don't wait until it's time to plant and be left out. Check out the newly revised ASCFG Members Only section, and use all the great information on there. Lots of good summer reading.

Look for all the information on the fall meetings, and plan to attend as they are so educating and motivating. Also join in with the #flowerbucketchallenge on your social media choice and post those pictures of all your happy flower customers enjoying your beautiful flowers.

## WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Alberta, and British Columbia



**Paula Rice**

BeeHaven Farm  
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If you don't have a system to capture good ideas and nifty tricks, they will soon be forgotten and slip away. I have two systems that keep me reminded of the things I need to do, and the things I want to do. If you have a system in place already—great, you can skip the next few paragraphs and go straight to #1 below. If you don't, let me help you.

You will need two simple things: a notebook and a clipboard. Go and get them. Yes, I mean now.

The Notebook: I want you to write on the notebook “Conference Notes and Good Ideas”, and then a poison sign for anyone who cannot yet read. Either that or some stern warning like “Death to anyone who moves, writes in, or touches this notebook.” Anyone who lives in a home with lots of other people (ahem, kids) will totally get what I mean by that. This notebook will begin to capture notes and ideas from conferences, meetings, videos, articles, and internet surfing. Keep it and fill it up. Always have it in an easy-to-grab location. I now have 1½ notebooks and I read them like books every once in awhile. Many times I find the answers to my present-day problems and dilemmas and am so glad I am a good note-taker. This seriously beats little random pieces of paper that ALWAYS get lost, forgotten, or accidentally thrown away.

The Clipboard: Use a permanent marker or label machine and label this clipboard “Things to Try/Data to File.” I have several sheets of lined papers clamped into this clipboard with various titles.

A.) “Things to Try”. This is a list of all the flowers I want to try growing next year. I add to it over the year as I come across and discover flowers I want to remember to grow. When seed and plug ordering time comes I will reference this list.

B.) “Things to Order/Buy” This captures all the items you need to buy or are considering purchasing.

C.) “To Do List” (I would make this my top sheet.) This, of course, is the never-ending, always changing, day-to-day projects and goals. It’s the master list of where you would build your “prioritized day-to-day carry-on-you” list of what’s going to happen today. (I promise that I won’t get any more ridiculous sounding than what I just said but if you re-read it and briefly think about the words, you’ll see that you probably already have this list going.)

D.) I also have clipped into this clipboard, random bits of information that I am currently referencing a lot and will eventually need to be filed away. It can be a real boost to the spirit to cross something off the list. You are getting things done, even when you don’t feel like it, and that helps you sleep at night.

That being said, I will now move to the crux of my writing. (I don’t want all of these great ideas to get lost).

The California Grower’s Intensive March 23-24 was fantastic. I walked away with jewels and nuggets of good ideas, information and inspirations and I want to share some with you here, in list form of course.

#1. If you are a diversified grower and you’re going to be a semi-serious peony grower, you are going to need two coolers to produce the highest quality peonies. You cannot be continually opening one cooler and causing temperature fluctuations or your

peonies will not store as long. The first cooler is to get the field heat out of the peonies, and to store your other farm flowers. After cooling the peonies, you will sort and grade them. Then they go into the second cooler (“the storage cooler”) where you keep the temperature at 33 ° to prevent them from opening. If I was a dedicated peony grower I might get away with one cooler, but I’m not. I am still harvesting other flowers and filling orders, which causes me to open the cooler quite often. Building a second cooler is on my Big Projects List.

Who is a serious peony grower? Well, in my magical, tiny piece of the world, I had a third of an acre come into full production, one 10 x 12’ cooler with other flowers to harvest and store, and a ridiculously short harvest window this year (all of 1 ½ weeks from earliest to latest field peonies) and I had a problem.

#2. Get a triangular hoe for weeding. I have seen these before and never been interested, but after Tom Wikstrom spoke so highly of them, I thought I’d better give it a try. Love cannot express my joy in this little instrument. Best darn weeding tool ever! Soooo sharp. So easy to use. Small weeds, big weeds, whatever weeds, you’re going down.

I bought mine (actually I have 3 now) from Peaceful Valley in California ([www.groworangic.com](http://www.groworangic.com)). Like the hammer of Thor, it’s a super hero weeding instrument.

#3. Grow more curly willow. There is quite a demand for it. In fact, one grower was having to buy it in to meet demand. Coppice it at hip height. After the San Jose meeting, I stuck cuttings in the ground and many are going to make it. I also rooted a bunch in water to fill in any holes that didn’t take.



Coppiced curly willow

#4. “Pick-A-Mix”. Someone said this and I wrote it down. I think I will incorporate it into my farmers’ market stand as I try to shift into selling more straight bunches. Great way to give people the idea that you’re supposed to buy several different bunches to create your designs.

#5. Callas in crates. Yep, another crop for crates but who cares about the bloom—give me that foliage. New calla varieties have great speckled and variegated foliage that may give hosta a run for its money, and stiff, tall stems too. Golden State Bulb Growers (GSBG) were growing callas in crates (which is great for us northern growers) and they were amazing. They sent us all home with free samples and I'm giving them a try. So far they are coming up nicely and, if all goes well,



Callas in crates

I will give them greenhouse/hoop house space next year and start them sooner. I may even be able to store the crates dried and stacked and get them to come back the following year. All the technical information on how to do this is uploaded to their website, and their leading calla breeder was wonderful to listen to. I thought I had passion. It was obvious they wanted

growers to be successful in growing callas. They have lots of technical information so I'm not anticipating failure... I know who to call. <http://goldenstatebulb.com/>

#6. This from the head grower at GSBG: If you've got sandy soil and you have plenty of water, lisianthus grows very well. To keep disease at bay, don't water it after 11:00 a.m.

#7. Grow more so that you can produce better quality. This gives you more product to choose from when building those Grade A bunches. It also happens to be a practice that will naturally grow your business without having to over think anything.

#8. Many succulents can be propagated very simply by laying a leaf on perlite and leaving it. With a bit of water, of course, after the end heals over.

#9. Encouraging thought: Last fall and this spring I heard two speakers talk about how profitable flowers can be. One said that you should have no problem selling \$100,000.00 in flowers a year on just a few acres. Another shared that on 3 1/2 acres he grossed \$130,000.00 in sales. That is encouraging to a small grower and while my short growing season is a limiting factor, I'm raising the bar and my goals.

#10. Put one of this fall's Grower Intensives on your lists. Basically, for me, they are dream vacations.

## FLOWER BUCKET CHALLENGE

See the flyer

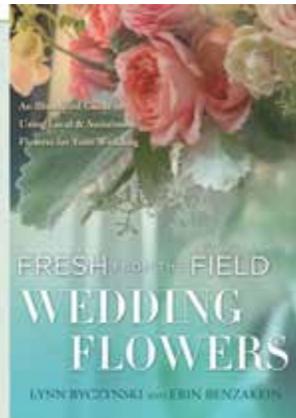
“Why Buy Local Flowers?”  
on page 38 and use it to educate consumers.

Download it at [www.ascfg.org](http://www.ascfg.org)

Send us your photos of happy customers with your flowers.

[www.flowerbucketchallenge.com](http://www.flowerbucketchallenge.com)

[#flowerbucketchallenge.com](https://twitter.com/flowerbucketchallenge)



### A NEW BOOK PROMOTING THE USE OF LOCAL FLOWERS FOR WEDDINGS

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- 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](http://growingformarket.com); 800-307-8949

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## Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

**Katie Beaton**, Houston, AR  
**Zack Bledsoe**, Warsaw, KY  
**Kimberly Burton**, Lakewood, CO  
**Linda Callan**, Saint Albans, VT  
**Harriet Charles**, South Gate Design, Myrtle Beach, SC  
**Angie Clark**, Mishawaka, IN  
**Susan Crawford**, Forest, VA  
**Erin Dake**, Main Street Blooms, Northfield, CT  
**Diana Drain**, Fort Walton Beach, FL  
**Veryan Graham**, Pender Island, BC  
**Brenda Hage**, Dallas, PA  
**Angel Jepsen**, Five Oak Flowers, Charter Oak, IA  
**Christine Johnson**, Fair Field Flowers, Chicago, IL  
**Dennis Kern**, OHP, Inc., Irvine, CA  
**Carla Kimmel**, Zachary, LA  
**Emily Madara**, Staley, NC

**Susan McBride**, Golden Brook Farm, Camden, ME  
**Melina McConatha**, Media, PA  
**Adam and Jennifer O'Neal**, PepperHarrow Farm, Winterset, IA  
**Tracey Parriman**, Cooperative Ext. Mason County, Maysville, KY  
**Blair Ramon**, Blair Ramon Photography, Burkburnett, TX  
**Susan Rockwood**, Stillwater, MN  
**Rebecca Sadlowski**, Rooted Acres, Hadley, MA  
**Maggie Smith**, Pine State Flowers, Durham, NC  
**Barbara Stewart**, Chesterfield, VA  
**Kari Thomas**, Thomas Farm, Aptos, CA  
**Todd Thornton**, Dos Gringos, Vista, CA  
**Caleb Whitfield**, FirstfruitGardens, Mattawan, MI  
**Katy Wietor**, Greenstone Fields, Romeo, MI  
**Der Xiong**, NC Cooperative Ext. Catawba County, Newton, NC  
**Kathy Yearwood**, Mount Vernon, IN

## Trials, No Tribulations



The ASCFG Trials Program Committee has revamped its schedule, and is looking for a few good farmers. In the coming years, we'll not only continue our traditional seed trials, but add a single-species seed trial (we will compare all the major cut flower cultivars of one or two species at a time), a tunnel-only program (anemone and ranunculus will be the next species tested), and because that's just not enough, a trial for herbaceous perennials as cut flowers.

Who's in?

You don't need to participate in all these options; in fact, it's probably better that you concentrate on only one of them. We're looking for dependable growers, excellent record-keepers, and those members who will be sure to see the program through the entire growing season, from properly siting the plant material in the spring to promptly turning in data in the fall.

If you'd like to be one of the first growers to see the newest plant material coming in from the breeders, and to contribute to an important service for all cut flower growers, please participate. Contact the ASCFG office or find more information online.

## ASCFG Mentor Program in Progress

*What I need is someone who will make me do what I can.” ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The ASCFG is launching a new and exciting program in the coming year! We’re developing a formal mentorship program to match our more experienced members with newer members just getting started with their flower farming endeavors. It’s a great way to give back to our community and create lasting, rewarding relationships with the next generation of flower farmers.

The main goals of the program are to:

- Fast track younger or inexperienced growers through the learning phase of beginning flower farming. This will help ensure a more successful venture and build more quality growers.
- Build more successful growers which will make for more active and long-term ASCFG members. Qualified beginning farmers must be ASCFG members to participate.
- Engage older and more experienced growers by keeping them involved in the ASCFG and active within the cut flower movement.

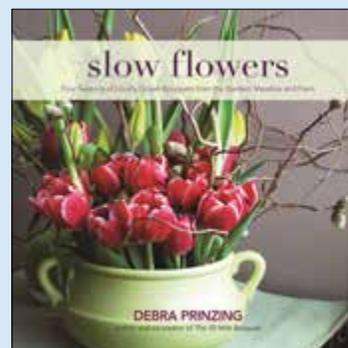
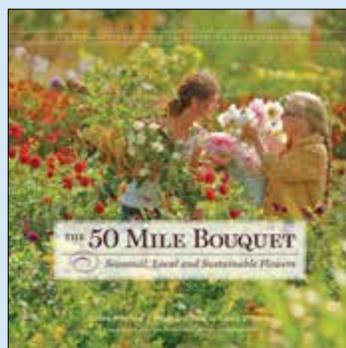
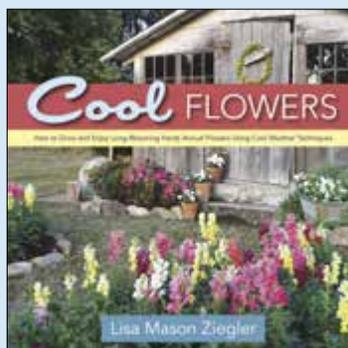
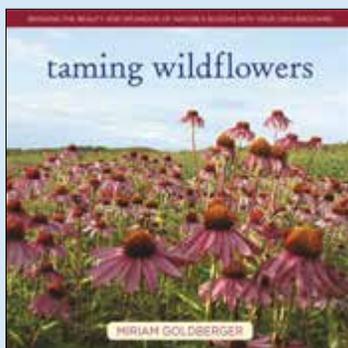


Mentors will be matched with a newer grower for two years, to communicate via email and phone, and ideally visit each other’s farms at least once, sharing experiences and building a supportive relationship.

Several ASCFG members have already volunteered to serve as mentors. This year, five of them will be matched with five mentees, based on location and shared business models.

If you’d like to apply for the program as a mentee, find the application at the ASCFG web site.

## May we recommend...?



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Beautify your bookshelf with these titles from ASCFG members.

# ASCFG 2015 Election

These ASCFG members have stepped forward to run for positions open on the ASCFG Board. You'll receive an electronic ballot later this summer. Please review their information here, and when you receive the email, take just a few minutes to cast your vote. Your participation is vital!

## President

### **Frank Arnosky, Texas Specialty Cut Flowers, Wimberley, Texas**

Serving as board President for the last 2 years has been both a privilege and a challenge as the ASCFG grows and changes. I believe that the ASCFG, first and foremost, is an educational organization, and I think we should remain close to what we do best: providing the best information, networking, tours, and meetings in the industry. We also have an opportunity to galvanize the current consumer interest in locally-grown flowers, and I want to continue the current trend of the ASCFG to be a voice in promoting fresh, locally grown flowers. I would also hope to continue the outreach to other industry organizations that share our goals.

I understand that serving on the Board is a chance for me to learn and expand my abilities as much as it is a service to the organization. I would appreciate the opportunity to serve another term as your ASCFG President. Thanks.



## Vice President

### **Jennie Love, Love 'n Fresh Flowers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

I first became an ASCFG member in 2009 and have always been equally grateful for both the rich source of information and the dynamic community within our ranks. I joined the Board as the Mid-Atlantic Regional Director with the intent of giving back to that knowledge base and helping organize great events like the 2014 National Conference in Delaware. Being part of such an energetic and dedicated national Board has been an incredible experience. So much is moving and changing internally to make the ASCFG even more useful for members. I want to take on a larger role in moving some big projects forward, such as the mentor program, social media outreach, and national PR campaigns to increase demand for locally-grown flowers. For this reason, I'd be honored to become the next Vice President and fill the very big shoes left by Mike.



### **Doug Trott, Prairie Garden Farm, Starbuck, Minnesota**

Robin and I are in our sixth year of growing cut flowers, and have come a long way in a short time, thanks to the ASCFG. We started out growing on less than a quarter acre, harvesting one day a week and making bouquets on our kitchen table for a small local grocery store. Each year we've added new varieties, techniques and knowledge, and now we grow on almost three acres (including a greenhouse and five high tunnels), delivering our flowers four days a week to over forty florists and designers, mostly in the Twin Cities area. Our business has done well enough that I was able to start growing full-time a year ago.

I can't imagine even attempting all of this without the ASCFG. We owe our success to the conferences, the Bulletin Board and Community Network and mostly, to the members, who have shared their knowledge, not just about growing flowers, but about how to turn this obsession into a genuine business.

Serving as vice president would be a way for me to give back, and I would like to help members meet their own personal goals for their flower-growing. I am mindful that not all members are in the United States, and we have a lot of diversity in terms of our climates, soils, markets and facilities, but we can all learn from one another, and help each other succeed.

## West and Northwest Regional Director

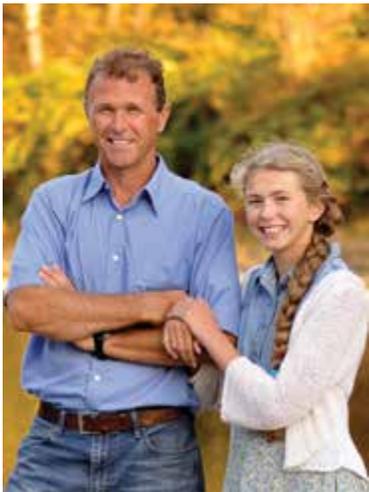
**Lennie Larkin, B-Side Farm, Petaluma, California**

After eagerly attending last year's ASCFG meetings in both Texas and Delaware, you can't imagine how honored I was to be asked to return as a speaker at this year's Grower Intensive in San Jose. My presentation on the ins and outs of starting a small flower farm was well received, as evidenced by lots of laughs (as I shared mistakes that I'm sure hit home for others), and by the slew of emails I've received since, letting me know that I've inspired growers out there, growers who are even younger, even newer to farming, and growing on even smaller plots than I.

I'm working to be an accessible source of knowledge for these newer growers, and to help connect them to the mountain of resources in our ASCFG community. Someone recently told me that I have a knack for "teaching even while I'm myself learning", which is exactly what I aim to do and what I hope to bring to the ASCFG Board.

Before farming, I spent 5 years teaching adult education, alongside writing and editing for magazines and trade publications. Now that I'm fully immersed in the cut flower world, I want to continue to focus on education in our field—and what a great platform the ASCFG could provide.

This is my fifth season farming, my third season teaching farming to the public as manager at Petaluma Bounty Community Farm (1.5 acres), and my first season with my own B-Side Flower Farm (3/4 acre). I'm proud to be a founding member of the North Bay Flower Collective, a group of local farmers and designers working together to strengthen our local flower movement, share resources, and grow our businesses and our movement. We're creating a great and scalable model and I'd love to work with the ASCFG to see how we can connect more growers across the country to one another in similar groups. Here in northern California, I'd love to start a series of half-day farm tours and workshops through the ASCFG. We don't have to wait for the next conference to get together and keep learning. I believe joining the ASCFG board would allow me to continue and expand upon my work in growing growers.



**Patrick Zweifel, Oregon Coastal Flowers, Tillamook, Oregon**

I would like to serve as West and Northwest Regional Director because I feel like I have a lot of real world business experience that would be useful to members of the ASCFG. I have served a prior term as the Regional Director; I enjoyed this time and would like to join the board again. My wife and I started our flower business in 1996 and our business has survived the ups and down of the real world. Our business looks much different today than it did even 10 years ago. I'm a team player and would enjoy the opportunity to serve you.



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Newbern



Mary Jo  
Swartzendruber



Robert  
Taylor



Wenfei & Richard  
Uva

Not pictured: Anthony Giunta, Bryan Gjevre and Harold Wilkins, Renee Halsey, Gail and Mickey Lee, Al and Sherry Minutolo, Robert and Louise Soucie, Gwen Whitmore, and Kathleen Williams.

Have you SEEN the redesign of our Members Only section? It's beautiful, and packed full of information. Check it out today!



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- Connect to important links and documents.
- View ASCFG videos and slideshows.
- Find answers to membership FAQ.
- Download the ASCFG logo.
- Submit a classified ad.
- Give us your feedback!



# Why Buy Local Flowers?

## They Are Truly Local

Almost 80% of fresh flowers sold in the United States are not grown in North America, but in Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Israel. Shipping flowers from those countries to the United States incurs huge transportation, energy, refrigeration, and storage costs, leaving an enormous carbon footprint. These floral materials may carry residue of chemical pesticides or fungicides.

## They Are Truly Fresh

Imported flowers are often cut a week or more before they arrive in a consumer's hands. During this time, quality and vase life decline. Locally-grown flowers can be cut in the morning and on your dining room table that evening.

## They Are Responsibly Grown

Our growers strive to produce their flowers using responsible farming methods like integrated pest management, diverse cropping systems, and low-input fertilization programs. Their farms encourage important biodiversity, soil health, and water conservation.

## They Smell Better

Many commodity-type flowers have been bred for uniformity to fit into a box, and the stem strength to hold up in that box for long-distance travel, usually losing their natural fragrance in the process. Locally-grown flowers are produced in greater varieties, providing a wide range of colors, forms, and scents.

## They Support Small Farmers and the Local Economy

The production and sale of locally-grown cut flowers contribute to a community's economy, and provides employment and valuable agriculture experience to young people.

## They Make You Feel Better!

Flowers reduce stress and improve your mood. Flowers can be connected to a time, a place, a person, a season, an event. They have a story and you are part of it.

**Find the freshest cut flowers using the ASCFG Flower Search and the interactive map tool at [www.ascfg.org](http://www.ascfg.org)**

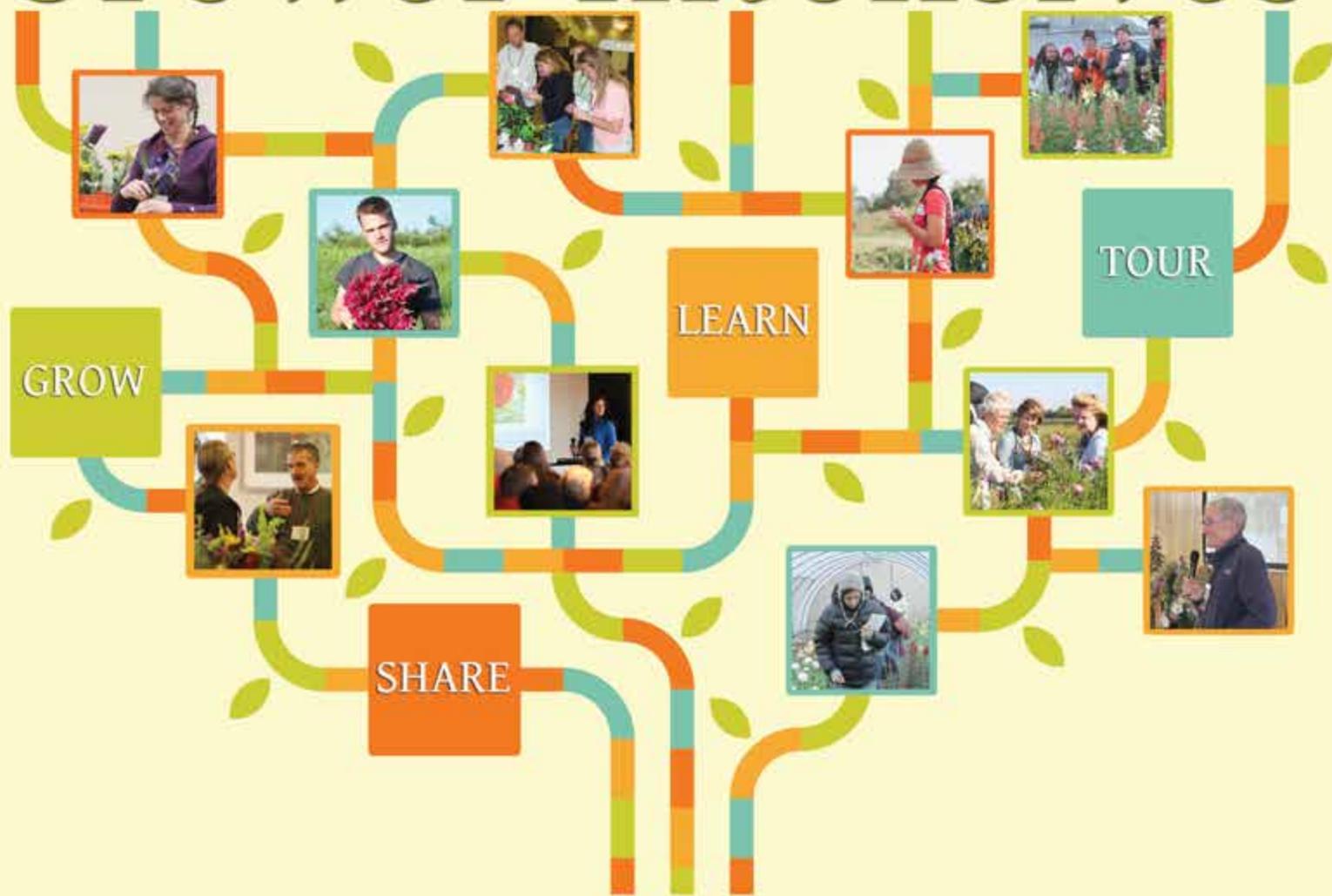


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# Grower Intensives



Association  
of  
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Cut Flower  
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September 20-22  
Greenstone Fields  
Don's Dahlias  
Wollam Gardens  
Virginia

2015

October 4-6  
Sheraton Madison Hotel  
Sunborn Flowers  
Brightflower Farms  
Madison, Wisconsin

Go to [www.ascfg.org](http://www.ascfg.org) for details

# Virginia Grower Intensive

September 20-22, 2015

## Sunday, September 20

### Greenstone Fields, Purcellville

7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Meet & Greet Reception with Question & Answer Session

Mimo Davis, Dave Dowling, Barbara Lamborne, Bob Wollam

## Monday, September 21

### Greenstone Fields, Purcellville

#### Don's Dahlias, Leesburg

7:30 a.m. Registration

8:00 a.m. Irrigation Demystified: Why it Should Rank Higher on Your "To Do" List

Ellen Polishuk, Purcellville, Virginia

Irrigation is a must if you expect to grow quality flowers consistently. Learn the basics of irrigation so you can design and install your own system.

9:45 a.m. Bulbs, Corms, and More Bulbs

Dave Dowling, Ednie Flower Bulb, Fredon, New Jersey

Learn the best techniques for the highest yield and quality of a wide range of cut flower bulbs.

10:45 a.m. Fall Sowings in the Field for Spring Cuts—Start Those Cool Flowers Now!

Lisa Ziegler, Gardener's Workshop Farm, Newport News, Virginia

Lisa will share what you should be planting now to have an abundance of great flowers next spring.

11:45 a.m. Lunch (included with registration)

1:00 p.m. Tour of Greenstone Fields with Mimo Davis and owner Barb Lamborne

The focus will be on high tunnel production of cut flowers, including handouts of how tunnels are used to extend the season for spring and fall blooms.

2:30 p.m. Bouquet Building 801

Jeanie McKewan, Brightflower Farm, Stockton, Illinois

800 level college classes are for the very advanced! Jeanie will demonstrate the efficient production of flower bouquets for mass markets, and explain the process of selling through distribution centers of large grocery store chains.

3:30 p.m. Don's Dahlias, Leesburg

The visit to Don's Dahlias will include a tour of dahlias grown for farmers' markets and the wedding industry. They consider themselves "boutique" growers; custom growing for brides well in advance of their weddings. After twenty years of growing dahlias for exhibition competition their emphasis changed to marketing dahlias to the public.

They also grow 100 hydrangeas of different varieties in a wooded area otherwise unusable for flower production.

Don currently serves as President of the American Dahlia Society, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

## Tuesday, September 22

### Wollam Gardens, Jeffersonton

7:30 a.m. Registration

8:00 a.m. Nurturing Farmer to Designer and Designer to Farmer Relationships

Ellen Frost, Local Color Flowers, Baltimore, Maryland

Laura Beth Resnick, Butterbee Farm, Pikesville, Maryland

Ellen and Laura Beth will speak in detail about the unique relationship between farmer and florist. They will discuss the process of buying and selling, along with cross marketing, and the do's and don'ts of any farmer/florist partnership.

9:00 a.m. Cover Cropping on a Small Farm with Small Equipment

Casey Gustowarow, The Farm at Sunnyside, Washington, Virginia

Jeanie McKewan, Brightflower Farm, Stockton, Illinois

Even if your farm is small and you can't leave part of your growing space fallow, it's important to add green manure to regenerate your fields. Learn the best methods and materials for this process.

10:00 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m. Equipment

12:00 p.m. Dahlias at Wollam Gardens

Bob Wollam, Wollam Gardens

Dahlias are one of Bob's specialties. He'll share his secrets to quality production.

12:00 p.m. Lunch in the Wollam Gardens Pavilion and tours of Wollam Gardens (alternating)

Designed and hand-built by local carpenters, the Wollam Garden Pavilion features supporting columns of native cedars, harvested from the farm property. This will serve as a natural and beautiful setting for the morning sessions, as well as lunch.

Attendees will have the option of touring first or having lunch first, then alternating with the other group.

3:00 p.m. Wrapup

**Because of space restrictions, attendance at the Virginia meetings will be limited.**

**Register online at [www.ascfg.org](http://www.ascfg.org) or call (440) 774-2887**

# Wisconsin Grower Intensive

October 4-6, 2015

## Sunday, October 4

### 7:00 p.m. Reception with Panel Discussion

Mimo Davis, Emily Watson, Doug Trott, Carol Larsen  
Here's your chance to ask four growers whatever you want. Audience participation is not only encouraged, it's virtually required!

## Monday, October 5

### 8:15 a.m. Welcome

### 8:30 a.m. Cut Flower Peony Production – Part One

Roy Klehm, Klehm's Song Sparrow Nursery  
Master plantsman Roy Klehm is known for his expertise with a wide range of ornamental plants, but peonies hold a special place in his heart. The first part of his talk will cover field preparation and planting, fertilization and fungicides, and general production processes.

### 9:30 a.m. What's Making My Plants Sick?

Brian Hudelson, UW Plant Diagnostic Laboratory, Madison  
Wondering what diseases may be adversely affecting your cut flowers? Feel free to email photos of any problems you are seeing to Brian for a free diagnosis. Or consider sending the plants themselves to Brian for a formal diagnosis (which includes a written report). Normal clinic fees (typically \$20-25) will apply for plant submissions. Tag your photos or plant samples with "ASCFG" and Brian will summarize results from these samples for his presentation.

Go to the UW Plant Diagnostic Laboratory's page for submission instructions.

### 10:45 a.m. Tools of Our Trade

John Hendrickson, UW Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems  
Joe Schmitt, Fair Field Flowers, Madison  
From favorite hand tools to nifty machines, two experienced Wisconsin farmers will share their finds from far and wide. Demonstrations will include planters, weeders, and cutting tools, homemade gizmos, handy techniques, efficiency tips, and more. Participants are encouraged to bring their own favorite tools as well.

### 12:00 noon Lunch (included with registration)

### 1:00 p.m. Cut Flower Peony Production - Part Two

Roy Klehm, Klehm's Song Sparrow Nursery  
Roy will continue his tour of cut flower peonies, examining flower types, hybridizing and selecting new varieties, and touching on peony personalities and what they've accomplished.

### 2:30 p.m. Insect Netting for Hoophouse Dahlias

Jeanie McKewan, Fair Field Flowers/Brightflower Farm  
Growing dahlias organically in the Midwest is very difficult with the high insect pressure and high winds. Jeanie has used insect netting on high tunnels to alleviate both. She is able to grow beautiful dahlias and sell every stem.

### 3:45 p.m. What's Bugging My Plants?

P.J. Liesch, UW Insect Diagnostic Laboratory, Madison  
Just when your lisianthus is looking perfect, ready to be cut and sold, you realize that something's chewing the petals. What ARE those bugs? Find out by sending samples or photos to the University of Wisconsin Insect Diagnostic Lab before the meeting. P.J. will determine the pest bothering you, and at the meeting, present his diagnoses and control solutions.

P.J. can accept physical samples only from Wisconsin residents. However, digital images of the insects and their damage can be sent from anywhere. Be sure to include your location, the plant species (and cultivar if possible), and a general description of the situation. Tag your photos or plant samples with "ASCFG" and P.J. will summarize results from these samples for his presentation.

Go to the UW Insect Diagnostic Laboratory's page and click on "Submitting Samples" in the green bar. There is no charge for this service.

## Tuesday, October 6

**Sunborn Flowers** is one of the founding partners of the Fair Field Flowers marketing cooperative. Carol Larsen has been growing since 1975, and is a fixture at the Dane County Farmers' Market. Sunborn produces a wide variety of sustainably grown cut flowers.

**Brightflower Farms** is a certified organic producer of cut flowers and ornamental shrubs; items include peonies, tree peonies, ninebark, willows, hydrangea, mixed bouquets, many annual flowers, grains, and grasses.

**Register online at [www.ascfg.org](http://www.ascfg.org)  
or call (440) 774-2887**



## Judy M. Laushman

One spring day in 1988, I sat in my basement office at the University of Georgia horticulture department, calling people who might be interested in joining a fledgling flower growers' association. Someone had suggested I contact Ralph Cramer, a second-generation grower in Pennsylvania. I was half-expecting the same quick "Go away, kid, you bother me." brush-off I'd already heard from other prospects.

Two hours and twenty minutes later, my fingers cramped and my ear flattened

from the receiver (this was so long ago phones had receivers), I trotted next door to Allan Armitage's office to tell him that I was pretty sure we had a recruit.

In an organization noted for its generous members, Ralph was a standout. He served on the Board as Mid-Atlantic Regional Director, he hosted innumerable meetings, he spoke at several more, and he would talk to anyone, at any time, about flower growing. And travel. And cars, beer, white water rafting, Dennis

Miller, farming equipment, his sons, his grandkids, his beloved wife Lynn. Ralph loved to talk.

He loved life, and his enthusiasm was infectious. If anyone else shouted "Judy Baby! The Grammar Queen!" when I called, it would seem inappropriate, but with Ralph, it was perfectly normal.

The best thing about listening to Ralph explain how he grew flowers is that, almost without fail, he would preface each statement with "Now, it's not like I'm going to give away all my secrets." and then do exactly that. Of course, Ralph was such a remarkable grower and business manager that he probably never did give away *all* his secrets, but countless growers have benefited from his example and leadership.

I've kept this in mind as I sort through applications for the ASCFG mentor program. I assumed that we'd have no problem finding those who would love to be matched with experienced

growers to guide them through a flower season, but thought we might have a little trouble roping in those leaders. Even generous growers are busy people, after all. I was surprised and gratified not only by the rapid response from so many potential mentors, but by their additional comments.

*"When I first read about the mentorship program (bravo, ASCFG Board), I immediately thought 'I should sign up, especially given the dismal statistics of young people turning to farming, let alone flower farming projections.'"*

*"What a good idea! I would be willing to do something like this without the 'benefits', but compensation for travel is helpful."*

*"Sign me up – I'd love to help a beginner. I'd do it for free, but your incentives are generous and enticing as well."*

It's heartening to know that so many growers are willing to lend their expertise and experiences—positive and negative—to those farmers just starting their operations. I only wish Ralph were still here to be one of them.



Ralph Cramer welcomed ASCFG members to his farm in 2005 -- and several other times.

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