

Volume 21, Number 1 Winter 2009

# *The Cut Flower*

Q U A R T E R L Y

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

**for growers of field and specialty greenhouse cuts**

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## The Cut Flower

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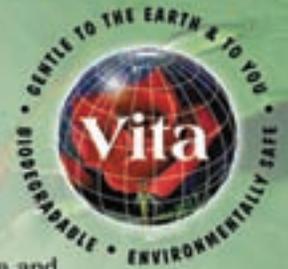


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# FROM *the President*

*Dave Dowling*

Years ago there was a sign on a door at Bill Clinton's Little Rock campaign headquarters that included the line "The economy stupid". Later this morphed into "It's the economy, stupid". I prefer to say "*It's the stupid economy*". Remember how nice it was back when everyone had money, or at least enough credit to buy your products without a second thought? Your biggest problem may have been increasing production to meet demand, not maintaining sales to keep your head above water. Whether you like it or not, we're living in a new age of consumerism, where people think twice before spending money on flowers. We have to work harder to sell our product, while working just as hard to produce it. We feel we can't raise prices because then our customers may buy less, or not buy at all. As much as we'd all like to be able to say this was all caused by so and so doing such and such, the cause is secondary to what you can, and must, do to survive. The cause is in the past, and we all know you can't change the past, but how you react to the past can help dictate your future.

There are several things that we as producers and marketers can do to get us through these economic times without too many battle scars. If you're reading the *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, you know you have already made one step in the right direction, you're an ASCFG member. You're keeping yourself informed about the newest cut flower varieties, production techniques, and marketing strategies that can help your business succeed. You're able to network with some of the most giving and sharing people you'll find. You can find answers to your questions by

using the Bulletin Board, attending ASCFG meetings and Conferences, or just picking up the phone and calling another member who can help you with something new you want to try.

Two other things that can't be stressed enough in these "hard economic times" are *quality* and *customer service*. QUALITY includes everything from selecting the best varieties to grow, growing the crop properly, and then harvesting and conditioning the flowers for optimal vase life. Make sure you always have top quality products and your customers will be repeat customers. CUSTOMER SERVICE is just that, service to your customers. You do that by always having a pleasant attitude and a smile. If you're having a bad day, let someone else work with the customers. Always try to give the customer more than they expect. Add a couple extra flowers to their bouquet, have some "special" flowers that you save for a regular customer, or follow through when a florist needs something special for a wedding customer. If you have an excess of something that will end up getting trashed later, send it along to a florist (while it's still fresh) as a sample or just a "thanks" for their continued business. You might give your retail florist customers something for them to take home with them for their own home. Do something, do *anything* that will keep you and your business in the front of your customer's minds - ahead of, and in front of your competition.

Keep your head up and keep looking forward. Remember, it's up to you to have a great 2009!



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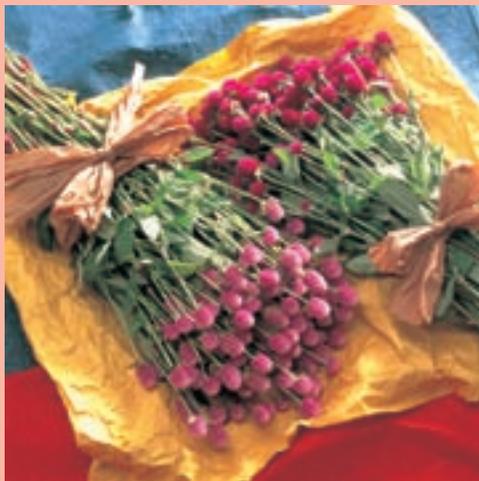
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# 2009 New Varieties

## American Takii



### Gomphrena Audray Series

Takii now offers its gomphrena in more color choices with the introduction of the Audray series. Joining gomphrena 'Bicolor Rose' (now 'Audray Bicolor Rose') are 'Audray Pink' and 'Audray Purple Red'. The series can be used both for fresh and dried arrangements. The Audray series can withstand hot and humid conditions. Plant height is 80-100 cm (30-40 inches).



### Sunflower 'Sunrich Lemon Summer'

New to Takii's F1 Sunrich series is 'Lemon Summer'. It flowers 5 to 10 days earlier and the flower shape and color are identical to 'Sunrich Lemon'. Suitable for spring to summer cultivation with sowing under long-day conditions. Plant height for is 80-130 cm (31-51 inches), 15-20% shorter than 'Sunrich Lemon'.



### Lisianthus 'Vulcan II Champagne' and 'II Purple Picotee'

Two new colors are being added to our F1 Vulcan series. 'II Champagne' is a unique blend of apricot, pink and yellow tones. 'II Purple Picotee' has a more uniform purple rim when compared to other purple picotee lisianthus. In addition to the two new colors, the series also consists of 'II Pink Picotee' and 'II White'.



### Lisianthus 'Arena Champagne'

Joining the existing 5 colors in the Arena series is 'Champagne.' The series features large and very double flowers on strong, sturdy stems. Arena exhibits less sensitivity to short stem length under long-day conditions and appears less sensitive to rosetting in plug cultivation. In addition to 'III Champagne', the series consists of 'I Green', 'II White', 'III Pink', 'III Yellow' and 'IV Rose.'





**L.O. hybrid lily 'Triumphator'**

The first lily with this stunning and unique color blend of white with a raspberry red center. Very large, long-lasting flowers. Stems up to 48 inches tall. Flowers 95 days from planting.



***Delphinium belladonna*  
'Blue Donna'**

Tall, graceful stems with numerous semi-double, deep blue flowers. Finish in 12-16 weeks from plugs. Will flower for 4 weeks. Expect multiple flushes about 6 weeks apart in one growing season. Heat tolerant and has low disease sensitivity. Excellent for cuts. Stems are 3 feet tall.



***Carthamus tinctorius* 'Red'**

The first red carthamus (safflower) on the market. Thistle-like flowers are held on strong 3-foot stems. Excellent for cuts.



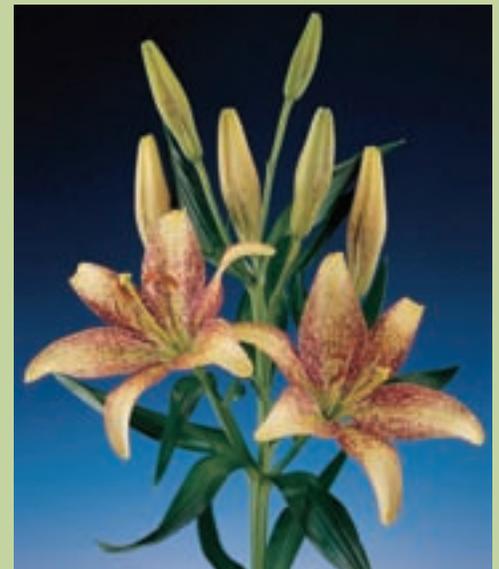
**O.T. hybrid lily 'Baruta'**

This wonderful lemony color is the result of some of the latest breeding in lilies. A cross between Oriental and trumpet (Aurelian) hybrids. Enormous, long-lasting flowers. Stems up to 45 inches tall. Flowers 95 days from planting.



**L.A. hybrid lily 'Kentucky'**

A cross between longiflorum and Asiatic hybrids has produced this unusual pattern as well. Deep, rich orange flowers are speckled with oxblood red spots. Very large flowers. Stems up to 48 inches tall. Flowers 100 days from planting.



**L.A. hybrid lily 'Suncrest'**

A cross between longiflorum and Asiatic hybrids has produced this most unusual pattern. Creamy yellow flowers are speckled with tiny red spots. Stems up to 45 inches tall. Flowers 95 days from planting.



**Sunflower 'Sun4U Lemon'**  
100% pollen free. Short bright lemon petals, strong 60" stems, early flowering.



**Snapdragon 'Chantilly Mix'**  
Extra early Group I and II. Long vase life, large flowers on four-foot stems. Works for outdoor as well as greenhouse.



**Zinnia 'Inca'**  
Bright orange cactus flowers on three-foot stems, large and fully double.



**Rudbeckia hirta 'Tiger Eye Gold'**  
First and only F1 hybrid rudbeckia. Long-lasting 16-24" flowers.



**Lisianthus 'Vulcan Purple Picotee'**  
Group II, cup and curl shape. Tall, large flowers.



**Lisianthus 'Cinderella Lime'**  
Group II & III. Upright habit with 32-40" stems.



*Eragrostis spectabilis*, purple love grass  
Ornamental grass, brilliant purple red flower, 20" tall, dense compact habit.



*Gaillardia aristata* 'Burgunder'  
30"; Pure wine red flowers. Bright summer cut flower or landscape plant.

**Calendula 'Orange Porcupine'**  
Two feet tall with brilliant orange, quilled petals forming spiky flowers.



**Cyclamen 'Laser'**  
Stems are 10-12 inches. Fresh approach to a cut flower. Heat tolerant. Early fall and late spring sales.





*Eryngium planum* 'White Glitter'

The sister variety to 'Blue Glitter', 'White Glitter' adds elegance and a touch of class to cut flower arrangements. Reaching heights of 38-40", 'White Glitter' has an abundance of white, pincushion-shaped flowers on dense spikes. 'White Glitter' is extremely durable and thrives in hot, sunny locations with rich, fertile soil, but is tolerant to more demanding locations. With its bright white flowers and unique appearance, it's a stunner in the vase for either fresh or dried cut flower production.

*Zinnia elegans* 'Benary's Giant Wine'

The well-known and trusted Benary's Giant zinnia series has added another breathtaking color. 'Giant Wine' has deep burgundy flower petals that resemble the color of a rich merlot wine. Pair with Benary's 'Giant White' in the vase for a stunning cut flower presentation. Characterized by long, thick stems (40-50") and a well-branched habit, Giants have large, 4-5" fully double flowers.



# Lily Plant



**O.T. Lily 'Belladonna'**

The next generation of O.T. hybrids is coming with the advancement of 'Belladonna', with very large yellow, side-facing flowers. 'Belladonna' has the most perfect shape bloom of any lily out there. The bud count is not as high as 'Palmares' but the presentation of the stem outperforms most yellow O.T.'s and will force in bloom in 95-100 days.



**Oriental Lily 'Caruso'**

This very nice soft pink lily has growing characteristics similar to 'Ribera'. The flower starts out light pink but after 1-2 days becomes a little darker. 'Caruso' has an attractive flower bud color giving it a very nice market-ready presentation, like 'Montezuma'. Even though it forces in 90-95 days, it still has great bud count in the 16-18 bulb size.



**Asiatic Lily 'Landini'**

Talk about new and unique— this is by far the deepest red of any of the Asiatics and L.A. hybrids. It is a MUST TRY. 'Landini' has a chocolate-red flower and produces plenty of flower buds in the smaller sizes. You might be the first one introducing this unique color in your local market.

**Asiatic Lily 'Latin Red'**

We have been awaiting a good red replacement for 'Monte Negro' and the other so-called red . L.A. and Asiatic lilies. Most of those seem to be an orange or a brick red. 'Latin Red' is up to the task because it has a truly great red color with enough flowers, and produces 5-7 days faster than most A.S. +L.A. varieties. If you're looking for a Christmas red, you can go with this one. The lily grower at Longwood Gardens grew it for the 2008 Longwood Christmas displays after he chose 'Latin Red' to be the best red lily to meet the needs of the Longwood Gardens' interior designer. Now these folks are happy with the results.



# Labo Plant



## Oriental Lily 'Montezuma'

This extremely reliable red Oriental has replaced most all pinkish red flowers in the Oriental group. The nice thing about 'Montezuma' is that it does not scorch. It is the darkest red Oriental with very good flower bud presentation, great overall balance. This variety is the best red O.R. and O.T. out there.

## Oriental Lily 'Presidente'

This is a high volume producing lily with a nice leaf shape, and larger, upward-facing flowers. Stems are very sturdy and not too tall, which make this variety very good for winter forcing, although it might be on the short side for southern growers when forced without shade cloth. 'Presidente' is a very nice bicolor pink and white with a very pleasant, almost fruity-sweet fragrance to it. It is worth you trying it.



# North Creek Nurseries



## *Salvia greggii* 'Ultra Violet' PPAF

An amazing garden performer, *Salvia* 'Ultra Violet' was selected by Lauren Springer and Scott Ogden from their garden in Ft. Collins, Colorado. An abundance of intense violet flowers adorn dark green, finely cut foliage well into autumn. 'Ultra Violet' thrives in lean-loamy and clay-loamy well-drained soils in full sun. Thought to be a hummingbird initiated cross between blue flowered *Salvia lycioides* and rose-pink *Salvia greggii*, the aromatic foliage of 'Ultra Violet' keeps the deer and rabbits away while blooms entice hummingbirds throughout the seasons. H/W 18-20"/24-28" Zones 5b-9



***Helenium* 'Mardi Gras' PP15124**

A festival of multicolored blooms jazzes up the garden for six to eight weeks in mid to late summer. Deep, chestnut colored cone flowers are inspiringly wrapped in bright orange ray flowers with streaks of clear red. No two 'Mardi Gras' blooms are alike. Great as a cut flower, long stems are sturdy and vase life is long. *Heleniums* are easily grown in rich moist soils in full sun. Naturally resistant to deer and rabbits; an early pinch back is recommended to promote more branching and floriferous growth. Incorporate along the border, in meadows and native wild flower gardens. A late summer, early fall celebration!

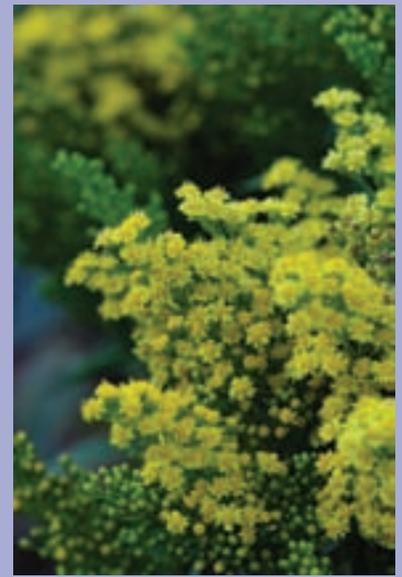
H/W 36-40"/24-36" Zones 4-8



***Eryngium* 'Big Blue' PPAF**

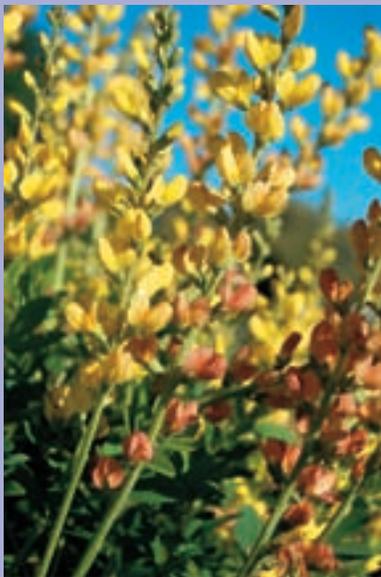
Intense, iridescent blue flowers sit upon branched, blue stems with silver leaves. Tall, erect stems reach 24-30 inches, creating a striking architectural accent to the perennial border. 'Big Blue' adapts well sandy loam soil with low fertility in full sun. Dusty silver flowers and stems paired with thick, rugged foliage are perfect for either fresh or dried cut flower decorating... *Eryngium* works well in combination with ornamental grasses, *Heliopsis*, *Aster* and *Phlox*.

H/W 24-30"/24-30" Zones 4-9



***Solidago* 'Little Lemon' PP17297**

'Little Lemon' is a fabulous garden and cut flower performer. This diminutive beauty is exceptionally compact, reaching 12-15 inches. Optimistic and easy to use light yellow flower clusters create a dense inflorescences beginning late summer and lasting well into fall. A versatile, quick and easy to grow native, 'Little Lemon' is a fabulous production plant and an outstanding garden performer; combines well with purple and pink *Asters*. Great shelf life! Outstanding garden performer. Good production plant. Quick and easy to grow. H/W 12-15"/18-24" Zones 5-9



***Baptisia* Solar Flare Prairieblues™ PPAF**

The compact, vase-shaped habit and upright stems of *Baptisia* Solar Flare Prairieblues gives rise to tall, 12-18" spikes of pea-shaped flowers that start out lemon-yellow and quickly mature to a soft orange-yellow tone. Extremely vigorous, cool spring evening temperatures coax attractive purple stems from dormancy as one plant can push as

many as 100 stems in a season! Another fabulous selection from Chicagoland Grows, Solar Flare Prairieblues is the only *Baptisia* selection to date with such colored flowers. Mature plants measure 3' to 4' tall and 4' to 4 1/2' wide. A fabulous vertical element for large, long lasting arrangements that make a statement!

H/W 36-48"/48-54" Zones 4-8

***Phlox paniculata* 'Lord Clayton'**

Found by garden writer Tammy Clayton, *Phlox paniculata* 'Lord Clayton' is a regal combination of leaf and bloom. Unique, cherry-red flowers add excitement to the perennial border from late June through September. Foliage emerges a deep purple with lime green stems and veins, later transitioning to a deep purple-green. *Phlox* 'Lord Clayton' performs quite well in average garden soil with average moisture.

H/W 24-30"/24-30" Zones 4-8



# Kordes / New Flora Roses



**'Charmant Freelande'**

Fragrant pastel pink with good production. Abundant green foliage on healthy plants. Moderate-sized blooms.



**'Corrie Freelande'**

Striking, non-fading hot pink/erise blooms showcased by abundant dark green foliage. Healthy plants have upright habits.



**'Honey Freelande'**

Lovely golden yellow flowers with a hint of tangerine. Moderate-sized blooms last 8-10 days. Stems average 40-60 cm.



**'Cherry Freelande'**

White tinged with red. An exciting variety with large single blooms. A vigorous, productive and healthy variety. Stem length 50-60 cm with a very good vase life. Lightly fragrant.

*The Cut Flower Quarterly*



**'Party Dress'**  
Nostalgic pink.  
Vigorous upright.



**'Peach Typhoon'**  
(**'Peach Taifun'**)  
Peach/salmon.  
Excellent results to date for this new variety.



**‘Penguin Frelander’**

A large-flowered, long-stemmed hybrid with pure white flowers, vase life is 10 days. Stem length is 50-80 cm.



**‘Lovely Antique’**

Cream white tinged with red. This variety produces good numbers of 40-45 cm stems, generally with 2-3 blooming side shoots. Vase life is 12 days.



**‘Big Fruitilia’**

Large salmon-colored hips for harvest. A large-fruited novelty with an interesting form and strong vigorous plant habit. Excellent vase life. Hips are oval to round shaped, 5/8 - 3/4" long, Stems have limited thorns, are 60-80 cm long.



**‘Coffee Fruitilia’**

The most productive of the Fruitilia collection for rose hips. The coffee-colored fruits combine well with many floral designs. The plant has an excellent shrub habit with uniform growth. Disease resistant. Pink flowers develop into coffee bean-colored oval hips, 1/3-3/8" long. Vase life is about 14 days.



**‘Orange Fruitilia’**

Interesting hip color transitions from orange to salmon-orange, at times expressing hints of green. The spray contains moderately large hips, approximately 5/8 inches long. This is an outstanding variety with very good vase life.

# Get to Seed



## *Aruncus dioicus* 'Whirlwind'

Unique feathery panicle flowers are a creamy white, on stems of about 24 inches. Flowers between May and July.



## *Echinacea purpurea* 'Lucky Star'

A sturdy white seed-grown *Echinacea* bred from 'Rubinstern' (the ASCFG 2006 Cut Flower of the Year) so it is robust and durable. Flowers have horizontal petals and large bronze cones. Stems 20-24 inches. Flowers July through October.



## *Eriogonum allenii* 'Little Rascal'

This buckwheat variety is a gem—long-lived golden yellow flowers arranged in flat-topped branched clusters above handsome rosettes of velvety paddle-shaped leaves. Stems are on the short side at 3-6 inches. Sea statice is similarly arranged. Flowers June-September.



## *Gentiana cruciata* 'Blue Cross'

Star gentian, with its intense blue-violet flowers and fabulous foliage, is a small but valuable plant for cut bouquets. Flowering July-October on stems 6-8 inches or so. Native to Europe and Asia.

# Ednie Flower Bulb



**Lily 'Koures'** This new L.A. hybrid has intense cherry pink flowers with a small white throat. Flowers face upwards, colored buds are spaced separately on the stem, which are about 40 inches tall. Takes 14 weeks to force.



**Lily 'Deep Impact'** This new Oriental has dark red speckled flowers, outlined in white, contrasting heart. Petals are slightly recurved. Strong stems about 36 inches. Takes about 14 weeks to grow.

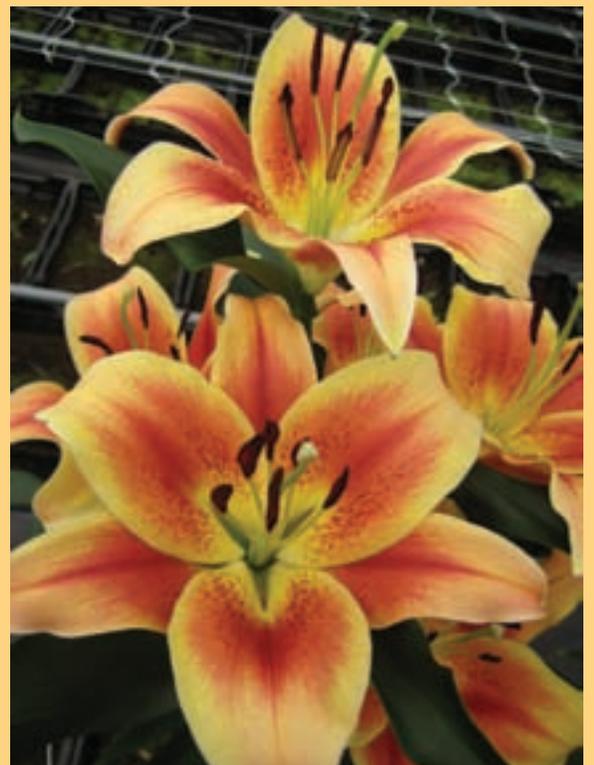


**Lily 'Time Zone'** This new O.T. hybrid has large, spectacular flowers, which are intense pink, nearly lavender, with a sharp, pure white center and green heart. Puffy pink buds face upwards for a showy presentation. Stems are 38 inches.



**Lily 'Tiger Edition'** A new Oriental, sibling of 'Tiger Woods', just in pink. It has large, deep pink flowers with a bright red vein, and many red speckles. Colored buds and flowers face upwards. It is about 40" tall and takes 14 weeks to grow.

**Lily 'Montego Bay'** This new O.T. hybrid has burnt reddish orange flowers with broad yellow edges and a yellow heart, very striking! The colored buds and flowers face upward. Takes about 13 weeks to grow, about 38" tall.





**Matthiola Katz Series**

Great accent item provides fragrance, volume and color to bouquets. The new stock Katz was named in memory of Mr. Philip Katz who for many years promoted the Ball cut flower genetics. This series combines all the great desirable characteristics of the standard stock, such as sweet fragrance, bright and solid colors plus an amazing full flower spike. Excellent choice for high-end floral designs.



**Dianthus 'Green Ball'**

*Dianthus barbatus* 'Green Ball' is the flower the market has been asking for. New, different, focal and green. Its very dark and glossy, long leaves on strong stems make it suitable for solid bunches. The perfectly round green head of about 7.5 cms (3 inches) wide provides bouquets with a never-before-seen texture and look. Very versatile in all seasons.



**Gypsophila 'Polar Bear Mirabella'**

A great gypsophila for producers, consumers and the planet. This new generation of gypsophila was bred with sustainability in mind. 'Mirabella' does not require additional lighting to flower, resulting in a reduction of energy usage. Resistant to leaf miner resulting in the need for fewer pesticides. Upright plant structure with long internodes to prevent flower tangling, resulting in less flower loss.





***Delphinium Triton Series***

A seed-breeding breakthrough because it is programmable and provides very uniform blooming within each variety. Reliable, easy to program, and easy to sell, the Triton series features stems with large spikes tightly packed with semi-double blossoms. An essential choice for commercial cut flower growers as well as consumers. Perfect complement for the delphinium Guardian series.



***Delphinium Trick Series***

A new and unique commercial cut flower series, with unique soft pastel, bicolored, full spikes. A tissue culture breakthrough with superior appearance, and uniform blooming within each variety. Reliable, easy to program and easy to sell, the Trick series features stems with large spikes tightly packed with single blossoms. Its soft pastel pink, light blue and lime colors make great solid bunches.

***Limonium sinensis Twinkle Series***

The Twinkle series is a new Japanese-bred *Limonium* suitable for bouquets and solid bunches. Selected for absence of fragrance, high-quality strong stems, bright flower colors, high productivity and many flushes. With lavish colors, the flowers are firmly packed on the stem, the solid colors of their calyx combined with the yellow floret gives a bright contrast adding a touch of light and texture. This series is an essential fresh, fanciful and fantastic filler for bouquets, corsages and other flower arrangements.



***Delphinium Waltz Series***

The new delphinium Waltz series is a desired variety not only due to its strong, tall, hard and sturdy stems and big, strong, evenly-arranged single florets, but for the solid colors as well. A tissue culture-breeding breakthrough since it is highly programmable, and provides very uniform blooming within each variety. Reliable, easy to program, and easy to sell, Waltz features stems with large spikes uniformly spaced with single blossoms. A novelty choice for commercial cut-flower growers and consumers.



# 2008 ASCFG Cut

John Dole, North Carolina State University  
Judy Laushman, ASCFG

Each year we get numerous new cultivars of various species but rarely are we able to directly compare them with standard, established cultivars or with cultivars from other companies. To address that issue, this year we conducted a comparison trial with seven zinnia varieties. The winner for growers was 'Uproar Rose', which garnered the highest ratings of all the cultivars and had the

longest stems. 'Uproar Rose' yielded 9.6 stems/plant, fewer than the Oklahoma series but higher than the 'Benary's Giants'. Trialers commented on the consistent flower color, high degree of doubleness and large flower size. The main limitation of 'Uproar Rose' is that it is currently a single cultivar. A couple trialers requested (begged) for more colors. It should be noted that 'Uproar Rose' is the ASCFG Fresh Cut Flower of the Year for 2009. However, the Benary's Giant cultivars also performed quite well, with yield and ratings only slightly below that of 'Uproar Rose'. Of course, the broad range of colors makes them an industry favorite. The Oklahoma cultivars had the highest yield but ratings were lower due to their smaller flowers. This series does particularly well as a

bouquet flower. 'Zowie Yellow Flame' had moderately high yield and many trialers adored the gorgeous bicolored flowers, but the small flower size and shorter stems reduced its appeal.

Zinnias are primarily a local flower, which is reflected in the low ratings for wholesale sales. Southern growers may wonder why the yield for all the zinnias was so low; this was due to the averaging of the results with the North, which has a shorter growing season. There was little difference in the reported vase life, with a high of 7.9 days for 'Benary's Giant Scarlet' and a low of 6.7 days for 'Zowie Yellow Flame', only a little over one day's difference.

Finally, we wanted to highlight the comments of one trialer which might be helpful to new growers of zinnias: "We have grown zinnias as part of our standard offering for several years. Nevertheless, we have learned



# Flower Seed Trials

something new about this crop. The test zinnias were planted where the compost heap had been for a couple of years and the soil was very rich, loose, and moist. The other zinnias were planted partially in this really rich soil and partly in our ordinary soil. Some of the compost zinnias were eventually over five feet tall and all were very productive. The ordinary soil zinnias never took off and eventually the weeds took over. Zinnias really prefer soil with lots of organic matter. Also from now on we will be planting plugs and hopefully avoid a lot of weeding hassles. The cost of the plugs would be nothing compared to the cost of hand weeding direct-sown zinnias”.

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”, “Silk purse out of a sow’s ear.”, “One man’s treasure is another man’s trash.”, “Either you loved ‘em or hated ‘em.” – believe it or not, we can’t come up with any more clichés to apply to *Panicum*

*elegans* ‘Frosted Explosion’. The grass garnered comments such as “The most popular flower in our ASCFG cut flower trials.” and “One of the most productive, in-demand crops I grew”. On the other hand, one trialer stated he or she had “crop failure” because it “was weeded out, this is a weedy annual grass here in Wisconsin”. Those who loved it enjoyed the 13+ stems per plant which averaged 18 inches and had a vase life of over 10 days. Certainly, the key to this cultivar will be the market. If you can sell grasses or the more unusual cuts, you definitely should try this one.

Sunflowers continue to be one of our most important field cuts and the number of available cultivars is increasing. This

year eight sunflowers were included in the trials and they illustrate that the bar is higher now for a cut sunflower to be successful than it used to be ten years ago. Several of the trialers made comments along the lines of “another good sunflower” for one or more of the cultivars. With so many varieties on the market now, a new one can be quite good but still not get noticed. The most



commonly grown cut sunflowers appear to be ‘Sunrich Orange’ (Takii), ‘Sunbright’ (Sakata) and ‘ProCut Orange’ (SeedSense), all with orange petals and a dark brown disk. A new introduction must be better in some way than these standards to get growers to switch to them. Five of the entries had the standard orange petals and dark centers; ‘Tavor Joy’ (Gloeckner) stood out by being one of the earliest to flower. ‘Tavor Joy’ is pollenless. A couple trialers also commented that it produced harvestable side flowers, which were great for bouquets. Chris Wien noted that in his trials at Cornell ‘Tavor Joy’ is a facultative short day cultivar, for those looking for greenhouse or high tunnel cultivars.

The two bicolored cultivars, ‘565’ (Gloeckner) and ‘Sun4U Bicolor’ (Kieft), garnered high praise for consistency of pattern and holding petals better than other bicolor sunflowers. Stems were long, with a medium-sized pollenless flower and relatively fast crop time. Some trialers mentioned good return flowering after the main stem was harvested. We noticed that the brown ring is well defined when the flower opens and appeared to fade as the flower ages – we wonder if this trait is climate related as growers in cooler climates did not mention the problem. We had difficulty telling apart ‘#565’ and ‘Sun4U Bicolor’ in our fields, and many of the trialers also mentioned the similarity.

It was interesting to us to read how different some of the cultivars perform among the trialers. For example, the color of ‘Arbel’ (Gloeckner) was described as “clear yellow petals against dark disk”, “standard orange sunflower” and “nice yellow orange, inner petals darker orange.” Head size and stem thickness also varied greatly. With ‘Arbel’ three trialers stated that the flowers and stems were too large while one said that the flowers were too small and stems not strong enough. When John checked the spacing each person used, all of those reporting large flowers gave their plants more space per plant than the one reporting small flowers. This illustrates nicely how responsive sunflowers are to spacing. If you want small flowers, space them more closely, and vice versa.



So, how are you as the reader able to sort out the various responses? Look for the overall tone of the responses, but be aware that the performance at your farm might be a bit different (sounds like a disclaimer on a grocery item: “Variations in color are normal and the contents may have settled during shipping...”). For ‘Arbel’, most considered it an orange sunflower with large heads when given plenty of space in the field.

As mentioned in previous year’s reports, lisianthus and snapdragons both perform their best under cover in high tunnels or hoopouses. The stems are long and the flower heads larger. Having said that, however, several cultivars of both species performed very well in the field trials. The entire Arena lisianthus series (Takii) got high marks for large, fully double flowers and long stems. The rankings were high enough to earn the series a nomination for ASCFG Fresh Cut Flower of the Year. Stem length of all three cultivars was close to 19 inches and trialers harvested an average of two to three stems per plant.

‘Rocket’ snapdragons are the classic series used by field cut growers. The durable selections are beloved for their reliable, durable nature and fragrant flowers. Greenhouse snapdragon growers have long had the luxury of being able to

select single cultivars from a broad array of colors. In the greenhouse these cultivars produce very long stems with large, sometimes too large, flower heads. Over the years we have started to test some of the greenhouse cultivars in the field and have obtained surprisingly good results. Certainly the stem length is shorter and the flower heads smaller on field-grown snaps than on greenhouse grown cuts, but the stems are wonderful for farmers’ markets and many florists. Most growers also keep field snapdragons after the main stem is cut, allowing the side shoots to be harvested later. This year, all four snapdragon cultivars in the trials performed quite well. In fact, ‘Opus Bright Red’ (Goldsmith), ‘Fresh White’ (Goldsmith), and ‘Calima Deep Rose’ (Sakata) scored high enough to be nominated for the ASCFG Fresh Cut Flower of the Year. ‘Opus Bright Red’ produced more than 6 stems/plant, with an average of 23 inches in length. Trialers also loved its bright vibrant red color. ‘Opus Bright White’ produced 5.3 stems per plant and a stem length of 22 inches. Stem yield was lower and length shorter for ‘Calima Deep Rose’ and ‘Pure White’ (Sakata). All four snapdragon cultivars showed unexpected durability in the field: here at NCSU, the snaps kept producing all summer long with a slight resurgence in the fall. Granted, the flowers heads were quite small during the summer but considering the heat of a Raleigh summer, the durability of the cultivars was quite striking.

Overall, we had 41 varieties from seven companies, up a bit in number from the previous year. Based on trial results, the top five performers are automatically nominated for the ASCFG Cut Flower of the Year. The rankings are based on the combined ratings score: market appreciation (average of wholesale, florist, and consumer) + repeat again + ease of cultivation. Thus, from the 2008 trials lisianthus Arena series (all the colors scored very high and we decided to nominate the entire series), snapdragons ‘Opus Bright Red’, ‘Fresh White’, and ‘Calima Deep Rose’ are nominated as Fresh Cut Flowers of the Year and will join other nominations from ASCFG members.

**Interpreting the trial results:** The numbers reported are averages of all the respondents and many factors will affect the success of any plant species. Our participants are growing and harvesting the trial plants in a wide variety of ways. After looking at the average, check the range of responses listed below each number to see how the cultivar performed at its best and its worst. If the range of responses in the ratings is narrow and high, i.e., 3-5 or 4-5, the plant was a winner for most of the respondents and is likely to do well for you. The 'Repeat Again Rating' is particularly important because it indicates if the trialer would take the time, money, and space to actually grow the cultivar again. Review the trial results carefully. If a cultivar sounds interesting but did not appear to do well, try it anyway. The cultivar may work well for you.

**Acknowledgments:** A hearty thank you to all of the evaluators who returned their trial reports and to the seed companies for providing such great cultivars. Congratulations to Laurie Hodges and Chazz Hesselein for being the first trialers to return their evaluations. I would also like to thank Ingram McCall for taking care of the North Carolina State University portion of the trials, Emma Locke, Erin Possiel, Erin Regan, Diane Mays, Brad Holland, and Tim Ketchie for assisting with the NCSU trials, and Ingram McCall for laboriously typing in the comments of several trialers. In preparing the report participants' comments have been edited for space and clarity; apologies the tone or content of anyone's comments was altered. Also, in a few cases we could not determine what was written.

## Participating Seed Companies

### **Agriдера Seeds & Agriculture Ltd.**

Gedera, Israel  
www.agriдера.com

### **American Takii**

Salinas, California  
www.takii.com

### **Benary Seed**

Sycamore, Illinois  
www.benary.com

### **Fred C. Gloeckner & Co.**

Harrison, New York  
www.fredgloeckner.com

### **Goldsmith Seeds**

Gilroy, California  
www.goldsmithseeds.com

### **Kieft-Pro-Seeds**

Conway, Washington  
www.kieftseeds.com

### **PanAmerican/Ball Horticultural**

West Chicago, Illinois  
www.panamseed.com

### **Sakata Seed America, Inc.**

Morgan Hill, California  
www.sakata.com

## Participating Growers

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floret  
Mount Vernon, WA

### **Christof Bernau**

UCSC Farm & Garden  
Santa Cruz, CA

### **Linda Chapman-Dale**

Harvest Moon Farm  
Spencer, IN

### **Maureen Charde**

High Meadow Flower Farm  
Warwick, NY

### **Connie Dam-Byl**

William Dam Seed, Ltd.  
Dundas, ON

### **Everett Emino**

Everett's Flower Farm  
New Germany,  
Nova Scotia

### **Thea Folls**

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Auburn, NY

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### **John Dole**

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### **Brenda Smith**

Smith & Smith Farms  
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### **Kate Van Ummersen**

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Brooks, OR

### **Chris Wien**

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Littleflowers  
Newfield, NY

**2008 ASCFG Seed Trial Results.** The first row of data for each cultivar is the average and the second row is the range of responses. Note when only one response is listed, either only one person responded for that category or several responded and all gave the same rating. The single highest score and the single lowest score in each category for each cultivar have been dropped.

Species Cultivar Company	Yield (stems/plant)	Stem length (inches)	Market appreciation rating <sup>1</sup>			Repeat again rating <sup>1</sup>	Ease of cultivation rating <sup>1</sup>	Average spacing (in. <sup>2</sup> /plant)	Average postharvest life (days)
			Wholesale	Retail	Consumer				
Larkspur 'Stiletta Indigo Blue' Gloeckner	<b>2.9</b> 1-12	<b>18.0</b> 12-24	- -	<b>4.5</b> 4-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>3.8</b> 1-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>123</b> 36-216	<b>7.8</b> 7-10
Lisianthus 'Adv. Cherry Sorbet' Gloeckner	<b>3.0</b> 1-7	<b>21.0</b> 17-24	- -	<b>4.0</b> 4	<b>5.0</b> 5	<b>4.4</b> 4-5	<b>3.1</b> 1-5	<b>40</b> 16-81	<b>13.6</b> 13-14
Lisianthus 'Arena Green' American Takii	<b>2.3</b> 1-5	<b>19.6</b> 12-24	<b>5.0</b> 5	- -	<b>5.0</b> 5	<b>4.2</b> 4-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>58</b> 16-144	<b>12.3</b> 10-14
Lisianthus 'Arena Pink' American Takii	<b>2.3</b> 1-5	<b>19.3</b> 12-28	<b>5.0</b> 5	<b>5.0</b> 5	<b>4.8</b> 4-5	<b>4.1</b> 3-5	<b>3.6</b> 1-5	<b>70</b> 16-144	<b>12.7</b> 10-14
Lisianthus 'Arena Rose' American Takii	<b>2.3</b> 1-4	<b>23.6</b> 15-36	- -	- -	<b>5.0</b> 5	<b>4.3</b> 2-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>59</b> 16-144	<b>13.5</b> 13-14
Lisianthus 'Arena White' American Takii	<b>2.3</b> 1-4	<b>18.6</b> 12-24	<b>5.0</b> 5	- -	<b>4.8</b> 4-5	<b>4.3</b> 3-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>59</b> 16-144	<b>13.7</b> 12-14
Lisianthus 'Arena Yellow' American Takii	<b>2.3</b> 1-5	<b>19.4</b> 12-24	<b>5.0</b> 5	- -	<b>4.7</b> 4-5	<b>4.4</b> 3-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>58</b> 16-144	<b>13.2</b> 10-16
Lisianthus 'Cadence Yellow' Goldsmith Seeds	<b>2.5</b> 1-5	<b>17.4</b> 12-22	<b>5.0</b> 5	- -	<b>3.7</b> 3-4	<b>3.6</b> 2-5	<b>3.6</b> 1-5	<b>58</b> 16-144	<b>12.8</b> 10-14
Lisianthus 'Twinkle Pink Imp.' Goldsmith Seeds	<b>1.8</b> 1-4	<b>19.9</b> 12-30	<b>5.0</b> 5	- -	<b>4.3</b> 4-5	<b>4.0</b> 3-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>58</b> 16-144	<b>12.1</b> 10-14
Lisianthus 'Twinkle Violet' Goldsmith Seeds	<b>2.0</b> 1-4	<b>18.6</b> 12-24	<b>5.0</b> 5	- -	<b>4.7</b> 4-5	<b>3.8</b> 2-5	<b>3.3</b> 1-5	<b>58</b> 16-144	<b>12.3</b> 10-14
Lisianthus 'Vulcan Pink Picotee' American Takii	<b>2.6</b> 1-6	<b>19.7</b> 10-28	- -	- -	<b>4.0</b> 3-5	<b>3.2</b> 2-5	<b>3.0</b> 1-5	<b>39</b> 16-81	<b>14.0</b> 14
Lisianthus 'Vulcan White' American Takii	<b>3.4</b> 2-7	<b>19.8</b> 12-30	<b>3.0</b> 3	<b>3.0</b> 3	<b>4.0</b> 3-5	<b>3.5</b> 2-5	<b>3.1</b> 1-4	<b>42</b> 16-144	<b>14.0</b> 14
Lisianthus 'Vulcan Yellow' American Takii	<b>3.3</b> 2-8	<b>17.6</b> 12-26	- -	<b>3.0</b> 3	<b>3.8</b> 3-4	<b>3.2</b> 2-4	<b>3.1</b> 1-4	<b>43</b> 16-144	<b>14.3</b> 14-15
<i>Panicum elegans</i> 'Frosted Explosion' Gloeckner	<b>13.5</b> 1-54	<b>17.9</b> 8-30	<b>4.3</b> 3-5	<b>4.0</b> 2-5	<b>3.8</b> 2-5	<b>3.6</b> 1-5	<b>4.6</b> 4-5	<b>107</b> 18-288	<b>10.5</b> 7-14

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			Wholesale	Retail	Consumer				
Rudbeckia 'Tiger Eye' Goldsmith Seeds	<b>4.5</b> 1-15	<b>10.6</b> 8-26	<b>1.0</b> 1	<b>3.0</b> 1-5	<b>3.8</b> 1-5	<b>3.2</b> 1-5	<b>4.3</b> 2-5	<b>167</b> 36-324	<b>8.1</b> 4-14
Snapdragon 'Calima Deep Rose' Sakata Seed	<b>17.7</b> 2-12	<b>42.0</b> 15-30	<b>3.6</b> 1-5	<b>3.8</b> 3-5	<b>4.6</b> 4-5	<b>4.3</b> 2-5	<b>4.3</b> 3-5	<b>96</b> 36-216	<b>10.5</b> 7-14
Snapdragon 'Calima Pure White' Sakata Seed	<b>3.7</b> 3-7	<b>19.0</b> 12-36	<b>3.3</b> 1-5	<b>3.5</b> 3-5	<b>3.6</b> 2-5	<b>3.4</b> 2-5	<b>3.7</b> 3-5	<b>98</b> 36-240	<b>10.5</b> 8-14
Snapdragon 'Opus Bright Red' Goldsmith Seeds	<b>6.7</b> 2-15	<b>22.8</b> 15-42	<b>4.5</b> 4-5	<b>4.2</b> 3-5	<b>4.1</b> 3-5	<b>4.4</b> 3-5	<b>4.1</b> 2-5	<b>106</b> 36-240	<b>8.5</b> 7-12
Snapdragon 'Opus Fresh White' Goldsmith Seeds	<b>5.3</b> 4-12	<b>22.1</b> 13-36	<b>4.0</b> 4	<b>4.3</b> 3-5	<b>4.0</b> 3-5	<b>4.3</b> 3-5	<b>4.1</b> 2-5	<b>106</b> 36-240	<b>9.8</b> 7-15
Stock 'Katz Cherry Blossom' PanAmerican/Ball	<b>2.6</b> 1-8	<b>15.7</b> 10-30	<b>5.0</b> 5	<b>4.0</b> 3-5	<b>3.8</b> 1-5	<b>3.6</b> 1-5	<b>3.6</b> 1-5	<b>97</b> 32-216	<b>6.8</b> 6-9
Stock 'Katz Lavender Light' PanAmerican/Ball	<b>1.2</b> 1-4	<b>15.9</b> 10-30	- -	<b>4.0</b> 3-5	<b>3.7</b> 1-5	<b>3.1</b> 1-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>80</b> 24-216	<b>7.0</b> 4-10
Stock 'Katz Pink' PanAmerican/Ball	<b>1.2</b> 1-4	<b>15.4</b> 10-30	<b>1.0</b> 1	<b>2.6</b> 1-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>2.8</b> 1-5	<b>3.4</b> 1-5	<b>85</b> 24-216	<b>6.5</b> 4-9
Stock 'Katz White' PanAmerican/Ball	<b>1.2</b> 1-4	<b>16.7</b> 10-30	- -	<b>3.5</b> 2-5	<b>3.4</b> 1-5	<b>2.9</b> 1-5	<b>3.4</b> 1-5	<b>80</b> 24-216	<b>7.0</b> 4-10
Stock 'Katz Yellow' PanAmerican/Ball	<b>1.3</b> 1-4	<b>15.9</b> 10-30	<b>4.0</b> 4	<b>3.5</b> 3-4	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>3.2</b> 1-5	<b>3.4</b> 1-5	<b>83</b> 32-216	<b>6.5</b> 4-9
Stock 'White Wonder Improved' American Takii	<b>1.3</b> 1-3	<b>15.9</b> 14-30	- -	<b>2.0</b> 2	<b>4.0</b> 2-5	<b>3.7</b> 2-5	<b>4.1</b> 4-5	<b>81</b> 25-144	<b>6.5</b> 4-9
Sunflower #565 Gloeckner/AgriDera	<b>1.7</b> 1-5	<b>36.6</b> 28-66	<b>3.0</b> 2-4	<b>3.4</b> 4-5	<b>4.0</b> 2-5	<b>3.4</b> 1-5	<b>4.5</b> 3-5	<b>128</b> 36-648	<b>8.6</b> 8-12
Sunflower 'Arbel' Gloeckner/AgriDera	<b>1.3</b> 1-2	<b>45.7</b> 24-73	<b>3.3</b> 2-4	<b>3.6</b> 3-4	<b>3.6</b> 2-5	<b>2.9</b> 1-5	<b>4.4</b> 3-5	<b>166</b> 36-648	<b>8.7</b> 5-12
Sunflower 'Carmel' Gloeckner/AgriDera	<b>1.3</b> 1	<b>45.0</b> 24-84	<b>2.0</b> 1-3	<b>3.0</b> 1-5	<b>3.4</b> 1-5	<b>3.3</b> 1-5	<b>4.3</b> 1-5	<b>145</b> 36-648	<b>9.8</b> 7-14
Sunflower 'Galilee Adam' Gloeckner/AgriDera	<b>1.9</b> 1-13	<b>44.1</b> 23-66	<b>3.0</b> 3	<b>3.6</b> 3-5	<b>3.9</b> 2-5	<b>3.1</b> 1-5	<b>4.5</b> 3-5	<b>168</b> 36-648	<b>9.3</b> 7-15

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Sunflower 'Tavor Joy' Gloeckner/Agridera	<b>1.6</b> 1-9	<b>39.8</b> 23-66	<b>2.6</b> 2-3	<b>3.8</b> 3-5	<b>3.5</b> 2-5	<b>3.2</b> 1-5	<b>4.5</b> 4-5	<b>160</b> 36-648	<b>9.5</b> 6-14
Sunflower 'Sun4U Bicolor' Kieft-Pro-Seed	<b>1.9</b> 1-5	<b>44.2</b> 24-72	<b>3.5</b> 2-5	<b>3.8</b> 3-5	<b>4.1</b> 3-5	<b>3.5</b> 1-5	<b>4.4</b> 2-5	<b>149</b> 36-648	<b>9.3</b> 7-14
Sunflower 'Sun4U Lemon Yellow' Kieft-Pro-Seed	<b>1.7</b> 1-7	<b>39.3</b> 18-60	<b>2.5</b> 2-3	<b>3.2</b> 3-4	<b>3.8</b> 3-5	<b>3.2</b> 1-5	<b>4.4</b> 2-5	<b>156</b> 36-648	<b>9.2</b> 6-14
Sunflower 'Sun4U Orange' Kieft-Pro-Seed	<b>1.6</b> 1-8	<b>43.7</b> 21-66	<b>3.0</b> 2-4	<b>4.3</b> 4-5	<b>4.1</b> 3-5	<b>3.4</b> 1-5	<b>4.4</b> 2-5	<b>168</b> 36-648	<b>9.2</b> 6-14
Sweet pea 'Winter Sunshine Rose' Gloeckner	<b>14.6</b> 6-28	<b>11.5</b> 5-14	<b>4.0</b> 4	<b>4.5</b> 4-5	<b>5.0</b> 5	<b>3.7</b> 1-5	<b>4.2</b> 4-5	<b>93</b> 18-244	<b>5.5</b> 4-7
Zinnia 'Giant Carmine Rose' Benary	<b>7.5</b> 2-40	<b>18.3</b> 12-30	<b>3.0</b> 1-4	<b>4.6</b> 4-5	<b>4.5</b> 4-5	<b>4.2</b> 1-5	<b>4.2</b> 2-5	<b>124</b> 24-252	<b>7.0</b> 6-9
Zinnia 'Giant Lime' Benary	<b>7.2</b> 1-30	<b>17.1</b> 9-27	<b>2.8</b> 1-5	<b>4.1</b> 3-5	<b>3.9</b> 3-5	<b>3.9</b> 1-5	<b>4.1</b> 1-5	<b>122</b> 36-252	<b>6.7</b> 5-9
Zinnia 'Giant Scarlet' Benary	<b>8.3</b> 1-40	<b>18.4</b> 7-30	<b>2.5</b> 1-4	<b>4.4</b> 4-5	<b>4.5</b> 4-5	<b>4.1</b> 1-5	<b>4.3</b> 2-5	<b>127</b> 24-252	<b>7.8</b> 6-14
Zinnia 'Oklahoma Pink' Benary	<b>11.6</b> 1-47	<b>16.9</b> 10-24	<b>3.0</b> 1-5	<b>3.6</b> 2-5	<b>3.5</b> 2-5	<b>3.1</b> 1-5	<b>4.4</b> 2-5	<b>130</b> 36-252	<b>7.2</b> 6-10
Zinnia 'Oklahoma Scarlet' Benary	<b>11.9</b> 1-52	<b>17.0</b> 10-24	<b>2.8</b> 1-4	<b>3.8</b> 2-5	<b>3.6</b> 2-5	<b>3.3</b> 1-5	<b>4.3</b> 2-5	<b>143</b> 42-252	<b>7.3</b> 7-10
Zinnia 'Uproar Rose' Benary	<b>9.6</b> 3-30	<b>18.5</b> 10-30	<b>3.8</b> 1-5	<b>4.8</b> 4-5	<b>4.8</b> 4-5	<b>4.4</b> 2-5	<b>4.4</b> 3-5	<b>128</b> 36-252	<b>6.8</b> 6-9
Zinnia 'Zowie Yellow Flame' Goldsmith Seeds	<b>9.1</b> 5-23	<b>15.0</b> 8-20	<b>3.0</b> 1-5	<b>4.2</b> 2-5	<b>4.4</b> 2-5	<b>3.9</b> 1-5	<b>4.3</b> 2-5	<b>129</b> 36-252	<b>6.7</b> 5-9

<sup>1</sup> 1 to 5 scale, with 5 being the best. Market ratings are based on sales to wholesales, retailers, or final consumers direct.



CUT FLOWER SNAPDRAGONS BY

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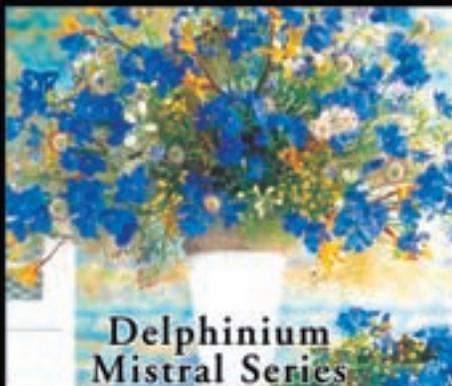
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**Yellow II '08 Improved!**

- \* Group II responsiveness
- \* Blooms under short days, cooler temperatures and low light conditions

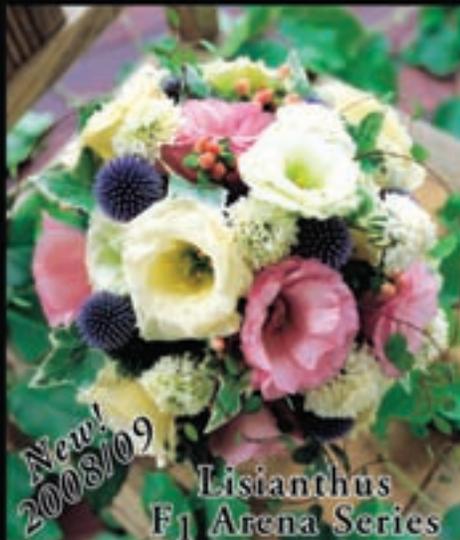


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## Summary of Comments

The number in a parenthesis refers to the number of respondents who made the comment. If no number is present, only one person made the comment. Comments by each individual are separated with a semicolon (;). Note: many respondents did not make specific comments on each cultivar and in some cases, comments have been shortened because of limited space.

### Larkspur

#### Larkspur 'Stiletta Indigo Blue'

(Gloeckner)

**Good Qualities:** The intense indigo blue color (5), slightly taller than other larkspur in my fields, nice vigorous plants; Tall, attractive, with usable branches after main stem was cut; good as both a fresh cut and dried flower.

**Problems:** None (2); Died in field; Although planted early in May, stems never attained any height, the plugs were not root bound so I don't know why this happened; Shorter than other larkspur, although we had a very dry spring.

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Cannes Deep Blue'; Also grew 'Sublime' larkspur mixture, to which this cultivar has similar growth characteristics, but not the indigo blue color; also grow 'Blue Cloud' larkspur that has a similar dark blue color, but is more open and airy in appearance.

**General Comments:** Last year's (07) larkspur cultivar was a much better performer; I would like to try this again under normal spring conditions, this larkspur did very well compared to other larkspur cultivars I grow, generally do not do well with larkspur but the past two years I have had good success including variety trial cultivars, I think this one will be a winner.

### Lisianthus

#### Lisianthus 'Advantage Cherry Sorbet'

(Gloeckner)

**Good Qualities:** The deeper pink color is very nice (3), although variable; Double flowers (2); Stronger stems than some cultivars, nicer than some others of similar color; Attractive large flower with ruffled petal edges, relatively early and productive, easy to grow, sturdy stems, didn't require netting in the field.

**Problems:** None (2); Poor germination; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them

in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!

**Similar Cultivars:** 'ABC Deep Rose', but this was a nicer flower; 'Magic Pink'.

**General Comments:** Flowered 4 days later than 'Echo Champagne', the earliest in the trial.

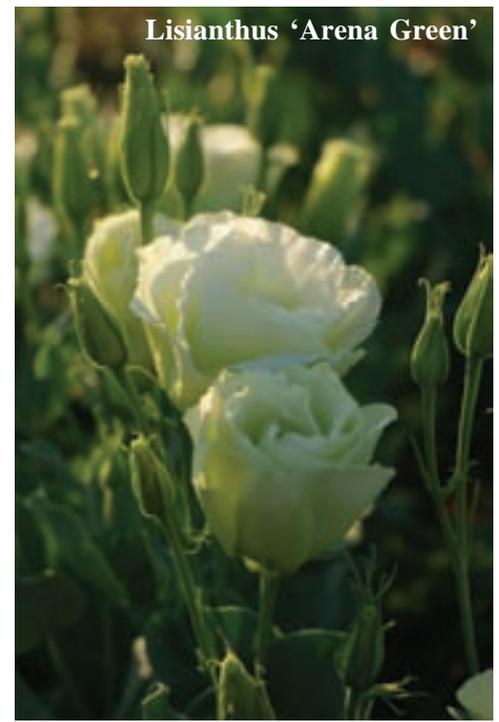
**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

#### Lisianthus 'Arena Green' (Takii)

**Good Qualities:** Great green color (3) or nice double white with green tinge; Sturdy stems (2), didn't require netting in the field; Attractive double flower with ruffled petal edges; Lots of buds; Timing of blooms opening very good, three flowers open at once! tall stems, nice double flowers; Easy to grow.

**Problems:** None; Somewhat wimpy terminal stems; Shorter plants in comparison to other lisianthus, and did a poor job withstanding wind, some almost growing parallel to the ground; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Long time to harvest from sowing (February to mid-Aug.).

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Super Magic Green', 'Arena Yellow'.



**General Comments:** 1 week later than 'Echo Champagne', the earliest variety in trial.

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water.

#### Lisianthus 'Arena Pink' (Takii)

**Good Qualities:** Nice light pink with dark yellow centers (4); Attractive double flowers with ruffled edges (3); Sturdy stems (3); Produced multiple usable stems/plant, prolific bud production, withstood windy conditions well; Uniform growth habit, fully double flowers; Tall; Our first attempt at growing lisianthus was wildly successful! lovely buds, long vase life, it was as easy to grow as celosia, florists love it; Easy to grow, didn't require netting in the field.

**Problems:** None; Wimpy terminal stems; Color seems a little washed out; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Later to bloom than rest of Arena series by a couple of weeks.

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Echo Pink', 'Twinkle Pink Exp.', 'Cinderella Pink'.

**General Comments:** 12 days later than 'Echo Champagne', the earliest in the trial; Planted two seeds per cell in a 125 plug tray in early February, started cutting stems in late September, flower quality improved after the bed was covered with a plastic tunnel for frost protection, still producing Oct. 15.



**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water.

### **Lisianthus ‘Arena Rose’ (Takii)**

**Good Qualities:** Great color (3); Strong stems (3); Double flowers (2); Attractive double flowers with ruffled edges, tallest variety in trial; Nice flower form, moderate buds, better stem strength than the other Arena varieties; Many buds/stem, most of all lisianthus cultivars, tallest plants and produced most stems/plant among all lisianthus; Very tall; Easy to grow, didn’t require netting in the field.

**Problems:** Too late for this location: 24 days later than ‘Echo Champagne’, low yield; Occasional flower stem droop; Blooming lags behind rest of Arena series, one week after first cut of the rest of Arena, it’s still not blooming; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Long time to harvest from sowing (Feb-mid-Aug.) (Zone 5).

**Similar Cultivars:** ‘Magic Rose’.

**General Comments:** ‘Arena Rose’ performed best of the Arena varieties; Didn’t stand up to our windy/breezy conditions, bloomed much later than other lisianthus, late August came before prolific blooming started; Best of all the lisianthus we had this year.

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water.

### **Lisianthus ‘Arena White’ (Takii)**

**Good Qualities:** Very attractive fully double blooms, pure white (5); Strong stems (2); Numerous flowers/stem, uniform color and size of blooms, very upright habit; Easy to grow, sturdy stems, didn’t require netting in the field.

**Problems:** None; Many stems unable to maintain open flower upright, limited buds; Stem length not always most desirable, generally shorter than what growers want; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have

known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Long time to harvest from sowing (Feb-mid-Aug.) (Zone 5).

**Similar Cultivars:** ‘Echo White’.

**General Comments:** A week later than ‘Echo Champagne’, the earliest in the trial; Beautiful! in field grew wonderfully, but this is the first time they were successfully germinated in our greenhouse.

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

### **Lisianthus ‘Arena Yellow’ (Takii)**

**Good Qualities:** Attractive fully double creamy yellow (5); Easy to grow, sturdy stems, didn’t require netting in the field; Large, full blooms, very upright/straight growth habit.

**Problems:** None; Limited buds, stems often bent supporting open blooms; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Long time to harvest from sowing (Feb-mid-Aug.) (Zone 5); First blooms to open are low on the stem and then hold on long after they die back, somewhat unsightly.

**Similar Cultivars:** Coloration quite similar to ‘Arena Green’.

**General Comments:** 9 days later than ‘Echo Champagne’, the earliest in the trial.

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water.

### **Lisianthus ‘Cadence Yellow’ (Goldsmith)**

**Good Qualities:** Small single light yellow flower (2); Spray type; Blooms quickly, green center, single blooms throughout stem in nice formation; Half of stem blooms at once making for a very attractive cut, very upright habit; Easy to grow.

**Problems:** Not as showy as other lisianthus cultivars; Holds onto spent blooms too long. they turn brown and are unsightly; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a

crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!!!; Shortest stems in the trial; single flowers not as attractive as doubles in trial.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.



Lisianthus ‘Arena Pink’



Lisianthus ‘Arena White’

**General Comments:** First to bloom of all lisianthus; 11 days later than 'Echo Champagne', the earliest in the trial.

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

### **Lisianthus 'Twinkle Pink Improved'** (Goldsmith)

**Good Qualities:** Rich pink color (2); Easy to grow, nice tall double pink; Attractive with dark center; Tall plants, uniform bloom time; Long, strong stems; Pink petals with dark center, earliest in trial

**Problems:** Not as vigorous as some varieties; Bend and grow with wind direction, appear to be toppled over; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Single flowers not as attractive as doubles in trial, showed rain flecking.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** Late but long-blooming period (mid-August to frost) (Zone 5); Very attractive color, too bad the plants grew so bent due to wind; With 'Echo Champagne', the earliest in the trial

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

### **Lisianthus 'Twinkle Violet'** (Goldsmith)

**Good Qualities:** Beautiful swirled purple color (4); Easy to grow; Knock-out rich color with darker center, open blooms line up on the stem which looks great in arrangements (tiered); Prettiest cultivar! /abundant bloom production, opening all together; Early, buds attractive darker stripes.

**Problems:** Stems were too short (2); Moderate fade; Marginally wind damaged, stems bend with the wind and grew that way, but generally straightened out well once cut and cooled; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them



**Lisianthus 'Cadence Yellow'**



**Lisianthus 'Twinkle Violet'**

in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Single flowers not as attractive as doubles in trial, showed rain flecking.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** Favorite flower of the whole trial!; With 'Echo Champagne', the earliest in the trial.

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water.

### **Lisianthus 'Vulcan Pink Picotee'** (Takii)

**Good Qualities:** Beautiful color combination, the pink tips were very vivid (3); Very strong stems, picotee made this more attractive to customers than most singles; The stem length was good; Moderate buds, great stem height and sturdiness; Strong stem, nice flowers.

**Problems:** Singles less popular (2); Low productivity, pink edges vary in width among flowers, some entirely pink; Did not get very many flowers; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Propagation difficult.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** 10 days later than 'Echo Champagne', the earliest variety in trial; I liked these for bouquet work; Fantastic blooms - my favorite lisianthus; Flower head 4 cm, no fragrance.

### **Lisianthus 'Vulcan White'** (Takii)

**Good Qualities:** Strong stem (4); Long stems (3); Nice flowers (2); Second-tallest variety in trial; Beautiful, single pure white flower; Extra sturdy stems, many buds, very vigorous, attractive bloom.

**Problems:** None (2); Singles never as popular; Shorter than other lisianthus, stem not as strong; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Propagation difficult.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** Single white flower with dark center, 3 days later than 'Echo Champagne', the earliest variety in trial; Not really worth growing for me; Vulcan series truly outstanding.

### **Lisianthus 'Vulcan Yellow'** (Takii)

**Good Qualities:** Very strong stems (3); Creamy yellow single with dark yellow center, good yellow color; Beautiful, petite single flower; Nice flowers; A great color, I like that there are many flowers on each stem.

**Problems:** None (2); Singles never as popular; Stems not as sturdy as other lisianthus cultivars; The seed came late (February) and although I started it right away, the plants in the field never got to maturity, we had a very cold/late spring (up to 6 weeks lost) and this did not work in their favor, also, in the future I will only grow lisianthus in the hoop, western Washington is just too cool to attempt them in the field, wish I would have known! I worked so hard to get a crop and really wanted to see all of these beauties in full bloom, bummer!; Propagation difficult.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** Flowered 3 days later than 'Echo Champagne', the earliest variety in trial; Flower head 5 cm, no fragrance.

**Postharvest Handling:** See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.

## Panicum

### *Panicum elegans* 'Frosted Explosion' (Gloekner)

**Good Qualities:** In a bouquet, it added an airy feature; Good filler, dries well; Lacy filler, not the norm, pleasing shape (upside down cone); Liked to use these early on until they 'exploded', this explains for low stem counts; Feathery, light appearance was very complementary to other cut flowers, vast majority of stems were 18-20 inches, very few were shorter; Light airy texture; nice green color with darker panicles, great as a filler both fresh and dried, the most popular flower in our ASCFG cut flower trials; I especially liked this grass in its less mature, tufted stage - like a fine grass tassel on a stem! made a very textural filler - nice bright green color, nice long useful life in field, will definitely be growing this again!; One of the most productive, in demand crops I grew, we never had enough and sowed twice plus cut from a batch of volunteers, this stuff is so easy to grow, easy to cut, the wholesaler and grocery stores love it and consumers can't get enough; Very cool plant, everyone loved it; 'Frosted Explosion' was easy to germinate, transplant, and grew vigorously, in fact it responded well to watering and fertilizing; Easy to grow, wonderful customer approval, long lasting and great filler for bouquets; Unusual flower type.

**Problems:** None (2); Too short (2); Looked too much like a weed for most people; Fragile; Stems can bend; Cut in early development or the tops become thin and brittle; First cut produced huge number of stems, following cuts weren't as lucrative; Longer stems would be desirable; Will grow it again, for sure, and

hope for longer stems, but even short, it was a winner!; Hard to use after it started to branch, maybe additional sowings would be better, sheds some seeds; All plants were almost dead, the results are from 1 small plant that barely survived, not sure cause of stress.

**Similar Cultivars:** Native switchgrass, a weed here!; No; There is a weedy grass in my fields that is identical to 'Frosted Explosion', I do not water or fertilize the weed but it grew similar to the cultivar and had the same inflorescence, in fact I have used the weed years previously in bouquets, for my customers, it was too common as they all have it as a weed in their gardens as well.

**General Comments:** I think I planted these too close, I didn't love it, but New England doesn't have the love for grasses that some areas do, what I do love is how it works as a dried "flower"; Adds a natural look to informal bouquets; Perennial grass/we grow as annual looks like our wild grass which we cut; Died in a cold weather snap in early spring; Japanese beetles enjoyed hanging out in the feathery ends, but thankfully didn't seem to eat foliage; Crop failure, was weeded out, this is a weedy annual grass here in Wisconsin; Should be Cut Flower of the Year!; Love it!; Lasted for the entire growing season, everyone remarked about it and wanted to know what it was.

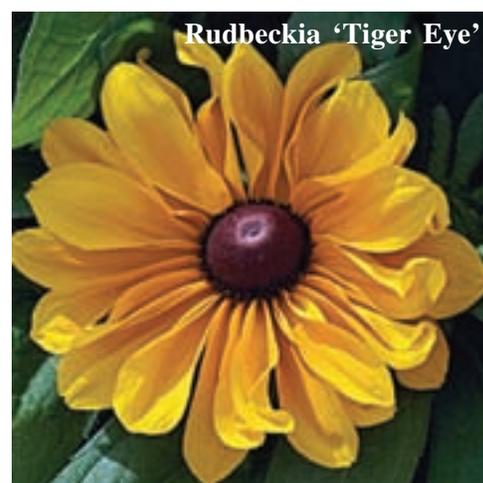
**Postharvest Handling:** Choose green inflorescences that are just getting a bronze tip to avoid messy arrangements; Water and bleach; Cut into Floralife; We only used plain water.

## Rudbeckia

### *Rudbeckia* 'Tiger Eye' (Goldsmith)

**Good Qualities:** Bright butterscotch color (5); Great bedding plant (2); Uniformity was outstanding, no pest problems; Lots of quality, uniform flowers, popular with customers; Very uniform in growth habit, very floriferous, sturdy stem, attractive, petite flower head; Beautiful plant; Lovely, sweet, long blooming, colorful landscape plant, did our perennial trial get mixed up with a landscape trial?; Very prolific double rudbeckia, easy to grow and showy; Beautiful healthy plants that are early to bloom and filled with blooms, mostly flawless; Very perky, classic rudbeckia look, good addition to small bouquets, easy harvest, holds up in heat, long harvest season; Whole plant harvest; very good for low table arrangements; no problems with insects or disease; Attractive and easy to grow rudbeckia, nice addition to group.

**Problems:** Too short for cut flower use (12); Better as a bedding plant (4); A total failure for us, dwarf plants, when cut they would wilt at



the farmers market in a few hours; None; Didn't sprout; Large green collar of smaller leaves around base of flower, which we removed; Needs to be evaluated in its second year here in zone 4B to see if it will be taller; Some root rot deaths; I had good germination but the plants didn't do well growing on, by the time they were ready for field planting I had 4 plants to transplant.

**Similar Cultivars:** I suppose, but I haven't found any as nice as these; Along with 'Tiger Eye', we also grew 'Cappuccino' and 'Irish Spring' rudbeckia, both had great color and stems in the 18 to 24 inch range making them better as a general use cut flower.

**General Comments:** Great for people who want short flowers or for use in Oasis; We did not plant seeds until this fall, we always seed rudbeckias in August, transplant in Sept/Oct (Zone 6b/7a); Great bedding plants; We will definitely grow again only to sell as part of our pot crop program; Crop failure, did not germinate, perhaps we should have started this in the greenhouse; We will be selling this as a bedding plant; I will grow this cultivar again and try to cut harder to see if that helps elongate stems; I don't usually bother to grow rudbeckia, after trying quite a few and not finding the quality I need, but this variety I will try again and try to grow it better.

**Postharvest Handling:** Used Floralife for hard water; Remove leaves; Rudbeckias are always the first thing we harvest early in the AM and go immediately into the cooler; We used only plain water; Pick early in the day and get into water quickly.

### Snapdragon 'Opus Bright Red'



### Snapdragon

#### Snapdragon 'Calima Deep Rose'

(Sakata Seed)

**Good Qualities:** Beautiful bright color (7); Nice stem length and strength; Very full flower stalks, numerous flower stalks/plant - although not always of appropriate cut flower length; 'Calima Deep Rose' was in fact a very deep color for us here in coastal California and was much appreciated by all who saw in growing and in a vase, this cultivar also seemed to have very good rust resistance, even while blooming next to infested neighbors; Spikes strong and rather tight; More vigorous than 'Calima Pure White'; Good fragrance; Love it.

**Problems:** Stems often were bent right at the point where flowers started, straightening of cuts in a cooler condition wasn't always successful; Slowest of the 4 varieties tested to flower; None especially; Short stems; Not all buds on stems are open at same time; Needs netting for field grown, wind bent stems - less usable stems.

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Potomac Cherry Rose'.

**General Comments:** Prolific bloomer, earliest of all snaps that were trialed, beautiful!; On the shorter side, perhaps planted too late by me; Flower head 2 cm; As with previous years, I continue to try to grow snapdragons, in the cultivar trial I planted the test varieties on either side of my Rocket snaps - all three cultivars grew similarly and did not produce any marketable stems, however, near the end of the season both 'Deep Rose' and 'Pure White' had some florets open on stunted

stems and the colors were outstanding, I would expect that both cultivars based on the clearness of the color would be a nice addition to the specialty cut flower growers snap collection; Harvested 7/24-7/30 (transplanted into the field May 15).

**Postharvest Handling:** Water and bleach. See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.

#### Snapdragon 'Calima Pure White'

(Sakata Seed)

**Good Qualities:** Nice pure white color (4); Good flower structure, blooming was uniform on each stem; Strong spikes; Long vase life, sturdy stems; Pretty blooms, good fragrance.

**Problems:** Cuts made after the first were often too short for use (not counted); 'Calima Pure White' looked very promising at first - however, as plants were beginning to elongate they were hit severely by rust and as a result stem length and quantity suffered, they were definitely more susceptible to rust than the Rocket series and the other trial varieties from the Opus and Calima series that we grew side by side this season; Flowered about 2 weeks later than 'Opus Pure White'; None especially, first flush great, but not long lasting; Poor germination and seedling survival, only 3 plants transplanted to field, stems needed to be netted, wind caused too much bending; white flowers don't seem to be very popular in our market, stems were rather short, axillary growth wasn't great; Not all buds on stems are open.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** First cut produced many bent stems, following cuts were straighter, though less productive in number, plants were very compact and had no issue with stems falling; On the shorter side, perhaps planted too late by me; Retail florists said California snaps are available for very cheap prices, but they liked our higher quality product - they would buy ours if they needed them, we had only about 70 snapdragon plants total so we planted them in one row, this might have contributed to the short stems, we'll try bigger numbers-in a bed next year; Flower head 2 cm; As with previous years, I continue to try to grow snapdragons - in the cultivar trial I planted the test varieties on either side of my Rocket snaps, all three cultivars grew similarly and did not produce any marketable stems, however, near the end of the season both 'Deep Rose' and 'Pure White' had some florets open on stunted stems and the colors were outstanding - I would expect that both cultivars based on the clearness of the color

would be a nice addition to the specialty cut flower grower's snap collection.

**Postharvest Handling:** Water and bleach.

#### Snapdragon 'Opus Bright Red'

(Goldsmith)

**Good Qualities:** Very bright, vibrant color (7); Very tall (2); Amazing plants! some were 48 inches, grew in field with drip tape and 1 row netting, I am still harvesting and some of the second flush stems also exceed 40 inches; Straight stems with good spacing of flowers, straightest of all snap cultivars; Wonderfully long stems with good girth; Strong plant, good rebloom with side dressing of fertilizer; Very fast growing from germination to transplant was about 6 weeks; The head size of bright red was not as impressive as 'Fresh White', but was good; Great for taller arrangements, good fragrance.

**Problems:** None (2); Some issues with stems falling over, but minimal; Flower spikes rather short - 6 inches or less, more susceptible to rust than other snaps in trial; Fragile tips; Needs to be staked, blooms are not open at same time on stem.

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Potomac Red' (2), but I like these better.

**General Comments:** Would like to see more colors; Most bushy of snap cultivars, good because they weren't sprawling; Had much better results with these than any of the other Opus series we have tried; The Red was outstanding, however, stem length was disappointing, maybe I planted too late, seeds were started on March 21; This entire planting

#### Snapdragon 'Opus Fresh White'



## Stock

### Stock 'Katz Cherry Blossom'

(PanAmerican/Ball)

**Good Qualities:** Wonderful fragrance (4); Nice bicolor pink (7); Uniform readiness for easy bunching, about 75% double; Beautiful in spring and early summer; The color range was great for spring bouquets; Produce more usable stems than other stock cultivars; Strong stems.

**Problems:** Too short; did not yield well and had a very short field life, too much time and effort and valuable field space for the little it yielded; Stems weaker than other colors, but did not seem to really be a problem for florists; Planted in shade but summer temps were too hot, deer ate foliage and blooms; Had a lot of

earlier than the numbered varieties I tried from Ball, doubleness was about 70%; Uniform; Beautiful in spring and early summer; Color excellent! We loved it; Easy to germinate and grow on to transplantable size.

**Problems:** Too many singles (2); Took too long, yield too low, I prefer plants with longer productivity; Weird twisting flower heads on some planted directly in the field, bad germ in plug trays about 50%; Stems tended to be somewhat weak, but none of my florists mentioned it; Flowers are crinkled and leaves curly, has the appearance of being diseased, not an attractive plant; Color only OK; Planted in shade but summer temps were too hot, deer ate foliage and blooms; Plants grow well for a time but when flowering should occur they stop growing and make a stunted flower stalk

that never produces a flower; Too short; did not yield well and had a very short field life. Too much time and effort and valuable field space for the little it yielded.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** If all the plants were double, I would grow them again, it was a waste of space for many of them were not usable; Easy to grow, didn't need support netting; This cultivar produced no blooms, very little, if any, growth occurred after transplanting; We were very happy with the results and hope

to grow again; Flower head 3.5 cm; It did not produce marketable flowers.

**Postharvest Handling:** Used Floralife; We use only plain water.

### Stock 'Katz Pink' (PanAmerican/Ball)

**Good Qualities:** Wonderful fragrance (4); Very dark pink (4); The scent and the color range was great for spring bouquets; Uniform length and readiness; Fast grower, large flower heads; Beautiful in spring and early summer; Good sturdy stem length.

**Problems:** Stems were weakest on this color, but still not a problem with florists; Flowers crinkled and leaves curled, plant appears to be diseased, not attractive; Could not select out doubles, requires staking; *Matthiola* just is not going to make the grade as an outdoor cut flower in western Wisconsin, our growing season is too short and too hot for this crop; Planted in shade but summer temps were too hot, deer ate foliage and blooms.

Small cluster of flowers at the top of the stem; Too short, did not yield well and had a very



Stock 'Katz Lavender Light'

singles (worthless) - still not very good at diagnosing a single from a double - hated I wasted the house space; Lots of singles, weird twisting flower heads on some planted directly in the field, bad germ in plug trays, about 50%; Flowers crinkled and leaves curled, plant appeared to be diseased, not an attractive plant.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** This cultivar produced no blooms, very little growth, if any occurred after transplanting; We had great feedback on all of the Katz stock that we trialed, could have sold a lot more; Lost most of these due to wet weather, will grow again; Flower head 3.5 cm; Easy to grow, didn't need support netting

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water.

### Stock 'Katz Lavender Light'

(PanAmerican/Ball)

**Good Qualities:** Fragrance (6); Good lavender color (3); The color range was great for spring bouquets; Pretty when they are double; Very sturdy and tall stems, nice cluster of flowers; Stem length, uniform quality for bunching,

was put in late and not cared for due to a total lack of labor, it was watered, it was subjected to heat stress right after transplanting and developed flowers while quite small, initially, but kept on growing; Flower head = 3 cm.

**Postharvest Handling:** Used Floralife for hard water; Water and bleach; We had a problem with the tips being very fragile and breaking, it was worse in the summer heat, this fall they did better, we recut the stems when we got them in the barn, put them in fresh water, and that seemed to help a lot.

### Snapdragon 'Opus Fresh White'

(Goldsmith)

**Good Qualities:** Very strong stems (4); Great bright white color (3); No breaking, almost no shattering; Amazing plants! some were 48 inches, grew in field with drip tape and 1 row netting, I am still harvesting and some of the 2nd flush stems also exceed 40 inches; contrasts well with colors. Stems were straighter with each cut; Nice long primary spike (6-10 inches) with shorter secondary, earliest of all snaps to flower; Good rebloom with side dressing of fertilizer; The head size was excellent - larger than other Monaco series planted at the same time and larger than 'Opus Bright Red', this is one I definitely would like to look at again, much superior to 'Monaco White' in stem strength and head size; Tall straight stems, blooms excellent, smells great!

**Problems:** None (3); Some awkward bending of stems just below flowers, didn't always respond to cooling so some stayed bent during their entire postharvest life.

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Potomac White', but these are taller; 'Calima White'; 'Opus White'.

**General Comments:** Would like to see more colors; Thickness of stems decreased with each cut, but length was relatively constant; Stem length disappointing, maybe I planted too late, seeds were started on March 21; This entire planting was put in late and not cared for due to a total lack of labor, it was watered, it was subjected to heat stress right after transplanting and developed flowers while quite small, initially, but kept on growing.

**Postharvest Handling:** Used Floralife for hard water; Remove all foliage; We cut into water with Chrysal 2.

short field life, too much time and effort and valuable field space for the little it yielded; Lots of singles, weird twisting flower heads on some planted directly in the field, bad germ in plug trays about 50%

**Similar Cultivars:** ‘Vivas Light Pink’.

**General Comments:** This cultivar produced no blooms, very little, if any, growth occurred after transplanting; Harvest spread out over a couple of weeks; We have had very good luck with Aida series and it fit wells into our program; The seed germinated and then struggled all summer, I picked a few stems for personal use in early October, hey, we gave it a try (Zone 4); Easy to grow, didn’t need support netting, least favorite of the stock varieties trialed.

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water.

### **Stock ‘Katz White’ (PanAmerican/Ball)**

**Good Qualities:** Wonderful fragrance (4); The scent and the color range were great for spring bouquets; Very nice strong plants, about 75% double; Good color; Fast grower, large flower head; Pretty when they are double; Beautiful in spring and early summer; Nice strong-stemmed white, sturdier than some other varieties we have grown; Easy to germinate and grow on to transplantable size; Cold requirement for flowering minimal, produced usable stems even in the last tunnel planting, when ‘Lucinda Cream’ became vegetative.

**Problems:** Stems were weakest on this color, but still not a problem with florists; Flowers crinkled and leaves curled, plant appears to be diseased, not attractive; Could not select out doubles, requires staking; *Matthiola* just is not going to make the grade as an outdoor cut flower in western Wisconsin, our growing season is too short and too hot for this crop; Planted in shade but summer temps were too hot, deer ate foliage and blooms; Small cluster of flowers at the top of the stem; Too short, did not yield well and had a very short field life, too much time and effort and valuable field space for the little it yielded; Lots of singles, weird twisting flower heads on some planted directly in the field, bad germ in plug trays about 50%

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** This cultivar produced no blooms, very little, if any growth occurred after transplanting; Since I can get white without selecting for doubles, I’ll probably skip this color in future; If all the plants were double, I would grow them again, it was a waste of space for many of them

were not usable; Flower head 3.5 cm; Easy to grow, didn’t need support netting; I grouped these three cultivars because they all grew the same and did not produce marketable flowers.

**Postharvest Handling:** Used Floralife; We use only plain water.

### **Stock ‘Katz Yellow’ (PanAmerican/Ball)**

**Good Qualities:** Nice light yellow (5); Wonderful fragrance (4); The scent and the color range were great for spring bouquets; Easy to germinate and grow on to transplantable size; Blooms that were present were full and attractive, pale yellow complemented other cut flowers well; Good stem strength; Fast grower; Beautiful in spring and early summer; Very sturdy and tall stems, nice cluster of flowers

**Problems:** Yellow was a bit pale, creamy looking; Flowers crinkled and leaves curly, plant appears to be diseased, not an attractive plant; Needs staking; Took too long, yield too low, about half were singles, I prefer plants with longer productivity; Planted in shade but summer temps were too hot, deer ate foliage and blooms; Plants grow well for a time but when flowering should occur they stop growing and make a stunted flower stalk that never produces a flower; Too short, did not yield well and had a very short field life, too much time and effort and valuable field space for the little it yielded; High percentage of single flowering plants; Lots of singles, weird twisting flower heads on some planted directly in the field, bad germ in plug trays about 50%.

**Similar Cultivars:** No; ‘Column Yellow’, which seems to have longer inflorescences than the Katz series; Similar in color to the Cheerful series but stronger stems.

**General Comments:** This cultivar produced no blooms, very little, if any growth occurred after transplanting; Since I can get white without selecting for doubles, I’ll probably skip

this color in future; If all the plants were double I would grow them again, it was a waste of space for many of them were not usable; Flower head 3.5 cm; Easy to grow, didn’t need support netting; I grouped these three cultivars because they all grew the same and did not produce marketable flowers.

**Postharvest Handling:** Bleach/water solution; Stock definitely needs bleach or some other “cide” in the water; We use only plain water.

### **Stock ‘White Wonder Improved’**

(Taki)

**Good Qualities:** Very nice white w/ green center, very sturdy and tall stems, excellent cluster of flowers; Very uniform, foliage clean looking, succession flowered in short window; Great fragrance, nice color; Beautiful in spring and early summer; Lovely fragrance, clean white, nice length, a few singles.

**Problems:** Not super strong stems; Flowers crinkled and leaves curled, plants appear to be diseased—not attractive; Planted in shade but plant performed poorly when temperatures were higher in summer.

**Similar Cultivars:** ‘Katz White’.

**General Comments:** Easy to grow, didn’t need support netting; Good planted alongside ‘Cheerful White’, as ‘White Wonder’ was a little later; Perhaps it’s our climate, but we did not find the stock in this trial to be attractive as individual cut flowers, the fragrance and colors are great, making them useful in mixed bouquets, but not as focal flowers.

**Postharvest Handling:** We use only plain water.

## Sunflower

### **Sunflower ‘#565’ (Gloeckner/Agridera)**

**Good Qualities:** Beautiful bicolor blooms (8), although shading of bicolor wasn’t uniform; Good stem caliper (2); Strong stem/neck; Quick to produce new usable stems after cuts; 6-8 inch flowers, among earliest in group to flower, tendency toward branching so that secondary flowers can be harvested if primary flower is cut short, lots of oohs and aaaahs on this one; Healthy and productive; Smaller heads were 5 in. in diameter and they worked well in arrangements; The newer cultivars of sunflowers that keep appearing each year are an incremental improvement over the older cultivar and ‘565’ is typical of that change, nice presentation and has a more upright appearance longer; Easy to grow, good bloom and stem size; Good plant height, not too bushy.

**Problems:** None; We hand planted our trial sunflowers and ‘#565’ was



Sunflower ‘#565’

indistinguishable from ‘Sun4U Bicolor’; Small bloom for size plant, tendency for petals to bend backwards as ages; Side shoots very fragile, susceptible to breakage even at the slightest touch; Vase life not quite as good as other cultivars; The large head was about 10 in. in diameter and it did not work well in arrangements; This one was of no use to me, no height, small inferior bloom; I really could not distinguish between any of these cultivars, or maybe I should say the differences were more subtle than I could see, I think that they were too large, really thick stems, big heads even when direct seeded; Good flower color pattern (brown-ringed center) when the flower opens but as the flower fully opens, the brown ring fades away. **Similar Cultivars:** ‘Sun4U Bicolor’ (5), appeared almost identical; Many; Looked a lot like the Sunbright series.

**General Comments:** Fine, not worth switching to; Did not know it was branching, but was delighted to get a later usable flush of 2-3 (24-30 inch) side shoots, perfect in bouquets!; 1 large head at 10 inches and 5 small heads at 5 inches; Harvested between 7/25-8/20 (direct seeded on May 28); Appears to be moderately sensitive to daylength: short day reaction; Would trade Sunrich or Sunbright series for any of them; The Agridera submissions from Gloeckner all did well and had similar characteristics, the yellow orange petals with brown disk were all similar in the group; Flowered around August 1 (sowed June 11, transplanted to field June 25), flower diameter 7.5 in. when fully open, medium stem thickness. **Postharvest Handling:** Bleach and water; Keep the vase solution clean; Remove leaves; We use only plain water. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

### **Sunflower ‘Arbel’** (Gloeckner/Agridera)

**Good Qualities:** Good orange color with dark disk (2); Consistent quality, healthy, smaller heads; The newer cultivars of sunflowers that keep appearing are an incremental improvement over the older cultivar and ‘Arbel’ is typical of that change, nice presentation and has a more upright appearance longer; Almost two layers of overlapping petals, good neck posture and strength; Leaves on flower head produce attractive framing, huge blooms, thick stems, sturdy plants, short plants; vigorous growth; Early bloomer, uniform flowers, clear yellow petals against dark disc; Smaller heights; Standard orange sunflower, quite tall and late; Easy to grow, orange with short petals, good flower and



Sunflower ‘Arbel’

stem size; Nice yellow orange inner petals darker orange; Good petal count.

**Problems:** Flower head is too big (3), it was so heavy that the head faced down when in a vase; Kind of plain; Some irregular petal lengths; Thick stems were difficult to cut; Flowers at a pronounced right angle to stem. Designers find it difficult to work with This variety was a poor performer for me, stems were not very stout; heads were small; Standard orange sunflower, similar to many, I really could not distinguish between any of these cultivar, or maybe I should say the differences were more subtle than I could see I think that they were too large, really thick stems, big heads even when direct seeded; Late to flower compared to others.

**Similar Cultivars:** The Sunrich series; Many; Looked a lot like the Sunbright series; Looked the same as ‘Carmel’.

**General Comments:** Would trade Sunrich or Sunbright series for any of them; Harvested between 8/8-8/20 (direct seeded on May 28);



Sunflower ‘Carmel’

The Agridera submissions from Gloeckner all did well; Slower than other sunflowers to produce more usable stems after a cut; Fine; 1 large head at 9-10 inches; May be day-neutral in photoperiod reaction; Flowered around August 14 (sowed June 11, transplanted to field June 25), flower diameter 8.5 in. when fully open, thick stems.

**Postharvest Handling:** Keep the vase solution clean; Bleach and water; We used only plain water; Remove leaves. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

### **Sunflower ‘Carmel’** (Gloeckner/Agridera)

**Good Qualities:** Pretty orange color with a dark center (7); The head orientation, very flat and close to stem, is interesting and could be viewed favorably, single row of petals is okay but would prefer double row; Enough heads were a nice size, 5 inch diameter - not too big, maturity was uniform; The newer cultivars of sunflowers that keep appearing each year are an incremental improvement over the older cultivar and ‘Carmel’ is typical of that change - nice presentation and has a more upright appearance longer; Nice plant height, stiff short petals; Sturdy plants; Beautiful, fine and hairlike centers of blooms; These were good solid plants and bloom uniformly over a narrow window; Nice big flower (which I favor) on a stout stem, no drooping, petals were attractively ruffled and cupped for a long vase life ;Nice flower head size for arrangements; Standard orange sunflower, quite tall and late; Liked relatively small size, good petal counts (more double); Easy to grow, short petals; Good flower and stem size; Good stem thickness, good plant height.

**Problems:** Late to flower compared with other varieties (3), latest variety in trial: 84 days from sowing; I really could not distinguish between any of these cultivars, or maybe I should say the differences were more subtle than I could see, I think that they were too large, really thick stems, big heads even when direct seeded; Poor germination, seeds that grew did well; I planted for August harvest - July was very hot, in the upper 90’s and low 100’s following a wet June - majority of heads did not produce uniform ray flowers (presence/absence as well as length of flower petal) and the ray flowers on a disk did not open at the same time, by the time I could determine if all the rays were going to open, the disk looked old or was old, this appears to be a negative aspect of these flat oriented flowers and the slower opening of the ray flowers, the few that opened well with good ray petals

were nice that I'd like to get buyer feedback; There are so many sunflowers on the market that I am sometimes dizzy trying to keep them all straight; About a third of the flowers were misshapen - clam shells, bald spots in the center; leaves in the middle of the flower etc., the breeders have a lot of work to do on this one before it goes to the grower, it was the last one in the group to flower and was not worth the wait, there are so many good sunflower cultivars, why fool with this dog?; Heights vary; Standard orange sunflower, similar to many, large flower, may need to be crowded more to keep small; Shortest plant; The stems were harvested at the flower opening stage and after the harvest, they never opened at all, not a desirable feature for this crop, the stems never opened, they finally wilted and died.

**Similar Cultivars:** Sunbright (2); Not really, due to head orientation; The Sunrich series; Looked the same as 'Arbel'.

**General Comments:** The Agridera submissions from Gloeckner all did well; Slightly less productive than other sunflowers in the trial, although, actually produced usable stems later into the season; Didn't stand out much, better than several in trial, but not worth switching to on a large basis; I really liked this one although the name is a bit misleading in terms of color, would grow again; 5 in head; Harvested between 7/28-8/20 (direct seeded on May 28); Strongly short-day in photoperiod reaction.

**Postharvest Handling:** Keep the vase solution clean; Bleach and water; We use only plain water; Remove leaves. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

## Sunflower 'Galilee Adami'

(Gloeckner/Agridera)

**Good Qualities:** Nice orange (8), orange ring in centers was unique; Early to flower (2); Healthy; The newer cultivars of sunflowers that keep appearing are an incremental improvement over the older cultivars and 'Galilee Adami' is typical of that change. - nice presentation and has a more upright appearance longer; Some petals overlap, strong stem/neck; Side shoots produced small, dainty blooms that would look great in arrangements; 'Galilee Adami' was another productive, consistent cultivar, but not a real standout in the vast ocean of *Helianthus* offerings; Eight to 10 inch flowers, vigorous growth; Uniform flower production; Easy to grow, good bloom and stem size; Good plant height.

**Problems:** Large flower heads (3); Height varies a lot (2); Large green collar of smaller leaves around base of flower, which we removed; Stalk



Sunflower 'Galilee Adami'

huge!!! Too big even with 6x6 spacing; I really could not distinguish between any of these cultivars, or maybe I should say the differences were more subtle than I could see, I think that they were too large, really thick stems, big heads even when direct seeded; Stems collapsed in our postharvest studies; Deer love them!; Another one that performed poorly in my fields and under my weather conditions, the seed company touts this as a "very early" variety so perhaps it was too warm when I planted it; Standard orange sunflower, similar to many; Gets too bushy.

**Similar Cultivars:** Looked a lot like the Sunbright series; 'Sun4U Orange'; Many.

**General Comments:** Harvested between 8/5-8/20 (direct seeded on May 28), The Agridera submissions from Gloeckner all did well; Overall a sturdy plant; Fine, not worth switching to; Flower head = 7 inches; May be insensitive to daylength; Would trade Sunrich or Sunbright series for any of them; Flowered around August 1 (sowed June 11, transplanted to field June 25), flower diameter 8 in. when fully open, medium stem thickness.

**Postharvest Handling:** Remove leaves; Keep the vase solution clean; Bleach and water; We use only plain water. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

## Sunflower 'Sun4U Bicolor'

(Kieft-Pro-Seeds)

**Good Qualities:** Great bicolor (6), even the stems have pretty coloration; Very uniform height or flowering time (4), cut all of each

color in about 1 week; Did not lose petals as easily as most bicolors (2); A nice big bloom on strong stem, a few customers especially commented on the lovely bicolor appeal; Easy to grow, nice size bloom; Good germination - harvested 77 stems; Good neck/stem strength and posture, very attractive bloom, good petal overlap, Forward-facing head, nice brown center very tactile, ray petals uniform length, nice moderate sized head, plant height and stem diameter generally were more what I like than the ProCuts or Sunrich series planted at the same time and in the same bed; Prolific side shoot production, bicolor was apparent even on underside of petals, stem coloration also attractive, good uniformity in bicolor habit; Tall plant; Love the Van Gogh look of this one; The smaller head worked well in arrangements; All Sun4U were perfectly fine, single suns; Very popular bicolor with lots of the oooooh factor; rapid and strong germination; some flowers are up facing that is favored by designers; blooms a few days ahead of orange types; flowers mostly in 7-8 inch diameter with secondary flowers being an inch or 2 smaller; Produces usable attractive branches after main stem harvest; An interesting feature of this cultivar is the smaller leaf under the flower, it makes for a very attractive display when bunched as the leaves are below the flower head, flowered earlier than the other bicolor sunflowers that I had planted at the same time; 'Sun4U Bicolor' was by far my favorite!; Good stem caliper, early to flower.

**Problems:** None (2); A few blooms were not held erect; Bicolor not appreciated by customers, had to replace with 'Sunrich' for a farmstand I sell to, Bicolor also fragile, lost petals in transit much like 'Joker' and 'Moulin Rouge', 'Lemon' and 'Orange', very few petals on head, if lost one petal, had to junk flower; Petals tend to bend backward with maturity; Distorted heads, prone to insect damage, I tended to wait until head more open than the 'Procut Bicolor' in order to tell if the petals would all elongate and disk would be uniform shape, i.e. marketable; Stems were very susceptible to breakage, all plants in our trial lost at least one usable stem from breaking; Petal drop at early stage of flowering; I planted too far apart yielding very large heads I could not use in bouquets; The larger flower head didn't work well in arrangements; I wasn't impressed with strength of stem or vase life to grow again; For those interested in only the primary flower, the branching may not be desirable as it make stripping leaves more difficult; Typical of bicolors is that the petals seem to fall off faster than the traditional yellow

and orange petaled sunflowers; While the petals did come off with the slightest abrasion, this new cultivar seemed better than any I have tried to date, certainly far superior to any of the “red” ones, just looking at those seem to encourage petals to fall off, in any event it is an improvement over other bicolors; Not very uniform i.e. some plants tall and some short, the brown center fades quickly as the flower opens.

**Similar Cultivars:** Trial variety 565 (2); ‘Procut Bicolor’ (2), liked this one better; Pro Cut Series; Bicolor, ‘Orange Mahogany’, flowered 5-7 days later than ‘Procut Bicolor’; The Sunrich series; Several; There are other bicolor sunflowers, but this is among the best.

**General Comments:** Harvested between 8/4-8/20 (direct seeded in the field on May 28); Would be really nice to get some rust resistance in these ornamental sunflowers, this one seemed to be more susceptible to rust or more heavily infected than the ‘Procut Bicolor’ but this was not quantified, rust was a big problem this year since we are growing organically combined with weather conditions this year and my absence during two critical weeks in July; Very attractive in the field, great plant height; Basically a normal cut flower sunflower, created some problems with the wholesale account, this year due to a very cool spring, the sunflower rotations came into flower at about the same time, like everyone, we pick our sunflowers when the first petal is just beginning to lift off, they look pretty similar at this point, the color of the center is about the only thing that looks different - while bunching, it was hard to keep all the different sunflower varieties separate, especially when we were dealing with lower numbers, so we frequently sent out mixed bunches, the retail florist didn’t seem to mind, but the wholesaler did not like the mixed bunches at all!; One large head at 9 in., and one small head at 5.5 in.; Nothing to write home about, not that large headed, not exciting; Seed catalogs list this as a single stem variety, but I found a weak tendency for branching and if the main flower is cut short side flowers will develop; The Sun4U series is a winner but this one is the weakest link; I will definitely look for more seeds for ‘Sun4U Bicolor’, great color; Flowered around August 5 (sowed June 11, transplanted to field June 25), flower diameter 7.5 in., not any better than other bicolor (#565).



Sunflower ‘Sun4U Lemon Yellow’

size; An interesting feature of this cultivar is the smaller leaf under the flower, it makes for a very attractive display when bunched as the leaves are below the flower head, flowered earlier than the traditional sunflowers that I had planted at the same time; Large bloom on strong stem, pollenless; Nice form, nice size; Stocky, sturdy plants; Pretty; Early to flower.

**Postharvest Handling:** Kept well if stems were recut under water and then held in a bleach/water solution; Remove leaves; Cut early and used Floralife; We used only plain water; Just from observation this variety seemed to have longer postharvest life; Cut before fully open; Keep the vase solution clean; We always cut our sunflowers into plain warm well water with a splash of bleach...works for us. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

### Sunflower ‘Sun4U Lemon Yellow’ (Kieft-Pro-Seed)

**Good Qualities:** Good lemon color with dark centers (11) with great customer appeal; Very uniform, cut all of each color in about 1 week; Easy to grow, Large brown center with short petals, good stem size; Came into flower early - by July 4<sup>th</sup>, uniform, medium head - good for bouquet work, no petal drop, good branching with multiple usable stems on each plant; Good germination harvested 76 stems; All Sun4U were perfectly fine, single suns; 6-8 inch flowers, first in series to flower, rapid germination; Strong branching, good flower

size; An interesting feature of this cultivar is the smaller leaf under the flower, it makes for a very attractive display when bunched as the leaves are below the flower head, flowered earlier than the traditional sunflowers that I had planted at the same time; Large bloom on strong stem, pollenless; Nice form, nice size; Stocky, sturdy plants; Pretty; Early to flower.

**Problems:** None (2); Too light of yellow; Very few petals on head, if lost one petal, had to junk flower; Light yellow, did not hold up well in the cooler and was not as good a seller as the orange sunflowers; Petals lack substance, do not hold well and are more prone to insect damage than other cultivars, yellow sunflowers are not popular with consumers;

Very attractive to tarnished plant bug more so than darker yellow sunflowers; A few blooms were not held upright; Petals seemed more attractive to insects than other cultivars – produced some holes on petals, slow to produce usable stems after a cut; Flower size varied large to small; I planted too far apart yielding very large heads I could not use in bouquets, I had borer damage to many; Plant height varies quite a bit; I wasn’t impressed with strength of stem or vase life to grow again; Flower head relatively small for size of plant; Slightly short plant height, petals are wrinkled/crinkled, color fades/bleaches into white on the edges, shorter stems than others in Sun4U series.

**Similar Cultivars:** Pro Cut Series; Several; The Sunrich series; A tall ‘Pro Cut Lemon’, but short-day responsive.

**General Comments:** The whole series is a winner and I want to grow it again next year. Better than Pro Cut; Harvested between 8/4-8/20 (direct seeded into the field May 28); Nothing to write home about, not that large headed, not exciting; I will definitely look for more seeds for ‘Sun4U Bicolor’, great color; The Sun4U series is a winner; First bloom of

main stem had very short stem, was not usable, although all our sunflowers did this, so it may have been environmentally influenced, slightly slower to produce usable stems in comparison to rest of Sun4U cultivars; Basically a normal cut flower sunflower, created some problems with the wholesale account, this year due to a very cool spring, the sunflower rotations came into flower at about the same time, like everyone, we pick our sunflowers when the first petal is just beginning to lift off, they look pretty similar at this point, the

color of the center is about the only thing that looks different - while bunching, it was hard to keep all the different sunflower varieties separate, especially when we were dealing with lower numbers, so we frequently sent out mixed bunches, the retail florist didn’t seem to mind, but the wholesaler did not like the mixed bunches at all! one retail florist specifically asked for this one and the bicolors, would consider growing them again for her; I will only grow branching varieties from now on, I tried to pinch some of all the sunflowers after reading about that in an older *Quarterly*, it does not work for all single varieties, this may be a great flower if planted more closely; Flower head 7 in., hard to use in arrangements;

Flowered around August 5 (sowed June 11, transplanted to field June 25), flower diameter 6 in., medium stem thickness.

**Postharvest Handling:** We always cut our sunflowers into plain warm well water with a splash of bleach...works for us; Keep the vase solution clean; We only used plain water; Kept well with bleach/water solution, be generous with recutting stems after initial harvest, kept better when more of end was cut indoors; Remove leaves; Cut early and used Floralife. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

## Sunflower 'Sun4U Orange'

(Kieft-Pro-Seed)

**Good Qualities:** Nice orange/gold color with dark brown center (7); Uniform size and maturity (4); A winner in my tests, big blooms on sturdy stems, held petals very well, long vase life, pollenless; Very uniform, cut all of each color in about 1 week; Easy to grow, large brown center with short petals, good stem size; Came into flower early - by July 4<sup>th</sup>,

uniform, medium head - good for bouquet work, no petal drop, good branching with multiple usable stems on each plant; Attractive bloom with moderate length petals, some petals overlap; Large flower heads with large petals; Strong branching; All Sun4U were perfectly fine, single suns; Double row of petals, flowers 8 to 10 inches in diameter, rapid and strong germination; Standard orange sunflower; 'Sun4U Orange' has nice clear orange petals with great customer appeal, an interesting feature of this cultivar is the smaller leaf under the flower, it

makes for a very attractive display when bunched as the leaves are below the flower head, flowered earlier than the traditional sunflowers I had planted at the same time; Early to flower, good plant height at harvest.

**Problems:** None (3); Stems collapsed in postharvest studies; Weight of flower heads caused top-heavy plants and breakage of stems, centers not always in the center of the bloom, large green collar of smaller leaves around base of flower, which we removed; Too attractive to tarnished plant bugs and grasshoppers; I planted too far apart yielding very large heads I could not use in bouquets; 8.5 in flower head hard to use in arrangements; I wasn't impressed with strength of stem or

vase life to grow again; Standard orange sunflower, similar to many.

**Similar Cultivars:** Pro Cut series; 'Galilee Adami'; 'Sunrich Orange'; 'Orange Glory'; The Sunrich series; 'Pro Cut Orange'; Many.

**General Comments:** This variety and 'Carmel' were my favorites in this grouping of sunflowers; The whole series is a winner and I want to grow it again next year. Better than Pro Cut; Harvested between 8/8-8/20 (direct seeded into the field on May 28); Removal of main stem produced abundant side shoots which had smaller blooms and thinner stems but were much more practical for cut flower use compared to large main stem; Good branching variety but does not fit into our program; Basically a normal cut flower sunflower, created some problems with the wholesale account, this year due to a very cool spring, the sunflower rotations came into flower at about the same time, like everyone, we pick our sunflowers when the first petal is just beginning to lift off, they look pretty similar at this point, the color of the center is about the only thing that looks different - while



Sunflower 'Sun4U Orange'

bunching, it was hard to keep all the different sunflower varieties separate, especially when we were dealing with lower numbers, so we frequently sent out mixed bunches, the retail florist didn't seem to mind, but the wholesaler did not like the mixed bunches at all!; Nothing to write home about, not that large headed, not exciting; I will definitely look for more seeds for 'Sun4U Bicolor', great color; The Sun4U series is a winner; Flowered around August 5 (sowed June 11, transplanted to field June 25), flower diameter 7.5 in. when fully open, medium stem thickness, looks like the best entry of all.

**Postharvest Handling:** Recut stems under water, use bleach and water solution; Remove leaves; Cut early and used Floralife; We only

used plain water; We always cut our sunflowers into plain warm well water with a splash of bleach...works for us; Keep the vase solution clean. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

## Sunflower 'Tavor Joy' (Gloeckner/Agridera)

**Good Qualities:** Nice yellow orange color with dark center (6); Early to flower (2); Liked relatively small size, good petal counts (more double); Easy to grow, good bloom size; Nothing special about this sunflower to distinguish it, it did not branch; The newer cultivars of sunflowers that keep appearing are an incremental improvement over the older cultivars and 'Tavor Joy' is typical of that change - nice presentation and has a more upright appearance longer; Nice plant height; Foliage removed easily, not many problems with breakage; Like its brethren, 'Tavor Joy' was a good solid performer, but the individual flowers were not anything to write home about, on a positive note, after cutting the main bloom, 'Tavor Joy' came back with 4-6 short but usable

secondary stems that we utilized in our "mini" bouquets; Double row of petals around a brown/green center, flowers 6-8 inches in diameter, among the earlier flowering in trials; Really liked this variety; Very nice sunflower, preformed well; Worked well in arrangements; Standard orange sunflower.

**Problems:** None (2); Large green collar of smaller leaves around base of flower, which we removed; I really could not distinguish between any of these cultivars, or maybe I should say the differences were more subtle than I could see, I think they were too

large, really thick stems, big heads even when direct seeded; Slow start to bloom, but prolific side shoots once blooming began; Stems are somewhat short, but adequate for most floral work; Flowered much later than the other sunflowers in the test block; Height varies a lot; Standard orange sunflower, similar to many; Flowered at a short height, not easy to harvest, flowering not very uniform.

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Sunbright' (2); Looks like 'Sun4U Orange'; Many.

**General Comments:** The Agridera submissions from Gloeckner all did well; Double petals are great! fuller than other cultivars, Fine, but not worth switching to; Harvested between 7/22-8/20 (direct seeded in the field on May 28); Still favor 'Sunbright' /

'Sunbright Supreme'; I thought it was a single stem type and so I planted it close and did not pinch - to my delight, they gave a second flush of 3-4 small salable stems, perfect size for bouquet work; Flower head 6.5 inches; Moderately sensitive to daylength: short day reaction; Some flowers are deformed, flower diameter 6 in., smaller flower, medium stem thickness.

**Postharvest Handling:** Remove leaves; We use only plain water; Keep the vase solution clean; Bleach and water. *See separate postharvest report in this issue for results from NC State University postharvest evaluations.*

## Sweet Pea

### Sweet Pea 'Winter Sunshine Rose' (Gloekner)

**Good Qualities:** Wonderful fragrance (2); Attractive pink color (4); 'Winter Sunshine Rose' was a prolific bloomer (3); Flowers continued throughout to season, every bouquet put in the retail shop sold immediately!; Outperformed all other varieties, strong plants, long stems; As early as others in trial such as Mammoth Choice Mix.

**Problems:** Too short (3); stem length, number of flowers per stem, the fragrance was not as marked as 'April in Paris', 'Watermelon', or 'Royal Wedding' from Renee's Garden Seeds, the other problem was not enough flowers per stem, I set a marketable stem of having at least 4 flowers or buds, the conditions (late spring and poor stand) were not the best for evaluating but I was disappointed, 'Mammoth Rose' doesn't have any fragrance but has larger blooms and more of them, the others from Renee's have incredible fragrance and longer stems, even in lousy conditions; Seemed slow to start flowering; Our plants start blooming in July, our customers only want sweet peas for early spring weddings; We experienced nearly 3 weeks of overcast weather right after they began to bloom and all buds blasted, I lost weeks of cutting; Lower production than Mammoth Choice Mix; Crop failure - only one seed of 100 germinated, only 3 feet away from other peas which germinated well, the one seed grew into a plant with nice blooms with long stems - unfortunately the one plant did not get much attention so no conclusion can be made except the few blooms indicate potential.

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Mammoth Deep Rose'; 'Sunshine Lavender', which I grew also and they are both great.

**General Comments:** I started seed in peat pots and planted along trellis, after planting in the ground it took about 2 months before they started flowering, once started they just kept coming, from late September on the flowers shatter after a couple of days, but still had the fragrance - I should note that we had a much cooler spring and summer than normal, punctuated with a hot blast just after July 4th - 109 degrees with wind and low humidity that cause both plants and people to wilt, even so the sweet peas kept trucking; Second year of experimenting with this crop, no more; I plan on growing only the Sunshine series in my hoop next year, they are awesome!; Flower head 3 cm, pod 5 cm.

**Postharvest Handling:** Use bulb food or high sugar floral solutions.

Sweet Pea 'Winter Sunshine Rose'



Gloekner

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# Zinnia

## Zinnia 'Giant Carmine Rose'

(Benary)

**Good Qualities:** Fantastic color (12), best pink; Very productive (3); Very good germination; Looks old, over the hill to me because the petals are graduated in color, still held up okay, customers bought it, maybe the grower just needs to get used to it; Easy to grow, bloomed for most of the growing season; I like the more subtle color of this pink versus the 'Oklahoma Pink'; Good flower size (3-4 inches); With repeated cutting we get very strong, long stems that hold in the vase for a long period of time; Robust zinnia with good size bloom and stem length; Giant habit could be re-established with cutting back stems that were in excess, large, beautiful blooms with many layers of petals; People and hummingbirds like zinnias; Mixed with 'Giant Lime Green' it was a winner! Nice tall plants; Flower size, just too late (my fault); Tall, attractive, with large double flowers; Size of flower, vigor of plant.

**Problems:** None (3); All had to be sprayed for fungus, due to our very rainy summer; We had the usual problem of short holding for all zinnias, problems with Japanese beetles and leaf spot; Considerable variation in color from a dark carmine to pink - all are popular colors but "shades of carmine" might be a more descriptive name; Weak neck and meltdown at times; Powdery mildew and some foliar disease always occurs in our zinnias by mid to late summer, corn rootworm beetle is a MAJOR problem from about mid-July to frost- worse in the zinnias, for us, than the Japanese beetles, we are aggressively experimenting for control measures; Poor germination, petal color in our humid climate inconsistent; After first cut, later blooms didn't have as many petal layers; Mildew; A lot of single flowers; Standard zinnia problems, weak neck, barely acceptable vase life, not enough of the nice big really double flowers; Slugs devoured seedlings as they emerged so I replanted twice, they have really just started to produce in the last few weeks; Dead - High EC irrigation water.

**Similar Cultivars:** I didn't find these that different from the other Giants I've grown; 'Uproar Rose'.

**General Comments:** I like all the Benary's Giant series; Despite the problems I can't imagine not growing all the beautiful, colorful Benary zinnias, I only stay away from the white which looks old too quickly, next season I'm

going to try to stay away from floral preservative and use only water on my zinnias; Most of the Benary zinnias are very fine cut flowers - 'Carmine Rose' is one of the best!; Relatively tolerant of Japanese beetles.

Harvested between 7/10-8/8 (transplanted to the field April 22); Harvested between 7/16-8/18 (transplanted to the field May 22); Entire zinnia crop was planted late while I was out of town, this year, I pinched in August and cut back severely in late August which did



Zinnia 'Giant Scarlet'

increase stem length, I could have sold all of the large-flowered ones if I'd been able to keep the mildew preventative spray; This was a beauty, very productive, cheerful color - I will grow it again!; I will use transplants in the future for all zinnias and watch for slugs; Will always grow 'Carmine Rose'.

**Postharvest Handling:** Plain water (2); Remove about 1/3 of leaves (lower ones); We use a light dosing of Floralife in warm water and do not place zinnias in the cooler, our customers enthusiastically get a week to almost 2 weeks of vase life!; Need temps; Surface sterilize stems in a 10% bleach solution, we don't use floral preservative with zinnias, we avoid keeping them in the cooler.

## Zinnia 'Giant Lime' (Benary)

**Good Qualities:** Unique and popular color (8); Easy to grow (2); Excellent event flower; Benary's 'Lime' shows its usefulness at the end of the season, when 'Envy' is fading: the plants are stronger, greener, and there are more useable stems; Very prolific, bloomed for most of the growing season; Wonderful color for bouquet work - customers love the color; Some flowers are beautiful and fully double, others are so-so; 'Lime' is stunning with the 'Rose'; Interesting color which some customers simply cannot get enough of! pairs beautifully with other greens and whites, especially, but

virtually any color! the fully mature DOUBLES are fantastic but are rare - will continue to grow this one but hope for some genetic improvements; People and hummingbirds like zinnias; The color is great for mixing, florists loved it! strong stems, big full heads, consistent quality, much better than 'Envy'; Tall, attractive, with medium-sized double flowers; 'Lime' is better than it was about 5 years ago, better green more consistently double, still not that green, seems to attract

insects for petal bites more than other colors; Vigorous growth, productive plant. Good germination, easy to transplant and establish in the field.

**Problems:** Smaller flowers than other Benary's Giant cultivars (6); A lot of single flowers (5); Stem shorter than other Benary's Giants (4); All had to be sprayed for fungus, due to our very rainy summer, flower head is more cone shape than other great Benary zinnias; Color variability, disease prone, vase life less than others; We had the usual problem of short holding for all zinnias, problems with Japanese beetles and leaf spot, tends to get brown edges more quickly; Breeders have more work to do in stabilizing this very

popular cultivar; Seems to mature and get "old" looking faster than other Benary colors - except white; Beetles and slugs; Giant habit faded with each cut, wasn't revived even with harsh cut that took away excess shoots, non-uniformity in petals; More susceptible to disease problems than other zinnia cultivars, not as productive as other colors, more attractive to Japanese beetles; Mildew; Quickly shows its age, may not develop fully, cut away at least as much as I harvest - lots of singles and blooms which fail to mature, bugs love this one!; Standard zinnia problems, weak neck, barely acceptable vase life, not enough of the nice big really double flowers; Sensitive to our high EC water; None; 'Giant Lime' seems more disease susceptible than other selections and mixes of 'Benary Giants', I grew 'Giant Lime' between blocks of other Giants and although they maintained their vigor most of the season, 'Giant Lime' went down fast with disease - in both field and greenhouse - however, the major problem is the browning of the petals, the slightest hint of anything and there were brown petals, this turned customers off, not a problem with the other single color selections or mix of Benary Giants.

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Envy' (4), but 'Giant Lime' has much better disease tolerance than 'Envy'; I didn't find these that different from the other Giants I've grown.

**General Comments:** I have to grow this, but I get frustrated with it. I had a great zinnia year, but these all needed to be from a new succession to have any kind of decent vase life; Harvested 7/22-8/15 (transplanted to the field May 22); 'Lime' did better for us this year than previous years, quite a lot of variability in flower but still a great color to mix in bouquets; Seems less prone to weak neck; Slow to produce new usable stems after a cut; Lime- (chartreuse) colored flowers are very popular right now and we will continue to grow 'Lime' zinnias even though our experience has been that it continually under-performs; Entire zinnia crop was planted late while I was out of town, this year, I pinched in August and cut back severely in late August which did increase stem length, I could have sold all of the large-flowered ones if I'd been able to keep the mildew preventative spray; Strong necks, very productive!; Flower head 3 cm; So, it is back to the drawing boards for 'Giant Lime' - definitely like the concept but not the problems, would not grow it again as it currently is.

**Postharvest Handling:** Plain water (2); Remove about 1/3 of leaves (lower ones); Used Floralife and picked when fully open; Need cooler temps; As with all our zinnias we used Chrysal OVB and did not put flowers in cooler, later in the season we trialed Chrysal chlorine tablets with good results; Surface sterilize stems in a 10% bleach solution, we don't use floral preservative with zinnias, we avoid keeping them in the cooler.

### Zinnia 'Giant Scarlet' (Benary)

**Good Qualities:** Eye-catching brilliant red color (11); Large flowers (3); Prolific (2); Matches rest of BG series in size and bloom time, good doubleness and even colour; Easy to grow, bloomed for most of the growing season; Strong stems, especially in September, little mildew problems; Great plant; Nice form, robust; Full blooms with many layers of petals; People and hummingbirds like zinnias; Tall, attractive, with large double flowers; about 4 days earlier than 'Giant Carmine Rose'; Postharvest life mostly, stiff stem; 'Scarlet' can't handle any rain or petals get marked with white bruise-like defects, couldn't sell once we started getting rain showers in September.

**Problems:** Color was not always uniform, some blooms were orange, others were deep scarlet (2); None (2); All had to be sprayed for fungus, especially with our very rainy summer; Too short, especially in my later plantings; We had the usual problem of short holding for all zinnias, problems with Japanese beetles and leaf spot; Poor germination 10 out of 48 plants made it to flowering; Unattractive white spots on some flowers may have been from insect damage or dew, very noticeable against bright background; Weak neck and meltdown at times; Size/diameter of blooms decreased with each cut, could somewhat be restored with severe cut back of side shoots; Mildew; Standard zinnia problems, weak neck, barely acceptable vase life, not enough of the nice big really double flowers; Slugs devoured seedlings as they emerged so I replanted twice, they have really just started to produce in the last few weeks; Sensitive to our high EC water.

**Similar Cultivars:** I didn't find these that different from the other Giants I've grown.

**General Comments:** Harvested between 7/14-8/18 (for two crop transplanted to field April 22 and May 22); Not as prolific as some of the other Benary Giant colors; Despite the problems I can't imagine not growing all the beautiful, colorful Benary zinnias, I only stay away from the white which looks old too quickly, next season I'm going to try to stay away from floral preservative and use only water on my zinnias; Love it; One of my favorite colors of



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Benary Giant zinnias; Susceptible to foliar diseases - more than other zinnias; Entire zinnia crop was planted late while I was out of town, this year, I pinched in August and cut back severely in late August which did increase stem length, I could have sold all of the large flowered ones if I'd been able to keep the mildew preventative spray; Flower head 5 cm; A staple for us.

**Postharvest Handling:** Plain water (2); Remove about 1/3 of lower leaves; Needs temps; Surface sterilize stems in a 10% bleach solution, we don't use floral preservative with zinnias, we avoid keeping them in the cooler.

### Zinnia 'Oklahoma Pink' (Benary)

**Good Qualities:** Productive (11); The color is a true cotton candy pink (5); Plant withstands wind better than larger zinnias, good stem length, dependable; Straight stems, overall very uniform petal layerage; Nice range of pink colors in small flowers is popular with both designers and customers; Good vase life; Healthy plants, good medium size for bouquets; Less prone to meltdown and weak neck than larger zinnias, gives great texture in bouquets when used with large zinnias or lisianthus; Pretty multi-layered flowers, color very uniform; People and hummingbirds like zinnias; They are cute and mix well with the other Oklahomas, disease free; Easy to grow, bloomed for most of the growing season; Fantastic performers! tall plants produced long stems, blooms were typically 2 inches or more in diameter and were in a variety of different forms - from standard zinnia to ball dahlia - many with interesting curled petals and/or tones of color, a really intriguing seed mix! our customers loved these delightful blooms, kids liked them also, we often combined the Oklahoma Pink and Scarlet for a surprisingly cheerful mix!; Flowers held a long time on the plants; Vigorous growth, good germination, easy to transplant and establish in the field.

**Problems:** Found flowers to be too small for our uses (4); Not much different than other Oklahomas I've grown; Lots of different shapes and sizes in the flowers, ended up with only 6 plants out of initial planting of 48; Some washed-out pink blooms were produced; All had to be sprayed for fungus, due to our very rainy summer, flowers are too small; Smaller than rest of Oklahoma series; Unevenness of color between plants: some were coral, some lighter or darker pink; Hard to get a really long stem when cutting; many flowers were left unharvested and the yield is not reflective of actual production ; Mildew; Standard zinnia problems, weak neck, barely acceptable vase life, we would not choose to grow these zinnias again; Color is so candy pink, a little boring; Sensitive to our high EC water; Only about half flowers fully double plants tall but usable stems shorter than the 'Giants'; We had the usual problem of short holding for all zinnias, problems with Japanese beetles and leaf spot; WAAAAAY too short, and the flower heads are useless to us for the way we sell zinnias-by the stem....couldn't ask as much for them, therefore I won't grow them again; None.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** I had the following trouble with all of the zinnias, but will write these comments only once: We had more snow here in Maine than people had remembered in 30 or more years, 22 plowable storms which meant the ground never froze, as a result, grub and cutworm populations were extremely high, this fact may explain why I had terrible seed germination as well as high seedling loss in all of the zinnia and sunflowers that were direct seeded: of the ones that survived, we had 16 days of almost continuous rain in July/August along with 3 hailstorms, so the mere fact that I had any flowers at all shows how tough zinnias are in general; Susceptible to Japanese beetles; Harvested between 7/10-8/8 (transplanted to field April 22), harvested 7/10-8/8 (transplanted to field May 22); Entire zinnia crop was planted late while I was out of town - this year, I pinched in August and cut back severely in late August which did increase stem length, I could have sold all of the large-flowered ones if I'd been able to keep the mildew preventative spray; Flower head 4 cm; Great little zinnias! I liked having the separate pink in addition to my regular Oklahoma mix, it was especially useful for special events when a color theme was used, in the past I only offered a mix of colors.

**Postharvest Handling:** Remove about 1/3 of leaves (lower ones); Surface sterilize stems in a 10% bleach solution, we don't use floral preservative with zinnias, we avoid keeping

them in the cooler; We used only plain water; 'Oklahoma Pink' benefits from the addition of a floral preservative.

### **Zinnia 'Oklahoma Scarlet' (Benary)**

**Good Qualities:** Clear bright colors (7); Productive (7); Color is uniform (2), just an occasional orange bloom. Vigorous growth, good germination, easy to transplant and establish in the field; Fantastic performers! tall plants produced long stems - from standard zinnia to ball dahlia - many with interesting curled petals and/or tones of color, a really intriguing seed mix! our customers loved these delightful blooms, kids liked them also, we often combined 'Oklahoma Pink' and 'Scarlet' for a surprisingly cheerful mix! flowers held a long time on the plants; Lots of long stem flowers on each plant, withstands winds/rain with support better than larger type blooms, dependable; Very striking with good stem length; Long lasting in vase, cute; Healthy plants with long stems; Less prone to melt down and weak neck than larger zinnias, gives great texture in bouquets when used with large zinnias or lisianthus; People and hummingbirds like zinnias; About a week earlier than the 'Giants', attractive small flower.

**Problems:** Flowers are too small (4); Color not uniform, some flowers were more orange than red (2); None; Not much different than other Oklahomas I've grown, scarlet got marred by rain; WAAAAAY too short, and the flower heads are useless to us for the way we sell zinnias-by the stem....couldn't ask as much for them, therefore I won't grow them again; Diameter of blooms was not uniform, number of petal layers also varied, seemed to go down with each cut; All had to be sprayed for fungus, due to our very rainy summer; Unattractive white spots appeared on some flowers against the bright background, may have been caused by insect damage or from dew; Hard to get a really long stem when cutting; Mildew; Standard zinnia problems, weak neck, barely acceptable vase life, not enough of the nice big really double flowers, we would not choose to grow these zinnias again; Sensitive to our high EC water; Plants tall but usable stems shorter than the 'Giants'; Size of blooms varied greatly, some singles, not as prolific as others in the Benary series.

**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** I liked having the separate red in addition to my regular Oklahoma mix, I offered straight bunches of 'Oklahoma Red' at the farmers' market and although the Benary Giants usually attracted the most attention, the straight bunches of

'Oklahoma Red' proved popular as well, in terms of harvesting, it takes about the same amount of time to pick and bunch Giants and Oklahomas, but have to put more in the bunch to get the same retail price for the customer to perceive equivalent value, from a harvesting and processing viewpoint it takes more time and effort for the same return because you are handling more stems, I like the red and will definitely grow it as a separate color next year; Great little zinnias!; Susceptible to Japanese beetles; Best results when you do not harvest as frequently so that the flowers get more substance, good in bouquets because of vase life, but not a big seller as straight stems; Good bright color; Harvested between 7/22-8/15 (transplanted to the field April 22), Harvested between 7/10-8/8 (transplanted to the field May 22); Entire zinnia crop was planted late while I was out of town, this year, I pinched in August and cut back severely in late August which did increase stem length, I could have sold all of the large-flowered ones if I'd been able to keep the mildew preventative spray; Flower head 3 cm; Wish they could improve this variety to ensure greater uniformity and doubleness.

**Postharvest Handling:** 'Oklahoma Scarlet' benefits from the addition of a floral preservative; Cooler temps!; Remove about 1/3 of leaves (lower ones); Surface sterilize stems in a 10% bleach solution, we don't use floral preservative with zinnias, we avoid keeping them in the cooler.

### **Zinnia 'Uproar Rose' (Goldsmith)**

**Good Qualities:** Great consistent rose color (13); Productive (7); Large flowers (6), flower size does not diminish as season advances; Double (4); Tall or long stems (3); Easy to grow (2); Boomed for most of the growing season; Consistent and uniform blooms; Triple layer (or more) of petals was always there; Very first flowers were 3-4 inches on 18 inch stems, lots of flower from July to September (Zone 9); Early successions especially productive; A standout in the field! a heavy yielder with big beautiful blooms on long, strong stems; Uniform grower; Still a favorite; Not as sensitive to high EC irrigation water; Weeks of cutting in field; Fit in nicely with the other large-flowered zinnias in the trial and those I regularly grow.

**Problems:** We had the usual problem of short holding for all zinnias, problems with Japanese beetles and leaf spot; Does not measure up to Benary zinnias; Size of blooms was reduced by each cut, however, was marginally restored to original 4-5in. diameter by severe cutting of side/lower shoots; Late successions seem much shorter, not as productive; Shorter than

other cultivars of similar color, more susceptible to zinnia diseases; Mildew; Soft necks, tends to break easily!; Japanese beetles and fungal diseases, used hot pepper spray, hand picked a lot of beetles!; None. **Similar Cultivars:** 'Giant Carmine Rose' (3); Very close in color to Benary's 'Giant Purple'; Benary's Giant is closest, but color not the same.

**General Comments:** Japanese beetles were a huge problem on pink cultivars, especially this one; Would never be without this zinnia! Wish the breeder offered a full range of colors with the commendable attributes of this cultivar!; Are more 'Uproar' colors coming along? Harvested between 7/16-8/19 (transplanted to the field May 22); Entire zinnia crop was planted late while I was out of town, this year, I pinched in August and cut back severely in late August which did increase stem length, I could have sold all of the large-flowered ones if I'd been able to keep the mildew preventative spray; A winner!; Would like to see additional colors; Flower head 8 cm; Outstanding zinnia added to our collection of things to grow.

**Postharvest Handling:** We used only plain water; Need cooler temps, unfortunately we didn't have the facility for storing; Surface sterilize stems in a 10% bleach solution, we don't use floral preservative with zinnias, we avoid keeping them in the cooler; Used Floralife and picked when fully open.

### Zinnia 'Zowie Yellow Flame' (Goldsmith)

**Good Qualities:** This one is a hit: I made bouquets with orange safflower, blue annual statice, 5 Zowie, 7 Uproars, they blew out of the farm market I sold to all summer long; Powdery mildew susceptible, therefore spacing is crucial, susceptible to other foliar diseases as well; I usually wait to grow this for end of summer, so perhaps it would be taller if I started earlier; Entire zinnia crop was planted late while I was out of town, this year, I pinched in August and cut back severely in late August which did increase stem length; A favorite!; Did well in greenhouse - used water with a lower EC; bloomed over much of the growing season; We had more rain than usual and cool nights, which caused some rust; I would not grow it again because of the disease problems, compared to other zinnia cultivars I grew this was the least vigorous and most disease prone.

**Problems:** Stems too short (10), Small flowers (2); Better as a bedding plant (2); Continual cutting eventually elongates the stems somewhat; Significantly shorter flowers, more botrytis-susceptible in a high tunnel planting than other varieties; Variable number of petals on blooms; Minor Japanese beetle damage; Zinnia meltdown at times; Mildew; Flowers were never big and double; Sprayed for fungal diseases and beetles, bad year for Japanese beetles; Sensitive to our high EC water; We had the usual problem of short holding for all zinnias, problems with Japanese beetles and leaf spot; Poor seed germination, poor seedling vigor, disease prone both in the greenhouse and field.

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**Similar Cultivars:** None listed by respondents.

**General Comments:** Eye candy! bright yellow with hot pink/red/purple center and pairs well with all those colors! always a customer favorite!; Bright orange and red flower color, very showy; Keep going forever; Very pretty color; Nice petal colors, unique color combo; Abundant usable stems! Could have been cut practically every other day, recovered from cuts quickly, great coloration, and very uniform; Very striking red yellow color; Fabulous color, nice leaf quality; Great color - gives a cheery "fiesta" look to bouquets; Nice bicolor combination; Fantastic color! Looks amazing mixed with other solid-colored zinnias; Hot color, prolific; Easy to grow, wonderful customer approval; Great red/yellow color - eye appeal; Fantastic eye popping color, gets a good reaction from everyone who sees it, won an AAS award 2 years ago; Interesting and attractive flowers; Easy to grow /Weeks of cutting in field.

**Postharvest Handling:** Plain water (2); Cooler temps, our storage was 68 F and not cool enough, bleach and water alone doesn't work the best; Surface sterilize stems in a 10% bleach solution, we don't use floral preservative with zinnias, we avoid keeping them in the cooler; Picked fully developed.

# 2008 ASCFG National Perennial and Woody Trials

John Dole  
North Carolina State University

The perennial and woody trials were off to a slow start this year as both trials were reestablished in 2008 and few of the plants had much to show yet. With the perennials we like to see flowering in the first year and happily all but the *Baptisia* 'Purple Smoke' (Gro 'N' Sell) produced a few flowers. Most of the perennials, however, did not produce enough harvestable flowers to give us a good evaluation. The most prolific bloomer was *Leucanthemum* 'Summer Snowball' (Gro 'N' Sell) - all plants flowered, producing an average of 14 stems per plant, averaging 18 inches long. This cultivar was quite productive for the first year. While some trialers commented on the vigorous plants and pure white flowers, others thought the cultivar was "very conventional", resulting in ratings that were not very strong. *Agastache* 'Sangria' (Jelitto Seed) also put on a good show with 11 stems per plant at 21 inches long. The flowers have a beautiful color and are fragrant but the stems were a bit "too wispy", as one trialer commented.

Interest in *Echinacea* has exploded over the last few years and we had two cultivars, 'Double Decker' and 'Summer Sky' (Gro 'N' Sell), in the trials. Both produced a few flowers this year, a little over 4/plant, but we are expecting many more for next year. 'Double Decker' has an unusual appearance, producing petals from the top of the cone as well from around the base. Unfortunately, the small print states that the unusual flowers do not start to appear until the plants are well established. By the end of the season we noticed a few flowers starting to produce petals from the top of the cone but nothing like in the pictures. One other trialer also noted that he "finally got some doubles late". Anticipation is half the fun of growing plants and we are eager to see how they will do next season.

Of the woody cultivars, only the fast-growing *Callicarpa americana* 'Welsh's Pink' flowered in the first year, producing 4.5 stems/plant, which were 37 inches long. While only two trialers rated the plants, however, they liked the cultivar and gave it high marks for vigor, nice color and long stems. We will have to see next year how the rest of the woodies perform.

**Interpreting the trial results:** The numbers reported are averages of all the respondents and many factors will affect the success of any plant species. Our participants are growing and harvesting the trial plants in a wide variety of ways. For example, with annual asters some people harvest the entire plant as one bunch while others harvest each individual flowering branch, giving very different stem lengths and yield data. After looking at the average, check the range of responses listed below each number to see how the cultivar performed at its best and its worst. If the range of responses in the ratings is narrow and high, i.e., 3-5 or 4-5, the plant was a winner for most of the respondents and is likely to do well for you. The 'Repeat Again Rating' is particularly important because it indicates



if the trialer would take the time, money, and space to actually grow the cultivar again. Review the trial results carefully. If a species sounds interesting but did not appear to do well, try it anyway. The cultivar may work well for you.

**Acknowledgments:** All cut flower growers should thank the perennial and woody plant producers for providing the plant materials and the growers for producing the plants, collecting data and submitting trial reports. The growers paid for shipping expenses and agreed to provide data for at least two years. Plant were donated by perennial producers and shipped as perennial plugs or dormant roots directly to the trialers. I would like to compliment Chas Gill, Betsy Hitt, Carolyn Ramsbotham, and Vicki Stamback who participated in both the seed and perennials trials and returned evaluations on all of their trial plants. I would also like to thank Amber Stewart and Betty Coleman for laboriously typing



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Peregrine Farms  
Graham, NC

### **Ingram McCall/John Dole**

North Carolina State University  
Raleigh, NC

### **Marc Kessler**

California Organic Flowers  
Chico, CA

in everyone's comments, Ingram McCall and Diane Mays for taking care of the North Carolina State University portion of the trials, Ingram McCall for data entry, and Leslie Tichner, Aliya Donnell, Brad Holland, and Tim Ketchie for assisting with the NCSU trials. In preparing the report I have edited the participants' comments for space and clarity; my apologies if I've altered the tone or content of anyone's comments. Thanks to everyone for making this service of ASCFG possible.

The number in parenthesis refers to the number of respondents who made the comment. If no number is present, only one person made the comment. Comments by each individual are separated with a semicolon (;) Note: many respondents did not make specific comments on each cultivar and in some cases, comments have been shortened because of limited space.



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**Trial Results for Year 1 of Perennial Cultivars Planted in 2008.** First row of data for each cultivar is the average and the second row is the range of responses. Note when only one response is listed in the range line, either only one person responded for that category or several responded and all gave the same rating.

Cultivar	Plants received alive (%)	Plants flowering (%)	Yield stems/plant <sup>①</sup>	Stem length (inches) <sup>①</sup>	Market appreciation rating <sup>②</sup>	Repeat again rating <sup>②</sup>	Ease of cultivation rating <sup>②</sup>
Agastache	100	100	11	21.3	2.8	3.4	3.6
'Sangria' (JS)	100	100	5-19	18-30	1-5	2-5	2-5
Baptisia	74	0	-	-	-	-	-
'Purple Smoke' (GS)	50-100						
Digitalis	100	32	0.6	17	2.8	2.8	3.5
'Candy Mountain' (GS)	100	4-100	0-1	12-24	2-3	2-3	3-4
Echinacea	100	93	3.4	19	3.0	3.3	4.8
'Double Decker' (GS)	100	80-100	0-5	12-24	1-4	1-5	4-5
Echinacea	85	90	4.1	15	3.6	3.6	4.4
'Summer Sky' (GS)	75-100	75-100	1-12	12-19	2-4	1-5	3-5
Echinops	94	31	4.5	-	1.0	1.5	3.5
'Star Frost' (JS)	75-100	0-100	4.5		1	1-2	3-4
Gaillardia	98	22	2.8	16	3.3	3.0	3.5
'Amber Wheels' (JS)	90-100	0-80	0-5.5	12-20	2-4	2-4	3-4
Leucanthemum	100	100	13.8	18	2.8	2.8	4.2
'Summer Snowball' (GS)	100	100	3-40	15-20	1-4	1-5	3-5
Penstemon	69	73	2.9	12.3	2.5	1.7	2.0
'Starburst Amethyst' (JS)	0-100	20-100	1-7	10-15	2-3	1-3	1-3

①Data shown are from those respondents who harvested stems. Some respondents may not have harvested stems because they were too short. Flowering stems may be longer next year after plants are established. See comments section for more details.

②1 to 5 scale, with 5 being the best.



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## Summary of Comments

### 2008 Perennial Cut Flower Cultivar List - Year 1

#### **Agastache 'Sangria'**

**Good Qualities:** Smells great (3); Nice flower color, long stems; Nice stem length; A nice filler flower.

**Problems:** Flowers shatter fast; Too wispy; Bloomed very late in the season just as we were ending markets so I don't feel we can judge it adequately, hope it will survive the winter here - I tried agastache 'Tutti-Frutti' a few years back and it did not make it here in zone 5.

**Similar Cultivars:** 'Pink Pop'; 'Tutti Frutti'.

**General Comments:** No specific insects or diseases observed (2); I had just pulled out all my agastache vowing "never again" when this arrived, it's nice, but I have a very limited market for it; It may have flowered earlier, and been more useful to us if we have gotten it in the ground sooner, the shipment arrived in terrible shape and had to be transplanted into pots and held for several weeks before setting out in beds.

#### **Baptisia 'Purple Smoke'**

**Good Qualities:** Nice foliage.

**Problems:** Grows slow(ly); Plants were small and have struggled, I'm not sure what I'll see in the spring; Flowers second year, looks like other purple digitalis.

**Similar Cultivars:** Seems to have a finer leaf than *Baptisia australis*.

**General Comments:** No specific insects or diseases observed; It usually takes three years for *Baptisia* to produce. Maybe next year there will be some. The plants were in terrible shape when they arrived. Of the 11 plants that were planted only 6 plants survived to the end of the season. I use a lot of *Baptisia*, both flower and foliage, so am anxious to see the flower color ...next year?; Plants are much weaker than *australis*, I already grow this and didn't get much to cut until the third year. It is pretty, and much more branched than *australis*, but not as popular with consumers; Did not bloom this year.

#### **Digitalis 'Candy Mountain'**

**Good Qualities:** Ease of cultivation - spikey form a good addition to bouquets, color pleasing and unusual.

**Problems:** Stem length seemed too short to be truly useful. Selling at market I felt compelled to warn people that *Digitalis* was poisonous if ingested. People with pets and children appreciated the information. Most chose not to buy it.

*The Cut Flower Quarterly*

**General Comments:** No specific insects or diseases observed; Good color but too early to tell; Few blooms this year; I'm anxious to see how it performs next year.

#### **Postharvest Handling:**

The flower was placed in water with no preservative added. I'll experiment a bit more next year.

#### **Echinacea 'Double Decker'**

**Good Qualities:** Strong plants; Something "different"; Pretty color, finally got some doubles late in the season; Lots of flowers.

**Problems:** UGLY; Bloomed very late in the season with only one bloom per plant, not all of the plants produced a double bloom, about half of the plants produced a single bloom; I didn't like it, very irregular, some plants were double...or whatever you want to call that...and others were normal; There was even a lot of variation in flower form of the double ones; The flowers are inconsistent in flower placement, some look normal, others look weird.

**Similar Cultivars:** If so, don't tell me about it.

**General Comments:** No specific insects or diseases observed; The plants did not produce enough this year to take to market. Hoping next year will be better. They may not all be 'Double Decker' plants.

#### **Echinacea 'Summer Sky'**

**Good Qualities:** Wonderful peachy pink color sets it apart from other coneflowers that are more of a magenta pink (4); Pretty gradation of color on the petals; Strong stems; Pretty strong grower.

**Problems:** Weak plants; Flower petals not very compact

**General Comments:** No specific insects or diseases observed; Plants did not produce enough stems this year to be able to get a true picture. Hoping stem length will be longer - The color is certainly a winner!

#### **Echinops 'Star Frost'**

**Problems:** The flowers have ugly thorns, several years ago I received seed for a white-flowering echinops from a friend, this one is the same cultivar, we plowed 'Star Frost' in because they are invasive on our farm; Plants arrived in poor shape, had to be transplanted into pots to recover before transplanting into permanent bed, we did not have enough stems to market test.



*Baptisia 'Purple Smoke'*

**General Comments:** No specific insects or diseases observed (2); Too early to tell; Did not bloom this year; Hoping for better production next year to get a better sense of stem length and flower color.

#### **Gaillardia 'Amber Wheels'**

**Good Qualities:** Beautiful color; Only two plants produced flowers but they were quite large and on sturdy, long stems; Tough plant, we'll see what they look like next year.

**Problems:** Arrived in poor shape. Needed to be transplanted into pots and held a few weeks before planted in beds.

**General Comments:** No specific insects or diseases observed (2); Too early to tell; Few blooms this year; Next year will tell the tale, the size and color of the flower, and the stem length look very promising.

#### **Leucanthemum 'Summer Snowball'**

**Good Qualities:** Lots and lots of flowers, nice pure white; Produced well the first year. Looks more like a mum than a traditional daisy, nice clear bright white color that didn't appear dirty; Vigorous plant, stems were strong.

**Problems:** Weak stems, browning out; Flowers tend to have a bent neck perhaps because the flower is so dense, one customer complained about that; Thrips, personally I don't like flowers to be that double - I also had a lot of browning in the centers...probably thrips but they looked kind of "dirty".

**General Comments:** No specific insects or diseases observed (2); Thrips, but no worse than any other leucanthemum; Too boring, and too early for "mum" look, very conventional; I'll again be anxious to see what is produced the second year, am hoping for longer stems.

**Postharvest Handling:** I did not use a preservative, just water.

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### *Penstemon* 'Starburst Amethyst'

**Good Qualities:** Blooms the first year; Very pretty color.

**Problems:** Very short (2); Hard to use in bouquets because of short stems filled with flowers, think it would make a better garden plant than a cut; Weak stems.

**General Comments:** No specific insects or diseases observed (2); If stem length is better next year, we can market test, plants bloomed very late in the season, they were not in good shape when they arrived and had to be transplanted into pots and held for several weeks before placing in beds; I have in part shade and I may move it for next year.

## 2008 Woody Cut Flower Cultivar List - Year 1

### *Callicarpa americana* 'Welsh's Pink'

92% of plants flowered this year, yielding 4.5 stems, which were 37 inches long. One trialer gave the following scores: 3 for wholesale marketability, 4 for retail florist, 4 for consumer and 3 for grow again and 5 for ease of cultivation. A second trialer gave the following scores: 5 for consumer marketability and 5 for grow again and 5 for ease of cultivation.

**Good Qualities:** Nice color, good form, long stems.

**Problems:** Berries shatter easily, not sure if they would hold in vase since they fall off in the field if touched; Not enough stems to determine vase life at this time.

**General Comments:** Easy to grow, vigorous, nice color, long stems, berries shatter.

### *Clethra alnifolia* 'Ruby Spice'

All plants flowered for one trialer but none did for another trialer.

**Good Qualities:** None.

**Problems:** Died in summer heat.

**General Comments:** Not enough growth this year for an opinion.

### *Craibiodendron yunnanensis*

**Good Qualities:** None.

**Problems:** Did not survive summer heat.

### *Cytisus scoparius* 'Windlesham Ruby'

**Good Qualities:** Too soon to tell.

**Problems:** Did not bloom yet.

**General Comments:** I haven't harvested anything from these yet; Seems to be doing well, but did not bloom this year.

### *Indigofera amblyantha*

All plants flowered for one trialer but for another all plants arrived dead.

### *Pieris japonica* 'Dodd's Crystal Cascade Falls'

All plants died for one trialer, while none died for the other.

**Good Qualities:** None.

**Problems:** Withered and died in our hot climate, *Pieris* can not be grown in the Sacramento Valley due to heat, even in full shade it would not do very well here.

**General Comments:** Best in cool coastal climates.

*Spiraea prunifolia*. No comments so far.

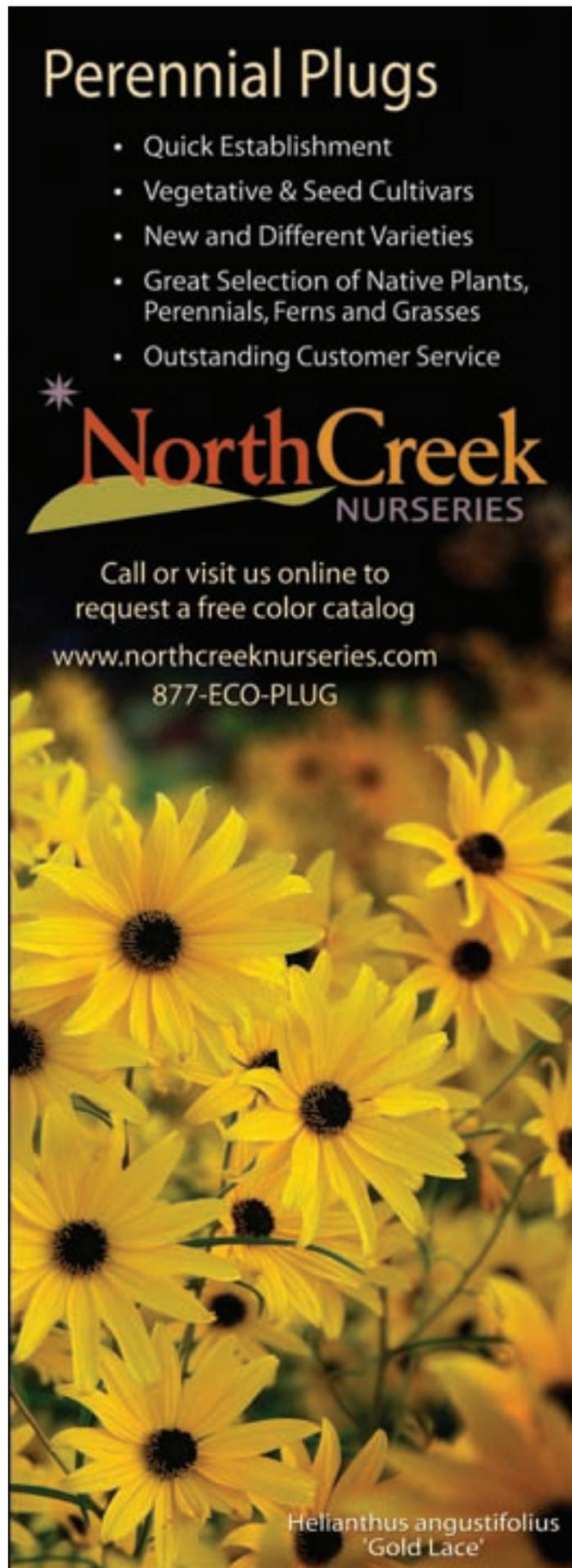
### *Viburnum tinus* 'Spirit'

One out of three trialers had flowering this year and all plants flowered.

**Good Qualities:** Seems to like our climatic conditions (Zone 7).

**Problems:** First year: Very short. It is a shrub so I assume it will get bigger in subsequent years; No blooms this year.

**General Comments:** No harvest this year; Too soon to comment on this plant, did not bloom.



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# Postharvest Treatment of Specialty Cut Flowers

## North Carolina State University Report for 2008

Erin M. Regan, John M. Dole, Erin Y. Moody, and Ingram F. McCall  
North Carolina State University

*This project was supported by the American Floral Endowment, the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Research Fund, and numerous suppliers. The authors would like to thank Diane Mays and Emma Locke for assisting with growing the cut flowers and handling the postharvest studies.*



Each year a simple postharvest test is conducted on the most promising species/cultivars from the Seed, Perennial, and Woody Trials. This year we screened 16 new cut flower species/cultivars. Many of the species/cultivars had a vase life over 14 days, which is optimum for marketing and consumer enjoyment, including *eucomis* ‘Sparkling Burgundy’ leaves, geranium ‘Citrus Spice’, lisianthus ‘Arena White’, lisianthus ‘Cadence Yellow’, lisianthus ‘Vulcan Yellow’, sunflower ‘Carmel’ and sunflower ‘Tavor Joy’. All but one of the remaining species had a vase life of 10 days or more, which is the minimum for wholesale production and handling.

For longevity in the vase, you cannot beat the two cut foliage in the trials. In previous years we tested the vase life of cut *Eucomis* ‘Sparkling Burgundy’ flowers. These tall and spectacular spikes have a wonderfully long vase life of 42 days when placed in plain water. Both hydrator and holding solutions were detrimental, however; if a holding solution was used, vase life dropped to a yet outstanding 29 days. The cut foliage performed equally well, lasting at least 35 days. We say “at least 35 days” because that is when we stopped the study – all the leaves were still acceptable, although they had become greener and less burgundy. Some of the leaves formed roots, which needless to say, really messes up the data.

The geranium also performed quite well. Typically, the leaves on cut stems of scented geraniums rapidly turn yellow. ‘Citrus Spice’ also turned yellow, however, at a much slower pace and the stems lasted 17 to 23 days. Keep in mind that it is difficult to determine when a stem is too yellow to be considered unattractive and be terminated. Thus, the vase life might be longer or shorter for you. This species can be used to add fragrance to bouquets and none of the treatments appeared to affect the vase life.

Of the flowers, few species can match the vase life of lisianthus. Cut stems of most cultivars easily last 10 days and many regularly last over 14 days. If I want to bring flowers to someone and I definitely need them to last, I choose lisianthus. We had five lisianthus cultivars in the trial this year and all of them had the expected long vase life. Lisianthus typically do best when treated with a holding preservative but none of the cultivars in this year’s trial were affected by floral preservatives, possibly due to

the fact that the vase life was already quite long.

Sunflowers were quite popular in the ASCFG trials this year and, consequently, we had many of them in the postharvest trials also. All eight performed well and lasted at least 10 days. As with lisianthus, sunflowers typically last the longest when treated with a holding preservative and this was evident in three of the cultivars.

### How we conducted the studies

Field-grown flowers were harvested at the optimum stage of flower development and immediately placed into tap water (0.21 EC, 6.1 pH). Subsequently, stems were sorted and placed in the following treatments:

- Hydrator only
- Holding preservative only
- Hydrator followed by holding preservative
- Distilled water only (control)

Floralife Hydraflor 100 (hydrator) was used at 8 mL/L and Floralife Professional (holding) was used at 10 mL/L. After treatment, stems were placed at 68±4°F under approximately 200 ftc light for 12 hrs/day. Minimum vase life for each cultivar was recorded when the vase life of the first stem was terminated.

Our testing methods tend to produce the maximum vase life, which tells you the potential vase life of each species. We cut and process the stems rapidly, put one stem per jar, and use a postharvest temperature that is cooler than a typical home in the summer time (and warmer in the winter, but the field trials obviously take place in the summer). These procedures were set up to provide a consistent environment so that anyone else should be able to repeat our work and get the same results. All of these factors typically add about 1 to 3 days to the vase life of some species compared to that of a typical cut flower producer. For example, flowers with a vase life of 6 to 8 days in testing would probably last 5 to 7 days for a typical grower and flowers lasting 16 to 18 days would probably last 13 to 15 days.

For several cultivars, we also listed the minimum vase life. We harvest and test up to 60 stems per cultivar and present the average vase life. With some cultivars most of the stems died about the same time. However, with other cultivars the flowers were terminated over a long period – thus the vase life of some of the stems was much shorter than the average. In those cases, we have included a minimum vase life.

### What we found out

**Eucomis ‘Sparkling Burgundy’ leaves** The leaves in all the treatments were still acceptable at 35 days after harvest. Some of the leaves formed roots while in the vase, so we terminated the study at that time.

**Geranium ‘Citrus Spice’** Vase life was 17 to 23 days and unaffected by hydrating and holding solutions. Minimum vase life was 8 days.



**Lisianthus ‘Vulcan Yellow’**

**Lisianthus ‘Advantage Cherry Sorbet’** Vase life was 13 to 14 days regardless of treatment. Minimum vase life was 8 days.

**Lisianthus ‘Arena White’** Vase life was 15 to 16 days regardless of treatment. Minimum vase life was 11 days.

**Lisianthus ‘Cadence Yellow’** Vase life was unaffected by hydrating and holding solutions and ranged from 13 to 15 days. Minimum vase life was 10 days.

**Lisianthus ‘Twinkle Pink Improved’** Vase life was 10 to 12 days regardless of treatment. Minimum vase life was 7 days.

**Lisianthus ‘Vulcan Yellow’** A vase life of 16 to 17 days occurred when a holding solution was *not* used. Vase life decreased to 14 to 15 days when a preservative was used. Minimum vase life was 7 days.

**Snapdragon ‘Calima Deep Rose’** Flowers lasted 8 days when a preservative was used, regardless of hydrator use. Minimum vase life was 4 days.

**Sunflower #565** Vase life was 10 to 11 days regardless of treatment. Minimum vase life was 8 days.

**Sunflower ‘Arbel’** Flowers lasted 12 days when a holding solution was used without a hydrator. Minimum vase life was 7 days.

**Sunflower ‘Carmel’** Vase life was 14 to 15 days regardless of treatment. Minimum vase life was 9 days.

**Sunflower ‘Galilee Adami’** Vase life was longest, 12 days, when a holding preservative was used without a hydrator. Overall, holding solutions extended vase life while hydrating solutions shortened vase life. Minimum vase life was 3 days.

**Sunflower ‘Sun4U Bicolor’** Vase life was unaffected by hydrating and holding solutions and ranged from 10 to 11 days. Minimum vase life was 7 days.

**Sunflower ‘Sun4U Lemon Yellow’** A vase life of 12.5 days occurred when a holding preservative was used, regardless of hydrator use. Minimum vase life was 7 days.



**Eucomis ‘Sparkling Burgundy’**

**Sunflower ‘Sun4U Orange’** Vase life was 11 to 12 days regardless of treatment. Minimum vase life was 8 days.

**Sunflower ‘Tavor Joy’** A vase life of 15 days occurred when a holding solution was used, regardless of hydrator use. Minimum vase life was 9 days.

# Back to Basics

Becky Devlin

## Smart Hiring

As for any business owner, small or large, hiring and managing employees can be one of the biggest challenges for a flower grower. While many of us operate for as long as possible wearing every hat ourselves, there comes a tipping point where help is necessary to grow your business. Since I took the plunge from “sole hat-wearer” to employer this spring, I talked to other growers to discover how they find and manage employees, and about what seems to be a great resource for some flower growers and a mystery for others: interns.

### Employees vs. Interns

Bob Wollam, who grows over 6 acres of cut flowers about 45 minutes from Washington, D.C., employs both permanent employees and seasonal interns. While family members seemed to make up the bulk of Bob’s permanent employees, Bob also hires several seasonal interns from a variety of sources. When I asked Bob whether he prefers permanent employees or seasonal interns, he responded “I’m not usually a waffler in my opinions, but I have yet to settle that.”

In Maryland, Dave Dowling employs both interns and employees and points out that new interns take training each year, for everything from where the tools are to the way flowers are loaded on the truck, while full-time employees should be able to work without much supervision. Bob said that although few interns are typically of much value to the workforce in the first two weeks, he truly believes that just about everyone who has interned at his farm has benefitted from the experience, as has he. Jodi Verbanic of Cherry Valley Organics, in Burgettstown,

Pennsylvania, summed it up by saying, “Our growers provide continuity. Seasonal interns help get the work done.” Jodi says they hire both interns and employees to help with growing 8 acres of produce and flowers (1 acre of flowers). They employ two full-time employees and one part-time, as well as 4 summer interns. Cherry Valley’s interns get paid around minimum wage with camping onsite (some commute), access to plumbing and a site for food preparation.

Most work mid-May through August (summer break from college). To find their interns, they advertise with local colleges and universities, ATTRA, PASA (a regional internship center), and via their website. Jodi says their interns are mostly involved in the produce aspect of the operation, but occasionally help cutting flowers or sleeving consumer bunches.

Most growers I spoke to were paying interns and employees the same rates (\$7-9 per hour), although interns who had short stays often started and finished at the same rate while employees were given raises for tenure and performance. Several growers I talked to said they had never used interns and were not sure where to find them. Others said they would love to have interns, but had no housing.

### Hiring Employees and Interns

Finding an employee for such a unique business as a flower farm can be a big challenge. Since many farms are in rural areas and the job itself can be very labor intensive, a small pool of candidates is typically available. Bob has had interns on his farm for about 12 years. Neither

he nor Dave Dowling are not very active in seeking them out, but say that growers should “always be looking for both. Make yourself visible on the Internet with your own web site or job postings.” Dave says his interns have always found him and that his being ASCFG President may help. Bob does send a few letters seeking students to several university faculty, as well as posting ads in *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, *Growing for Market*, and on [www.backdoorjobs.com](http://www.backdoorjobs.com).

Bob says about one-third of his interns come from Backdoor Jobs, a web site which posts job listings for those seeking “short-term job adventures”. When I checked out Backdoor Jobs’ website, Wollam Gardens was the only flower farm listing. The other farms were all dairy or vegetable farms—or a combination—in various locations throughout the United States.

Vicki Stamback, a wealth of information on the subject, employs both permanent employees and seasonal interns and employees. With about 8 acres in the field and 4 acres of greenhouses, most of Vicki’s employees are full-time and year-round. On hiring, Vicki says, “Go with your gut feeling on them. You can usually tell in the first 5 minutes talking to them whether they will work out for the job or not. As far as locating them, I focus on what I want and they come to me. Sounds crazy but it works and works much better than advertising for someone.”

Keith Cramer of Cramers’ Posie Patch, with 50 acres of cut flowers in production, says they are probably the only growers in the ASCFG using the H2A temporary migrant labor program. About this program Keith says, “I could write a

## SELLING LOCALLY?



You should be reading *Growing for Market*

Since 1992, *Growing for Market* has been the premier periodical for direct-market farmers. GFM covers cut flowers in every issue (with Pamela and Frank Arnosky writing again in 2009!), plus news and innovations in farmers markets, CSA, on-farm markets, selling to chefs and florists, and more. In print or online.



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book about the ins and outs of government regulated labor, but there is no time! Suffice it to say that it is a cumbersome, complicated, time sensitive system, made worse by the fact that three different government agencies are involved.”

The Cramers have never had interns and say it just doesn't seem to pay dividends at their production level. Their labor is seasonal—from mid-January through mid-November—though Keith says they could use more help in the winter, but it's hard to find anyone who wants to work in the field cutting curly willow in December!

Joe Caputi of Charlotte's Garden in Virginia shared his recent hiring experience by saying: “In February, I placed an ad in a local weekly paper and received over 40 responses; interviewed 13 of the 40. I hired three people within a week, all of them to start on April 1st of that year. Two weeks later, I fired one of those employees. Went through the

applications and hired a replacement for the fired employee. Two years ago I paid \$9 per hour for new employees. Because my help is seasonal (April 1st to October 31st), I offer a \$1 per hour bonus if an employee stays for the entire term of the season. The incentive is that an employee can make a bonus of as much as \$1,000 if he or she completes the term of employment. In three years, only two employees have not worked until the end of their terms.”

California Organic Flowers' Julia Kessler shared her employee-screening secrets with me over dinner at the 2008 Conference in Portland. Julia says she typically avoids anyone with any kind of horticultural degree, preferring someone who is more of a blank slate with an openness to learn. Julia actually likes candidates with restaurant experience and says these folks know how to multitask, work quickly and are used to having to hustle from one task to the next.

I was pleasantly surprised by my own experience with hiring recently when I ran an ad in our local paper this past spring. I was inundated with phone calls (I'll definitely have resumés mailed or emailed next time) to the point that I stopped answering the calls so that I could actually get my work done. I screened the 50 some calls I took and requested resumés from some. From the resumés I received, I set up 6 interviews and had a hard time deciding which to hire. I ended up hiring a girl who had only worked on small sustainable vegetable farms (both as an employee and an intern), since my main concern with the others was that they really didn't know how hard the work would be. Most were extremely excited about the idea of working on a flower farm and pledged desperate promises of how much they like to be outside. They all had great work and life experience, but very little of it strenuous or dirty. And, surprisingly, all had wonderful personalities.

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## *Managing People*

When I asked other growers about managing employees it was again evident to me what good people flower growers are. Marc Kessler of California Organic Flowers summed up just about everyone's attitude in his response of "Work them hard and treat them like gold!" Marc went on to say, "(We) work with them often, use clear communication, and we hire only quick learners who are excited to come to work." Marc says their formula for managing their employees is lots of hard work and lots and lots and lots of fun. Vicki echoed Marc's attitude by saying, "When we are cleaning up brush in the winter and burning it, I bring hamburgers and hot dogs and s'mores for everyone and we all cook lunch over the fire. Another thing I do is bring donuts every Friday for them. They really look forward to that. Do fun things that you would like to do; they appreciate the break in the routine and work harder on the other days to get things done that have to be done."

Vicki narrows it down further by figuring out what personality type they are and how they communicate, then working with them in those terms. Joe added, "Each employee is different. It's important to fit employees to the right task. For example, if an employee does not possess good "people skills" she may not be the right person to be selling flowers at the farmers' market. Or, if an employee isn't as physically strong in the field, we may use him in the processing room, bunching

flowers or making bouquets, setting and seeding plugs, or send him on deliveries. It takes a few weeks to understand the rhythm of your crew. Hopefully you hire the right people to get all the work done."

Dave advises that it is much easier to manage employees you like and get along with. He says to treat them with respect, pay them well for their efforts and give them extras, like flowers, meals, and vacation time.

## *Making it Work*

My own recent experience with becoming an employer taught me that the finding and hiring was the easy part. Although I had a wonderful season with a wonderful employee, I am still wrestling with finding balance between letting go of many tasks and still maintaining quality and continuity on the farm. Jodi gives this valuable advice on the subject: "Allow employees to take ownership of particular crops or crop families (when they are trained and experienced enough). Make the opportunities professional in nature; employees should not just be laborers (despite the fact that there is much labor involved). Involve them in planning, and every stage through customer interface to provide the most fulfilling, rewarding opportunity."

Jodi trains and works with most new employees herself to ensure the high quality of their products. Vicki adds that if an employee or intern just isn't working out, the sooner you let him or her go, the easier life will be for everyone. She says, "Sometimes it just doesn't work out, for whatever reason. Life is too short to let it drag on and on and for everyone to be unhappy. You want to be happy and you want everyone else to be happy too, and if an employee leaving gets that accomplished, then so be it. It is all a learning experience, for everyone—including the boss. The first time you have to let someone go is the worst, and it gets easier from there because you really realize life is just too short."

---

*Becky Devlin is a certified organic cut flower grower in Virginia. Contact her at [beckydevlin@cox.net](mailto:beckydevlin@cox.net)*





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# SMALL Things Considered

Gay Smith

## Basics, Brass Tacks and Backbone

For the past few months we've been relentlessly showered with news of economic downturns, upheavals, bailouts and scary predictions of a less-than-rosy 2009. No one knows exactly how things will play out, but it is clear that the next 9-12 months will be very tough. The floral industry is bound to take hits, but hopefully, price points of floral products are low enough to fit the definition of the "lipstick factor"—a moniker economists use to describe the small indulgences people refuse to give up even when expendable money tightens up. It refers to the historical rise in lipstick sales during tough economic times as women look for an affordable way to cheer themselves up.

Last October, I heard Jack Welsh (former CEO of General Motors) interviewed at a PMA (Produce Marketing Association) breakfast. He said in no uncertain terms that the next 9 months will be difficult. His discussion of tactics sounded as though it came from a playbook of military tactics: maneuver products in relation to each other in order to use their full potentials, plan strategy to achieve long-term outcome and stick with basics. He told the crowd that the backlash of the financial debacle of Wall Street will result in more regulation and a de-leveraged society. Welsh said that *value* is the game. "In a de-leveraged world, you don't want to be the niche player. It's the value guy who is going to win big."

### Communicating Value

How do we communicate our product's value while maintaining fingernail-thin margins in a tough market? One concept caught my eye last summer

in the *The Wall Street Journal*. An article described how Macy's was revising its "one size fits all" marketing mentality and specializing in merchandise appealing to local tastes. The new strategy, called "My Macy's" will be rolling out in a third of its 813 stores in 2009. The program relies on input from sales managers interacting with customers *and* taking a hard look at the store sales racks—always a good indication of what does not sell in the area. As you prepare for the 2009 season, include a review of '07 and '08 histories to spot items that had weaker margins or sell-through than you anticipated. When making variety choices, stay on the conservative side because when money is tight, consumers are less willing to take risks on products they don't know or recognize.

What's trendy? The trend gurus say that we will be spending more time at home in 2009 so offer ideas on ways flowers and plants can be used around the house to enhance the ambiance. Do some homework and then have fun. A few sites to check out include the Flower Council of Holland ([www.flowercouncil.org/us](http://www.flowercouncil.org/us)), the California Cut Flower Commission ([www.cffc.org](http://www.cffc.org)) and the Society of American Florists ([www.safnow.org](http://www.safnow.org)). *GreenProfit* magazine (Ball Publishing) offers good information and innovative sales ideas, too.

### Leverage Strengths

Why not copy the popular concept of "thematic" pot mixes becoming more available this past year? One features aromatic herbs and recommended ideas for their use. The overhead signage (or wobbler pick stuck right in the soil) includes plant care, light requirements and

a recipe card. For themed bouquets, an information blurb could explain the choice of flower assortment used in the bouquet menu. Maybe you display anecdotes of floral folklore, ancient medicinal use or design trends. Another way to offer value is to incorporate information about the various mixes: "easy care", "lasts 10 days" or "fragrant notes". Signage goes a long way in lowering consumers' flower intimidation. Some consumers find value in a bouquet mix that dries well. Why not provide instructions on how to dry the products after a week in the vase? Let your display do the talking. Customers love to hear the story behind the product. Instead of repeating it a thousand times, consider developing a small handout about your company and products so consumers can share it with friends and family, when the oohs and aahs about your bouquet mix start rolling in.

### Service Your Customers

During the interview, Welsh also advised the crowd that in this economic landscape, perception matters more than ever. A good reputation and brand image can be lost in a minute by someone screwing things up with a stupid move. Ouch! What safety measures do you have in place to ensure your image is not dashed by a careless or clueless misstep of a staff member? Does your training include practice on how to answer difficult customer requests or how to deal with demanding customers? Can employees provide an engaging discussion on why (and how) consumers need to use flower food? Do employees tell the story of where the flowers are grown? Making the connection with consumers is one way to

keep them coming back. Today's consumers want a "retail experience"; regardless of whether they're flower buyers for a wholesaler, or the general public, they are looking to be engaged.

### *Sustainability—Good for the Earth*

And employees, and profit margins! The right solution for the job is Step One, but it doesn't stop there. Solution re-use helps conserve water and makes postharvest products more affordable. What about proper dosage and length of treatment time? If you don't follow the guidelines listed on the label, you won't maximize your investment or the performance of your blooms.

Starting clean is another critical point. In the past couple years, I've been to floral conventions and shows where the set-up buckets offered were filthy. Not the ASCFG's, of course. It cannot be said too often, if you wouldn't drink it or out of it, neither should your flowers!

Happy New Year to all my ASCFG friends and colleagues. 2009 promises to be an interesting year. I'm facing the New Year with a clear focus on advice my mother gave my siblings and me as we struggled through the trials of growing up: What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger.

---

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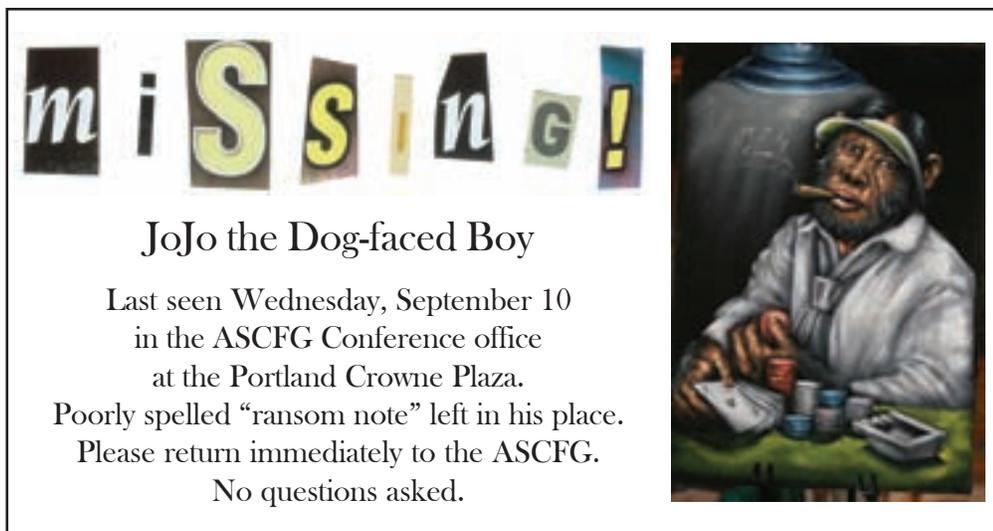
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# miSSiNG!

## JoJo the Dog-faced Boy

Last seen Wednesday, September 10  
in the ASCFG Conference office  
at the Portland Crowne Plaza.  
Poorly spelled "ransom note" left in his place.  
Please return immediately to the ASCFG.  
No questions asked.



## No More Ugly Buds!

When some sunflower varieties are grown under natural short-day conditions of winter and early spring, they flower early on short plants, and produce many small flower buds on the upper stem (see photo). While it is nice to have early flowers and a short crop time, the extra buds are ugly, and flower size is too small. But for those of you growing cut flowers in those conditions, wouldn't it be nice to have early flowering without side buds? We manipulated daylength on 'Sunrich Orange' seedlings in a greenhouse in 2008, and the results are encouraging.

Since some varieties of sunflower are sensitive to daylength in the first three weeks after emergence, we placed the seedlings in either 12 or 16-hour daylength compartments for week-long periods, then to the other daylength, and then transplanted them to the field after the three weeks were up. There were 20 seedlings per plot and three replications, with a 9 x 9 in. spacing in 4-row beds covered by black plastic mulch and trickle irrigated.

As in our previous experiments reported in the *Quarterly*, 'Sunrich Orange' sunflower is very responsive to daylength in the first three weeks after emergence. If it is grown in short days during that period, the plants flower early, producing small flowers and excess buds. If grown under long days, plants flower 18 days later, become nearly twice as tall, with double the flower size and lacking the buds.



Fig. 1. 'Ugly' bud on short-day sunflower.

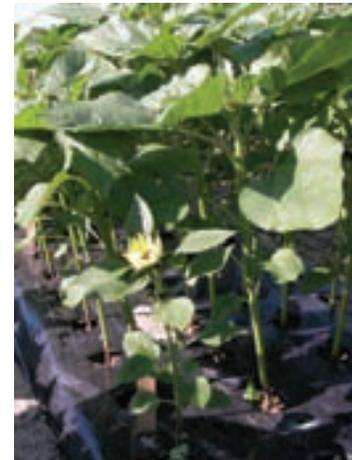


Fig. 2. Short day (foreground) and long day-treated sunflower plants of the same variety.

Inserting one or two weeks of long days into an early short-day exposure gives intermediate results: flowering earlier than the long-day plants, with moderate stem length and flower size. And, more importantly, we got rid of the ugly buds. This study was repeated on another daylength-sensitive variety, 'Solara', with similar results.

So for those of you growing sunflowers in Florida in the winter, or producing an early crop when daylengths are around 12 hours or shorter, try extending daylength over the seedlings to 16 hours during week 2 or longer after emergence, and enjoy the clean and early crop. Use screw-in fluorescent bulbs to minimize stem stretching during the lighting period.

**Table 1.** Effect of week-long daylength treatments on flowering date, plant and flower size and bud production on the upper stem for Sunrich Orange sunflower. SSS=three weeks short days; SLS=first week short days, then one week long days, then one week short days; SLL=first week short days, then two weeks long days; LLL=long days.

Treatment	Flower date, days from sowing	Plant height (inches)	Flower disk diameter (inches)	Buds on upper 3 nodes (no.)
SSS <sup>2</sup>	51	29	1.6	1.2
SLS	59	37	2.1	0.2
SLL	63	48	2.8	0
LLL	69	55	3.2	0

<sup>2</sup>Weekly daylength treatment of either 12 (S), or 16 hours (L).

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The competent assistance of Liza White, and her helpers Andrew Hoffman, James Longley and Colin Meeks is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks also to Johnny's Seeds for furnishing the sunflower seed.

# IPM Update

Stanton Gill

## Is This the Year to Add Herbs to Your Cut Flower List?

The poor economy is changing the market quickly. The question for this spring is “What can you grow that the public might be interested in?” Many greenhouse operations are choosing to expand their offerings of vegetable transplants since in bad economies people tend to plant what they can eat. As a cut flower grower you need to look at what might increase your customer purchases in a downturned economy. If you are selling at farmers’ markets, how about potted herb plants and cut herbs for 2009?

For years, growers in Maryland have used basil as aromatic filler for bouquets. Most have limited themselves to the Italian basil but there are cinnamon basil, lemon basil, licorice basil and many others that could be added to this mix. The other market to expand in 2009 is to sell potted herbs or herb mixed bowls. This market is strong from spring through early summer. Basil is easy enough to grow from seed if you maintain warm temperatures for the plants to thrive. Do not allow basil to become chilled or it develops all sorts of secondary foliar and root disease problems.

### What About Bugs on Basil?

You knew that I, as an IPM specialist, would have to mention insects that feed on basil. Well, here it is: watch for aphids, whiteflies and mealybug. Most growers start their plants in greenhouses where these three pests thrive and have strong potential for reducing your profit margin.

The green peach aphid and melon aphid are the two most frequently seen on basil. The green peach aphid is usually found on tip growth early in the infestation process. Melon aphids tend to cluster near the main stems and center of the plants.

The problem is that very few chemicals are labeled for use on herbs. If the aphid population is low you can usually keep them under control with applications of the botanical insecticides Azadirachtin (neem Azatin, Aza-Direct, Neemix). Another option is to use the entomopathogenic fungus, *Beauveria bassiana*, sold under the names Botanigard ES and Naturalis-O. It usually takes 3 to 4 applications at 3-5 day intervals to control aphids with this biopesticide. This material will also work on whiteflies.

Insecticidal soap can be used but there are two precautions: avoid more than 3 applications within a 30-day period to avoid chances of phytotoxicity and do not apply within a couple of days of when you plan to sell it. The fatty acids give the foliage a slightly foul taste for 1-2 days after an application. Ultra-Fine oil is labeled for use on herbs and provides fair control of aphids and good control of whiteflies if directed onto the pest.

Don’t let mealybug get established on basil. It is one tough pest to control if it shows up on an herb crop. The best success with controlling mealybug on basil, which we’ve seen at Hillcrest Nursery, is when they apply insecticidal soap and follow it up with an application of horticultural oil the next day. The alcohol in the insecticidal soap helps dissolve the wax covering mealybugs and appears to make them more susceptible to control with the horticultural oil.

### How About Something Sweet?

An interesting herb to look into is *Stevia rebaudiana*. This plant looks like mint and reaches heights of 2–3 feet in a growing season. The foliage of the plants is extremely sweet. Steve Hershfeld of

Hillcrest Nursery sent some stevia plants for us to try out at CMREC this spring. The plant is native to Paraguay and Brazil where natives have used it for centuries to sweeten food. Dried stevia leaves are reportedly 15 times sweeter than cane sugar. We tried it out this summer in teas and it really does sweeten tea very nicely. There is even a cookbook with recipes on how to use stevia. The book by Jeffrey Goettemoeller is *Stevia Sweet Recipes: Sugar-Free – Naturally*. Our family tried out a couple recipes this summer and we were impressed.

Supposedly people with diabetes are using *Stevia* to sweeten food without the negative effects of cane sugar. Better check with a medical professional before you try to market it for diabetics.

*Stevia* appears to be pretty insect resistant. I placed nymphs of green peach aphids and melon aphids on several plants and the colonies did not thrive. It is reported that grasshoppers leave the foliage alone. So far it appears pretty pest free but I am sure we can find something that will feed on it given enough time.

You can sell potted plants in early spring and cut the stems as fillers in bouquets later in the summer and early fall. The foliage is attractive enough to serve as a bouquet filler, and you can tell customers they can dry the foliage and use it to sweeten teas or food afterwards. Plants thrive in hot summer but will keep growing until frost in the fall. If you grow it in pots you will need to pinch it back a couple of times to get the plants to look full.

*Stevia* is not winter hardy which is good since you sell people more plants next year. If you maintain a stock plant it is very easy to root cuttings to make additional plants. Cutting are taken from stock plants in January through March for rooting under mist.

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## Doing My Job

I leave you with a list of other herbs that can be sold at farmers' markets and the key pests that attack them. Use the chart to focus your monitoring:

<i>Herbs</i>	<i>Pests</i>
Basil Lemon verbena Tarragon Rosemary Tansy Mexican marigold	Aphids The green peach aphid is found on tip growth. Populations can explode in spring (March through early June). Look for the long cornicles with black tips on the rear end, and notch in the antennae. Melon aphid starts building on major branches in the center of the plant. As populations build they move to parts of plants and accumulate around flowers when a plant matures.
Rosemary Lavender Basil	Mealybugs Once you get mealybugs on a crop it will take a major cleanup effort to bring them under control. Mealybugs are mobile and can move off plants and be found on benches, pots and flats. Insecticidal soaps containing alcohol help dissolve the wax. Follow this with a horticultural oil application for the best control. See mealybug section for biological options.
Lemon balm Thyme Hyssop	Two-spotted spider mites Examine undersides of foliage for mites. Insecticidal soaps and some formulations of horticultural oil (UltraFine oil) are useful.
Tansy Oregano Cuban oregano Greek oregano Pineapple sage Lemon balm Gold and variegated sage Mexican marigold	Thrips Western flowers thrips transmits tospovirus such as impatiens necrotic spot virus (INSV). Approved formulations of the bacterium <i>Saccharopolyspora spinosa</i> can be used for thrips.
Rosemary Balm of Gilead African Blue Basil Sage Lavender Salvia	Whiteflies The two most common greenhouse species are the sweet potato whitefly, B-biotype ( <i>B. tabaci</i> ), formally known as the silverleaf whitefly, <i>Bemisia argentifolii</i> , and the greenhouse whitefly, <i>Trialeurodes vaporariorum</i> . It is not uncommon to find both whitefly species in the same greenhouse, even on the same plant.

## Best of Luck

2009 is looking a little dicey at this point but if you offer your customers interesting new products you have a better chance of making money. If you are not already offering herbs in your plant mix give it a try this spring.

*Stanton Gill is Regional Specialist in IPM for the Greenhouses and Nurseries, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, and Professor with Montgomery College, Landscape Technology Program.*

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# RESEARCH Update

Megan Bame

Funding for this column is provided by the ASCFG Research Committee.

## A Longer Vase Life with Chlorine Dioxide

Researchers at the University of Florida, Gainesville, evaluated the use of chlorine dioxide as a safe, effective biocide for inclusion in vase solutions to extend the vase life of cut flowers. Antimicrobial compounds are known to reduce the number of bacteria in vase water; however, some are not as effective in the acidified solutions commonly used for hydrating and others are limited in commercial use due to human health concerns. Chlorine dioxide is known to work as a biocide over a broad pH range and is considered safe for use, even at low concentrations on fresh produce.

This test included 10 species: *Alstroemeria peruviana*, *Antirrhinum majus*, *Delphinium*, *Dendranthema x grandiflorum*, *Dianthus caryophyllus*, *Gerbera jamesonii*, *Gypsophila paniculata*, *Lilium asiaticum*, *Matthiola incana*, *Rosa* hybrid. All stems were grown in Colombia or California and shipped to the lab in Florida according to specific protocol. The alstroemeria, delphinium, dianthus and gypsophila were pretreated with silver thiosulfate for ethylene protection.

Surface-sterilized vases were prepared with a chlorine dioxide solution at concentrations of 0, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50  $\mu\text{L/L}$ . Additionally, vase solutions were prepared with varying bacteria concentrations and subsequently treated with 10  $\mu\text{L/L}$  chlorine dioxide or none. A pre-treatment experiment was performed on the gerberas prior to shipping. Half the stems were dipped in a 10  $\mu\text{L/L}$  chlorine dioxide solution for one minute. The final experiment compared the efficacy of chlorine dioxide treatments to the other biocide options commonly used, such as 8-HQS, aluminum sulfate, Physan 20™, DICA, and Clorox™. Vase life of each species was subjectively judged according to marketable characteristics and recorded as number of days.

The addition of aqueous chlorine dioxide in concentrations as low as 10  $\mu\text{L/L}$ , or in some cases 2  $\mu\text{L/L}$ , resulted in significantly extended vase life of all the species tested except *Delphinium* ‘Bellamosum’ and *Dendranthema* ‘Albatron’. Even in those two species, the number of bacteria in the vase solution was significantly reduced compared to the

control, but the control lasted as long as the treatments. Chlorine dioxide concentrations of 50  $\mu\text{L/L}$  resulted in leaf chlorosis and flower abscission in *Alstroemeria* ‘Senna’, *Delphinium* ‘Bellamosum’, *Dendranthema* ‘Albatron’ and *Lilium* ‘Vermeer’.

Pre-treatment of *Gerbera* stems resulted in a vase life extension of 4 days compared to those that did not receive any pretreatment. The pre-treatment prevented the accumulation of bacteria in the water used to rehydrate the flowers after a 1-day dry shipment from the farm to the lab. Chlorine dioxide and 8-HQS were most effective in extending the vase life of three *Gerbera* cultivars, compared to the other commercially-accepted biocides tested. Considering the health concerns regarding repeated exposure to 8-HQS, chlorine dioxide looks like a promising vase solution additive for at least these eight cut flower species.

Macnish, A.J., R.T. Leonard, T.A. Nell. 2008. Treatment with chlorine dioxide extends the vase life of selected cut flowers. *Postharvest Biology and Technology*. 50, pp. 197-207.

## Testing Biodegradable Mulching Materials and Snapdragons

Research conducted at the University of Bari in Italy compared two biodegradable mulch materials to the commonly used low density polyethylene (LDPE) film. Snapdragons were grown and evaluated to determine how the different mulches affected the substrate temperature and subsequent plant growth and development.

The field test was carried out in a greenhouse in a soil-less media. The three mulch materials tested were: transparent biodegradable mulching film, transparent LDPE mulching film and transparent spray mulching coating. Unmulched medium served as the control. The biodegradable film (Mater-Bi grade NF, supplied by Novamont Co.) was 30  $\mu\text{m}$  thick, made from a

starch-based raw material. The LDPE film was 60  $\mu\text{m}$  thick, supplied by Pati Co. Both films were secured on top of the media. The biodegradable spray (PSS20 Protective Surface System) was sprayed over saturated media using a high pressure airless spray machine. The resulting thickness was approximately 50  $\mu\text{m}$ . Three weeks after the mulch was applied, the snapdragons were transplanted in the media. The plants grown in each mulch treatment began to flower 7 days earlier than those snapdragons grown in the unmulched control. The number of flowers produced was the same for all treatments. The harvest period was shortest, at 8 days, for the film mulches and longest for the spray mulch (19 days). The harvest interval for the control plants

was 12 days. The mean days to bloom decreased and stem length increased as substrate temperature increased. The LDPE film demonstrated the highest average substrate temperature (25.8C/78.4F), followed closely by the biodegradable film (28.8C/83.8F) and then the biodegradable mulch (23.7C/74.7F). Lab tests to determine the radiometric properties of the mulches determined that the biodegradable materials were more reflective of the solar radiation.

The lifetime of the biodegradable materials was also tested. For the five months of experimentation, neither biodegradable mulch showed visible signs of biodegradation. While the biodegradable film remained unbroken during the growing period, the spray mulch had some cracking within the first month. Despite

the cracking, the coating maintained its mulching effect for the entire crop cycle. After the harvest was completed, the biodegradable materials were fragmented and mixed with the growing medium and plant residue. The spray mulch proceeded to degrade within one month while the biodegradable film required nearly 12 months. Several variables, such as humidity, and size and thickness of the fragmented mulch pieces, contribute to the rate of degradation.

Schettini, E., G. Vox, and B. De Lucia. 2007. *Effects of the radiometric properties of innovative biodegradable mulching materials on snapdragon cultivation*. Scientia Horticulturae. 112, pp. 456-461.

## Comparing Organic and Inorganic Fertilization for Growing Statice and Cockscomb

The certified organic farm plots at West Virginia University in Morgantown, West Virginia, were the testing grounds for a nutritional study focusing on the organic production of statice and *Celosia*. Additionally, the research considered if these two specialty cut flowers would be viable options for farmers in the midst of transitioning from conventional production to organic.

These particular species were selected because statice (*Limonium sinuatum*) has relatively low nutrient requirements, and *Celosia argentea* is considered a high nutrient requiring plant. Five rates of a composted dairy manure-leaf litter mix were tested. The compost was applied at rates of 0, 6.2, 12.4, 24.7, 49.4, and 98.8 tons/hectare each year being tilled in to a depth of 10 cm prior to planting. A once-over harvest was performed and characteristics, such as color, stem length and stem fresh weight, were recorded for the marketable stems. The experiment was carried out in 2001 and 2003.

A greenhouse study was also conducted using conventional fertilizers to gain a better understanding of these species' organic fertilization requirements. The greenhouse experiment tested four rates of nitrogen and six rates of phosphorus.

The nutrient analysis of the compost was approximately 0.5% nitrogen both years. The phosphorus measured 66% in 2003 compared to 24% in 2001; however the harvest data



collected over the two growing seasons was averaged for further analysis. The statice demonstrated a linear increase in fresh weight per plot and number of stems per square meter as the amount of compost increased. The weight per stem increased up to the 49.4 t/ha rate, then decreased at the highest compost rate. The *Celosia* showed a linear increase in fresh weight per plot, weight per stem, and stem length as the compost rate increased. The number of stems per square meter increased up to the rate of 65 t/ha (according to the quadratic curve of the analysis), then dropped off. The greenhouse studies resulted in similar results, though direct comparisons cannot be made.

This study produced two basic conclusions:

- 1) Statice is a better choice for a specialty cut flower (compared to *Celosia*) for use during conversion from conventional to organic production requiring small amounts of composts to provide adequate plant nutrition and
- 2) The phosphorus analysis of compost should be given more consideration than the nitrogen amount with regards to nutrient applications since acceptable cut flower production was achieved under low nitrogen circumstances.

Verlinden, S., L. McDonald. 2007. *Productivity and quality of statice (*Limonium sinuatum* cv. Soiree Mix) and cockscomb (*Celosia argentea* cv. Chief Mix) under organic and inorganic fertilization regimens*. Scientia Horticulturae. 114, pp. 199-206.

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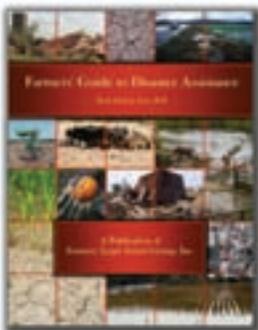
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The Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG) has released the sixth edition of *Farmers' Guide to Disaster Assistance*. It describes in plain language the rules for programs such as FEMA assistance, federal crop insurance, USDA's Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, and Emergency Loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency. Chapters may be downloaded free. The book is available by calling FLAG (651) 223-5400 for \$40.00 plus shipping.

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### January 2009

Week	Sun day	Mon day	Tue day	Wednes day	Thurs day	Fri day	Satur day
1	Daffodils				New Year		
2	Iris,						
3	Lilies,						
4	Narcissi,						
5	Tulips						

### February 2009

Week	Sun day	Mon day	Tue day	Wednes day	Thurs day	Fri day	Satur day
6					Callas		
7					Daffodils		
8					Iris,		
9					Lilies,		
					Ranunculus,		
					Tulips		

### March 2009

Week	Sun day	Mon day	Tue day	Wednes day	Thurs day	Fri day	Satur day
10							Callas
11							Daffodils
12							Iris,
13							Lilies,
14							Ranunculus,
							Tulips

### April 2009

Week	Sun day	Mon day	Tue day	Wednes day	Thurs day	Fri day	Satur day
1							Callas
2							Daffodils
3	Easter						Iris,
4							Lilies,
5		May Day					Ranunculus,
							Tulips

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# GROWER Profile

Megan Bame

## Kirby Bachman Behold Flowers

While raising her boys, Kirby Bachman made a special effort to engage them in nature. They would take walks through the gardens and the woods searching for examples of wildlife and simple beauty in the life cycles all around. When everyone was intrigued, Kirby would proclaim, “Behold the beauty of God’s creation.” When it came time to name the business, it seemed obvious to Kirby that this family moment could be shared and it provided an apt expression of her love of flowers; thus, Behold Flowers was established in 2004.

Though trained as a registered nurse, after years of being a stay-at-home-supermom, Kirby wasn’t interested in re-entering the medical field. She recalls that as she raised her three sons, who are now college-bound or beyond, she says,

“I was obsessed with growing things as a way to hold on to my sanity.”

She grew things for herself, but when it came to deciding what to do in her post-child-rearing days, she explored many different growing-type ventures that held business potential. In her fourth year as a full-time flower farmer, Kirby has found success with fresh cuts, but is in the process of

tweaking the business model by developing a line of products that feature pressed and dried flowers.

Kirby has 1.5 acres in production with raised beds, drip irrigation and completely enclosed by deer fencing. She doesn’t have a greenhouse, nor immediate plans to build one. She starts seeds in her “workroom” using grow-lights, moves them to a shade house as soon as temperatures allow (usually April), then transplants them in the field. The workroom would likely be called a barn by most standards. While it seemed massive at first, she’s filled much of the 90 x 140-foot space including a 10x10-foot walk-in cooler.

She’s looking to erect a shade structure over part of the existing field area to grow a wider selection of shade perennials. One plant that won’t be among her mix is



hydrangeas, since she’s in friendly competition with fellow ASCFG members and hydrangea specialists, Highland Moor, at the bustling Saturday market in nearby Louisville, Kentucky.

Kirby loves to trial new flowers every year, but her primary crops are the traditional favorites including sunflowers, snapdragons, zinnias, lilies, lisianthus and tuberose. A hot seller later in the summer is *Hibiscus sabdariffa* ‘Jamaican Cocktail.’ She would like to add to her small collection of woodies in cultivation, but takes full

advantage of the opportunity to gather interesting stems, berries and flowers from plants that are growing wild on her 80-acre property. As a cost-conscious measure, Kirby takes time to dig bulbs, including gladiolus, tuberose, and peacock orchid lilies. She leaves her lilies in the ground and leaves the tulips for two years.

In addition to herself, Kirby has one full-time employee, David Sanchez, a dedicated worker with immense creative talent. To retain him, and avoid training someone new, she pays him the same amount year-round, though they both work significantly fewer hours in the winter. Through the summer, she has three to five part-time folks who so far have been family, or family friends who actually come looking for work. And then there’s Tom, the customer who asked if he could work for free. This past year Kirby rewarded his volunteer effort by giving him an acre to grow miniature heirloom pumpkins,

heirloom squash and gourds, which may very well find their way into Kirby's product mix.

Though not organic certified, Kirby is committed to using organic compost she purchases from Kentucky, and OMRI-approved chemicals if needed. She doesn't plan to move toward certification so that she can retain the right to use Round-up along the sides of the raised beds and by drip application on noxious dead nettle. Weeds, she says, are her biggest challenge.

The market season runs from early April through late October. Her initial sales strategy was to make and sell mixed bouquets, but she wasn't thrilled with that approach. Making the bouquets was quite time consuming, they were difficult to transport and required lots of display space. She now sells single stems and her signature item is a small bouquet, easy to make and ready to carry, in a 16-oz. biodegradable cup. They make up 36 in advance for each Saturday market and her employee continues to make flower cups throughout the entire market. Selling at \$6 each, regulars sometimes call ahead to reserve a certain number for pick-up later in the day. The small bouquets are also a great way to use short stems. In fact, due to their success, Kirby has started growing some shorter flowers that would normally be passed over for cut flower production.

In addition to farmers' market customers, Kirby sells her flowers to floral designers and restaurants who must come to her since she doesn't have time to run a delivery route. While she provides flowers for special events, including weddings, she does not arrange flowers. Since she dries flowers throughout the year, she also offers dried flowers and dried wreaths in the fall.

The dried flowers are the cornerstone of the new business venture. She's been selling her flowers at a mid-week farmers' market and a Saturday market, both in Louisville. The Saturday market is always busy and they regularly sell out, while the Tuesday market, though well patronized, simply doesn't bring in the profit Kirby would like to see. She made the difficult decision to completely drop the Tuesday market in order to develop the products and marketing strategy for a family venture in papermaking. Along with her sister-in-laws, they are working on decorated paper products such as gift tags, bookmarks, cards, stationary, framed art renderings using the dried flowers as the color medium, and even flower infused pottery.

She uses a microwave press from Australia that provides superior quality to the terra cotta tiles she'd tried previously. While there are certainly exceptions, the standard drying time for most flowers consist of three short bursts of heat: 30 seconds, 20 seconds and 20 seconds. Once they are pressed and dried they are labeled and stored among the pages of an old set of encyclopedias—they are in the process of looking for a better, weighted storage solution.

Up to this point, Kirby hasn't paid for any advertising, only mentions in the farmers' market e-newsletter. While she anticipates selling the papercrafts at the farmers' market, she also plans to invest in developing a website this year. Most importantly, she markets the perceived romanticism of being a flower farmer. For example, she lovingly refers to her property as a magical piece of land where flowers grow. While in the business of selling flowers, with every sell she tries also to create a meaningful connection that her customers can take back to their busy lives as they enjoy their flowers through the week. And "magically," they come back for more.



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## Gary A. Anderson

The current business climate has created concerns and challenges for retail florists, their suppliers, and their customers. Rising prices and decreasing disposable income has created a sense of caution in buying habits. Restraint in spending is not an attitude that retailers like to hear.

While the current economic situation is not welcome, the reaction of retail florists seems to vary greatly. Some have chosen to focus on the bottom line, raising prices, increasing delivery charges, and cutting back on product lines and services. Others have approached the challenge by seeking new accounts, trying harder to get customers into their shop, and expressing an upbeat and positive approach to the beautiful and emotional product they sell! flowers.

In reality, many florists who continue to be successful are doing both. It is evident that traditional florists who cater to the middle level customer cannot afford to do nothing. Funeral work has declined and spending on flowers for everyday occasions has been modest. Florists are continually seeking ways to bring more people into their shop. Beautiful floral product and artistic displays along with friendly and helpful staff are powerful selling tools. But the reality of today's buying habits finds fewer people coming to the shop. Just to look.

There is no simple formula to overcome these barriers, but it is important that each florist assess their individual situation and implement a plan of action. In most cases, doing business as they have in the past will not work. Changes in buying habits, technology, and the nature of the competition have forced retail florists to make the necessary adjustments in order to remain profitable. Below are some areas of consideration that have been talked about by florists.

### Charge a Fair Price to Cover Costs

Prices must change to reflect the cost of doing business. Nobody likes to increase prices but it is necessary to make money. The timing of the increase is important. With the widespread publicity on rising prices in all areas of the economy, customers are primed to accept that flower prices will also increase. Likewise with rising fuel prices, it is logical that delivery charges will go up or be assessed where they previously were not. That does not mean that these hikes will go unnoticed or be commented upon. It is necessary to respond in a positive way, pointing out the special services that florists provide, including careful handling, a quick response time, and travel to distant locations to satisfy the customer.

### Refocus Your Business to Include Profitable Components

Florists cannot afford to offer the same product lines and services they have in the past. It is necessary to decide what change is most effective for the individual situation. The size of the business, its geographic location, and the nature of the competition are all factors that will impact the decision. In many ways it seems that the traditional small town florist has been unfairly affected by all the change. The decrease in funeral business, reduced numbers of incoming wire service orders, and reduction of walk-in trade has all worked to change the complexion of the traditional florist business.

For some florists it may mean specializing in event planning or custom home décor service with a high emphasis on individual quality service. For others it may mean becoming more like the box

stores with a high volume of economical and readily available product. Yet others may focus on corporate accounts, holiday decorations, and interior plantscaping. Another area of consideration is rental of containers, accessories, and live plants. Focus on product and services not available from other businesses in your area and scale back on areas where there is stiff competition.

All areas of merchandise should be considered for their contribution to the bottom line. Product that is no longer popular and moves slowly does not make money. Perhaps it is a matter of updating or changing lines so that the customers are seeing the things that they now desire. If they don't, they will go elsewhere to buy their gifts and expressions of emotion.

### Increase Awareness of Your Business

Now is the time to put even more emphasis on generating awareness and excitement about your business. Traditional advertising costs are also rising. Decisions have to be made as to which are cost effective and worth keeping. Those that are not should be eliminated. Just because they were always done is not a good reason for continuing that expense. It is also necessary to be aware that many buyers are using the Internet to check out florists before they make a decision to buy. Others are using it to place orders. In either case it is important that businesses not miss this opportunity to portray themselves in a positive and personalized way. Cookie cutter web sites are not impressive. Those with an attractive picture of the shop, some representative design work, and perhaps weekly specials will likely be more effective in attracting customers. Those buying online prefer a very simple-to-use, straight-forward

system that will allow them to complete the order rapidly and with assurance that they are getting what they want.

This is also a time to be active in the community and get your floral product out where potential customers can see it and be inspired to buy from you. It is not a new concept, but many florists have recently stepped up their efforts to place arrangements in local restaurants, beauty shops, and dry cleaners along with a business card indicating where the flowers came from. The country club is another venue for displaying an artistic presentation of flowers before potential customers. The conversations that these displays generate are valuable to the florist and will be passed along to many other people.

Another source for community outreach is the high school prom. Welcome this new generation of customers by showing them the stylish products you have to offer and help them feel comfortable ordering from a florist. They are seeking unique creations to enhance their special attire, and florists have the tools to respond. As floral artists, you have the talent to turn the colored wire and jeweled accessories into creations that suit the present generation. They are willing to spend a considerable sum for this special night and many will return for wedding flowers in the not too distant future, if they had a good experience.

### Focus on Customer Service

The biggest edge that florists have on their competition is their quality customer service. Make sure that you do not compromise this valuable asset that causes people to do business with you. A satisfied customer is worth their weight in gold and will become that all-important repeat customer that is essential in building a solid and profitable customer base. Customers who are pleased with the way you do business will tell many other people. A satisfied customer is the result of many positive experiences, including the consistent supply of a quality product and reliable, and professional help from shop personnel. Occasionally complaints will arise but they should be dealt with in a positive manner that will result in making the situation right.

### Buy Wisely

Careful buying of product and avoiding waste are high on the list of actions that can make an immediate difference in the bottom line. Look for specials and quantity discounts that will save money. Don't overbuy, especially on expensive product that may have limited use. Once you have the product, figure out a way to turn it into saleable product. Don't add it as extra stems just to get rid of it. Small hand-tied bouquets and novelty arrangements are great ways to use left-over flowers and offer customers a unique Aspecial.

Judicious buying also applies to containers and other hard goods. Look for items that have multiple uses as opposed to being suited for a certain project. Containers that are sitting in the back room are not making money. Pull these out of inventory and think of ways they can be used. There are so many opportunities to alter the surface color or texture. This will allow them to be turned into money instead of gathering dust on the shelves.

### Educate and Appreciate Employees

Select and develop the best employee group possible. Good people are the face of a business and are what make it successful. They wish to be valued, and opportunities for development can bring benefits in knowledge and moral. It was heartening to see groups of shop employees attending the 2008 OFA Short Course where there were ample opportunities to learn from great designers and business people. Their experience will surely stimulate conversation and motivate them to see the bigger picture of the florist industry.

There are many other opportunities for professional development including quality programs at wholesale houses and fine industry publications. Those ready to take the step of becoming an Ohio Certified Florist (you don't have to be from Ohio to attain accreditation) will find a rewarding course of study in preparation for the written exam. Details can be had by contacting Michelle Gaston at the OFA office.

### Keep Busy

We are well aware that time is money. There are many times when we are overwhelmed by the amount of work and the rapidly approaching deadline, but there are also the slow periods. Use the time wisely to work ahead for upcoming events and holiday needs. Create exciting props for shop and window displays, refurbish containers, and organize inventory. Tara Baeire of Tara's Floral Expressions in Mansfield, Ohio suggested the importance of catering to the summer wedding business to keep the summer season profitable. Being energetic and enterprising is certainly more rewarding than sitting on a stool waiting for the phone to ring.

### Stay Positive

As I have listened to many florists talk about the challenges that they face, I am left with the distinct feeling that those who are positive and willing to change are the ones that are will survive and thrive. It is the ones that are out there gathering new ideas and analyzing them in terms of their individual situation that express optimism for the future. It is those who are encouraging their employees to learn and grow who have the greatest hope for improving their customer service and overall quality and reputation. There is no simple answer, but people will continue to be moved by the emotions that our floral products evoke, and they will continue to buy flowers.

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# REGIONAL *Reports*



**NORTHEAST**  
*Polly Hutchison*  
Robin Hollow Farm

As I write this we have officially reached the official determination, “*Recession*”, which has been whispered in the halls of power for months. If you follow the news, we are looking at some deep economic guano. Despite this, I am not the only one who thinks that there remain opportunities for the creative, lean-thinking business owner. Furthermore, I think farmers are some of the most creative businesspeople our country has. Here are two good signs as I see them:

The “buy local” movement isn’t going away any time soon. I personally believe that as dollars are shorter, people are thinking more carefully about where they go. Wal-Mart is not soaking up as much of the citizens’ money as expected. People really do want their own communities to survive.

Farmland will not be gobbled up for house lots as quickly, and there may be some opportunities for new farmers to afford land. This is a serious consideration for us in the Northeast. We have less land to lose, and a lot of the land that has been protected with public purchase of development rights has been too expensive in the last few years. This economy, used wisely, can buy us the time to get better zoning and laws in place.

In order to get the edge on the competition, I plan to continue to work on new marketing opportunities, and new ways to reach customers. A good friend of mine said that if each of Rhode Island’s one million residents bought a single stem, I’d be all set. Heck, I’d be better than all set. I decided to aim for just 10% of the people to buy one bunch. It sounds much more achievable, yes? But seriously, think about your market in the wider market every once in a while. More specifically, in the short term I have set up flower share programs within two local vegetable CSAs, and I will carefully add to my florist routes, as farmers’ markets may slacken some.

I also plan to increase my efficiency on all levels. Labor efficiency is the number one priority for farmers. I am not even talking about cutting back on help here, I am talking about reviewing how I do everything, and how it could be done better, faster, or more simply. Fuel efficiency is a must, obviously, as well as reducing excessive purchases or mid-season resupply of basic items that I could have stocked at a bulk discount. I

have cleaned out all of my sheds and storage areas, given away pots I haven’t used in years, and inventoried supplies so I can look at fewer deliveries, fewer shipping charges, and less time at the desk. Nothing is more efficient than that!

The number one thing I won’t cut back on is the fabulous learning and networking that I do through the ASCFG. The membership cost definitely pays for itself every year, usually many times over, in cultural information, marketing ideas, field structures and supplier information. The Board and the staff are working really hard to keep your membership valuable and spend a lot of time trying to help grow your business. When times are harder, this edge can make a big difference. I wholeheartedly recommend you use this resource to the fullest. You can only “outgrow” the ASCFG if you limit how you interact with other experienced growers. I have been farming for creeping up toward twenty years, but the ideas around how to grow more successfully just keep flowing.

Speaking of the flow of ideas, your Conference Committee has been busy pulling together a must-attend conference for this fall. I have worked on a lot of farming conferences, but this one will be the best ever. We have been to Long Island, and there is a huge and high-end network of horticultural and floral resources in this part of the country. We have great new research through the good folks at Cornell and other nearby universities. We have worked hard to make an effective program to help you make back more than the conference costs in the very next growing season. One tidbit to whet your appetite: we will have a new multi-session series of workshops on event design and marketing, including customer communication, pricing, and marketing (and some design as well!). Please mark your calendars and your budgets now! This is the year to give yourself the edge over the other growers in your area.

As this is the ‘New Varieties’ issue, I want to share one new plant I will definitely grow again. I really enjoyed *Eryngium leavenworthii*, a purple sea holly that is an annual. I didn’t try successions, although I will next year. It is softer and more delicate than *Eryngium planum*, and needs trellising, but the head is larger than the *planum* and a fabulous true purple. Sold well to my weed-weaving florist and at market, and I used it in some wedding work. I started it mid-February in the greenhouse, bumped it up a month later, and transplanted to the field in the third week of April for late July-early August blooms.

Best of luck to all of you for the coming year.



**MID-ATLANTIC**  
**Andrea Gagnon**  
 LynnVale Studios

Yesterday I stood salivating at the grocery store over a huge display of magazines touting mouth-watering collections of holiday sweets. Never mind that I haven't dug a single dahlia yet, I'm ready for some much needed end-of-season rest AND some therapeutic baking. Everything looks so yummy, how can I decide? My hand pauses over each volume. It's a week before Christmas, my shopping is barely done, we're moving in to our new house, and our tree isn't even up. I hesitate to add to my long list of unfinished projects. In uncertain times like these I resign myself to make do with recipes of old and turn to face the cashier, yet, a flash of green catches my eye. I quickly snatch up the last copy of the *Martha Stewart Weddings*.

Flipping through, I find an article on bouquets and see that half of the eight featured contain sweet peas. I've already had one bride request sweet peas as the feature flower in her May wedding. Now, I can envision increased demand from my florists as well. So buy your seeds, get your beds prepped and read on for a summary of my lecture on Sweet Peas from the 2007 National Conference in Raleigh.

10 Tips for Sweet Pea Success in the Mid-Atlantic

1. Select early-flowering varieties and PLANT EARLY!

Sweet peas require specific daylengths to flower. Early-flowering Elegance and Winter Sunshine series require only 10 hours daylength to flower, while the more fragrant Spencer varieties require 12 hours. The difference can be a few weeks of cooler spring temperatures, not easy to come by in a region known for its unpredictable spring heat. Look for new early-flowering varieties on the market as most breeding efforts in the U.S. and abroad are focused in this area. We start seeds in late December/early January and transplant in our hoop in February. If there are tricks to growing sweet peas successfully outdoors in our region, we have not figured them out yet, but will keep trying.



2. Dig deep!

Be sure to select a site in full to partial sun; some afternoon high shade may be beneficial when temps soar in spring. Amend well with organic matter, plant in well-drained soil and provide good air circulation.

3. Protect your investment.

Early-season pests can destroy a crop faster than you can build a trellis. Before you start your seeds, have strategies in place to protect your seeds/shoots/plants from slugs, mice and birds.

4. The seed prep debate.

Some say to soak the seed overnight, some say nick the seed coat (a fingernail clipper is easiest), some say both nick and soak together, some say just plant as is. Trial and error is your best solution here as each seed-starting situation may be different, be it cold frame, greenhouse, heat mat, or other. We've had good success with soaking seeds, but have lost many to root rot/overwatering so I will modify my watering schedule this year to prevent loss.

5. Tray seeding and growing on.

Sow seeds in larger (72+) deep cells or multiple seeds per 4" pot, 1" deep, in soilless potting mix. Cover with newspaper, place in cool area. Seeds germinate at 55-65F in 10-21 days. Bottom watering can reduce risk of disease to young plants. Grow on at cool temps, 50F. Be sure to keep soil evenly moist. Thin multi-plant cells to one strong seedling when 2 sets of true leaves appear. Pinch at 3-pair leaves to promote lateral branching, then transplant. Bamboo stake if needed.

6. Direct seeding or transplanting.

Space rows 12-24" apart, in-row spacing at 2-3" apart, 1-2" deep. Thin/transplant to 6-8". Plants tolerate light frosts, protect from hard freezes. We found that a heavy organic mulch (6-8") cools roots and makes for happier plants.

7. Trellising and training.

We construct our support trellises from tall t-posts and two layers of vertically hung Hortonova support netting fastened with zip-ties. Whatever method you choose, make sure netting is taut. Young plants generally find trellis when the structures are erected early in the seedlings' development, however, you may have to coax/attach stray

shoots. As our season is so short we choose to grow our sweet peas with a natural trellising method or "on the bush". This means plants are allowed to grow naturally with no removal of lateral branches.

## 8. Fertilizing.

Provide early balanced liquid feeding (20-20-20), switching to low nitrogen "Blossom Booster" as plant matures. Mulching and side dressing with composted manure work well too.

## 9. Check the label.

Sweet peas are very sensitive. Whatever method of pest and/or disease control you use make sure it labeled safe to use on sweet peas. Control of pests is essential as aphids and thrips love sweet peas, can destroy plants and flowers and transmit viruses. Use sterile media and fungicides for controlling root rots.

## 10. Harvest time and marketing.

Sweet peas can be cut when 2-3 buds are swollen and showing color, up to when half the cluster is open. Cut directly into floral preservative, stems can be stored for up to 24 hours in a 35F cooler. Vase life is short: 3-5 days. Use of ethylene inhibitors (STS, Ethylbloc) definitely improves vase life significantly. As we are selling most of our stems to consumers we find that selling with clusters more open is most attractive and appealing to buyers. We market them in short, flared, heavy-bottomed glass vases at market, to both array their beautiful stems and help them compete in our stand next to other longer-lasting spring blooms.

If you decide to grow sweet peas this season here are some great resources:

### Specialty and Commercial Seed Suppliers:

[www.reneesgarden.com](http://www.reneesgarden.com)  
[www.fredgloekner.com](http://www.fredgloekner.com)  
[www.lathyrus-seed.com](http://www.lathyrus-seed.com)  
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[www.fragrantgarden.com](http://www.fragrantgarden.com)  
[www.enchantingsweetpeas.com](http://www.enchantingsweetpeas.com)

### Pest & Disease Information:

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/t280113211.html>

### Postharvest:

<http://ss.jircas.affrc.go.jp/english/publication/jarq/32-4/ichimura/ichimura2.htm>

### Planting Guidelines:

[http://www.ngb.org/gardening/fact\\_sheets/fact\\_details.cfm?factID=17](http://www.ngb.org/gardening/fact_sheets/fact_details.cfm?factID=17)



## SOUTHEAST

Susan Wright

Shady Grove Gardens & Nursery

Here at the Gardens we are always trying a few new things. Recently, we tried our new Holiday Farmers' Market. Which didn't go so well as it was ~25F, windy and we were breaking 3" chunks of ice out of our spot. Yes, this is the South. But we've proven to ourselves not to depend on any one market. Even the Saturday before Thanksgiving can be a weather and sales loser.

On the woody cut flower front, we are trying once again to protect our 60-some blue *Hydrangeas macrophyllas* from too much cold and I believe even more importantly, temperature swings that lead to early leaf-out. We are also debating our treatment of *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry holly). We usually wait for orders before we cut, to keep our labor cost down. But we are observing that super-hard freezes (for us), 20F and below make the berries softer and shorter-lived. Usually we wait until a freeze drops the leaves to harvest the bulk of the stems, but a surprise November night of 8F has us reconsidering.

For the real bottom-line on these questions I'm anxiously waiting for my copy of Lane Greer and John Dole's new book; *Woody Cut Stems for Growers and Florists: Production and Post-Harvest Handling of Branches for Flowers, Fruit and Foliage*. It is available through the ASCFG.

I've also been working on a small project to get ASCFG members our own group on [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com). This is a free website for photo sharing. Anyone can join and post photos of their own, join public groups, looks at others' photos and make comments. We've set up a private group for ASCFG members. That means you are invited to join and the group doesn't show up on any of the searches. I'm hoping it will become a visual way for all our members to interact and share ideas. You will be able to upload any photos you have on your computer or camera. Just follow the simple instructions. Here's what you need to do.

- Make sure the ASCFG has a working email for you and we are in your address book so mail doesn't end up in your spam filter.

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- Join the Bulletin Board if you haven't already. If you need help with setup, contact Judy Laushman, she'll take care of you.
- Start looking for announcements on the Bulletin Board regarding the ASCFG flickr group.
- Shortly after that, by mid-February you should receive an invitation to the Flickr.com ASCFG group. So check that spam filter.
- Make sure to answer the invite and follow the steps to join the ASCFG flickr group.
- In the meantime, you can join [www.Flickr.com](http://www.Flickr.com) and start putting on photos of your own. These can be marked public or private depending on your needs. You can invite friends and family, make comments and anything the social networks generally let you do. When we get the ASCFG group up and running it is very simple to move your photos over to our group. Or you can just join our group.

I'm looking forward to seeing other members' flowers, farms, innovations, bugs, and floral arrangements. Remember to start checking the Bulletin Board for messages regarding this new benefit. And please, if you don't already access the BB, you should start this winter. It's a great forum and archive of questions and answers about how to grow cut flowers.

Here's thinking warm thoughts until spring.



**MIDWEST**  
*Quinton Tschetter*  
 Tschetter's Flowers

As the incoming Director for the Midwest Region, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the vast body of information and knowledge that is the ASCFG. It is a small repayment for the information that we have gleaned for our business. We are also grateful to Suzy Neessen for her years of service to the Midwest Region and her willingness to tutor us in our early years of development.

Carolyn and I came from farm backgrounds, so it was natural for us to 'work the dirt'. We live on a small farm of 20 acres, one mile east of Oskaloosa, Iowa on a main highway, 60 miles southeast of Des Moines.

We started this venture in 1993 as a dried flower business, growing herbs and flowers that were easy to dry. By the fall of 1994, I had remodeled our 1850's peg and beam style barn into a retail store. The name Harmonic Scents was chosen to reflect our love of music and flowers. We specialized in exquisite dried arrangements, wreaths, swags as well of bunches of stems. It wasn't until 2001 that we started selling fresh cut flowers as Tschetter's Flowers. As we were approaching retirement age, we decided to take the plunge to cuts, especially since we had

the land and the potential to build hoopouses. We also had a reliable source of water that I plumbed to cover the land on which we were growing flowers. We then sacrificed our two-car garage, that I converted to a floral design room, with a large attached walk-in cooler.

The best thing that has happened to our business was the ASCFG. A chance trip to the 2002 Midwest Regional Meeting

at Mimo Davis' WildThang Farms in Missouri introduced us to the organization. That was the beginning of a huge learning curve. The resources and knowledge, that is the ASCFG, have transformed the way we farm and do business.

Another big step was taken in 2003 when we decided to apply to sell flowers at the Des Moines Farmer's Market, a Saturday morning market where vendors have to be approved and then can sell only part-time the first year. We received an A+ for market presentation, quality cut flowers and educating our customers on the care of our products (more about that in a later issue). It was during that spring that a reporter stopped by our stand. She then asked permission to write an article about us. After extensive photo shoots and interviews on our farm, we were featured on the front page of the Iowa Agriculture section of the *Des Moines Register*, "the paper Iowa depends on". To say the least, that article "put us on the map."

...And the rest of the story: In 2004, Carolyn retired from teaching public school and my former life in construction was filled with keeping up with flowers and building projects. Our growing capacity increased to near 5 acres and we added 6 hoophouses. Currently we sell to 30 florists, full time at the Des Moines Farmer's Market and provide floral services for weddings and funerals. We also sell and deliver business subscriptions to a large clientele (our local form of advertising), as well as selling locally out of our Flower Shop.

Since we are "retired" or "tired" as the case might be, we are closed from November to January while we re-group and travel to see our families. We still love Harmonic Scents, our blending of flowers and music. We are still employed at Central United Methodist where I am the choir director and Carolyn is the organist/pianist. We also teach private lessons out of our music studio. And we love dirt, flowers and our ASCFG family.

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## SOUTH-CENTRAL

*Josie Crowson*

Josie's Fresh Flowers

I am honored to be the new Director for the South-Central Region. It's a little daunting to be following Vicki Stamback in this job, but I'll do my best. Our first order of business is to make plans for our Regional Meeting. I'd like to have that meeting in Nacogdoches ("the oldest town in Texas"), perhaps in late May or early June. We can tour my farm (that won't take long), the Stephen F. Austin State University Arboretum and tap some great speakers from their horticulture department. But you are allowed to come only if you can pronounce "Nacogdoches" (You can call me if you need help meeting this requirement.) I'll soon be contacting South-Central members for feedback and suggestions about the meeting.

Buckle up—we may be in for a bumpy ride over the next year or two. I'm writing this just after the Thanksgiving holiday, when each day brings worse economic news. I'm hoping that by the time you receive this, things will be looking up—but frankly, I don't think that's likely. So how can a flower grower cope with tough economic times?

First, I think we have to do a great job promoting our products and ourselves. At the 2007 National Conference, Joe Caputi and Charlotte Morford gave a presentation entitled "Developing Your Farm's Image." Build a strong image, they advised: hire a professional designer to develop your logo, something that really communicates who you are and that makes a strong, memorable impression. Put it everywhere—buckets, signs, business cards—and get a website. I took this advice to heart. A local graphic artist helped with my logo and business card, and then I hired another professional, Joe Caputi, to design my website ([www.josiesfreshflowers.com](http://www.josiesfreshflowers.com)). These were some of the best business decisions I have made.

Soon after my website became operational, I got a call from the editor of a new local women's magazine. She was searching for story ideas for their first issue and came across my website. That led to a story on me and my flower farm being published in that inaugural issue. The magazine was distributed free to beauty shops, restaurants, bookstores, banks, etc. all over East Texas, and people did read it. The publicity yielded new customers and new contacts, plus I came to be known as "The Flower Lady of Nacogdoches". At first, that just made me laugh. But then I realized that moniker is a pretty good marketing tool in itself.

This experience was a revelation to me. I'm a pretty reserved person, so self-promotion didn't come naturally. But I found out it can pay off, and now I am obsessed with thinking up new, creative ways to promote my business. Of course, some of this takes money, which is hard to part with in tough economic times. For 2009, I'm planning to advertise in the magazine that carried my story. Now that I see what a wide distribution it has,



and how well it's read, this seems like a good use of advertising dollars. Also, as a member of the local Chamber of Commerce, I can put a flyer in a monthly Chamber mailing to 2000 or more businesses for a moderate price. Maybe these efforts won't yield the results I want, but they are marketing opportunities that seem worth a try. I also welcome opportunities to give presentations and tours to local garden clubs and Master Gardener groups. I've found that these efforts have yielded many new customers.

A second way to deal with a trying economy is to find new outlets for your flowers. If you can't sell your entire product at the farmers' market or to florists, try some other avenues. One that worked for Karen Hanley of Stork Road Farm in New York State (and that I copied) is the bucket subscription. Karen has successfully sold bucket subscriptions for the past 8 years, and 70 percent of her customers return. Customers get a bucket of flowers weekly for a set number of weeks during the season. They can choose the subscription length that they want—4, 6, or 8 weeks, for example—and you can make adjustments for weeks they will be on vacation. The advantages are that you get cash up front, like a CSA, and *you* decide what goes in the bucket. After getting some wonderful advice from Karen, I tried bucket subscriptions this past year, and they were a great success. I delivered flowers to the customer's home each Friday (workable in a small town) or they could pick up their flowers at the Saturday farmers' market. I'm hoping to expand this service in 2009. Beyond its direct advantages, the subscriptions generate loyal customers who order flowers for birthdays, parties and other special events. I followed Karen's lead in advertising this service on my website and creating a brochure that I hand out at the farmers' market and elsewhere. But like Karen's, most of my new customers come by word-of-mouth. To tap those potential customers who complain that they can't arrange flowers, I'm planning to team up with a local event florist to give some flower-arranging workshops at my farm.

You can also get some good publicity (plus some cash) by providing flowers to local restaurants. The restaurants to which I sell allow me to keep my business cards at the front desk, and

diners do ask about the flowers and take the cards. The new owner at the historic downtown hotel & convention center is a great supporter who loves the idea of buying local produce and flowers. During the growing season, she buys flowers weekly for all the dining tables.

But do be careful what you try. Two years ago I started making Mason jar arrangements for the farmers' market, thinking this would be a great way to use shorter flowers. Just a simple arrangement in a pint jar, but people loved them—and they loved the \$5 price. I also offered a \$.50 discount on their next purchase if the customer returned their jar. The demand for these jars just exploded—that was the good news. The bad news was that it took all Friday afternoon to make these little arrangements. They are cute, just not very profitable.

These are just some ideas that I have tried or plan to try. Although they may not be appropriate for your particular business, I'm hoping this discussion will encourage you to think about new ways to promote your business and distribute your flowers. To remain successful in difficult economic times may require that we growers be especially creative.



**WEST**  
*Brenda Smith*  
Smith & Smith Farms

2009 is going to be an interesting year for sure. Do you know what you want? If not, take the time to make your list now. Vicki Stamback got me into this line of thinking last year and what a difference a shift in perception makes. Remember, it's what you want, not what you don't want.

Opportunities abound this spring in the West Region and I hope that all ASCFG members will take advantage of the educational/social offerings before we all get tired in the middle of the season. Coming right up are the California Spring Trials. This is the second annual West Regional Meeting at the Spring Trials because we realized what a treasure of information the seed companies have available during what is essentially their open house. We (myself and our seed company hosts, Bonnie Marquardt, Kathy Cron and Jeannine Bogard) want to strongly encourage everyone to join us for this special, specialty cut flower day to be held on Friday, April 3. We start in Salinas and end up in Gilroy. Check the ASCFG website for details and just make plans to attend. Among what you will find at this day is all the new varieties and tons of technical information on growing cut flowers, exchange information with plant breeders – tell them what you are looking for in cut flowers, and much more.



Another opportunity you might be interested in is on April 24-25, Vicki Stamback and I are going to be holding a cut flower seminar for people interested in developing a cut flower business. It being held at Western Nevada College in Fallon, Nevada. Friday will be an intensive day of classroom work; Saturday will be hands-on in the field at Smith & Smith Farms in Dayton. This is an exciting collaboration and it has come about due to a grant received by the college from Specialty Crop funds made available to states to promote and enhance specialty crop farming. If you want more information on this seminar, contact me at [smithsmithfarms@aol.com](mailto:smithsmithfarms@aol.com) or (541) 573-1454. You know it will be good with Vicki being involved.

I wanted to end my column on a not-so-flower-related subject, but I am finding a way to make it flower related. I have been participating in a series of draft horse workshops this winter from a wonderful teamster – Doc Hammill of East Glacier, Montana. He has come out of the hills of Montana to winter in western Oregon where the workshops are being held. ([www.dochammill.com](http://www.dochammill.com), in case you might be interested). Since we have homework for the workshops and I have homework for my *Quarterly* column, I thought I would get by in the 'two for one' category this time.

You all probably have seen or read or at least flipped through the books entitled *Everything I Need to Know I Learned from \_\_\_\_\_*. Well, I'm here with a new title: *Everything I Need to Know I learned from Draft Horses*. These draft horse workshops are really about life lessons as much as they are learning about driving and working and having draft horses in my life. The horses themselves leave me with so much admiration and I find myself working so hard just to be worthy of them. Here are just some of the life lessons I have learned so far:

1. Set your intention for success. Think only of having positive experiences and visualize what success is going to look like with the horses. Why not do this for flower growing also?

2. Give a wake-up signal before you ask for anything from the horses. Does anyone or anything like to be jolted out of the blue

into doing something? Not usually. It is always important to let someone know you are going to ask something of them. Once again, if your intention is to start selling your flowers to florists – give them a heads-up of what you hope to do so they can be ready to buy from you when you walk in the door.

3. Support your horses so they can do their best. Do not set out with a specific goal to accomplish. It is more about the means than the end. If you support your horses you will often accomplish the goal. On the surface

you might question this one, but it speaks to not being so focused on the end goal ("I've got to this field disced today." or "I've got to get 4000 transplants in by the end of the week.") but focusing on the process to get to that goal. If anything, it makes life more enjoyable, right?

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4. Have contact with your lines but use as little pressure as necessary. This speaks to all relationships where the person or horse knows you are there for them. In the flower business it's not all growing; in fact when it comes right down to it, it might not even be half of the learning curve. The people factor is crucial too. A team of horses needs to know I am back there and have control of the lines, but with as little pressure as is necessary. Again, I think this is helpful in our day-to-day relationships with our employees or any relationship in the flower business.

5. Your internal message is louder than your external message. Doc Hammill demonstrated this lesson clearly when the group of us students were taking turns plowing with Raye. She was standing and Doc reminded us that we are energy and we have energy and horses can pick up on that energy (positive or negative). So he told Laura, who was holding the lines, to not give Raye a cue but to mentally picture her taking a step forward (of course the 6 or so of us standing around also started picturing the horse taking a step) and sure enough it took maybe a minute for Raye to take a step forward). Be aware that your thoughts affect you and your day-to-day interactions. If you want positive things to happen, start by thinking that way.

6. Be clear in your messages. Who doesn't want a clear message? Conflicting messages are difficult in all relationships – business or personal or pets or draft horses.

7. And finally, if things are not going the way you wished them to go, go back to kindergarten, if necessary. Go back to the basics, do what you know you can do (with your team of horses or your flower growing).

Hopefully this might be helpful to you this growing season. I'm thinking all those positive thoughts for you all to have a great flower growing year.



## NORTHWEST

*Jerianne Sabin*

Bindweed Farm

We are enjoying an exceptional November with enormous skies, bright and blue, lending a light so intense in its autumnal slant it highlights the deep cocoa furrows of our sleeping farm. The willows stand empty of leaves, deepening in saturated wine hues and the viburnum are bare, stripped clean by flocks of migrating birds. It is quiet and still as I wish for snow to cover my rose beds.

Bindweed Farm has a unique niche market—two resort areas, separated by hundreds of miles and a couple of mountain ranges. Both are popular destinations for weddings and events, so growing unique, difficult to ship, high quality, fragile but fragrant roses was a no-brainer. We deliver once a week to savvy clients who understand that these flowers are “event” roses—unique, richly scented, fleeting but fabulous. Our roses are in demand for high-end events, parties and weddings because they fill the entire venue with fragrance and visual impact. So much more than just a flower, roses are sentimental, romantic symbols of abundance and well-being.



To fill our demands we chose a dozen varieties, ordering twenty-five plants of each. Our plan was to disbud the entire first year but I could not resist and let a few buds bloom. Excited by our first blossoms I took a small sample bucket with me on a delivery and sold every stem. Once our clients got a taste of these beauties, we had a demand our fledgling plants were barely vigorous enough to fill.

Even though we planted “ever-blooming” roses, they bloom in waves or flushes, the first usually occurring mid-June. Although the plants continue to produce we get a second big flush



'Falstaff'

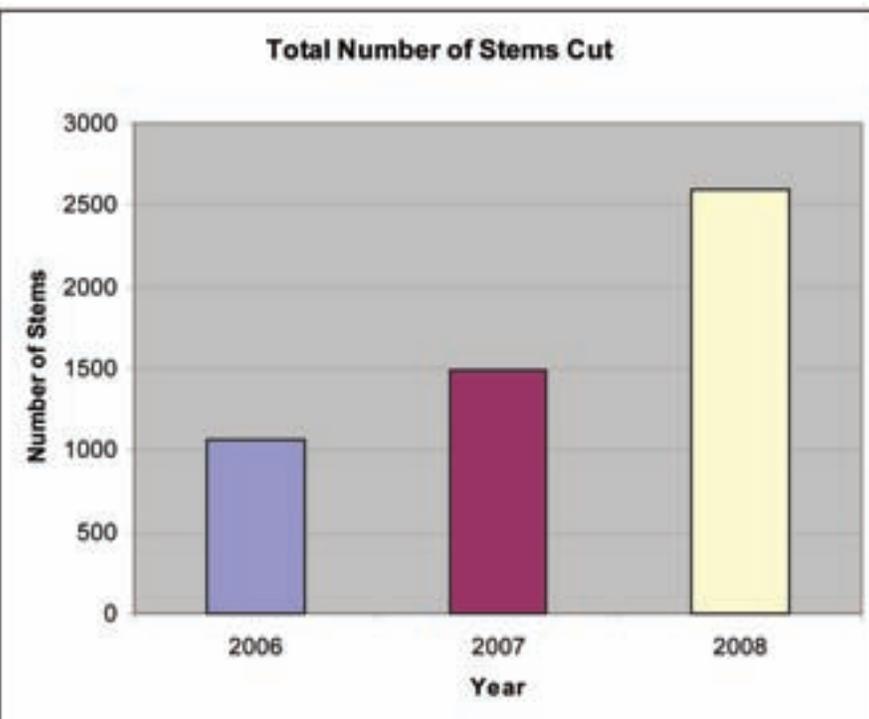
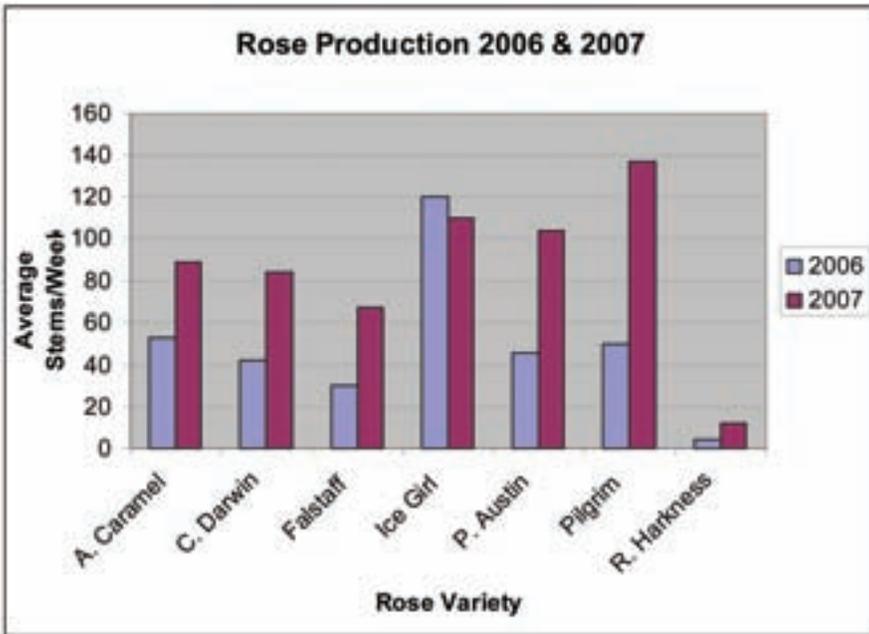
approximately three weeks after the first wave, and if the weather holds, another smaller wave before the first frost. We were surprised by the number of blooms our first year but more amazed when the numbers doubled the following year. As part of our ASCFG Grower Grant I kept records on the numbers of stems cut the first and second year. (See chart number one—'Ice Girl' doubled its production as well in the second year but I quit cutting it due to a problem with thrips.) By the third year we were producing more than we could sell and I began cutting to order. In the second chart the numbers for 2006 and 2007 are the number of stems produced and cut but the number for 2008 is actually the number of stems sold.

Each variety has its charms and challenges; in our presentation at the 2008 National Conference we focused on our favorites: 'Charles Darwin', 'Falstaff', 'Pat Austin', 'The Pilgrim', and 'Rosemary Harkness', 'Constance Spry', 'Benjamin Britten'—all David Austin roses, and 'Caramel Antike' and 'Fantasia Mondiale', Kordes roses.

'Pat Austin' is my favorite rose in the garden; it is a gorgeous plant—deep green shiny leaves, loads of big apricot blooms that fill the air with scent. Unfortunately this beauty is my most fleeting rose, lasting a short two days peak, three days maximum in the vase. Named for David Austin's wife, this rose is a lush, deeply cupped apricot rose, blushing to rose with a heady scent on 15-18 inch strong, straight stems. It is best cut at new bud stage with full color showing and green sepals laid back. If you are using it within two days it can be cut in the soft bud stage or even after the first petals are unfurling. This rose will fade and continue to open in the cooler so I cut to order the day before my deliveries. My biggest rose client uses only this rose for events and arranges it tightly in the vase so the heavy blooms are supported—insurance against any limp heads.

'Rosemary Harkness' is very similar in color to the 'Pat Austin' rose, with pinker and peachier tones. It is a semi-double fragrant beauty with very attractive shiny chocolate green foliage on 12-14 inch stems. Best cut in the soft bud stage with some unfurling, this rose has a better vase life, four to six days, holding well in the cooler. I often use it to fill out an order or to complete a bunch of 'Pat Austin' roses. Similar in color and scent, the color variations and mix of shapes create interest and complement one another.

One of Shakespeare's favorites, Falstaff is a wise and generous character, full of life. The 'Falstaff' rose is deep raspberry colored, with a generous scent and a good vase life. It is shallow cupped with loads of petals that swirl towards the center on 15-18 inch stems. It is best cut at the soft bud stage, but may be cut fully open if using the next day. With a proper twenty-four hour conditioning in the cooler this rose will look beautiful



for five to seven days. ‘Falstaff’ is my favorite cutting rose.

‘The Pilgrim’ is Bindweed’s “white” rose. In our hot dry climate this yellow rose blooms white, opening to a buttery yellow center. On Erin Benzakein’s farm in the much cooler Northwest it is a clear yellow bloom. It is a smaller rose, often blooming in huge sprays with three to five branching arms and tons of blossoms. Almost every stem has two to five buds with each opening on 20-24 inch stems. The blooms form fragrant rosettes with high petals counts. Cut in the bud stage; I look for a swelling bud with some slight unfurling. It will continue to open in the cooler until full blown. Properly cut and conditioned ‘The Pilgrim’ will offer three to four days peak vase performance. Erin loves this amazing rose for its productivity, long life and fragrance.

Another of Erin’s favorite Austin roses is ‘Benjamin Britten’. Uniquely colored, ‘Britten’ is a warm red touched with orange that Erin describes as ‘unbelievable’. It is very productive and beautifully shaped, deeply cupped, opening to a slightly cupped rosette. The fragrance is one of a kind, much like warm fresh raspberries.

‘Constance Spry’ was David Austin’s first introduction in 1961. It flowers only once a year but Erin’s two large bushes produce “hundreds” of blooms in the spring. They’re a clear pink, smell divine and last very well in the vase. It blooms with the fragrant old-fashioned honeysuckle vine on her arbor and together they are a showstopping combination.

If I were allowed to grow only one rose it would be ‘Charles Darwin’—it is a complete and pure pleasure, my favorite rose. In early summer its blooms vary between ivory and pink-blushed pearl, in late summer the blooms deepen, becoming almost caramel; it is my champagne rose.

The blooms are large and full, shallow cupped and elegant, loaded with deeply scented petals. The first blooms are side shoots on 15-20 inch



stems, the second wave of blossoms come from the center of the plant on thicker, stronger stems reaching 22-26 inches. It is best cut at mid-bud stage with the first petal unfurling. Cut buds will open, with some opening evident in the cooler. I do not recommend holding this rose in the cooler for more than three days as the



outside petals begin to look “tired”, showing signs of wilt as it opens in the vase. If cut to order with a 24-hour conditioning period in the cooler, this rose gives four to five days in the vase.

‘Caramel Antike’ is our “work-horse” rose and Erin’s favorite Kordes rose.



Being a Kordes rose it was bred as a cut flower and is as durable as it is beautiful. Aptly named, it blooms antique ivory to butter yellow to deep caramel late in the summer. It is an old-fashioned rosette with a high petal count on 16-18 inch stems. Best cut at mid bud stage with some petal unfurling, it will withstand three to four days in the cooler and still give five to seven days in the vase. This is a tremendous flower, beautiful in shape, long lived, but alas, no scent. Because it is similar in color and shape to the ‘Darwin’ rose they make the perfect pair—‘Darwins’ for scent and ‘Caramels’ for longevity.

Another noteworthy Kordes rose is ‘Fantasia Mondiale’. All the Kordes roses we grow are disease resistant, hearty and vigorous growers. They produce almost indestructible flowers on long, strong stems. ‘Fantasia’ is extremely productive and beautiful—large and tea-rose shaped each bloom ranges from pink to coral to fuchsia.

Years ago, in Bindweed’s infancy, I dreamed of growing roses. Applying for and receiving a research grant from the ASCFG made it a reality and three seasons later, a profitable enterprise. These delicate roses work for us because we can grow, cut and deliver with quality a fragile product that does not transport long distances well, giving us an advantage over the larger companies that ship flowers into our markets. We are in demand and viable in part because of our roses. Understanding the challenges involved and the fragile nature of these roses you can better decide if they might be a good addition for your farm.

In conclusion, I am reminded of a few wise words from my sister. Prior to my first beading lesson she paused, hands poised on the catch of an enormous treasure trove of beads, she caught my eye and warned me, “...beading is not a hobby, it is an obsession.” So dear reader, with my hands hovering above the keys I issue a similar caution—roses are not a hobby, they are an obsession.



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This grant was supported by the ASCFG Research Fund.

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## Outdoor Kordes Roses Trials in an East Coast Soil and Climate

*Tom Parker, Parkerhouse Nursery, Inc., Mays Landing, New Jersey*

### Introduction

I am really excited about growing roses for cut flowers and having this opportunity to share my results with you, my colleagues and fellow cut flower growers. First, I must acknowledge Ralph Thurston of Bindweed Farm because, thanks to his article in the Spring 2007 issue of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, I began to think about growing roses for cuts. I have had difficulty, disappointment and failure with the English type roses (I presently have only one survivor) and was eager to try something different. So I applied for and was fortunate to be awarded an ASCFG Grower Grant. With the encouragement and generosity of Gary Pellett of Newflora LLC in Oregon, I obtained ten bareroot plants of eleven different varieties and was on my way.

The Kordes Freelanders Cutting Garden rose collection was developed for outdoor cut flower production in Europe and North America. My goals were to test the productivity of the Kordes roses as both cut flowers and container plants, in a climate and soil representative of many areas on the East Coast. I also wanted to document vase life, stem length, selling price and customer preference. There was no control group, so there's no way to scientifically evaluate the effectiveness of my growing methods. Nevertheless, every Kordes rose I planted survived and thrived.

### Climate and Soil

According to the 1990 USDA Atlantic County Soil Survey, the Evesboro Series consists of nearly level, grayish-white, sandy, excessively drained, and strongly

to extremely acidic (pH <4.5) soil types of low natural fertility. In the old Russian system of soil classification, such a soil would be called a "podzol," a common forest soil found in vast areas of Europe and North America. In fact, extreme cases of podzolic soils produce pygmy forests; examples can be found in the pine barrens of southern New Jersey as well as in Mendocino County in northern coastal California.

The climate in this part of south Jersey, USDA Zone 6B, is characterized by awfully humid summers and cool to cold winters. Last year, I recorded 1F in the winter and 99F this summer. Even though we are near the coast, our climate is more of a continental type with extremes in temperature, as the shaded, sandy soil does not hold heat well. We are fortunate to have abundant rainfall (average 44 inches) and vast supplies of groundwater, although the water has a high iron content. Average snowfall is usually less than 20 inches. Though the ground may freeze some years, frost-action potential is not a worry.

### The Nursery

Parkerhouse Nursery is a small, owner-operated nursery. Located at the dizzying height of 19 feet above sea level and about twenty 20 miles inland from Atlantic City, the ten-plus acre nursery site is in a mixed oak-pine forested region. The deer-fenced growing area is about a half-plus acre of intensely planted cuts. Expansion is planned. Environmentally-friendly growing methods are used to produce cut flowers and containerized perennials, with an eye to continued future cultivation.

### Materials and Methods

#### The Roses

Kordes roses are selected hybrid tea seedlings grafted onto either *R. canina* 'Inermis' or *R. corymbifera* 'Laxa' rootstock. You can see photos and production methods at [www.kordes-rosen.com](http://www.kordes-rosen.com) and [www.freiland-rosen.de/html/wissenwertes.html](http://www.freiland-rosen.de/html/wissenwertes.html). Click on the link "Eine Rose entsteht"

The Freelanders outdoor cut flower shrubs are:

'Antique Caramel' - large buff yellow 'cabbage' type flowers with a slight fragrance.

'Buxom Beauty' - very large (up to 6 inches) hot pink, fragrant flowers.

'Fantasia Mondiale' - long-lasting apricot-pink blooms on very long stems.

'Ice Girl' - initially small, white highly fragrant blooms opening to 2-2½ inches in diameter.

'Magma' - yellow flowers with orange tips (and a hint of pink) and one of the longest vase lives.

'Masquerade' - pale pink- and cream-colored flowers with curved petals.

'Mondiale' - long-lasting pink blooms on very long stems.

'Pinquin' - greenish white flowers that fade to pure white.

'Red Queen' - deep, rich red flowers—the first to bloom.



‘Magma’



‘Masquerade’



‘Red Queen’

The spray rose is:

‘Typhoon’ - orange red and yellow flowers.

The rose hip producer is:

‘Coffee Fruitilia’ - sprays of salmon-pink flowers that develop into small, dark red hips.

### Site Preparation

#### My Topsoil Fiasco

Once the area was cleared of trees, the surface was raked smooth. Although I gave the clearing contractor specific instructions to save and replace the thin layer of topsoil, it went out with the brush understory and trees that were reduced to chips. The lesson learned here was that I should have been on site to supervise the work.

Next, I contracted with a company to haul in compost, provided that the contractor first inspect the compost to determine that it was free of grubs. Then, without my prior approval, this contractor delivered topsoil and dumped it on my newly cleared field. He told me that he had seen many large grubs so he purchased beautiful, loamy topsoil for the same price of the compost. At this time, I was recovering from foot surgery and could not walk out to visually inspect the topsoil, so I went ahead and paid him to spread it. I then hired people to deep-till the area as I couldn’t find anyone with a tractor.

When I hobbled out to inspect the finished rototilling, I stood in amazement as I gazed at a field littered with broken glass, gravel, bricks, pieces of cement and asphalt along with other odds and ends. The men had actually broken their tiller by the time they had completed their work and weren’t too happy. It looked like an inner-city vacant lot, minus the graffiti!

I later found out that the topsoil contractor had been paid to haul away subsoil from an excavation for a new office building. Instead of dumping the soil, he delivered it to me and called it topsoil!

Yes my friends, we can all be scammed. What’s worse is that this guy was actually doing work for a colleague



‘Typhoon’



‘Coffee Fruitilia’



‘Antique Caramel’



at my “day job” and he had been recommended.

In any case, the soil delivered was still better than my native soil and when life hands you lemons, the best thing to do is make lemonade (although at the time a whiskey sour might have been a better choice). Every time I stopped and stooped to pick up another piece of glass, I stuck a pin into my imaginary voodoo doll.

Marching on, I raked the area into raised beds a section at a time. Dolomitic lime was added to adjust the pH to the 6.9 range and to provide calcium and magnesium. A 2-inch layer of leaf compost was applied, along with gypsum for additional calcium to facilitate soil structure. Osmocote, a time-release fertilizer, was added as well. I use the northern formulation (15-9-12) that contains micronutrients and lasts eight to nine months at 70F. Then the planting area was again rototilled and raked into finished beds.

It is recommended that spacing between raised bed rows be wide enough to accommodate equipment, including sufficient space at row ends to turn equipment. Since my machinery presently consists of a contractor’s wheelbarrow and a rake, I settled on 4’ spacing between rows.

### Planting the Roses

When the roses arrived, they were immediately unpacked and soaked overnight in a large plastic bin filled with water. I left the water running slowly so that oxygen was always present in the water. Any thin, dry, weak and/or crossing stems were removed and the canes were pruned to about 12” inches so that existing roots could support subsequent top growth. Also, canes were pruned to an outward-facing bud eye so that new growth will be outward, not into the center of the plant.

Next, the roses were planted single-file in a hedgelike fashion at approximately 2’ centers in raised beds that are about two 2’ wide. The centers of the rows have a slight depression to catch water. Make sure the bud union is planted up to two



inches below the soil surface and/or mulch.

### Fertilization and Irrigation

During the growing season, additional water soluble fertilizer (15-15-30) was applied twice using a hose with a siphoning device in a bucket of fertilizer solution. Also, two Osmocote fertilizer plugs were placed at opposite ends of the drip line of each rose plant (about 8-12” apart). The fertilizer plugs are really just Osmocote pills glued together.

This year, hand watering was done almost daily. Once the markets started up I just couldn’t find the time to finish laying the drip tape—I was too busy watering! Believe me when I say that next season all drip tape will be installed.

### Problems

I had to resort to spraying a solution of Sevin with insecticide soap twice to control Japanese beetles, cucumber beetles and thrips. I added sugar to one spraying to try to entice the thrips from the flowers to make contact with the Sevin, but this was not totally successful. Black spot and mildew were not problematic; although not rampant they did develop on ‘Typhoon’. ‘Ice Girl’ had the most trouble with Japanese beetles.

In addition, the lighter colored blooms on ‘Ice Girl’, ‘Fantasia Mondiale’ and ‘Pinquin’ developed brown, discolored petal edges. At one point, I could not sell ‘Ice Girl’ or ‘Pinquin’ because of the discoloration and many ‘Pinquin’ flower buds would not open at all.

One florist told me that the discoloration was due to the humidity, however, I think thrips played a part.

### Harvesting and Vase Life

When I harvest flowers, I’m actually deadheading. Every bloom ready to cut is picked and since I’m cutting almost every other day, few blooms are past their prime. Removing every flower is important in order to encourage new flower buds. Again, when harvesting it is wise to keep in mind correct pruning techniques. Cut

the stems on an angle slightly above a bud that faces outward so that the new stem will not grow towards the inside of the shrub. I cut as low as I can in order to get the longest stem possible, but I cut above at least two leaves that have five segmented leaflets so those lateral buds at the leaf's base can develop into another shoot. In addition, be sure to leave at least one-third of the shrub's foliage intact so the plant can produce enough food to sustain itself.

Several of the Freelandr shrub types have a tendency to form a spray. 'Antique Caramel', for example, is actually listed as a large spray type. However, I found that 'Ice Girl', 'Pinquin', and even 'Magma' had a tendency to form a group of buds at stem tips. Of course, if you want the largest flowers possible, you have to remove the smaller lateral buds. This adds to the time it takes to care for your plants.

Cuts were pulsed in Floralife Quick Dip for one second and then transferred to a solution with Floralife Crystal Clear. I should note that the first drink is with outside well water with a high iron content. Our inside house water is run through a water softener, which replaces the iron with sodium through cation exchange.

After harvest, the roses were counted and measured to the nearest quarter inch and the data recorded. Please see Figure 1 on next page, the data sheet for 'Fantasia Mondiale.'

I tried to duplicate the typical care that I imagined my customers would give their roses. Since I always give individual packs of Floralife Flower Food with each flower sale, this is the floral preservative I used. I didn't change the water every day, maybe every other day, and I didn't use any more flower food after the initial dose. Of course as we all know, the best vase life results from clean vases and changing the water every day, but that would be in a perfect world.

## Results

### Data Analysis

Figure 2 on next page displays the total stem count, average vase length and vase life for each rose trialed.

I cut a total of 633 stems from 80 plants barely one year old. The most productive shrubs were the highly fragrant 'Ice Girl' with 95 stems, and the buff yellow 'Antique Caramel' producing 93 stems on eight plants each.

Overall, the average stem length was a little over 17 inches and the average vase life was almost 9 days. The longest stems (20.9") were from the greenish-white 'Pinquin'. The salmon-pink 'Mondiale', with average stem lengths of 19.5" followed closely behind, along with the apricot-pink 'Fantasia Mondiale' (19.1"), white 'Ice Girl' (18.6") and pale pink and cream 'Masquerade' (18.4"), respectively.

'Mondiale', with its salmon-pink flowers on long stems, had the longest vase life, 12 days on average. 'Magma's' bicolor yellow flowers with orange tips and a hint of pink also had a long vase life, averaging 10 days. With the

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exception of the very large, fragrant hot pink flowers of 'Buxom Beauty', all roses trialed had a vase life of a week or more.

The 33 'Coffee Fruitilia' stems were all harvested on November 19, 2008. To my eye their color is a deep, rich red mixed with a dark burnt umber, a darker red than either winterberry (*Ilex verticillata* 'Sparkle Berry') or American holly (*Ilex opaca*), and 'Coffee Fruitilia' has a full, branching inflorescence. While these first cuts are short (average length of 9.9" ), I can see them being bundled and used as a holly berry substitute for holiday wreaths. We'll use them for this since we don't have a market for them at this time of the year. Be sure to harvest rose hips before the first hard frost.





'Ice Girl'

### Marketing Individual Stems

Our roses were sold at two farmers' markets and a retail produce outlet store. We didn't sell to any florists this year, but to one wholesaler.

We sold thirty (3 bunches of 10) of the spray rose 'Typhoon' to a wholesaler for \$0.80 a stem. We were lucky to have this outlet at a time when the roses were really producing and only one of our farmers' markets was open. The reason the wholesaler purchased them at such a high price, however, was because his regular supplier didn't have any spray roses available. This was a one-time-only wholesale transaction because the retail florists who bought them didn't like the fact that the sprays of flowers did not all open at the same time.

At the farmers' markets we sell by the stem and make bouquets on demand. I sold stems for \$1.50 each and often ran specials such as four for \$5.00, which brought the individual stem price down to \$1.25. Single stems of roses did not sell at the retail produce outlet store at all even though we sold other flowers as single stems.

I wasn't able to keep track of every stem sold at the farmers' markets. Often I'm so busy I can barely keep up, especially if I'm alone. So, more stems were sold than documented and many roses were used in bouquets for our retail produce market account. In addition, countless smaller stems wound up in bouquets throughout our home and with friends. In any case, I estimate that we sold at least \$113.75 roses at \$1.25 per stem.

ROSE DATA 2008												
VARIETY:	FANTASIA MONDIALE											
Source:	NewFlora											
Comment:	Flowers suffered from petal blight - the brown of the petal edges.											
	Amount Purchased: 10 @ \$4.90											
Harvest Date	8-Jun	11-Jun	16-Jun	4-Jul	19-Jul	29-Jul	10-Aug	22-Aug	4-Sep	11-Sep	24-Sep	1-Oct
Stem Lengths	20.50	18.50	19.00	14.25	15.50	17.00	14.25	17.25	23.50	18.00	31.50	20.00
	20.25	18.50	17.00	15.00	16.75		13.50	13.75	22.00	21.00	23.00	22.50
	20.50	25.00	16.50	14.50	19.00		14.00	15.00	19.00	25.25	27.25	
	16.00	21.00	21.75	17.25	19.50		16.00	19.00	24.00	18.25		
	13.25	19.50	17.75	18.50			16.50	23.00				
		18.25		18.50			15.25					
Stem Count	5	6	5	6	4	1	6	5	4	4	3	
Average Length	15.92	19.79	18.40	16.33	17.69	17.00	14.92	17.60	22.13	20.63	27.25	21.25
Time												
Discard Date		20-Jun	21-Jun	11-Jul					14-Sep			
Vase Life		9	5	7					10			
# Stems Sold					1		2					
Price					\$1.50		\$1.25					
Time												
GRAND TOTALS												
Total Stem Count	49											
Final Average Length	19.07											
Average Vase Life	8											
Total Stems Sold	3											
Total Time Spent												

Figure 1

ROSE DATA SUMMARY <sup>1</sup>							
	Name	Color	Fragrance (*slight)	Total Stem Count	Final Average Length (inches)	Average Vase Life (days)	Total Stems Sold
1	Antique Carmel	Buff yellow	*	93	14.8	7	16
2	Buxom Beauty	Lavender pink	**	51	16.0	6	3
3	Fantasia Mondiale	Apricot pink	*	49	19.1	8	6
4	Ice Girl	White	***	95	18.6	9	14
5	Magma	Yellow with orange tips		28	12.8	10	8
6	Masquerade	Pale pink & cream		61	18.4	9	12
7	Mondiale	Salmon pink	*	50	19.5	12	9
8	Pinguin	Whitish green		80	20.9	9	11
9	Red Queen	Red (bright)		69	16.6	8	12
10	Typhoon	Orange red, yellow spray		57	16.3	9	35 <sup>3</sup>
11	Coffee Fruitalia <sup>2</sup>	Red hips (small)		33	9.9	14	0
	Grand Totals			633	17.3	8.7	91

Figure 2

<sup>1</sup> Data is based on eight (8) shrubs for each named variety.

<sup>2</sup> Coffee Fruitalia data was not included in the Grand Totals calculations.

<sup>3</sup> Thirty Typhoon stems were sold wholesale.

## Container Sales

I planted two roses of each variety in standard two-gallon black plastic nursery containers and used my label maker to make a professional-looking tag, attached to a plain 6" x 5/8" white plastic label. I had a sign posted saying that Kordes roses were bred specifically for field-grown cut flower production in Europe and North America and I explained that they were not available to the general public other than the few that Wayside Garden offers.

Each week, I'd bring a few of the roses that were in bloom to the one market where I sell container material. Eight plants were sold at \$19.95 each for a total of \$159.60. Had the economy been better this summer, I believe more plants would have been sold. High gas prices as well as food price increases definitely reduced customers' disposal income at this market. Nonetheless, many people were interested in the plants and the roses initiated many friendly conversations.

## Landscape Potential

Even though these Kordes rose varieties were bred for cut flowers, several appear to have good landscape potential. 'Coffee Fruitilia', for example, might make an excellent ground cover rose. It hugs the ground and is often covered with small, salmon-pink colored roses. It's also a disease-free repeat bloomer and the red, berry-like hips are a fall bonus.

'Typhoon' also is a repeat bloomer on a rounded shrub of dark green foliage. The flowers appear to glow from within. However, it did develop a little mildew and black spot towards the end of the growing season. 'Buxom Beauty' has such large, hot pink fragrant flowers that it cannot go unnoticed. This also grows into a nice, full-looking shrub that did not have a trace of black spot or mildew.



## Conclusions

During the summer season at our busy coastal market, I saw customers pass by buckets of drop-dead-gorgeous lisianthus and absolutely beautiful roses, to zoom in and grab armfuls of gomphrena. What were they thinking?! Better yet, what was I thinking?! In addition, I overheard customers talking to one another saying that roses don't last. I wonder if all of the inexpensive, but past-their-prime supermarket imports have given roses a bad reputation.

Next season, I'll attempt to educate my customers to the fact that Kordes roses have just as good a vase life as just about any other cut flower. I'll have signage indicating the respective vase lives for each flower and I'm going to market the stems as thornless. I've purchased a hand-held thorn remover that I'll ideally learn to use to make the roses less intimidating.

I plan to grow several more varieties of Kordes roses, especially those that have the full, old-fashioned English rose look. I would also like to try a few, such as 'Magma', in a high tunnel to see if I could improve stem length. I plan to compare other postharvest products and to conduct vase life comparison tests with products such as Chrysal #1 holding solution.

As this year was my first experience with noticeable thrip damage, next season I'll be more pro-active with a monitoring program of blue and yellow sticky traps. I'll also anticipate problems with mildew and I'll have a plan of attack ready before it appears. I'd like to try Neem oil for mildew (2 tablespoons of 70% Neem oil in 1 gallon of water), sprays using a 10% solution of milk (1 part milk, 9 parts water) and baking soda (1 tablespoon baking soda, half-teaspoon liquid soap, 1 gallon of water). As for the cucumber beetles, I've purchased lures.

So, while roses for us this year may not have been a 'silver bullet,' Kordes roses will definitely fill an important, permanent position in our flower portfolio. I believe that roses do set you apart at the farmers' markets and they just may have been a factor in customers selecting us to deliver bulk party flowers. They may also have played an important role in good bouquet sales for our retail produce market customer.

## Parting Thoughts

I remember customers admiring and commenting on 'Antique Caramel', 'Buxom Beauty' and 'Typhoon', even if they didn't buy them. Once, when I was making a bouquet with 'Typhoon' and bupleurem, a lady stopped in her tracks and bought it on the spot! She said that she had never seen anything so beautiful. However, from our limited sales data, I can not say with any certainty that one rose was more favored than another.

It's hard to say which rose is my favorite. 'Red Queen' was the first to bloom and we were immediately taken by the texture and richness of the red petals and the beautiful dark green foliage. It was hard to believe that we actually grew such magnificent flowers and that we had



them in our home! Then the 'Antique Caramels' bloomed and I was pleased to finally have the old-fashioned looking roses that I always wanted. And so it went with every new flower. There was always something unique and outstanding about each one. That's why, if you've ever been disappointed with other roses, I recommend that you give the exceptional Kordes roses a try.

Contact [tom@parkerhousenursery.com](mailto:tom@parkerhousenursery.com) with any questions or comments.

### Sources:

Newflora LLC, Gary Pellett - [gpellett@newflora.com](mailto:gpellett@newflora.com)  
Wayside Gardens - [www.waysidegardens.com](http://www.waysidegardens.com)

## The ASCFG Welcomes its Newest Members

Chelcey Beahm, Farmhouse Flowers & Plants, Brookeville, MD  
Sherry Billingsley, Loma Rica, CA  
Steve & Lori Bulla, Ozark Mountain Blooms, Fayetteville, AR  
Scott Byars, West Virginia State Univ. Ext., Institute, WV  
Lindsay Chandler, Green Acres, Tyronza, AR  
Maria Cockrell, Morning Moon Gardens, Charlottesville, VA  
Cathy DeValk, St. Bridget's Flower Farm, Solon, IA  
Patricia DiVello, Harbes Berry Farm, Mattituck, NY  
Michelle Elston, Roots, Carlisle, PA  
Joseph Emmerich, Ground Covers, Morris, IL  
Don Hermes, Hermes Floral, St. Paul, MN  
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Elizabeth Keen, Indian Line Farm, Great Barrington, MA  
Rose Anna Messner, Toile Jardin, Slapout, OK  
Sherri Michelbach, Sonshine Valley Farms, Binghamton, NY  
Jiro Robinson, Midori, Inc., Levittown, PA  
Marjorie Skaggs, The Busy Bee Flower Farm, Taylorsville, KY  
Sumner Smith, Spotted Dog Farm, Asheville, NC  
Kim & Ted Van Essendelft, Pantego Blossoms, Inc., Pantego, NC

## Industry Events

### Practical Tools and Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms Conference

January 21-24, 2009  
Chattanooga, Tennessee  
[www.ssawg.org](http://www.ssawg.org)

### Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Conference

February 3-5, 2009  
Hershey, Pennsylvania  
[www.mafvc.org](http://www.mafvc.org)

### Chesapeake Green

February 4-5, 2009  
Linthicum, Maryland  
[www.chesapeakegreen.org](http://www.chesapeakegreen.org)

### New England Grows!

February 4-6, 2009  
Boston, Massachusetts  
[www.negrows.org](http://www.negrows.org)

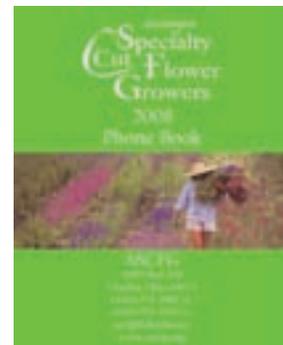
### Empire State Fruit & Vegetable Expo

February 10-12, 2009  
Syracuse, New York  
<http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/hort/expo/pdf/2009Program.pdf>

### California Spring Trials and West Regional Meeting

April 3-5, 2009  
Morgan Hill, California  
[www.ascfg.org](http://www.ascfg.org)

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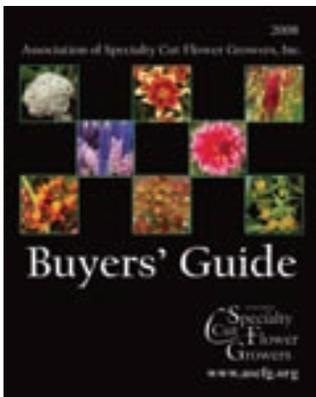
**Look for it in Members Only**

## The 2009 ASCFG Buyers' Guide

Member Profiles and Advertising Insertion Order Forms were sent to all members. If you have already sent your profile back indicating you want to participate, you will be in the 2009 *Buyers' Guide*. If you have not, please remember that you must return the form to be included. It is not too late to place a display ad. Call the ASCFG

office if you need more information.

The Buyers' Guide is a tool for buyers of specialty cut flowers, and for growers who want to sell to them. It is distributed to thousands of buyers across the country. The more growers who participate in the Buyers' Guide, the better it will be. Each year, we receive an increasing number of requests for copies of the book from florists, wholesalers and designers who have used earlier issues. Regardless of your current market, a Buyers' Guide listing is a great way to get your company's name in front of buyers you never dreamed of.



## Grower Grant Recipients for 2008

The ASCFG Research Committee is happy to announce the winners of its Grower Grant program. These ASCFG members have received grants which will allow them to perform on-farm research which benefits specialty cut flower growers in the field or greenhouse.

Any grower is eligible to apply for these competitive grants. Topics to be considered include field pest control, new species and cultivar evaluation, fresh or dried postharvest, fertilizers and nutrition, economics of production, water management, and off-season production.

Proposed work to be funded by ASCFG should be for one year or less in duration, but can be part of a multi-year project. Recipients of a grant for a multi-year project will be given preference when they apply for funding in subsequent years. Proposals should be two pages or less in length.

Find more information about the Research Committee grants at the ASCFG web page, under the Research Activities tab.



**Rita Jo Shoultz, Fritz Creek Gardens, Fritz Creek, Alaska** will investigate research weed control methods for peonies, considering different chemicals, timing of applications and having the pesticide/herbicide approved by the Dep. of Environmental Conservation.



**Larry Johnson, Still Point Farm, Brooklyn, Wisconsin** will evaluate ornamental plants with non-traditional flowers or foliage that may meet customer needs, while developing a profitable niche for cut flower growers.



**Diane Szukovathy, Jello Mold Farm, Mount Vernon, Washington.** Diane's project will explore low-tech possibilities for heating hoophouses with compost.

### New Tunnel from Haygrove

Haygrove Tunnels recently introduced the Super Solo single bay tunnel, a taller, stronger version of the popular Solo tunnel.

The Super Solo's hoop profile provides the same excellent tractor access and 9' high venting as Haygrove's standard size, multi-bay tunnels. The hoops are made with 12 gauge, high strength steel and feature horizontal struts that can support the weight of trellised crops. The Super Solo's extra height makes it a great tunnel for raspberries and blackberries.

The new tunnel is 25' x 200' and costs \$8995 fob PA. The price includes 12' wide roll-up doors and Luminance THB poly, which diffuses sunlight and reduces infrared.

All Haygrove tunnels are sold as complete units, there is nothing else to buy.



## An ASCFG Regional Meeting is coming to your area!

<b>West</b>	Friday, April 3	California Spring Trials	Morgan Hill, California
<b>Mid-Atlantic</b>	Monday, April 27	Lynnvale Farm and Studios, LLC	Gainesville, Virginia
<b>Northwest</b>	Friday, May 1	Jello Mold Farm Farm	Mount Vernon, Washington



### 2009 Cut Flowers of the Year



#### **Fresh Cut Flower of the Year**      **Zinnia ‘Uproar Rose’**

‘Uproar Rose’ was the highest-rated cultivar in the 2008 Seed Trials. Its consistent magenta-rose color, high degree of doubleness and large flower size made this a favorite with growers across the country. It was called “a standout in the field” for its heavy yield on strong 30-inch stems. For those growing zinnias in the North, one planting may be enough for long stems all season. For those in the South, fresh plantings every four weeks will insure a constant supply of high quality flowers. ‘Uproar Rose’ is mildew resistant but as with similar cultivars, the incidence will increase on older plantings, especially in the fall.



#### **Dried Cut Flower of the Year**      **Achillea ‘Coronation Gold’**

Allan Armitage considers ‘Coronation Gold’ “...the best upright golden yellow yarrow available.” The cut flower standard has 3 to 4 inch wide flowers on 24-inch stems. Plants require little maintenance, and are productive, with division, for several years. Plants should be divided and replanted every third to fourth year as the longest stems are usually obtained the second and third year after planting. Flowers are easily dried and hold their yellow color indefinitely. The strong stems allow them to be easily used in dried arrangements. Fresh cut flowers can last for more than a week, be sure to change the water in buckets frequently if storing in the cooler.



#### **Woody Cut Flower of the Year**      **Hydrangea ‘Hamburg’**

“What’s old is new again” - this saying is a great fit for the long-time favorite *Hydrangea macrophylla*. One of the best cultivars is ‘Hamburg’, which Lane Greer states has “dark blue-purple (dark pink) fading to red, serrated sepals, large flowers are good for drying and preserving”. ‘Hamburg’ flowers are popular when harvested blue, and equally popular these days when the flowers age to wonderful mix of green, blue and pink known as “antiques”. Vase life will be 6 to 8 days when harvested early in the season and 10 to 12 days when the antiques are harvested later in the season. How many other cut flower species last longer the older they are cut? The early flowering and long harvest seasons means these vigorous plants will be wonderfully productive.



## Bulletin Board

### Foliage for Cuts

The catalogs are arriving and I'm seeing some foliage plants that might make interesting cuts. Has anyone tried coleus as a cut? How about abutilon or strobilanthes grown as annuals? Where can I go for more information?

Larry Johnson, Wisconsin

I love foliage for cuts. I have tried a few coleus, with mixed results. One that worked well is "Tuckerman's Ravine". Hydration is the main issue. I'd recommend choosing tall varieties, planting them close together, and cutting in the morning. I personally had no luck with strobilanthes 'Silver Shield' as a cut; it kept wilting no matter what. As I mentioned in the January 2009 Quarterly, I really like the alternanthera "Purple Knight".

Polly Hutchison, Rhode Island

I do table arrangements for a small restaurant and I occasionally (when the coleus needs cutting back) do little fish bowl vases with coleus and various green tropical plant leaves, pothos ivy, anthurium, etc. If you fix them up a day ahead, you can cull the few that don't hydrate; the rest will last at least a week and probably start rooting.

Karen Yasui, Tennessee

I grew Perilla a few years ago and had fairly good success. I cut it into Hydraflor. It would have benefitted from a bit of afternoon shade here in zone 7. Coleus is another species that you'd cut early in the day into a hydration solution. 'Mrs. Burns' lemon basil is great and this coming season I'm going to try the variety of basil recommended by Lynn Byczynski, 'Oriental Breeze.' I sold a good bit of sword fern last year. It's great in bouquets and lasts and lasts.

Susie Whaley, North Carolina

'Purple Ruffles' basil easily had 24-30" stems in full sun, direct seeded and cranked out from July (we seeded fairly late to have some dramatic foliage for late summer/fall bouquets) until a frost melted them early November. It went great with lime and lilac zinnias for a really quick and easy market bouquet.

Becky Devlin, Virginia

'Oriental Breeze' is also a nice basil. This fall I stumbled on using foliage from Lysimachia and it was really pretty and changed color as cooler weather came. I think I cut on it even after frost.

Linda Doan, Tennessee



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*Woody Cut Stems for Growers and Florists*

Lane Greer and John Dole

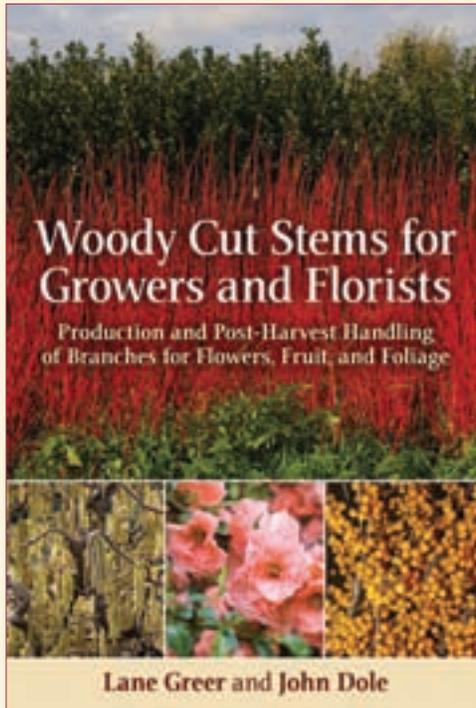
Timber Press 2008

Before Lane Greer and John Dole were even finished writing this book, I told everyone “This is the book you’ve been waiting for. This book will answer every question you have about woodies production, and some you haven’t even thought of.”

That last phrase was kind of a little throwaway, but it was prescient: now that I have the book in hand, I realize that Lane and John have covered every possible consideration connected to growing and marketing woody stems. Their own growing and research experiences, supplemented with extensive travel, reading, and communications with commercial growers around the world, have contributed to a complete reference that no cut flower grower should be without.

The primary chapters cover a wide range of topics, from plant selection and spacing, to detailed examinations of defoliation, postharvest handling, and forcing. They then divide a hearty chunk of the plant kingdom into “Proven Woody Cuts”, “Species Worth Trying”, and “Species Best Avoided.” Growers can save themselves time, money and grief by basing their crop selections on these sections before they even open a catalog or put a shovel to the soil.

The authors’ extensive personal experiences and relationships with cut flower growers have made it possible for them to think “Let’s think of every topic growers ask about woodies, and write as much as we can for as many topics as we can.” And they did. Each species is examined on the bases



of why you should or shouldn’t grow it, species and cultivars, production, harvest and postharvest, propagation, marketing, troubleshooting, landscape plantings, and uses.

Considering growing witch hazel? Nine and a half pages describe five species, dozens of cultivars (grouped by color), growth habit, how to prune it and what kind of reception it may receive from buyers: “...the stark flowers are not to everyone’s taste and markets will vary widely between appreciation and aversion.”

Contributions from ASCFG members like Ed Pincus, Bob Wollam, Phil Muller, John Zehrer, Pat Zweifel, and Diane Szukovathy are liberally sprinkled in among research results and literature references; their “real world” experiences prove that woodies can be frustrating as well as rewarding to grow.

Color photographs are expensive to print in textbooks (so I’ve been told); fortunately, *Woody Cut Stems* boasts two sections of fairly large pictures, illustrating foliage, plant habit, fruit and foliage, and production methods. Bits of humor and personal opinion are also in evidence, making reading as pleasurable as informative.

I’m not sure if a book review is supposed to include congratulations, but kudos to Lane and John for this work.

If you haven’t gotten your copy of *Woody Cut Stems* yet, use the order form below to buy one with your ASCFG member discount (\$35, regular price is \$40).

*Woody Cut Stems for Growers and Florists*

Lane Greer and John Dole, Timber Press 2008

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# FROM the Director

Judy M. Laushman

As there seems to be no agreed definition for “specialty cut flowers”, for several years we would suggest it included “anything other than roses, mums and carnations.” which seemed to satisfy most questioners. This issue of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, however, devotes 11 pages to “roses”. These are not the long-stemmed, fragrant-less roses that most consumers have come to expect from the floral industry, they’re the antique garden roses, whose lush beauty and gorgeous perfumes have brought them back into demand from in-the-know florists and designers.

Before, and especially after Jeriann Sabin’s and Erin Benzakein’s popular presentation on garden roses at the Portland Conference, it became clear that growers, always looking to fill a niche in their crop lists, are also gravitating to these flowers and finding success with them.

Clearly, it pays to be diverse in the cut flower world. Growing the same old thing, selling at the same old markets, and using the same old promotional methods just doesn’t work. The same goes with *The Cut Flower Quarterly*. This issue does include the important and always-popular Cut Flower Trial Reports, and New Varieties photos and descriptions. But it also includes Gary Anderson’s article about the challenges retail florists face in this economy. It was directed toward florists, but as I read it, I realized that it applied to cut flower growers as well. Growers should also consider increasing awareness of their business, and both new Regional Directors Josie Crowson and Quinton Tschetter explained how they made this happen for their farms. Gary talks about “careful buying and avoiding waste”, both of which Polly Hutchison addresses in her Regional Report.

Becky Devlin volunteered to write an article about hiring and keeping employees. No matter the size of your company, this information is valuable, and covers a topic we’re not often able to cover in the *Quarterly*.

Stanton Gill usually writes about pests and their control, but this issue contains his analysis of herbs useful as cut flowers. Stanton is a valuable resource for ASCFG members; he works in the field with cut flower growers, and knows exactly what kind of information they’re looking for.

As we move into 2009, with uncertain economic conditions facing many of us, we must all make sure we’re doing as much as we can to keep our companies fresh and different. It is what makes the difference between success and failure.

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