

Volume 34, Number 3 Summer 2022

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

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## Balance. If you haven't already found it, give it another try.

Val Schirmer



In the first place, I admit I've never been good at achieving any sort of sustainable balance between the different aspects of my life—especially between my professional life and my personal life—so I'm not one to hand out advice about it.

Gotta say that heading to a long weekend in California in late April for a workshop and time with flower farm buddies, followed by another one to the Northeast just two weeks later, was probably not the best idea (but was great fun!). Especially when bed prep, bumping up TONS of seedlings, our one-day-a-year plant sale, the steady stream of peony and spring florals harvest, deliveries, hosting workshops, bringing new farm help on board and planting, planting, planting, and then WEEDING was #1 on every day's list, along with actual ASCFG board work, which is important and also takes time.

In late May, as the deadline for our *Quarterly* articles loomed straight ahead, I almost hit the panic button—then I pulled my head out of the dirt and actually said out loud, “Well, how in the heck do the *other* board members do it?” After all, they're longtime growers and business owners too, trying hard to be their best partner to their partners, as well as parents to little kids and caregivers to others.

So I asked, “How do you find balance; what works for your particular situation?” and gratefully, they responded. Their words gave me ideas and inspiration, and also made me feel grateful for what I have. I hope they do the same for you.

### **Shanti Rade, Whipstone Farm South and Central Regional Director**

I've always devoted 100% of myself to the farm and to work, sacrificing time with my family/personal interests/time with friends/travel. Even with all the changes and disruptions through the pandemic, our business is still doing just fine and I realize I don't need to give it 100%. So I'm trying to give about 10% of myself to time for me and time for my partner and kids. Doing outdoor stuff together (hiking, kayaking); supporting my kids (with my actual time) in pursuing their own interests (music, sewing, cooking, sports); going on dates with my partner (we still need more of these). A lot of this has been accomplished by dropping one of our farmers' markets and taking Sundays off. But a lot of it is just being deliberate about what I choose to do—like not work 24/7.

Having gone through the pandemic and all the challenges that came with it, changing gears at warp speed, stressing about innumerable realities out of my control, dealing with employment shortages, and so much more, I'm finding I just don't stress as much about things going wrong as I used to. I'm much more open to big changes in our business, and feel secure that things will all work out in the end. And, slowly finding there's more to life than farming.

I'm not perfect at this, but I really feel a big shift in my life. It also helps me to make a wish list (a written list of goals). Things I want to spend my time/money/mental energy on. Then I can feel good about decision-making towards these goals.



As an aside, the bad (and ugly) for Shanti this year has been weather related. They had a super cold snap in mid-April of about 12F. Even though they're in the high desert and used to temperature extremes, this one was just a little too extreme.

That night they lost every single bud on their 800 mature peony plants, every bud froze on their lilies, and 90% of the plants for their plant sale were killed. Some things pulled through, like their acre of onions, but then the temperature swings confused them and they bolted in June. On the positive side, she had the best tulips ever.

### **Janis Harris, Harris Flower Farm Canada Regional Director**

I don't have balance. The summers are busy and crazy. The winters are calmer and cozier. I think my balance is knowing that even though we have the heated greenhouse growing space, I NEVER want to grow and produce flowers year-round. I need the time off in the winter.



It's really hard to have balance with farming and family. I am VERY lucky to have my parents close by and they are able to help a lot. I realize not everyone has that. There are many different types of situations. There is so much pressure to "find balance." Balance is not reality. There is always something needing your attention more than another thing.

Decreasing distraction is more attainable. Be present in each situation. When you are farming, do that. When you are family-ing, do that. Growing up as a farm kid, I SWORE I wanted to get a real job and not do farming like my parents, but here I am. I hope my children don't dislike it as much as I did as a teen. But if they do, I hope they come to appreciate all we have done to create a life for us (insert sobbing cry).

The quote that I have on my ledge in my kitchen window, above the sink so we see it all the time is, "The secret to having it all is believing you already do."

**Bailey Hail, Ardelia Farm  
Northeast Regional Director**

It's really just a simple scheduling problem. How much time will it realistically take to accomplish everything on your list, and how much time are you willing to devote to that goal? If you have more to accomplish than you have time for, you either need to do less, or find more labor and/or efficiency in your systems. The early years are full of learning and miscalculations, but at some point you have to set a schedule for yourself and stick to it.



For instance, we work only 8 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. every day. At 4:00 we stop, finished or not. Watering is the only task that happens outside of this 40-hour work week. Initially lots went undone, but we prioritized those things that were most profitable and dropped those things that were too time-consuming for the profit yielded. It may sound simplistic, but you will never find this mythical balance until you schedule time for yourself into each day and week of the year.

**Susan Rockwood, Arcola Trail Flower Farm  
North and Central Regional Director**

My biggest challenge now is that since Brad's stroke in 2020, I am a full-time caregiver, in addition to my other full-time jobs of flower farmer, homeowner, etc. I've taken on the job of caring for Brad at home, but I lost my farming partner, leaving me to do the work or find someone who can take on his important roles on the farm and at home (mostly things that involve more strength and engineering know-how than I will ever have). So balance is not something I have figured out, especially with the sleep deprivation that is probably similar to a new parent.



To keep some balance, I had to decide what I could do to uncomplicate my business. For example, most of my flower sales now require customers to come to the farm and I no longer do deliveries. Designers, subscription members, and retail customers pick up at the farm, and on-farm events and workshops are being planned so I don't have to leave home. A beautiful thing that happened is that I have an army of good friends who regularly volunteer their time in exchange for flowers and camaraderie. This has allowed me to keep the business going and thriving, and frees me from doing all the work myself, which would be impossible.

The thing that keeps me afloat is the help and generosity of friends. Friends who encourage me to keep doing what I like/love to do so that I continue to get some satisfaction and sense of accomplishment in my own life. That includes being involved with the ASCFG, which taps into my interest in helping build and contribute to something greater than myself. Though it is frustrating not to have as much time to devote to outside interests as I would like, it does recharge me and uses a different set of skills that I don't want to lose. It also energizes me to get to know new colleagues and flower farmers who I can learn from and get the opportunity to work with on the ASCFG Board.

**Linda Doan, Aunt Willie's Wild Flowers  
Southeast Regional Director**

The good thing about this time of year is that things are still fresh. I'm not tired of flowers, the heat hasn't gotten to me, and the staff isn't on my nerves. That may change with time.

The bad is there is just so much to do and it seems to come on all at once. Those February and March days of taking your time, getting things planted, and starting to cut are now a whirlwind of cutting, foraging, making CSA and wedding bouquets, seeding trays, and just keeping so many balls in the air.



In my flower farmer apparel, the good times of bouquet making.



When I'm done, I'm done and can't do another thing.

The ugly for me is that the aging process has really lowered my energy levels. I can no longer work down to dusk which I actually enjoyed most days when I was in my young 60s. We recently did a workshop that normally would take me a day to recover from; now it takes about four days. I am also nervous about injuries. My reaction time is less, so when I trip I tend to fall rather than catch myself, not a good thing in a hoop house with rebar posts, netting, etc.

This morning we just did CSA bouquets, did a small wedding last night, and after the bouquets today I just had to sit and really quit for the day. I have wonderful workers this summer, but only part time, which has me in the field often. The trick to enjoying farming at 73 is acknowledging weaknesses and accepting limitations. I take only small weddings that are picked up here, and I don't accommodate small orders. We have people come

to the farm and we don't deliver a thing (thank you, COVID). And each age has its limitations.

Look at your life and make adjustments so you can always enjoy farming!

### Mimo Davis, Urban Buds City Grown Flowers Vice President

Trying to balance:

- Sales outlets (florists vs. Saturday market vs. Sunday market vs. events).
- Crop mix for the sales outlets mentioned above.
- Having enough employees for the busy times but not too many for the slow times.
- Weeding vs. the "money makers" like planting and harvesting.
- Creating enough content for social media but not wasting time.

Wins:

- Hiring an office assistant to do office tasks. Emails are not at the bottom of some farmers' list anymore.
- Giving every employee an area of the farm to have ownership of. Each one has a greenhouse assigned to them; it is their responsibility to keep it weeded if they aren't given another task, and to scout weekly for pests and diseases to report back.
- A weekly schedule that means EVERYONE on the farm has days off, owners included.

### Michelle Elston, Roots Cut Flower Farm Mid-Atlantic Regional Director

My favorite nugget I try to remember is that Balance is a Middle Class Pursuit. We've articulated this on the farm this season by focusing on sprinting and then resting.

Tulips, peonies, supermarket bouquets, and Christmas wreaths are all sprints. Intentional rest and time off in between these sprints allow us to go full force when opportunity hits. I clearly discuss with my crew the 6-week period that we request no time off (July 20-September 1) because we're so busy. And then I'm also clear on when good times to plan vacations are—October rest before wreath season is a must!

Having a lot of part-time crew members also helps; they don't get burned out because they're not here all the time, and they arrive enthusiastic and refreshed.

My husband is a landscaper, so we both work seasonally. We love our restful winters and are very protective of Sunday evenings at home. We book (and pay for) 2-3 overnight trips during the growing season to recharge. These are usually 1-2 nights, and the rule is under 2 hours driving distance so we can spend our precious time off truly resting. I work like a maniac during the season—usually 55-65 hours a week—BUT my average over the whole year is only 44 hours a week, very average.

So really, it's a matter of perspective.

We've raised two kids, now 18 and 14, in this lifestyle. While they can't brag about their summer vacations, we go somewhere warm and fun in the winter. While we can't be driving them all over during the growing season, their friends are always welcome here to swim and hang out. While we can't do summer camps, we commit to lessons and classes during the winter. It all "balances out" but not in the traditional sense of the word.

And back to perspective:

I am one of the luckiest humans in the world to do what I love every single day. Writing my gratitude every morning helps remind me of that.

Everything about this farm is a choice. I choose this lifestyle. It's a wild one, not for the faint of heart. But it's my choice to live it!

Perfect words, Michelle! Thanks so much to you, Shanti, Janis, Bailey, Mimo, Susan and Linda for your wise perspective and thoughtful advice.

Here's to a strong, successful summer growing season and lots of well-deserved balance for everyone. Cheers!

*Val Schirmer is founder of Three Toads Farm, Winchester, Kentucky. Contact her at vschirmer@gmail.com*





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## Routine, Rest, and Rejuvenation

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick



For small business owners, personal and professional time is often fluid. Finding ways to set boundaries can be challenging because there is always more work to do, and many of us do some or all of our work from home. Burnout is real, and it can have lasting negative effects on your business, creativity, personal life, and more. The trick is to find the things that work for you and prioritize them fiercely. Below are some ways we try to find time for ourselves, stay engaged with our work and set realistic boundaries.

### Ellen

**Morning routine:** I have a morning routine that I love. Early morning is my favorite time of day. First thing I do when I get up is make coffee. That first cup is such a treat. That probably sounds corny, but it's true. I try to make sure I don't have to rush out in the morning. If I have to go to work early, I get up extra early, around 5:00 a.m., just so I can peacefully drink my coffee, read the *New York Times*, do the Wordle puzzle of the day, write in my journal, and do a short walk on the treadmill while listening to a podcast. All of this takes about an hour. This time is special to me because it helps me start the day slowly. I had years and years of starting the day fast, eating on the run, running to the bus—feeling crazed right out the door. Those days are mostly over, and a slower early morning helps set the tone for the day.



and I go biking or hiking (and get donuts!), then I work a few hours at night. Having time together outside of work where we can be outdoors and exercising is a priority, and it's time I'm careful to protect. I often get requests for work meetings or even social dates with friends (including from Laura Beth) and I almost always say no. Of course, if it's something special, I'll make an exception, but mostly I keep this schedule because it helps me disconnect and clear my mind.

**Playing with flowers:** One thing I try to make time for every week is playing with flowers. Even on weeks when I'm exhausted and feel really run down, playing with flowers lifts me up and gets my creative juices flowing. Obviously, I do floral design much of the week, but that is design for other people, for customers who have expectations about what their arrangements will look like and how long they will last.

Playing with flowers is just for me. I combine this time with cleaning out the cooler so I'm mostly using leftover blooms from the week. And I just make whatever. Whatever I feel like. Sometimes it's hideous and sometimes it's magic. It doesn't matter. The purpose is not to have an end product that is Instagrammable (although sometimes I do share it on Instagram), the goal is to choose colors and textures that I like and try something new or make something comforting or just design while my mind wanders. So much of the joy in this work comes from the flowers, so that's where I go to get reinspired.



I learned to overwork early on. I wanted to be a musician, and played the flute at all hours, always pursuing that elusive 4+ hours a day of focused practice. As a teenager, I'd get up early to play scales, and escape to dingy basement practice rooms every free period. I even got a special exemption from chemistry class so that I could spend more time in the practice room—which is why I have zero understanding of anything related to chemistry!

Pursuing music allowed me to be free. I was in charge of my time when I worked on it. No awkward high school social life, no boring classes, and best of all, no after-school sports. Looking back, it's no shock that I burned out at eighteen years old. I had a successful music career in front of me, but the will to do it had gone up in smoke. That experience made me wary of overwork. I



swore I would be more careful when I found my drive again.

As you all know, farming is an overworker's dream job. So I have to be really careful; if I want to keep farming, then I have to counterbalance work with rest. Watching TV or going for a walk have to be just as high priority for me as weeding the zinnias.

I've broken rest into four categories: physical rest, rejuvenation, laziness, and hobbies. Here are some ways that I find them in my life:

1. Physical rest. I go to bed at around 8:00 or 8:30 every night during the high season, and get up around 5:30. Getting more than 8 hours of sleep is a real luxury that I know most people (parents!) don't have. I'm very lucky to be a fairly good sleeper, so this one's easy for me.

2. Rejuvenation. This one is a harder nut to crack, as what rejuvenates each person is different. For me, seeing dear friends is a great way to recharge. Being around friends reminds me that there is a world beyond my world; laughing and enjoying each other brings me so much pleasure.

Another activity that rejuvenates me is going for long walks—but they have to be off the farm. That's important! Pre-



we eat too. I always think of *Matilda* and feel guilty watching TV like her horrible parents did during dinner; but truly this screen time relaxes me, and it's a chill way that my partner and I can be together without being focused directly on each other. We both work on the farm, so we see plenty of each other during the day.

4. Hobbies. I never had hobbies when I was pursuing a career in music. Now, in a full circle kind of way, music is my hobby! I haven't played the flute in a while, but I play the guitar (badly) and really enjoy it. I also read (highly recommend *My Brilliant Friend*) and have a few pen pals to write to. Hobbies usually get kicked to the side when work is really busy, but I try to pick them back up as often as I can; even reading my just book once a week helps, if that's all I can manage. Usually hobbies happen after dinner, between laziness and physical rest.

I'm sure that as I grow and change, so too will my routines and ways of finding rest. We're moving to our own land in the fall, and my parents are moving there, too, to a separate house on the property. I'm excited to hang out on their porch after work and generally spend more family time together; it will be a great new way to rest!

pandemic era, I'd also spend a lot of time reading or writing in coffee shops. This is an activity that I really miss, and when the pandemic happened it was tough to let it go. Usually rejuvenation happens on days off, but sometimes it's nice to sneak in some friend time or a walk after a work day, too. We have a dog, so I also get to enjoy recharging throughout the day by cuddling him!

3. Laziness. For me, this translates to TV time. More ideally, I think I would nap or just lie around letting my thoughts wander, but that always ends up causing stress as my mind slips into list-making mode. Television helps me to think about nothing at all.

After work, here's my routine: I come inside around 3:30. I finish up with emails around 4:30, and then I make dinner with the TV on. My husband and I often watch a show while

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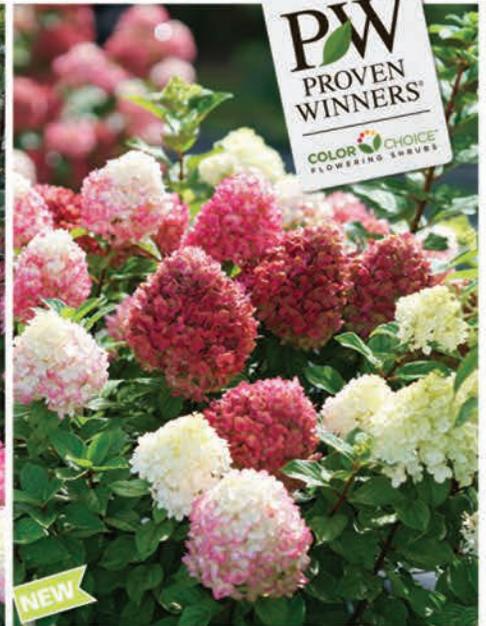
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### Small Steps Yield Big Success

Julie Martens Forney



*Flower farming is like slow motion chess played outdoors against Mother Nature.*

Tripling sales in three years is no small feat, especially when the team consists of just two people. “We’re both past retirement age, so that dictates what we do compared to younger farmers,” says Clarence Denton, owner of Daveco, a fresh cut flower farm in Clearwater, Kansas. “Flower farming is like slow motion chess played outdoors against Mother Nature. You’ve got all the logistics of the moving pieces, and you’re going against someone who can change her mind at any time, and change the rules any way she wants.”

Clarence tackles this game of chess-against-nature with his partner in business and in life, Lou Lemont. They started growing flowers six years ago in 2016 on Lemont’s farm, which has been in the family since the 1940s. With ample space, Clarence’s natural growing skills, and Lou’s born-to-sell personality, the couple broke ground with a small 16 x 32 hoophouse.

The goal was to grow landscape flowers and plants for Daveco’s lawn and landscaping business. Somewhere along the line they discovered an on-line video about a day in the life of a flower farm, and a seed took root. “If the weather is good, cut flowers bring a better margin,” Clarence explains. That margin has led him to grow specialty cut flowers for florists, along with others for his landscape business.

“We thought it would take 10 years to get where we are now,” Lou admits. “We’ve grown into our market and grown with our customers.” Clarence explains, “We didn’t start with a whole



The brains behind Daveco flower farm are Lou Lemonty and Clarence Denton, partners in flower farming and in life. Their business name, Daveco, comes from Clarence’s middle name, which his daughter suggested he use when he incorporated. “We know it’s not flowery but the florists really don’t care,” he says.

lot of different flowers or a lot of depth—of anything. We slowly added more as we had demand. As a result, we’ve been able to sell almost everything we’ve grown in the last two years.”

#### Catering to Local Florists

The philosophy behind Daveco’s success comes from Lisa Mason Ziegler, aka The Gardener’s Workshop. “Years ago she said ‘Sell to people who need flowers every day.’ We took that to heart,” Lou recalls. She took buckets of flowers to local brick-and-mortar florists in the nearby Wichita area, introduced herself and Daveco, and slowly built relationships with eight different florists.

The fascinating parallel between taking Ziegler’s advice and the start of Daveco’s flower success is that both businesses blossomed on the heels of daily life disruptions. For Ziegler, the life-altering event was 9/11. For Daveco, it was pandemic-induced supply chain disruptions.

“We’re not trying to grow our client list. It’s really just the two of us doing everything here 90 percent of the time. That’s a lot of labor for two people who work other jobs,” Lou shares. “If we can make those florists happy, we’re doing good.”

The couple divides the business of growing along the line of their natural skill sets. Clarence handles seeding and growing, and Lou takes over when flowers are ready to head out the door. They serve their client base from roughly 5,000 square feet under cover, with an additional 4,500 square feet in outdoor beds. Every stem that’s grown is within 50 steps of the processing and cooling area, which keeps the flowers in premium condition for florist clients.

### A Crop Mix that Sells

Daveco aims to grow quality and quantity for their customers. “Florists don’t need 16 different varieties. They need reliable quality and quantity weekly,” Lou explains. “At one point Clarence wanted to plant 100 sunflowers per week, and I thought he was crazy. This year we’re up to 350 sunflowers per week, and the florists love them.”

Clarence agrees. “Florists want everyday stuff. We’re not selling mixed bouquets so we don’t need a wide variety of material. We’re selling stems for everyday floral work. With the sunflowers, for instance, we focus on medium size varieties, like ProCut® Orange and ‘Sunrich Orange’ in summer. In the fall we add ProCut® Red and ProCut® Plum.” Daveco will plant over 6,000 sunflowers in the course of this growing season.

The crop mix also includes ranunculus, anemones, dianthus, snapdragons, lisianthus, and dahlias. Dusty miller is the must-have foliage that florists clamor for—so much so that Daveco has had to triple their supply. Snapdragons are a big draw for florists, and Lou says they can’t wait for fall snaps, too. “They love our snapdragons because they’re not more than two days old when they get them,” she adds.

Dianthus is a big Mother’s Day seller. “We harvest 3,000 to 4,000 stems from a 3 by 60-foot bed,” Clarence says. “Each year that bed has made us over \$2,000.” With the addition of high tunnels, Daveco now overwinters dianthus and snapdragons.

Daveco’s secret to snapdragons is succession planting. “I grow some single stem and some I pinch so they branch. If the weather cooperates, in a typical spring that spreads out the harvest for us,” he explains. He follows the same method with lisianthus.

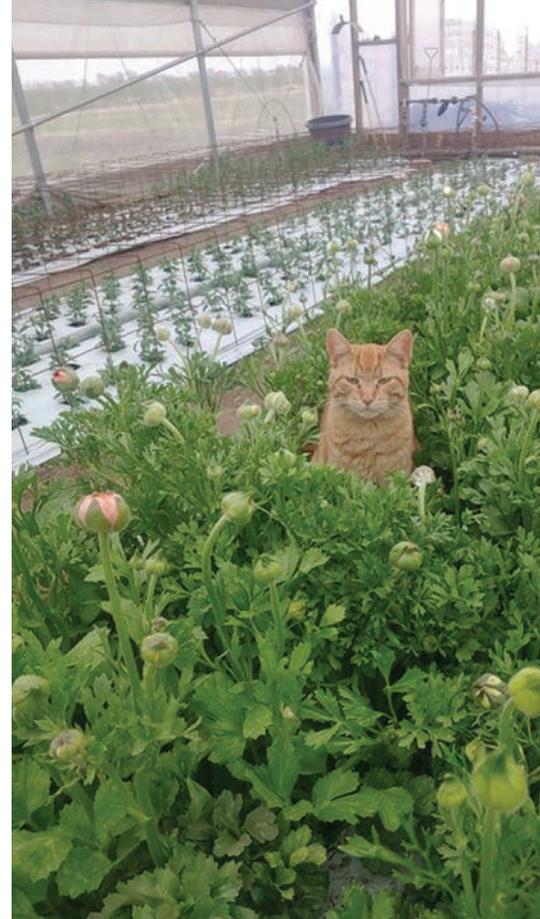
### Farming Efficiently

The greatest challenge for Daveco is being a small-scale flower farmer, but it’s also the biggest benefit. “In a small business, you’re more directly involved in each step of the process, and if you make a mistake, it’s easier to correct,” Clarence shares. He expects the business will hire additional employees at some point, but it will occur the way the operation grew—gradually.

In the interim, a major key to Daveco’s success is maximizing efficiency. The mantra of efficiency comes into play with each decision made on the farm, from focusing on a simple crop mix to ordering plugs. Seeding is definitely more cost effective, but “we’re always trying to experiment with things to make it easier for us. The consistency we get with plugs allows us to have less burden on our time and thinking,” Clarence shares.

Listening to Ben Hartman’s “Lean Farm” podcast has helped shape how Clarence thinks about things. He especially recommends listening to interviews with urban farmer Curtis Stone of Green City Acres, as well as Diego Footer podcasts. “Farming is about always learning something new and how to improve what you’re doing,” Clarence says.

The latest example of efficiency on the farm is a little green tarp that’s usually used for moving yard waste. In an effort to improve his own lisianthus crop, Clarence was watching a video of



George, the official Daveco cat, keeps watch in a bed of ranunculus, which is planted over Thanksgiving weekend and overwinters in a high tunnel for harvest in spring, from roughly April 5 until after Mother’s Day.

a Japanese lisianthus farmer who was using the tarp for hauling harvested stems. Lou uses the 3x3 tarp to carry 60 snapdragon stems at once.

She explains, “I put the snaps on the tarp as it has handles to carry it. It works for everything we cut, and is so much better than in a bucket. Over 4000 snaps carried one season, and only two broken from the tunnel to the processing spot.”

Other examples of farming efficiency include:

- Standard bed sizes. Daveco makes all planting beds—inside the tunnels and out—the same size. That makes moving a piece of weed barrier from inside to outside easy.
- Small tunnels. The 16-foot Farmer’s Friend tunnels are easier for two people to cover. They get a little hotter in summer, but maintaining them is easier.

- Soil prep. Daveco’s ground prep is forking new beds with 9-inch fork. After forking he uses a Grillo Walk Behind Tractor with a power harrow to make the bed plug ready.

- Stand-up planter. Lou calls this the “most beautiful thing on the farm.” It’s a custom-built planter tool that eliminates bending over to plant. The design is borrowed from a model that Johnny’s Selected Seeds used to sell. The stand-up planter takes two people to operate, but with it Daveco plants 350 sunflowers in an hour.

- Free buckets. After Valentine’s Day, the local Dillon’s Floral Dept. has extra buckets (literally hundreds) that they throw away. Lou learned about them as she works part time for Dillon’s. Daveco picked up 400 free buckets this year in February. “We just had to scrub them and store them,” she says.

### Advice to New Farmers

With six years of flower growing, Clarence and Lou have definite opinions on what they’d do differently if they were starting over again. “I would have gotten a cooler right from the start,” Lou shares. “We went two full years without one. Without a cooler, you lose flowers because you can’t hold them for more than a day or two. Our ranunculus last over two weeks in the vase—that’s once a consumer gets it home—thanks to the cooler.”



Daveco relies on three tools for preparing soil in planting beds: 9-inch digging forks, broadfork, and Grillo walk-behind tractor with a power harrow.

If Clarence were a younger version of himself, he’d get a multi-bay greenhouse, although he’s quick to point out that with different tunnels, he can do different temperatures and grow different crops. “We can use shade cloth and moderate temperatures. We have areas that can go fallow. With one greenhouse, I wouldn’t have that flexibility.”

He urges new farmers not to be afraid to get into more permanent structures if you have the room. “Farmer’s Friend has perfect starter high tunnels that are 16 or 14 feet wide. It’s much better than having hoops that you move or take off. I built mine with roll-up sides because a pull-up side would rip the plastic in the wind,” he explains. “You can customize the tunnels to fit your landscape.”

For instance, Daveco overbuilds his tunnels to withstand Kansas winds and hail by reinforcing with more purlins and cross bracing. “Without the tunnels, we’d lose a crop when hail comes,” Lou explains. “Kansas wind can destroy dahlias. Clarence loves his tunnels.”

For new farmers, Lou suggests finding your market. “Once you find it, grow for that market. Since we started this, we’ve learned constantly. Three years ago, I couldn’t tell the difference between dianthus and lisianthus.”

These days she’s enjoying the fruits of her labor, like walking into a local florist and watching their eyes “light up because they know what you’re bringing them. They can pick from my bucket and put it right into their floral piece. That gives me great satisfaction. It makes this time-consuming, hard work worth it.”

*Julie Martens Forney is an avid gardener and freelance writer who’s been writing about flower and plant production, horticulture research and consumer gardening for over 30 years.*

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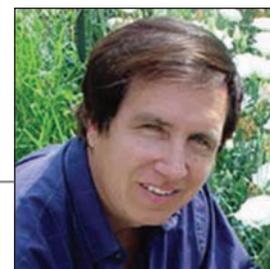
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## Trialing Basil for Disease

Stanton Gill, David Clement, Jerry Brust and Karen Rane



*The team at University of Maryland Extension is in year three of trialing basil for downy mildew and fusarium. Here are the results from the 2021 trials.*

Downy mildew continues to be the biggest challenge to basil production in America. The disease, *Peronospora belbahrii*, was first reported in Africa in 1934. The first U.S. report occurred in southern Florida in October 2007. Within five years, the disease spread throughout the U.S. and is found wherever basil is grown.

The disease can decimate a basil crop, usually in late summer to early fall, ending the plant's life rapidly. The best defense against this disease is the use of basil cultivars that are resistant to downy mildew. Italian sweet basil, which is the most popular for use in culinary dishes and a popular CEA crop, is highly susceptible to this disease.

For the last three years, our team at the University of Maryland Extension has been testing cultivars bred for resistance to downy mildew. Rutgers University has released the cultivars Devotion,

Obsession, Passion and Thunderstruck, which are reported to have good resistance. A promising resistant basil cultivar, Prospera, has been developed by researchers at Genesis Seeds in Israel.

### The trial locations

Weather varies from location to location and influences the disease pressure in a given year. We expanded our testing sites to three different parts of Maryland, each with different temperature and humidity levels. We selected sites in north-central Maryland (Westminster and Finksburg), central Maryland (Central Maryland Research and Education Center [CMREC], and Brookeville) and southern Maryland (CMREC-UMF) with each site having different light and air circulation

Warm, humid conditions at a site greatly influence the disease pressure; this will vary from site to site. The site in Westminster was at the top of a field in an open airy space. The sites at CMREC and Brookeville were in areas with 10 hours of direct sunlight, but surrounded by plant material that reduced air circulation. The length of direct sunlight was reduced to eight hours for both sites by September. These two central Maryland sites were more typical of urban garden plots.

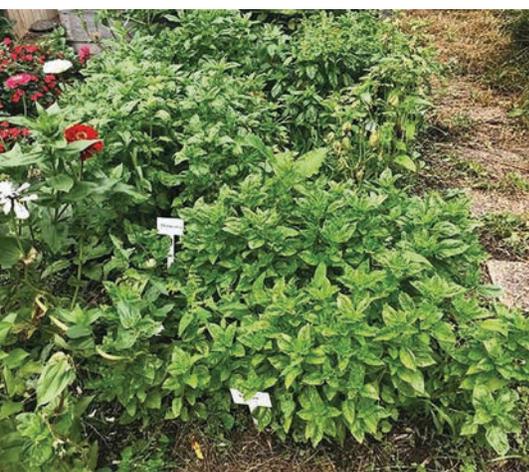
The site in southern Maryland was located a few miles north of Upper Marlboro at the CMREC-UMF facility, and was in sunlight throughout the day with no reduced air circulation. The plants in Finksburg were in a full sun location.

### Trial details

The basil plants were started from seed in a commercial greenhouse operation (special thanks to Hillcrest Nursery in Millers, Maryland, for starting the seeds for these trials). All the plants were established in the growing plots at the five sites in 2021 in the first week of June. We took data on the number of times we could harvest the basil plants in the summer and fall at the Brookeville and Westminster sites, as well as the Upper Marlboro site. We waited until plants were 20-in. to 24-in. before each harvest. The foliage was examined and symptoms of downy mildew noted on a 14-day interval.

The Westminster, CMREC, Finksburg and Brookeville sites were established on June 24. At the Westminster and Brookeville sites, the basil was planted in raised beds made up of 8% leaf compost, and a trickle irrigation system with T-tape was established shortly after transplant. There were 10 reps of each cultivar with six individual plants of each cultivar. Obsession, Passion, Devotion, Thunderstruck, Aroma, Prospera, Dark Opal, and lemon basil were established at these two sites.

At the CMREC site, the plants were placed in topsoil with 2% organic material. No trickle irrigation was established at this site. Space was limited, so we planted four reps of each cultivar with two individual plants per cultivar in each rep. Obsession, Passion, Devotion, Thunderstruck, Aroma, and Prospera were transplanted to this site. At the



Thunderstruck and Passion basil plants during the trials.

Finksburg site, plants of Prospera, Devotion, Thunderstruck, and Aroma were established and grown in containers under full sun conditions.

For the Upper Marlboro site, seedlings of Obsession, Passion, Devotion, Thunderstruck, Aroma, and Prospera were transplanted on July 21. The transplants were planted into two rows of white plastic with drip irrigation. There were four reps of each cultivar with six plants per rep. First harvest occurred on August 4 for all cultivars except Obsession.

Harvest consisted of taking the top part of a plant and cutting it down to within 4-in. to 8-in. of the soil. The harvested basil was examined for quality and recorded as marketable weight per plant. Harvests occurred approximately every two weeks (August 4, 17, 31; September 15, 28; and October 15).

### **Trial evaluation**

#### **Westminster and Brookeville**

For the Westminster and Brookeville sites, harvest was every two weeks in July, August, and mid-September, cutting stems to 4-in. of the soil line. Bunches varied from four to seven stems per plant at each harvest. At farm markets these bunches could easily fetch \$5 to \$6/bunch.

The first harvest occurred July 15 and continued at two-week intervals though mid-September. In mid-September, as temperatures became cooler, harvest was extended to every four weeks. By early October the cultivars Devotion, Obsession, Prospera, Passion and Thunderstruck all started to produce flowers. while Amazel Basil started to produce seed heads by late August; the plants stopped producing marketable foliage by early September.

At the Westminster site, downy mildew was detected on September 18 on Aroma with 30% of foliage infected. By October 5 all of the Aroma plants were dead. Passion had 10% of the foliage infected with downy mildew on September 18, but the plants continued

to grow and produce foliage. By the October observation date over 50% of foliage had necrotic spots from the downy mildew, making it unmarketable.

At the Brookeville site, on September 18 we detected downy mildew on Aroma, lemon basil, and Passion plants. The Aroma and lemon basil plants were thoroughly covered in downy mildew within two weeks. The Passion basil showed 20% to 30% of the foliage infected; though the plants continued to grow, they didn't have marketable foliage. Prospera, Obsession, Devotion, Thunderstruck and Dark Opal all were free of downy mildew until heavy frost in early November ended the trial.

#### **Finksburg and CMREC**

On August 6, the first downy mildew infections were seen on Aroma at the Finksburg and CMREC sites. The first symptoms of infection were recorded on Devotion at Finksburg on August 16. By August 21, we found downy mildew had encompassed 50% of the foliage on the Aroma plants at both sites. By September 29, the Aroma foliage was 100% infected with downy mildew at both sites.

Symptoms on Devotion increased to about 50% of the foliage by mid-September. No evidence of Fusarium wilt was seen and no downy mildew symptoms were detected on Prospera, Passion, Obsession or Thunderstruck at the CMREC or Finksburg sites.

The CMREC plants were not as vigorous and were first harvested mid-August with second harvest at the end of September. The reduced vigor is likely due to the poorer soil quality, low organic content in the soil and lack of an irrigation system.



Downy mildew is shown on the underside of an Aroma basil leaf.

### **CMREC-UMF**

At the Upper Marlboro farm site, no symptoms of downy mildew were observed on any basil cultivar during the first harvest (August 4). Second harvest (August 17) showed the cultivars Passion, Devotion and Aroma yielded well. with Passion having significantly greater ( $p < 0.05$ ) marketable yields than Prospera and Obsession. Fusarium wilt of basil was found on a few plants of Thunderstruck at this time. No downy mildew was found on any cultivar on this harvest date or the third harvest date (August 31).

On the fourth harvest (September 15), downy mildew was found on Passion, Obsession, Devotion, Thunderstruck, and Aroma, but not on Prospera. Marketable yields were reduced significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) by 55% for Passion, Obsession, Devotion, and Thunderstruck compared with Prospera. The susceptible cultivar Aroma had its marketable yield reduced by 95% compared with Prospera, and by 85% when compared with Passion, Obsession, Devotion, and Thunderstruck. By the fifth harvest (September 28), only Prospera had any marketable yields. Prospera showed no symptoms of basil downy mildew. The cultivar Aroma was defoliated on this harvest date and while the other cultivars still retained much of



Aroma basil on October 9--highly susceptible to downy mildew.

their foliage. that foliage had basil downy mildew infection, making them unmarketable.

### Overall results

At the Westminster and Brookville sites, the basil cultivars Prospera, Obsession, and Dark Opal over the last three years of trials have performed the best, with production of cuttable stems and resistance to downy mildew. Thunderstruck was added to our trials in 2021 and performed well at

### Basil Downy Mildew Fast Facts

- Basil downy mildew, specific to this crop, can spread rapidly and result in complete yield loss.
- Infection starts on lower leaves and moves up the plant.
- The pathogen that causes basil downy mildew can be transmitted on seed, transplants or fresh-harvested product.
- The downy mildew pathogen doesn't overwinter outdoors in most northern climates. Initial infections in northern locations can start from wind-blown spores moving northward from southern overwintering sites.

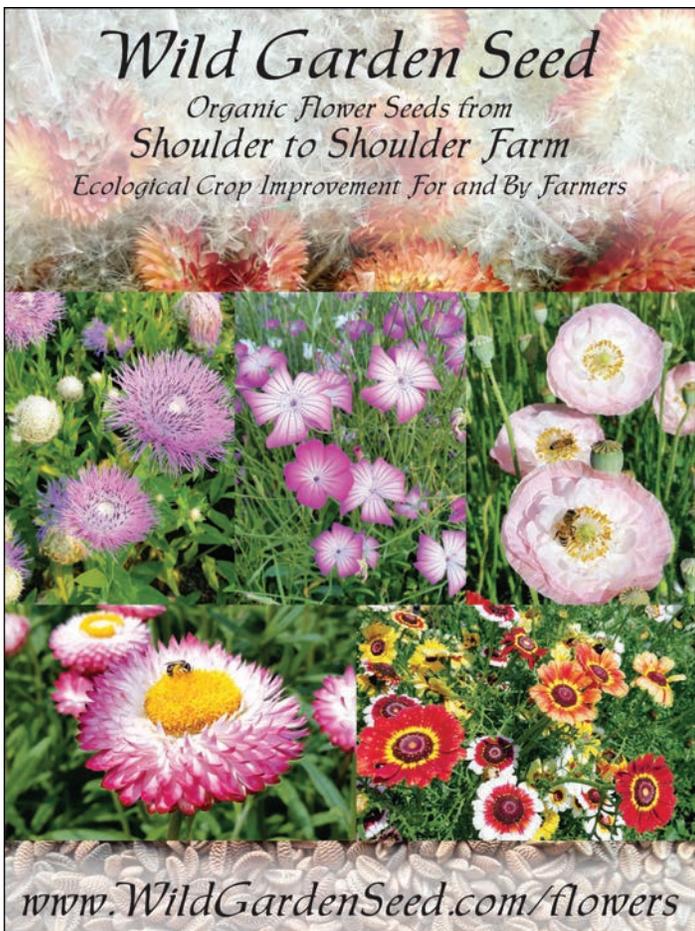
the Brookeville, CMEC, Finksburg, and Westminster sites. Devotion showed moderate downy mildew symptoms at the CMREC and Finksburg sites. The Aroma and lemon basil did well in the early to mid-part of the summer, but succumbed to downy mildew by late summer and continued into the fall with infection and death of plants. Dark Opal was not as productive as the green leaf cultivars, but it also didn't show any damage from downy mildew.

For the Upper Marlboro site in 2021, four of the five cultivars (Passion, Obsession, Devotion, and Thunderstruck) became infected with downy mildew at the same time, as did the susceptible cultivar Aroma. At this study site, only Prospera didn't develop downy mildew symptoms. The infected cultivars had significantly reduced marketable yields at first, and then no marketable yields four weeks after infection. Prospera continued to have good marketable yields throughout the entire study period.

We'll continue these trials in 2022 and add any new downy mildew-resistant cultivars that come onto the market. In 2022, we'll add Emerald Towers to our trial. It's showcased to be resistant to downy mildew and fusarium. This cultivar is also touted to produce flowers until very late in the season, providing more useful foliage.

*Stanton Gill is an Extension Specialist in IPM and Entomology; David Clement is an Extension Specialist in Plant Pathology; Jerry Brust is an Extension Specialist in Commercial Vegetable Production; and Karen Rane is Director of the University of Maryland Plant Clinic at University of Maryland Extension.*

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# *A Farming Retrospective in the Rearview Mirror*

**“Sitting in the shade of my Chinese garden gate. The banner on the left says, “Welcome”. The one on the right says, “Watch your head”. The Virginia bluebells say, “It’s May!”. I say, “Yay!”. Joe Schmitt**

## **Barbara Lamborne**

Like clockwork, the birds woke me up this morning at six. It’s late May, a busy period for farmers. For the last 17 years, I would have been out of bed by that time, starting morning harvest. Instead, I covered my head and went back to sleep for a while longer. These days I have shorter “to do” lists, no crew, and no need to stress over whether the peonies will be in bud when a killing frost comes in April. It feels both delicious and unsettling.

Now that I am retired, I understand the value of managing growth as a farmer, and having a plan that addresses the physical, financial, and emotional implications of retirement. I also realized that decisions you make while you are growing your farm have implications once you stop. I recently spoke with several retired farmers about their retirement experiences. Though they all had different stories, their underlying sentiment is that planning is wise. How and when you end your farming career, and transition your land and lifestyle, are important for retirement happiness.

“How do we get off this merry-go-round? There is no way to stop it!” This was Joe Schmitt’s take on the notion of having an end game while in the thick of farming. Joe was born a flower farmer and he speaks for many farmers who did not have a retirement plan. The idea of stopping was just not on the radar for most of us. Betsy Hitt, who farmed Peregrine Farm, with her husband Alex, in North Carolina for 40 years, points out that there comes a natural time where it makes sense to “Stop the constant pursuit of growing the business.” So what is it that triggers us to think about retirement? For some, life events and exhaustion moved the process along; others had a plan, and a timeline.

Typically, when a farmer gets started, she or he won’t know enough to make that plan, and, as Joe Caputi puts it, “Too much focus on retirement can defeat some of the ambition needed to grow the farm.” I agree with Joe, and as for planning, who knows where you will be 20 years into the future? As business owners, we focus on growth, not usually the end game, but having no plan leaves too much to chance.

## **Deciding To Retire**

In my farmer conversations, I found different factors that drove the retirement process. In some cases, there were financial goals, such as having sufficient IRA investments to combine with Social Security. In other cases, health issues were the drivers, and many of us were just exhausted. Joe Caputi noticed that he was “Starting to look for a hard frost in August.” COVID, and an opportunity to grow hemp, facilitated Chas Gill’s retirement from flower farming. Chas, and his wife Linda, ran Kennebec Flower Farm in Maine for 30 years.

“Retirement can be almost shocking for people who have been extremely busy and self-motivated,” says Lynn Byczynski. Lynn recommends having a plan by the time you are 50 years old. Lynn, the founder of *Growing for Market* magazine and author of *The Flower Farmer*, operated Wild Onion Farm in Kansas for more than 25 years.

Joe Schmitt, always one to seize unplanned opportunities, started his retirement when his grower friend, Jeanie McKewan, was looking for more room

for her flowers on the Fairfield Flowers Co-op truck. Joe saw this as his chance to step back from growing and give Jeanie the space in the van for her stems. Jeanie, who owned Brightflower Farm in Illinois for 16 years, began her own retirement process with a goal to end up with enough money for a down payment on a house. She took into account her husband's job, her age, and Social Security. She started moving towards that goal 4 years before actually retiring.

Health issues made the decision for Joe Caputi to stop farming. His retirement process involved scaling down from three markets to one. He found that having that focus resulted in greater productivity. Joe and his wife Charlotte operated Charlotte's Garden for 11 years in Virginia.

A few years before I retired from flower farming, a young woman named Mallory joined our crew to learn all she could about flower farming, and take that knowledge back to the vegetable farm where she worked. Mallory recognized that I was working at a feverish pace and that I was understandably tired. She asked, what seemed at the time, a strange question. "Barbara, didn't you start farming with an exit strategy?" My response at the time was one of incredulity: Who does that? Last season, I came to realize how insightful Mallory's question was. A retirement strategy is important, and timing is everything.

### How Constant Growth Impacts Retirement

How big we grow our farms impacts the retirement process. The ASCFG and its members inspire all of us to be the best possible farmers. After every ASCFG conference, we are motivated to do more and try new things. "Grow, Baby, Grow" becomes the mantra. One high tunnel is great, so why not build another, and another?

I am fortunate to be neighbors of several wonderful vegetable farms. Early in our farm years, one of them asked us to provide the flower share for their CSA program. Over time, another farm asked us to do the same; these opportunities were great for using flowers throughout the week. In 2012, after seeing the Seattle Wholesale Market, Dave Dowling, Bob Wollam, and I started Capital Flower Growers, a mid-week wholesale business. Living 55 miles from Washington, D.C., we also landed two profitable farmers' markets after several years of trying. Sales were great, but down time was scarce. The

lesson learned is that desirable and diverse sales channels are awesome, but too much success can cause burn-out, and maybe, early and unplanned retirement.

Growing your farm increases the need for more infrastructure and supplies that can add to the burden of retirement. Structures you buy or build, and where you put them, become "stuff" to store, sell, or remove when you stop.



Chas Gill

The placement of greenhouses, tunnels or other infrastructure, for example, may impact the market value of the farm to a future owner, who may or may not have a need for them. In our case, we built a processing center that we call "the hub", a covered flower processing space with two coolers. It was a game changer for our farm, and for convenience, it is close to our house. It isn't, however, very attractive, and it could be a hard sell to a potential buyer if we get to that point.

### Make That Plan!

Planning for retirement in advance is wise and practical, but is usually too far into the future for new farmers to contemplate. Financial plans, however, must be made as soon as possible—at least by year five. Three to five years is enough time to understand what you have gotten yourself into with your farming life. For many growers, it is the point when your farm may be, or beginning to be, self-sufficient. Start saving as soon as you possibly can, even if you can contribute only small amounts—every bit helps. Relying on Social Security for retirement may not be enough. SEP (simplified employee pension plan) IRAs are a great way for self-employed people to save towards retirement. If you don't understand the



Jeanie McKewan



Alex and Betsy Hitt

different retirement savings options available to you, be sure to speak with someone who can help you decide what may be best for your situation.

There are many things to consider as you make that retirement plan. Do you want to sell the business or the farm? Do you intend to keep your farm operational by getting a solid crew on board that you “just” oversee? Do you want to have another person farm your land? Do you have structures like high tunnels to sell? Do you want to maintain perennials? These decisions take time to figure out. Personally, I have come to see that this first year of not farming is more like a year of de-farming—selling structures, equipment, tools, supplies, and perennials.

Selling the farm and land could be a clean approach to closing down your business. Both Jeanie McKewan and Lynn Byczynski sold their farms. A challenge is finding someone who can afford the purchase on a farmer’s income. If you have a buyer who needs the help, perhaps you could provide financing; monthly payments would be helpful to cover your expenses in re-

tirement. If selling is the goal, the ideal situation is selling to a flower farmer who would benefit from all of your perennials. Dave Dowling suggests, “Either way, when you sell, walk away and don’t look back. Don’t let it bother you what happens once you are gone. Don’t be so attached that you can’t give it up.”

If you don’t want to sell, and have a farmer you trust, consider a lease arrangement: stay on your land and let someone else farm it. This can be a good idea, but having other people on your land every day is not for everyone. Another approach is to do a “work-to-own agreement.” This was Betsy Hitt’s plan, but the grower decided after 8 years that it was not the path she wanted. Betsy and Alex wisely had a Plan B to scale back their farm to a size that just the two of them could manage until they were eligible for Medicare.

If you don’t sell or lease the farm, what do you do with infrastructures and supplies? “Things like high tunnel frames go from being an asset to a maintenance nightmare as soon as you quit using them. Deer fence also falls into the same category,” Betsy points out. Any structures or supplies that you want to sell require organizing, pricing, and advertising. Consider waiting to sell stuff right away, because you never know what you may need. All the growers I spoke with are still growing something, whether vegetables, hemp, berries, fruit trees, or some of their favorite flowers.

I decided to sell most of my perennials. In the fall, I offered a you-dig sale of peonies, dahlias, and bulb plants. This was a great way to share a piece of Greenstone with our wonderful customers, family, friends, and other flower farmers. In the spring, we sold many of our other perennials. The remaining plants are going into landscaping around our house, something we have dreamed about for years!

Not everyone makes it as a farmer. It is not uncommon to discover that farming is not for you. Some growers end their farming career because they

find that it is just too much labor, or they simply cannot make a profit. Marion Baker owned Duchess of Gloucester Farm in Virginia, and gave it 10 years. An honest discussion with her accountant about her lack of profit moved Marion to quit farming, despite loving what she was doing.

### Life After Farming

Farming is an all-in lifestyle, usually leaving little time for fun. As part of your retirement planning, keep a list of fun things you do not have time to do while farming. At the top of Chas Gill’s list was being able to go fishing in May after 30 years of not being able to do so. For others, fun includes traveling, hanging out with grandkids, growing vegetables, writing, learning how to play guitar, enjoying van life, volunteering, political action, experimenting with plant breeding, cooking, pottery, and getting to that stack of books you have yet to read.

While farming, there was little time, and not much need, for going to the gym to keep fit. As farmers, our bodies were in constant motion and strain. In some cases, those activities, over time, had negative impacts. Repeated leaning over to harvest, without engaging enough of the right muscles (abs, glutes, lats), can result in distorted muscle memory. Carpal tunnel syndrome and other injuries caused by the repetitive motions of cutting flowers are common ailments of cut flower growers. Part of a happy retirement includes finding ways to retrain our muscles to do the right things and create an intentional approach to getting enough physical activity.

If you stay on your property, how will you manage the property? Having enough land to farm, and then stopping, means you will have plenty of areas that will need mowing and weed whacking. We plan to strategically let areas go, and in some places try to create pollinator meadows. My crusade to get bindweed and Johnson grass under control is part of our strategy.

## What We Miss

Customers and an abundance of flowers are what we miss the most. Each week for years, either at our markets, or at floral shops, we connected with customers who regularly relied on our flowers. Markets were times to hear about Deb's new job, Jay's family adventures in the RV, and Diane's health issues. Customers learned about farming, too, supporting us in times of weather challenges, crop failures, and each new flower story. As farmers, we developed close relationships with other growers in our agriculture community. Those relationships provided camaraderie that supported us throughout the seasons, particularly during challenging times.

While farming, I spent many hours talking with my flower farming buddy, Jeanie McKewan. We shared crop plans, growing techniques, and provided shoulders to cry on when things got tough. Now that both of us are mentoring new growers, we get to continue our farm-related conversations, and we both enjoy teaching what we have learned as growers. Sharing our experiences allows new farmers to bypass at least some of the inevitable pitfalls. I also miss many of the crew members who worked at Greenstone. I enjoy hearing from them and how they appreciate what they learned—hard work, dedication, growing techniques, flexibility, and the importance of teamwork.



Dennis Fuze and Barbara Lamborne with Gus and Ruby

Looking back, Mallory was wise to suggest having an exit strategy, eventually. I hope this retrospective helps encourage farmers to actively manage their growth and create a plan for retirement. Once on the other side of all that effort, there is fun to be had.

We are still de-farming and hope to embrace the after-farm-life soon. We look forward to renovating our market van and trying out van life with our Labradors, Gus and Ruby. Meanwhile, we are slowing down, growing vegetables, a few flowers, and enjoying Wordle and the Merlin bird app. We also just can't help ourselves, so we continue to grow some of Babz' Bodacious Berries.

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*Barbara Lamborne created Greenstone Fields in 2006, and ran it with her husband Dennis Fuze until 2021.*

*Ruby and Gus continue to rule the land.*

*Contact Barb at [greenstonefields.flowers@gmail.com](mailto:greenstonefields.flowers@gmail.com)*

To learn more about Betsy and Alex Hitts' retirement plan, check out the video "Transitioning Your Farm to the Next Generation" in the Learning Portal in the Members Only section of [ascfg.org](http://ascfg.org)



# Ideas for Improving Farm Profits

Julie Martens Forney

We asked four flower farmers which crop is their biggest money maker. Their answers included plant names, growing strategies, marketing tips, and a host of other secrets to success.

Flower farming isn't a cookie cutter business. There's no one-size-fits-all plan that works for every farm, turning seeds and plugs into fields of cash. That's just not how it works. Ask 10 different flower growers their best strategy to turn a profit, and you'll get 10 very different answers. That's the beauty of this business. All it takes is one creative idea custom fit to a market to make the margins that fuel a thriving business.

We talked with four growers, in four different markets, running four different business strategies to find out what makes their flower farm flourish. The answers are as varied as the growers. Check out their stories.

**Shelly and Brad Brubaker**  
**Little Creek Valley**  
**West Manchester, Ohio**

**The basics:** Started in 2011, Little Creek Valley is an 1880 farmstead that serves picturesque views, complete with a meandering creek. It's a family-run business. These days Brad handles the field work, while Shelly runs the office. Together they plan everything from product mix to next week's field chores. Their five children have grown up on the farm and are very much a part of the business.

**Business model:** Brad, with one of the children in tow, runs two florist routes twice a week in the Cincinnati-Dayton area. "We have 30 to 40 florist clients we serve," Shelly says. "The majority are event florists, but all have walk-in business, too." The farm also sells bouquets at the weekly farmers' market in Oxford, Ohio, a university town. A small percentage of flowers sells through a small local farmers' collective.



Brad Brubaker, co-owner of Little Creek Valley, makes florist runs two days a week. He always takes one of the couple's five children with him on deliveries. The integration of family with customers has helped the farm cement relationships with their florists.



Lisianthus is popular with Little Creek Valley's florist customers in the Cincinnati-Dayton area.



Little Creek Valley farm out-competes Canadian flower growers by raising tulips that don't ship well, including parrot, double, and fringe tulips.



Every member of the family is involved at Little Creek Valley, which also grows strawberries and raspberries to help supplement flower sales at summer farmers' markets. Florist customers also request berries when the Brubakers make their weekly deliveries.

"With different outlets, we can use all of our crops," Shelly explains. "We're moving a good bit of product just because of how we molded our business to fit our outlet. The farmers' market works good at the end of the week because as we harvest for that, it gets the beds back in shape for cutting for our florist routes at the start of the following week."

**What makes us money:** "Our clients expect something different and unique from us, something they can't get from the local floral wholesaler," Shelly shares. "We grow a specialty crop that doesn't ship well—and it's fresh. We strive to only keep flowers in the cooler overnight. That's our niche."

For instance, Little Creek can't compete with Canadian-grown snapdragons, so they focus on snap varieties that don't ship well, like the double-petal 'Madame Butterfly' or open-face, butterfly-type 'Chantilly.' Tulips are another mon-eymaker, again with a focus on unusual varieties that don't ship well, including parrot, fringe and double tulips. "Our florists can buy Canadian straight French tulips for the same price we'd pay for the bulb alone," Shelly says. "We let those big Canadian growers do what they want, and we do what we can."

"We make our margins on variety selection and uniqueness. For example, every July through October we have lisianthus, and our florists actually book wed-

dings around that crop. It's something they know they can get and use." Other crops that do well with Little Creek's florists include dahlias, sunflowers, celosias, and ornamental grasses.

The other secret to Little Creek's success is customer service. "We interact personally with our florists every week through email, text or a phone call," Shelly says. "I take the time to interact with our customers, and that makes them feel important to us. We know them and the type of work they do."

Over time, the customers have gotten to know the Brubakers, watching the children grow through the years. "That personal interaction we have with our florists and farmers' market customers has helped our business be successful," Shelly shares.

**Christian Ingalls  
Daisy Dukes Flower Farm  
Papaaloo, Hawaii on the Big Island**

**The basics:** A full-time first grade teacher, Christian Ingalls started growing flowers to sell in 2019. Three years into flower farming, she "can't keep up with the demand. Every single stem is taken," she says. Christian is aiming high with flower farming, setting financial goals that will permit her—eventually—to farm full-time.

**Business model:** Wholesale direct to florists accounts for 50 to 60 percent of Daisy Dukes' business, with grower's choice buckets bringing in the lion's share of sales. After cutting flowers early in the morning, Christian drops custom-labelled buckets at florists on her way to school twice a week.

She also sells to DIY brides, event hosts, and local jewelry stores, and hosts u-pick in summer during the peak cutting season. "The u-pickers get what's left over in the field, taking things that we don't cut." Christian explains. "Everything is used on the farm—sometimes the u-pickers even

put weeds in their bouquets. We've got to maximize everything we grow—nothing should be going to waste.”

Recently, Daisy Dukes has started shipping flowers to other Hawaiian islands via air cargo. Her next venture is a flower studio at the farm for processing and arranging flowers, storing supplies, and hosting workshops. “We’re working on marrying all the different aspects of the business. My goal is to fill all the floral needs and niches, while extending the business as much as I can,” she explains.

**What makes us money:** Grower’s choice buckets are Christian’s biggest earner, and she calls snapdragons (available year-round in Hawaii’s island climate) her gateway flower. “Once florists try those, they’re hooked on my flowers,” she says. Another one of her big money-makers is zinnias, which she grows in six 60-foot rows each year. “I’ve had other growers tell me they can’t sell zinnias because everyone grows them. I say if you mix it and market it the right way, you can sell it,” Christian says.

She calls zinnias her “cheap way of having the rainbow all summer long, with very little investment. You don’t have to grow that many to have a mil-

lion stems in every color. Then, when someone wants something dark purple in the middle of summer, I cut ‘Benary Giant Purple’ zinnias and pull in other things that go with the palette. Dark purple lisianthus is too much of a risk in summer, but zinnias—that’s easy.”

Christian’s favorite zinnia varieties include ‘Queen Lime’ (“that ombre with a hint of green ties other flowers together easily,” she says), heirloom Oklahoma Series, and Benary’s Giant Series in every color. For bluish tones suitable for weddings, she grows ‘Senorita’ zinnia from Select Seeds, and heirloom ‘Isabellina,’ “the cutest, creamiest ivory. Every time I use it, everyone goes crazy. It’s super stunning in wedding bouquets,” she says. Daisy Dukes’ zinnias sell wholesale at \$1 per stem, with a 25 percent mark-up for retail (\$1.25-\$1.50 per stem).

“I’m determined to do things in different ways to make profits,” Christian shares. “I’m constantly thinking how else can I get myself out there?” Her latest marketing project makes a profit off those short zinnia stems that first form on each plant. It’s a bento box stuffed with edible flowers. “I love making botanical cocktails and using edible flowers at home,” she says. “Here on the

island we have so many resorts, weddings, and events. I realized that edible flowers is a whole new market for me,” Christian says.

She sourced the compostable clamshell-type bento boxes through Sustainable Island Products. “It’s a new product for them, and I ordered a case,” she says. “There’s no rubber band—the box just snaps shut.” She takes the box into the field and literally cuts flowers into it. The flowers don’t have to be washed or conditioned. It’s cut and go.

A sticker on the box features the Daisy Dukes logo, along with the required instructions, “Rinse before use.” Customers include chefs, restaurants, artists, and DIYers who want fresh edible flowers for ice cube flowers or events. Regulations for edible flowers vary by state, so if this is a market you want to tap, do your homework.

“Flower bentos are a seasonal product, so the mix varies. I have multiple standing orders for bentos at this point, with \$100 invested in the boxes and a \$200 inkless thermal label printer,” she says. “At \$10 a box, I’ll make a profit. I’m determined to do things in different ways and use every bit of what I grow to make profits.”



At Daisy Dukes Flower Farm, owner Christian Ingalls grows a rainbow of zinnias, which she’s dubbed “Zinniaville.” Having many different colored zinnias allows her to meet any color request through summer, from dark purple to ombre antique shades.

The heirloom ‘Oklahoma’ zinnia series are one of Christian Ingalls’ favorites to grow. This market bouquet includes ‘Oklahoma Salmon,’ a pale bluish hue popular with brides.

Christian started selling edible flower bento boxes in March—and sold her 100th one three months later. The package is compostable plastic made from corn. Hawaii law requires each box list the origin source address and instructions.

Bento boxes stuffed with edible flowers are a seasonal product—the mix varies weekly. In the field, Ingalls cuts blooms directly into the container. She sells the boxes for \$10 to local resorts, private chefs and artists.

**Erin McMullen**  
**Rain Drop Farms**  
**Philomath, Oregon**

**The basics:** Erin and Aaron McMullen have been flower farming for 20 years, with both of them full-time on the farm for the last three seasons (Erin has always been full-time on the farm). Their farm endeavor actually took root with vegetables, but soaring local property prices led them to switch gears and grow flowers, which “we can pack into the small space so we can make a profit,” Erin says.

The bonus is that growing flowers isn’t monotonous. “One reason I love this job is that every year is a clean slate. You get to try something different, applying the lessons from the past to the future. You see how you can shift.”

**Business model:** The primary market for Rain Drop Farms is the wholesale floral markets in Portland and Seattle. Combined, they account for 60 to 65 percent of sales. Grocery sales gobble another large slice of Rain Drop’s flower pie, with CSA subscriptions and farm-based event design also rounding out the farm’s receipts. “I have a couple of staff members with a lot of design background, so we do events only because we like to do them. But they have to be the right fit,” Erin says.

Rain Drop Farms has started to analyze the things they’re doing and what they’re growing. “It’s exciting to do that, and it’s overwhelming,” Erin shares. “It’s hard to get down to the nitty gritty of whether or not something is profitable.”

Add to that the fact that nuances with revenue streams can make it hard to pin down profitability of a crop. “Some things we grow are not profitable in one revenue stream but are in another, so it’s a balancing act,” she adds. “It’s so important to remember that you can always change things.

When I can break out of thinking ‘this is what we’ve always done,’ it’s a boon for the farm.”

**What makes us money:** In terms of volume and sheer numbers, dahlias are the biggest crop for Rain Drop Farms, with 35,000 in the ground this year. The farm’s success with dahlias hinges on several facts. First, the climate is amenable. “Dahlias just grow really well here,” Erin says.

Second, the farm focuses on extending the season. “We do everything we can to maximize the shoulder season with dahlias. We plant in hoops and plant early. We started harvesting dahlias out of our hoops in early June, while flower farmer friends further east won’t harvest until August. That timing creates an advantage.”

The farm’s diversified markets allow them to move a large volume of dahlias. Lastly, Erin is “fastidious about our collection as far as growing to our customer base. Variety selection is important with dahlias, as is harvest timing and postharvest care. All of those things together allow us to have a thriving dahlia market share.”

She also adds that dahlias dry beautifully, which provides another way to increase profits on this crop. “I haven’t been able to dry dahlias in volume simply because by the time they’re blooming the thought of getting them hung and dried is overwhelming,” she says. “But I really think that one of the keys to having a profitable crop of any kind is being able to maximize our use of them. I’m looking for crops we can use in multiple stages and multiple markets.”



Dahlias are the big moneymaker at Rain Drop Farms in Oregon. Erin McMullen uses several strategies to maximize revenue on dahlias, including growing in hoop houses to extend the season.

One versatile crop that provides multiple avenues of revenue is eucalyptus. Rain Drop sells it fresh in straight bunches through their wholesale outlets, in consumer bunches at the grocery store and in CSA bouquets and event work. They also sell it dried. “Our eucalyptus is in the field. We have some winter die-off (we’re Zone 8b), but most of ours comes back every year,” she says. “Variety selection is important with eucalyptus. Some are hardier than others, so it pays to research this.”

Erin finds that “there are plenty of crops we grow that we would never have thought to sell in grocery or dry, but pushing the envelope of our expectation of crops brings revenue.” In early June, nonstop rain created a 2- to 3-week lag in flowers, but all of the

greens were “moving like hotcakes. They’re not the flashiest things, not the most glamorous, but they are consistent producers that give us a consistent revenue through fall,” she explains.

Rain Drop’s greens include raspberry foliage, scented geraniums, eucalyptus, and mint. Once stems harden on eucalyptus, the farm cuts from the end of July through Valentine’s Day, while raspberries and geraniums provide stems until October.

**Gretchen Langston & Gaylene Moldt  
Blooms Colorado  
Northern Colorado**

**The basics:** Sisters-in-law Gretchen Langston and Gaylene Moldt broke ground on their flower-growing venture in 2017. This year they honed production to 4 acres, focusing on crops that make money. Gretchen handles crop planning, variety selection, and building terrific soil, while Gaylene tackles sales and marketing, along with cultivating lasting relationships with clients.

**Business model:** The majority of Blooms’ flowers move through local wholesale markets to high-end event designers. Florists can order crops from the

farm’s website or the Colorado Flower Collective, selecting delivery or pick-up options. Fresh-from-the-farm bouquets sell direct to consumers through a local grocery store, as well as at farmers’ markets. Workshops held at local venues round out the farm’s revenue stream.

Gretchen tells the now-familiar tale of how the one-two punch of 2020 pandemic shutdowns combined with supply chain collapse propelled demand for local flowers. “Everyone wanted local flowers,” she recalls. “Anything we were growing, we were selling. The next year, we had to pivot again to what works in a more normal market. It’s been a ride, and great for sales and getting the word out about local flowers.”

**What makes us money:** Space is not a limiting factor for Blooms, so cut foliage and perennials have become the top earners. “We’re not as tied to seed starting and succession planting as more annual-centric farms,” Gretchen explains. The farm’s big moneymakers include spring bulbs: tulips, daffodils, and muscari. “We don’t really have spring in Colorado—it’s here and gone in a flash,” she says. “We go with bulbs because they can often take the cold snaps and still flower.”

Peonies also bring solid revenue, with the farm currently growing about 600 plants. Crops have a slight lull in late June, and perennial season kicks into high gear in July. The crops that thrive in Colorado’s xeric environment also sell well to event florists who have extremely busy wedding seasons, due to the state’s destination wedding status. “Yarrow is a moneymaker, along with kniphofia (in fabulous colors, like lime) and coneflower,” Gretchen says. “Our perennial field is pushing 3,000 plants, all of which are xeric. If it is a water hog, we don’t grow it.”

Woodies also play a big role in sales for Blooms, including viburnum, elderberry, and Nanking cherry. The No. 1 seller is ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*). “We continue to add more each year because every single bunch we offer is snapped up by designers,” Gretchen explains. Currently the farm tends about 400 ninebark shrubs overall, with new ones added each year. The variety list features Coppertina®, Summer Wine®, Summer Wine® Black, Diabolo®, Ginger Wine®, and Festivus Gold®.



Summer Wine® ninebark pairs beautifully with pink dahlias. Florists love the contrast that ninebark foliage brings to bouquets. Colorado Blooms sells every single bunch of ninebark they cut.



Perennials and woodies are the key crops at Colorado Blooms, where space isn’t at a premium. This bouquet features ninebark (the farm’s No. 1 crop), Oriental poppies and peonies.



Ninebark is the top seller at Blooms Colorado, where the plants thrive in the xeric conditions but definitely need a deer fence. The farm’s trick to success is not cutting in the flowering stage, but waiting to harvest the straight shoots that form after bloom.

The farm uses the largest ninebark starts they can source from wholesalers, and cutting begins Year 1. “With an early June planting, we find a plant is typically ready for cuts in early September,” Gretchen says. The plants produce long, straight shoots, and cutting in the first year doesn’t seem to affect the plant in terms of production. “Designers tend to request the largest stems around the end of August into early September for large installations,” she adds.

Ninebark is gorgeous in bloom, but Gretchen doesn’t cut in the flowering stage. “If we cut then, we take off so much of the new growth. We want the plant to get going and use all its energy to send out new shoots,” she adds. “If we do spring cuts, we get much less of the plant for less time in the season.” Instead, the farm focuses on straight foliage cuts from late June (on established plants) until autumn frost kills the plant. Gretchen gleaned this technique from an ASCFG live learning session. “We always learn so much from other more tenured growers,” she says.

Ninebark thrives in Colorado’s climate, and with its ability to ring up sales, the farm isn’t planning to scale back production. “When we use the stems ourselves for market bouquets, we can see why everyone loves it so much,” Gretchen says. “The depth of color, leaf form, and sturdy nature of the foliage makes it a perfect choice for bouquets!”

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*Julie Martens Forney is an avid gardener and freelance writer who’s been writing about flower and plant production, horticulture research and consumer gardening for over 30 years.*

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## Overwintering Eucalyptus in Colder Climates

*Funded by the ASCFG Grower Grant Program*

Jamie Rohda, Harvest Home Flowers, Waverly, Nebraska

This report is a little late in coming, because from my perspective I considered it an utter failure, but learning often comes in the failing!

Here in eastern Nebraska, zone 5, we have grown eucalyptus as an annual for many years. I had heard of some successes with overwintering eucalyptus in zone 6 so thought I'd try to push it a bit and see if we could get any to overwinter here.

In 2020 we were awarded an ASCFG Grower Grant to help pay for the costs of a small trial. We worked with Ed Coughlin from Southern Eucs to pick out some of the hardiest varieties he thought might stand the best chance of surviving here. We originally planned to plant half of each variety in our hoophouse, but because of some soil issues in them we decided not to risk it.

In May we planted the varieties 'Funky Monkey', 'Cab Sav', 'Grace', and 'Sheila' in our outside beds. They all grew beautifully that summer and come fall we trimmed them back, mulched heavily with leaves, constructed a low tunnel over the bed, and covered it with plastic. We did get some incredibly low temps that winter with a low of minus 30 at one point, which is pretty much unheard of for us. We also had great snow cover most of the winter, which is also not normal for us, and we hoped that would help insulate them from the cold.

Unfortunately, we did not have a single plant survive.

In 2021 we tried planting some of our favorite variety, 'Silver Drop', in our high tunnel since we were pretty sure that variety would not be available in 2022. We also planted some 'Baby Blue' and 'Willow' both in the tunnel and outside. In the fall we mulched with leaves and covered both the outside plants and those in the hoophouse, some with plastic and some with frost fabric.

This spring (2022), we anxiously awaited warmer weather in hopes that some would survive since we'd had a much milder winter. As I write this, the first of June, I have seen a few plants, both in the tunnel and outside, that have survived. I've not done an actual count but I'm guessing 5%



or fewer of the plants show any signs of life, and honestly they are no bigger at this point than the new transplants that we've put in this spring. And there doesn't appear to be much difference between those in the tunnel and those outside. It also does not appear to be one variety over another that survived better—just a variety of scattered ones made it.

At this point I'm going to be content to grow our eucalyptus as an annual and just be perennially jealous of those who can get it to overwinter!

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<p><b>MAY</b> <b>17</b> — 1:00 PM</p>	<p><b>Biological Control of Whitefly on Poinsettias. Start Your Crop Correctly</b></p> <p><i>Speaker: Dr. Rose Buitenhuis, Vineland Research and Innovation Center</i></p> <p><i>Sponsors: BASF and BioWorks</i></p>	<p><b>SEPT</b> <b>27</b> — 1:00 PM</p>	<p><b>New Technology and Pesticides for Flower Crops</b></p> <p><i>Speaker: Dr. JC Chong, Clemson University</i></p>
<p><b>JUNE</b> <b>21</b> — 1:00 PM</p>	<p><b>Developing an Integrated Pest Control Program for Whitefly on Poinsettia</b></p> <p><i>Speaker: Dr. Sarah Jandricic, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture</i></p> <p><i>Sponsors: BASF and BioWorks</i></p>	<p><b>OCT</b> <b>18</b> — 1:00 PM</p>	<p><b>Finish your Poinsettia Crop Successfully</b></p> <p><i>Speaker: Dr. Chris Currey, Iowa State University</i></p>
<p><b>JULY</b> <b>12</b> — 1:00 PM</p>	<p><b>Reducing Pesticides in Surface and Subsurface Irrigation Water</b></p> <p><i>Speaker: Dr. Tom Fernandez, Michigan State University</i></p>	<p><b>NOV</b> <b>29</b> — 1:00 PM</p>	<p><b>Flowering and Forcing of Perennials</b></p> <p><i>Speaker: Dr. John Erwin, University of Maryland</i></p> <p><i>Sponsors: Ball Seed and Darwin Perennials</i></p>
<p><b>AUG</b> <b>23</b> — 1:00 PM</p>	<p><b>DIF and Graphical Tracking</b></p> <p><i>Speaker: Dr. Royal Heins, Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University</i></p>	<p><b>DEC</b> <b>20</b> — 1:00 PM</p>	<p><b>Viruses in Flower Crops</b></p> <p><i>Speaker: Dr. John Hammond, Research Plant Pathologist, USDA</i></p> <p><i>Sponsors: Ball Seed and Syngenta</i></p>

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## NORTHEAST

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts,  
New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island,  
and Vermont



### Bailey Hale

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Orchids make up the largest plant family in the world and range across much of the globe. Many of the more familiar types are native to tropical areas, but there are orchids that grow on trees, in bogs, on rocks, in soil, and very likely some that grow right where you live.

Orchids have been an important cut flower for many decades and it was common to find cut orchid growers as recently as the 1990s. Increased heating costs and competition from imports made commercial cut orchid production less viable. Floral trends deemed orchids old-fashioned as well, and they fell by the wayside. There are parts of Florida, Hawaii, and California that have been traditionally well suited to commercial orchid production, but with a changing climate and warmer winters there is a good possibility that more of us can grow orchids than we previously would have imagined. I have dabbled in orchids off and on for the last 20 years, but in the last year, thanks to a new heated conservatory on our house, I'm fully addicted once more. Commercial cut orchids may not be the most logical choice for Northern Vermont, but there are in fact species that tolerate cool temperatures, and even those that are fully hardy even in zone 3. Here is an overview of some of the traditional favorites as well as some worth considering for the true plant nerd.

**Cattleya** "Corsage orchid" is the traditional name of this group of orchids, and in fact they were locally produced and very popular all over the U.S. even in the 50s and 60s. Like dahlias they fell out of fashion, and deserve a renaissance. The range of colors and sizes has increased dramatically in the last 50 years and there is untapped potential in this genus.

**Cymbidium** Cymbidiums are still commercially produced globally, mostly in Holland but also New Zealand and parts of South America. There are some folks dabbling with them in the U.S. as well. They are commonly seen in Easter corsages, but are equally at home in modern and garden style floral design. They have the advantage of preferring cool winters, so the heating cost may be more manageable for those in more northerly climes. In fact, they require a cool winter to bloom, so are a poor choice for those with very warm winters.



Cattleya

**Dendrobium** Dendrobiums were the epitome of late 90s elegance! It would be hard to count the number of cascading dendrobium wedding bouquets I made back in the day. They tend to have small flowers borne on long sprays. The individual flowers are the perfect little boutonniere bloom. Dendrobiums are produced in huge numbers in Thailand for export which has made them very affordable on the international market. There is still cut production in Hawaii as well. I would look at other genera if making money is a goal. This is an enormous genus, so there are probably species and hybrids out there with cutting potential that have yet to be brought to market.

**Oncidium** These orchids and their hybrids range in size from very tiny to 3-4" across, often borne on airy branching sprays. Similar to dendrobiums, they are in large-scale production internationally and can be quite cheap. Some of the more advanced hybrids have untapped potential, and many of them can take a cool winter.

**Vanda** One of my favorites! Vandas bloom in spikes of 6 to 9, or more, flowers, each reaching 3-5" across. While they are produced in Thailand for export, the best have been grown in Holland for the last 15-20 years and sell for \$3-5 per bloom (making them as much as \$45-50 per stem!). Vandas love heat and need to be kept warm even at night, so they aren't so practical for the North. They do very well in Florida and with minimal heat would love the coastal South. They come in an exceptional range of colors and sizes. Some smaller-flowered Vanda hybrids are commonly imported at low prices, but the large-flowered types still command good prices.

**Paphiopedilum** The Asian lady slipper orchid is seen commonly as a potted plant, but is also used as a cut flower. They are grown in Asia, Holland, and Italy for cutting, and in Hawaii for potted plants. Their exotic shapes and long-lasting



Vanda

characteristics make them a captivating addition to floral design. On a recent trip to Madeira, Portugal I was shocked to find them being used as a Christmas cut flower! They were for sale on every corner, and many patios across the island have several pots of them happily blooming.

**Phalaenopsis** It's hard to go into a supermarket or Walmart without seeing a Phalaenopsis. Their success is a detriment to their marketability as an upscale cut flower, but there is nothing more elegant than a long spray of white Phalaenopsis. They are being grown in Vietnam for export at a very high standard. Some of the smaller hybrids in novelty colors may find a niche in the cut flower market. They are long lasting, easily programmable, and widely available.

**Cypripedium** This genus occurs across all of the northern hemisphere. If you have lady slippers in your woods, these are Cypripediums. DO NOT CUT THEM. They are very slow



Disa

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What's great about orchids? They tend to be long lasting, they can be used as individual flowers or used as entire sprays of flowers. They last well out of water. They are available in every color of the rainbow as well as black and white, and many have intoxicating fragrances.

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growing and quite endangered in most of their range. That said, newer hybrids between North American and Asian species are proving to be vigorous and easily cultivated in shady wooded areas. This is a crop just waiting to be commercialized. They are fully hardy in northern conditions.

**Disa** These rare beauties are finicky, requiring cool conditions all year. They must also be stood in pure water (rainwater or reverse osmosis) at all times, as they come from bog-like areas of South Africa. If you can meet their needs, there is a market to be had for Disa. They can last more than a month after cutting, their colors are simply outrageous, in shades of orange, red, hot pink, yellow and white, and their shape is unlike anything else I can think of. There have been attempts to grow Disa commercially in Holland, New Zealand, South Africa and the Pacific Northwest of the U.S., but to date nobody has fully cracked the code. I'm working on it, but I hope somebody else beats me to it.

There is never a reason to be bored with flower growing! The only limitation is our imagination. And winter!

## MID-ATLANTIC

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



### Michelle Elston

Roots Cut Flower Farm  
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### Saving Plume Celosia Seed

Plume celosia, one of my most favorite crops to grow, seems to be having its moment of favor in the flower world.

We've been selecting and saving our own seed for about 15 years, thanks to encouragement from Frank and Pamela Arnosky. We now have some of the best colors and strongest strains that work great for our climate and clientele. Our plume patch is regularly as tall as me, with huge fluffy heads. We do both transplants and direct seeded, with a total of 12 successions. Transplants do better early when the soil is cool; direct seeded plantings are stronger once the soil is warm.

You can also easily save your own plume seed, and now is the time to be doing it! While "free seed" is a clear benefit, the greater one is that you can choose what colors and forms work best for your market. Since we do supermarkets, we love bold colors and bright, huge heads. Design clients may prefer softer colors and more wheat-type forms. Our original seed stocks were 'Pampas Plume', 'Forest Fire', and the Sunday series.

Here is our easy process:

1. Flag the best and strongest plants in your planting. We use neon flagging tape to wrap around the flower head.
2. Resist the very strong urge to harvest these stems all season. Warning: it can become rather painful to pass by these beauties every single harvest day, but just keep reminding yourself that next year you will be cutting hundreds of that beautiful color and form.
3. After the head matures and you can see the black seeds at least halfway up the head, harvest it into a paper bag, turning the head upside down. Label the bags with descriptors of your variety, but you can put similar heads together in one bag. Give them whatever name helps you differentiate. We have orange, yellow, bright pink, magenta, crazy crested sorbet shades, crested burgundy, and a few others. It's important to harvest the seed when there is still enough color on the flower head to be able to label it. Plus, if you wait too long, all the seeds will start dropping on the ground.

4. Hang all your paper bags somewhere to continue drying. Anywhere you hang dried flowers is fine for this, a hot barn, for example.

5. On a cold day in fall, clean all the seed. We start by shaking the heads into the paper bag, and then combing the heads with our fingers. A few wire strainers, a flour sifter, and a box fan all help separate the chaff from the fine black seeds.

6. We store all our seed in paper envelopes, because we don't always get them 100% dry. If you are able to guarantee no moisture, you could also use plastic bags. Label with year and name.

7. I do find that viability is not as high as commercial seed. When we seed these, we either do a 3-4 x seeding in a flat or do a "pinch" in each direct-seeded hole. The beauty of saving your own seed is that you can very quickly have hundreds of thousands of seeds. You can afford to be generous when seeding to compensate for reduced viability.

Wishing you great luck as you develop the best celosia seed money cannot buy!



## SOUTHEAST

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



### Linda Doan

Aunt Willie's Wild Flowers  
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### Let's Talk Mother's Day!



I hate seeding trays in the dog days of summer but I love having buckets of flowers in early May. Mother's Day is our single largest bouquet sales day year after year, and the more flowers we have available, the more bouquets and the more profit.

Even if we miss Mother's Day, May seems to be the new June for weddings, and the more flowers any time in May, the better. Before I learned about fall-seeding cool flowers (thanks to Lisa Ziegler and her practical and complete book *Cool Flowers*), I seeded trays in January or February, and had lovely blooms mid to late May, just AFTER Mother's Day. In zone 6b-7, by seeding fall AND midwinter, I can have successions that last from April or early May through June and even into July, and by then most all of the warm-season annuals have kicked in. If I miss the January-February seeding, June can be what I call the "green time" when I have lots of green but not much blooming.

If I'm being honest, I don't do as much seeding for fall transplants now as I could, because buying plugs to plant in early to mid-November guarantees I have a good product to go in the ground. My attention to my plug trays in the heat of summer just isn't what it should be. Most of my fall planting goes into our unheated high tunnel, but could be planted in the field with similar, though later, results. Those trays that are going outside rather than under cover, I start a week or two earlier as they'll be at the mercy of worse weather, and a larger plant seems to do better outside. And planting some plugs under cover and some in the field gives another natural succession. Weather is the one thing we flower farmers can't control, and that can speed up or slow down spring crops, but for us this year, we had a cold winter and a cool spring and still had plenty of cool flowers by an early May 8th Mother's Day.

Most of our cool flowers are grown in a 30 x 72' unheated high tunnel. We find we get best and earliest results under cover but fellow ASCFG member Savanna Hobbs of Rainbow Roots Floral Company in nearby Maryville, Tennessee did all her fall planting in the field with no cover, and had agrostemma blooming in April, and several of her direct-seeded and transplanted flowers blooming by early May. If a high tunnel isn't available, row cover tunnels or low tunnels in the field are possible but add to the workload, but at least most of that work is in the cold months when there is a little more time.

An early bloom date is important, especially in early spring when there's not much flowering besides anemone and ranunculus, but we've found fall-planted flowers also have longer and stronger stems. And while I love anemone and ranunculus, it's hard to make a large bouquet with small flowers only, and with flowers of similar shape.

Through trial and error, we have found our best transplant date to be early to mid-November, which puts our seeding date about 6 weeks earlier. The trick is to find the date for your climate that will allow your transplants to develop a strong root system but not get too big. Even though our first frost date is mid-October, we often have so much warm weather through the winter that the plants put out too much new growth more likely to be damaged by cold temps in late winter or early spring. We leave the sides open on our hoop unless the temps dip into the 20s, and find that gives us less insect pressure and keeps the transplants a better size. The larger the plant, the more likely we will have to add low hoops inside the high tunnel to protect the tender new growth, and if plants outgrow the low hoops, we even have more work, and we're lazy so we try to avoid that.

My favorite crops to fall plant are snaps, sweet peas, campanula, and poppies. I also plant lesser amounts of agrostemma, bells of Ireland, and ammi because while they're good fillers

I can't afford to give them too much valuable hoophouse space. I will also put these fillers in the field and they'll come a little later, but still earlier than winter planted.



Snapdragons are my most profitable crop to fall plant. By planting several varieties including 'Chantilly' through 'Butterfly', I get so many predictable blooms every spring and all but the 'Butterfly' generally bloom by early May. 'Chantilly Light Pink' is always the first to bloom and just the right color for Mother's Day bouquets.

Fall-planted sweet peas bloom not only earlier but on longer stems. As our southern temperatures heat up, sweet pea stems shrink to almost unus-

able lengths by mid-June, but April stems can reach 18'. We usually yank the plants by July but with fall planting we have enjoyed 3 more weeks of sweet peas than when winter seeded. Their fragrance, texture, and color variety earn them the high tunnel space. I used to direct seed but mice damage forced me to grow in pots or trays, then transplant. I have transplanted as late as December with good results.

Campanula is another that benefits from early planting.

Even though campanula is daylength sensitive we have had 'Champion' blooming the first week of May. This year we grew 'Champion II' and it did not flower until mid-May. I prefer the regular 'Champion', so if I can find trays it will grow it next year and will do some of various colors from seed.

Iceland poppies come early April and continue to bloom through Mother's Day for us. We grow



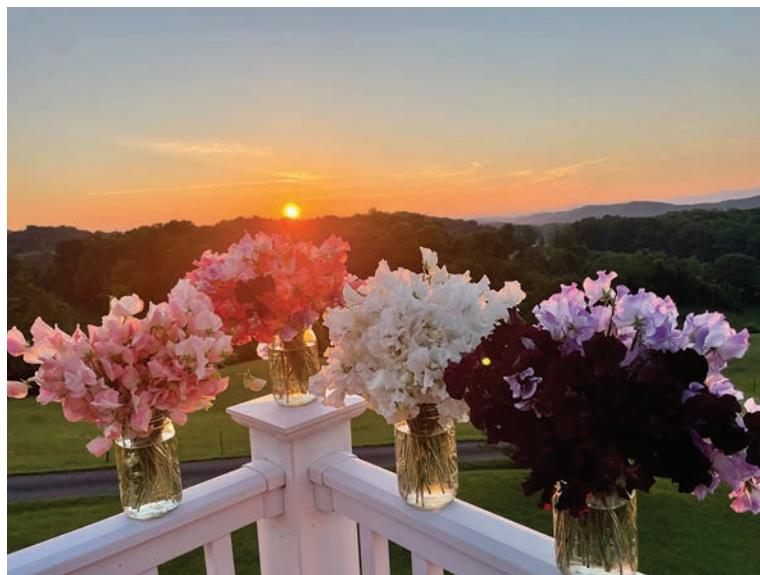
small amounts as their vase life best suits just adding a poppy or two to a bouquet, but adds such a lovely effect it earns a bit of space.

Bells of Ireland is my favorite filler, and adds interest and bulk to bouquets. I seed my own trays for fall transplants as I need smaller quantities of this, with each plant throwing many usable stems. I try to add a winter seeding of bells that will bloom later in May; after that disease hits and snipping the spotted leaves becomes problematic.

I asked my Ohio ASCFG friend Mary Slingluff of Avalon Gardens Farmer Florist if she fall transplanted, and she referred me to the very helpful webinar on Johnny's website, *Overwintering Flowers: How to Extend Your Growing*



*Season with Cold-Hardy Annuals.* Johnny's has been trialing fall planting into unheated high tunnels in zone 5A for four years, and the details are presented clearly and concisely in the main webinar with many shorter videos highlighting their successes flower by flower. They feature 17 crops to overwinter with their top 5 being snapdragons, sweet peas, foxglove, dianthus including carnations, and ammi. They



transplant into the tunnels mid-October which is also after their first frost date.

Adjust your planting time to your zone, and give fall planting a try if you haven't already. There are so many things to consider about fall planting that I haven't covered here, but hope this at least gets us all thinking. After rereading Lisa's *Cool Flowers* and watching Johnny's webinar I'm even more excited to fall transplant, and will be adding several new varieties to my lineup. Cool weather will come again, I promise, and the more flowers we have before the heat hits the better for the flowers and the flower farmer!

And the good news is, Mother's Day is the latest it can be next year at May 14th so even more blooms will be available. Happy Planting and Happy Mother's Day!



Friends helping out at the market at 7 Vines Vineyard.

## NORTH AND CENTRAL

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



### Susan Rockwood

Arcola Trail Flower Farm  
Susan@ArcolaTrailFlowers.com

### Friends Make Great Volunteer Farm Workers!

As the season is in full swing, I expect we are all thinking the same thing: farming is hard work, long days, and never-ending "to do" lists. We all know flower farming is not what most people picture it to be...playing with flowers and wandering through rows of colorful blooms in a white dress. The life of a farmer is full of challenges, and every day I ask myself "How is everything going to get done?!"

I've heard many farmers say that hiring their first employee was a game changer, and asking why hadn't they done that sooner. While hiring is the best option for regular,

reliable, and full-time help for a busy farmer, I have been fortunate to cultivate a unique volunteer staff and wanted to share some of the lessons learned through that process.

As a person of retirement age, I am fortunate to have friends who have recently retired from their careers and professions, and they are a smart and interesting bunch of folks—an attorney, professional organizer, dentist, physician, produce manager, food stylist, nurse, engineer, and physical therapist. These friends are looking for ways to spend time in retirement staying active, learning, and enjoying the beauty of nature. Many are avid home gardeners, which is an advantage, but learning how a commercial flower farm operates is new to all.

Over time it becomes obvious what each person likes to do and what they are good at, so assignments can be made accordingly. My longtime friend who comes 2 days



Even in cold, rainy weather friends come through!

per week, has learned just about every job on the farm and serves as a great mentor to others and *de facto* farm manager. She has been critical to the success of the farm for the past four seasons.

Some of the pros and cons of this volunteer work force of friends include:

**Pros**

- I get to spend time with my friends.
- No payroll - most work for flowers and cold drinks!
- Friends are less of a risk for liability.
- Flexible schedules.
- Multiple year commitment.
- Great word of mouth marketing team.
- Personal connection to your success.

**Cons**

- Orientation, training, and supervision is needed as with any employee.
- Not always available when needed, vacations, etc.
- Physical limitations of some older workers (hips, knees, etc.),
- Speed and productivity lacking.
- Feedback on quality of work can be tricky.

The most important thing to remember regardless of who helps your farm succeed—volunteer, friend, or paid employee—is to let them know how much you appreciate their contributions. You can never say thank you enough! Keep going, keep growing!



Sometimes husbands get dragged along for the fun stuff.



Marcia still smiling after planting 1,000 dahlia tubers!

**SOUTH AND CENTRAL** .....

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



**Shanti Rade**  
Whipstone Farm  
info@whipstone.com

**Unavailable at press time.**

**WEST AND NORTHWEST** .....

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington



**Erin McMullen**  
Rain Drop Farm  
raindropfarm@peak.org

The spring of 2022 was a doozy for us here in the PNW. We are a water-loving people, in general. I love the days of gentle drizzling rain outside while I sit next to the fire flipping through seed catalogs just as much as the next farmer, but this year was particularly challenging.

Long weeks of nonstop rain and cloudy skies made almost everything late to bloom, some things by 2-3 weeks. The slugs and weeds thrived and the battle was constant to keep them all at bay. We were all the way into June before we actually saw the rain taper off and the sun come out. It was a long spring, to say the least. And though things didn't go exactly according to plan, we had some trials that were great, so I thought I'd share.

In 2020, as an experiment, we low tunneled a few rows of peonies, hoping to push them to bloom for Mother's Day. We saw some success, and tried again in 2021. Our weather in 2021 was extreme in a different way and we had little to no rain through the spring. So while our peonies did hit for Mother's Day, the numbers were low and the botrytis in the tunnels was rough.

Fast forward to 2022. Farmer Aaron redesigned the low tunnels to better withstand wind gusts and to make them



easier to vent. We got them up at the beginning of February and kept them vented through the next few months. With an early Mother's Day, we weren't sure if we could get the timing right, but saw some great success! We were able to harvest and market our local peonies for Mother's Day to our wholesale customers, offering a product that is highly coveted for the holiday. Because they were the first peonies of the season, we were able to charge a higher stem price, which covered the extra time and labor of continually venting the tunnels and tending to the plants.

A few things about these tunnels. We built them over established rows of peonies, all at least 4-year roots. Aaron selected for varieties that we already knew to be early bloomers, and ones that we had enough volume of to allow for an extended harvest, allowing us to provide the same peonies over a 4-week period. They are built similarly to a caterpillar tunnel, but with fixed ends, providing us with easier access for venting and weeding. Note that keeping the tunnels weeded during the spring is very important to help with air circulation and reduce the occurrence of fungal issues, like botrytis.

Because of the wet spring, the flowers were slow as molasses to start and we were scrambling to get anything to market. Those thin months of May and June were even tighter due to a lack of product to sell. Enter the greens. Farm standards like mint and raspberry were just fine in the rain and were ready to roll long before the summer flowers started, giving us a much-needed bridge to carry us through the lean times.

Scented geranium was as well. Although it is not always totally hardy, we were able to overwinter the majority of

our mother plants in ground in one of our field tunnels and start cutting on it almost 6 weeks earlier than we have in the past. We cut back the plants in the fall, mulched them heavily, and used minimal heat from portable propane heaters any time the weather dipped below about 27F. The result was lush, beautiful plants, hardened and ready to cut by mid-May. Almost too lush! These things were beasts and a few sections fell down on themselves as the weight of the plants became too much.

These kinds of small experiments are one of our favorite things here on the farm. Trying new things, stretching the known boundaries, and discovering what works on our individual farms is what farming is all about. I've said before that what works on my farm may not work on yours, but if we share these kinds of successes then the sky's the limit for how far we can go!



## CANADA

Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba,  
New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador,  
Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island,  
Quebec, and Saskatchewan



### Janis Harris

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### Know Your Weed—Know Your Soil

A weed is just a plant in a spot where it is not intended to be. Flowers can be weeds too! We had sunflowers pop up EVERYWHERE the year after our sunflower maze. There is currently spearmint happily travelling from one hole to the next in my perennial tarp. Yikes! Mojitos, anyone?

Also remember some weeds can make you money! I had to swallow my pride and “harvest” Solidago, aka goldenrod, after Dave Dowling visited my farm and commented on how much amazing solidago I had! Face palm. I was so embarrassed of the chest-high weeds. But the next week I put them in the market bouquets and had so many positive comments!

We all think of a pristine, weed-free farm as the gold standard. But sometimes weeds are helpful. Weeds can be a great indicator of your soil’s health. An observant farmer can notice the subtle changes in weed populations in response to their soil management skills. They can reveal the soil pH, aeration, moisture-holding capacity, and even the nutrient deficiency or toxicity of the soil.

A few common indicator weeds I look for on the farm are dandelion (*Taraxacum*), Canada/creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), lamb’s quarters (*Chenopodium album*), pigweed (*Amaranthus retroflexus*) and smart weed (*Polygonum pennsylvanicum*).

Dandelions are very common. They spread across meadows, and the recognizable yellow tuft flowers dapple the countryside. Dandelions have a strong, deep taproot. They show up especially in compacted areas. The taproot is work-

ing to break up the hard soil and loosen the ground. I always find it hilarious seeing people rolling their lawns (compacting the soil) then having to spray or dig out dandelions! So, if you see dandelions you know your soil is compacted and you need to work at loosening it. If you are trying to remove dandelions, make sure to get as much of the root out as you can.

Canada or creeping thistle—I stake no claim to the name! But it is definitely here in this part of Canada. These thistles have a taproot so they are telling you that your soil is compacted and has heavy clay. Again, its roots want to work to break up the soil. These guys are resilient; if the root fragments break off when you are pulling them, each of those pieces will grow a new plant. Get them all out. Fun fact: goats LOVE thistles! When we would open a bale of nice alfalfa hay for the goats, they would find the dry spiny thistle and snatch it up instantly.

When lamb’s quarters pops up in your fields you can rest easy that there is high fertility or humus in the soil. These weeds show up in tilled soil and are fairly easy to get rid of. When the seedlings are very small (under 1”) you can go through with a “Garden Weasel”/tine hoe to uproot them and kill them before they are too attached. This method works great on a hot, sunny day. I call it weed-killing weather. Once the little weeds are disconnected from the soil they will fry in the hot sun! Such a satisfying sight.

Pigweed is another indicator of high fertility and humus in tilled fields. You can deal with pigweed much the same as lamb’s quarters. Get them when they are small and they won’t cause a problem. Pigs also do LOVE eating pigweed. Small pigweed and lamb’s quarters can also be killed when they are super small with a flame weeder.

Smart weed is one weed that I actually search out at times for wedding work. The hanging pink clusters are an amazing texture in design! With something to support them, I will also use them in bouquet work. But really, they are a weed. Smart weed is indicating wet conditions. Try to get smart weed out when it is small because when it gets larger the stems bend, and wherever the stem touches the ground it attaches and grows roots out of the part touching the ground.



To find more information about weeds in your area, search “weeds as indicators”. There are many research papers, books, and charts with lots of valuable information.

Next time you are out pulling those darn weeds, take a minute to look closer, and listen to what they are telling you.

## Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

- Julie Abell, Biglerville, PA  
 Emily Adkins, Anthos Flower Farm, Findlay, OH  
 Jessica Alpers, Orchard Breeze Flowers, Lake Leelanau, MI  
 Sherry Lynn and Amanda Kyne, Eisler Farms, Prospect, PA  
 Mimi Anderson, Morning Star Farm, Orcas, WA  
 Barbara Appleton, Martin Appleton Farming Works, Moncton, NB  
 Jessica Bush and Aral Michalow, Phoenix Hill Flower Farm, Louisville, KY  
 Jessie Babbitt, B.a.r.e. Flower Farm, Neshanic, NJ  
 Kim Baker, KB Flower Farm, Otway, OH  
 Shauna Balance, Ballance Bloom Company, Waynesville, NC  
 Maryjo Barga, Ball ColorLink, Lima, OH  
 Hannah Barzycki, Beyond the Barnyard Flower Company, West Valley, NY  
 Joshua Bauer, Delwood Flowers, Delmar, IA  
 Anthony Bellomo, Christopher Spitzmiller, Inc., Millbrook, NY  
 Amber Bengtson, Windy Hill Farm, Elk River, MN  
 Nichole Bentley, Hamilton, ON, CANADA  
 Adam Bigham, Wool Branch Farm, Concord, VA  
 Cindy Bliss, Zekiah Ridge Flowers, La Plata, MD  
 Brenna Brehan, Alta Luna Herb Farm, Arlington, WA  
 Brenda Brewer, Webb Gardens, Catoosa, OK  
 Teresa Brewster, Treasures at the Barn, Placerville, CA  
 Zachary Briggs, Bloom WNC, Arden, NC  
 Kirstin Buckland, Edgewood Gardens, Whitefish, MT  
 Susanna Byrd, Spring Creek Blooms, Charlottesville, VA  
 Lynn Campbell, Wild Passion Flowers, San Tan Valley, AZ  
 Nicole Carlton, Brewhouse Blooms, Underwood, IA  
 Hannah Carriere, Newinton, ON, CANADA  
 Erin Cech, Renegade Flower Farm, Garnet Valley, PA  
 Mary Cervantes, Bloomin Betty, Stockton, CA  
 Laurie Charpentier, Max's Farm, Hope Valley, RI  
 Mary Chauvin, Calamity Blooms, Pendleton, KY  
 Haley Childress, Crestwood, KY  
 Virginia Christmas, Chartwell Hospitality, Franklin, TN  
 Stacy Clore, Clore Farms, Richmond, MI  
 Kevin Cook, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Winslow, ME  
 Marianne Copene, Corolla, Portland, OR  
 Jenna Cowperthwaite, Leepa Farm, New Gretna, NJ  
 Catherine Crawford, Lyndaker Farms, Salisbury Center, NY  
 Susan Croke, Vineyard Blossoms, White Salmon, WA  
 Sarah Cuddihee, Chicago, IL  
 Christel Culberson, White Barn Blooms, Fraser Lake, BC  
 Laura Curry, Isabelle Blooms, London, KY  
 Mycah Cyr, Raven Flower Farm, St. Johnsbury, VT  
 Patricia Dabush, Meadowbrook Gardens, Molalla, OR  
 Barbara Dahl, North Bloom Peonies, Kenai, AK  
 Belinda Daniel, Bullard, TX  
 Nichole Dathorne, La Très Jolie, Fisherville, KY  
 Jennifer Davis, Saylorsburg, PA  
 Susan Davis, Bella's Delight Blooms & Produce, Finksburg, MD  
 Stephanie Dentoni, Stockton, CA  
 Erica Di Claudio, Saint Rose Flowers & Farm, Newark, NY  
 Charles Sherman and Drienne Benner, North Fork Flower Farm, Orient, NY  
 Jessica Duncan, Bloom Flower Garden, Farmington, UT  
 Kelly Dundule, Bella's Blooms, Erie, PA  
 Heather Durkel, Brook and Blossom Farm, South Pomfret, VT  
 David Dyson, Blueberry Hill U Pick, Greensboro, NC  
 Amy Eckes, Brilliant Blooms Flower Farm, Appleton, WI  
 Julia Fair, Julia Fair, Woodstock, GA  
 Elizabeth Farrell, Color ME Wild, Bar Harbor, ME  
 Paula Federico, Hayden Run Farms, Plain City, OH  
 Marti Feller, Martha June Flower Farm, Sanford, NC  
 Jody Feris, MoJo Ranch Petal and Branch, Woodland, WA  
 Ronda Foreman, Flygirl Flowers, Xenia, OH  
 Haley French, Brynhill Flower Farm, Prospect, PA  
 Andrew Friend, Friend's Flowers, Story City, IA  
 Morgan Fuller, Gwinnett Technical College, Stone Mountain, GA  
 Rochel Furniss, Fredericktown, OH  
 Beth Gabbett, Bouquet Y'all, Atlanta, GA  
 Claire Goss, The Brew Creek Centre, Whistler, BC  
 Jane Greenko, Nerdling Acres Flower Stand, Peconic, NY  
 Andrea Grist, Florasource KC, Lees Summit, MO  
 Bethany Empert Guenther, Prickly Poppy Farm, Ben Lomond, CA  
 Amy Gunnells, Birdsong Flower Fields, National City, MI  
 Peggy Hall-Davenport, Gedeons Farm, Brighton, MI  
 Gina Hamilton, Z-Land Flower Company, Lewisville, TX  
 Julie Hannink, Tin Can Flowers, Arlington, VA  
 AnnMarie Hawkins Hodgson, Cleveland, OH  
 Hannah Hazelwood, High Hill Blooms, Wallingford, CT  
 Natalie Hazlehurst, Baltimore, MD  
 Jennifer Henson, Dragonfly Farm, Westerville, OH  
 Dana Hilfinger, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Worthington, OH  
 Allison Hill, Bloomers Flower Farm, Lehigh, PA  
 Isabelle Hill, Rise N Shine Organic Farm, Calhoun, GA  
 Zoe Hitchner, Front Porch Farm, Healdsburg, CA  
 Brandy Hunsaker, Farmyard 1832, Kenton, OH  
 Camille Hunter, Twiggy Lane Blooms, Provo, UT  
 Amy Hurst, Learning 4 Life Farm, Johnstown, OH  
 Hillary Hutchison, Ludin Farm, Kent, WA  
 Victoria Jabot, Ley Creek Farm, Fulton, NY  
 Kinsey Johnson, Spade + Spatula, Normangee, TX  
 Alyssa Johnston, Hands On Florals, Amaranth, ON  
 Kriste Jones, Bayou Blooms, Hughes Springs, TX  
 Madison Jones, Seal Point Farm, Lamoine, ME  
 Ulana Joslin, Flower Barn at Locust Pointe, Rumson, NJ  
 Charity Joyce, Farmhouse Flowers and More, Hiddenite, NC  
 Jessica Jue, Fern & Folly, Vienna, VA  
 Sherry Kelly, Chatuge Springs, Hayesville, NC  
 Ondrea Kidd, Sowing Joy Farm, Post Falls, ID  
 Jennifer and Robert Klatt, Alum Creek Farm, Columbus, OH  
 Cynthia Korbelik, Angels Camp, CA  
 Bryant and Leann Lamberth, Love Blooms, Cottontown, TN

Christina Larry, Groveport, OH  
 Elisabeth Lawson, Rise N Shine Organic Farm, Rome, GA  
 Megan Lawson, Black Petal Farm, Bozeman, MT  
 Susan Lazzari, Suzette's Flowers, Midland Park, NJ  
 Sara Leibold, Greece, NY  
 Brandon Lewis-Peters, Branken Flowery, Mountain Home, AR  
 Karri Lockwood, The Cozy Acre, Menomonee Falls, WI  
 Angela Macdonald, Desirée Blooms, North Saanich, BC, Canada  
 Autumn Mahaffey, Union Grove, NC  
 Samantha Martin, Bad Dog Farms, Mammoth Lakes, CA  
 Caroline Martineau, MAPAQ, Warden, QC  
 Maria Martins, Cherokee Blooms, Chuckey, TN  
 Laurie Mask, Southern Blooms, Alamo, TN  
 Dania Matheos, Dania's Garden, Hingham, MA  
 Megan Mathews, O'Hare's Flower Farm, Navarre, FL  
 Marlene Mazieres, Les Batisses, Dordogne, Nouvelle  
 Aquitaine, France  
 Andrea McAdow, Rosebird Farms, Kingman, AZ  
 Jayne McCullough, Tickled Pink Farm, Hartland, WI  
 Christian Mehlenbacher, Overlook Farm NY, Naples, NY  
 Amber Mellott, Seed & Bloom Farm, Mount Joy, PA  
 Jessica Meyer, Two Rivers Ranch, Basalt, CO  
 Angela Miller, Vermont Farmwife Flowers, Vernon, VT  
 Brittany Miller, The Farm Noir, Lakeland, FL  
 Allie Millington, Valley Ridge Farms, Acworth, GA  
 Siera Mizenko, Seeds & Flourish, Wrightsville, PA  
 Heather Moore, Cherry Hill Farm, Jeromesville, OH  
 Joyce Moore, Seeds 2 Plugs, West Deptford, NJ  
 Susan Moorehead, Susie Q's Produce and Posies, Ocala, FL  
 Amanda Mounce, Piney Grove Flower Farm, Kernersville, NC  
 Shohei Murakami, American Takii, Salinas, CA  
 Barb Nelson, County Line Nursery & Floral, Parker, SD  
 Brent Nichols, Cubed Laboratories, South Bend, IN  
 Amber Ogden, Urban Roots Flower Farm, Shelbyville, IN  
 Louise Olmsted, Forgotten Windows, Moses Lake, WA  
 Kumi Omori, Ocean Springs, MS  
 Kimberlin Orlando, Belle Plaine, KS  
 Jackie Osanitsch, Tilton, NH  
 Audra Otis, Teton Blooms, Driggs, ID  
 Alana Otten, Traverse, MI  
 Beth Palmer, Gibsonia, PA  
 Chelsea Palubiak, Banded Oak Farms, Madison, OH  
 Delaney Peterson, Briarwood Flowers, Spring Green, WI  
 Jena Piccolo, Backyard Blooms, RI, Westerly, RI  
 Gabrielle Prescott, Bendon Blossoms, Interlochen, MI  
 Patty Purdy, Panacea Flowers, Mount Vernon, OH  
 Andrea Ravelo, A. Ravelo, Fulton, MO  
 Tamara Rhyne, Golden Arbor Flower Farm, Bullard, TX  
 Susan Rice, Sue's Fresh Cup Flowers, Cashiers, NC  
 Linda Riddle, Arizona Blossom Cellar, Tucson, AZ  
 Annette Ritchie, Ritchie's Family Farm, Royalton, MO  
 Gabriela Rivera, Still Life Flower Farm, Naugatuck, CT  
 Ashley Roach, Roach Family Farms, Rutledge, TN  
 Sheri Robinson, Hoofprint Farm, Foster, RI  
 Roxanne Rodriguez, Rumphius Farms, Weymouth, MA  
 Jamie Rogers, Farm to Florist, Montana, Helena, MT  
 Heather Rossi, Fresh and Local – Vero, Vero Beach, FL  
 Julie Rowland, Row & Co. Farms, Monticello, GA  
 Andrea Ruiz, Squirrel's Garden & Goods, Sunnyside, WA  
 Alisa Sacino, Maitri Farm, Amenia, NY  
 Jennifer Saltonstall, Western Sun Lavender Farm, Coupeville, WA  
 Mackenzie Saltsgiver, Saltlick Flower Farm, Salem, OH  
 Mary Santerre, Hidden Lake Farm, Port Republic, MD  
 Susan Sawyers, Chocolate Milk, New York, NY  
 Elisabeth Say, Rocky Mount, VA  
 Robert Schaedle, Chartwell Hospitality, Franklin, TN  
 Rebecca Scheller, Nelson, BC  
 Yvonne Scheurman, Norwich, ON  
 William Schilder, Netherland Bulb Company, Shrewsbury, NJ  
 Katherine Schoeff, Franklin, TN  
 Jenn Schrandt, Sorcha Farmstead, East Bend, NC  
 Melissa Scott, In Bloom, Hephzibah, GA  
 Robyn Scott, Blair House Blooms, West Brookfield, MA  
 Veronica Sellers, Village Bee, Prairie Village, KS  
 Haley Shaw, Birdsong Blooms, Leavenworth, KS  
 Susan Silverstein, Bear Creek Blooms, Bear Creek, NC  
 Jake Smith, Ritter Farms, Marked Tree, AR  
 Rachel Solka, Fort Mill, SC  
 Jeanne Sommer, Hidden River Events, Asheville, NC  
 Linda Sowash, Bonniebrook Blooms, Butler, PA  
 Christopher Spitzmiller, Christopher Spitzmiller, Inc., Millbrook, NY  
 Courtney Stone, Burnt Hills, NY  
 Nicole Strafelda, Olson Blooms, Hawley, MN  
 Charlotte Sullivan, Sol-Ful Blooms, Libertyville, IL  
 Jennifer Swartz, Farmhouse Flowers, Turner, MI  
 Marlene Sweda, Blue Door Flora Farm, Portland, TN  
 Gina Swift, Iowa City, IA  
 Christopher Sylvester, Spectrum Farms Delaware, Felton, DE  
 Elizabeth Talbot, Cedar Street Farms, Fair Grove, MO  
 Jenny Tamayo, Forestville, CA  
 Erica Tamburo, Silvestri Family Farm, Pittsburgh, PA  
 Lindsey Teat, Eden Blooms Flower Co., Albertville, AL  
 Erik and Michelle Tedhams, Second Avenue Growers, Phoenix, AZ  
 Kimberly Terpstra, The Wood Colony Farm Stand, Modesto, CA  
 Katrina Thielen, Thielen's Bloomers, Albany, MN  
 Jordan Trew, Mead, WA  
 Pat Twining, Love Blossoms Flower Farm, Erie, PA  
 Elizabeth Van Emst, Flower Thief Farms, Napa, CA  
 Sherry VanQuaethem, Eden, ON  
 Katie Vargas, Tierra Colibri, Sparta, MI  
 Chris Vry, Funny Ass Farm, Story City, IA  
 Jessica Watts, White Picket Flowers, French Lick, IN  
 Christine Whitaker, Linden Blooms Farm, Linden, VA  
 Robert Wilder, Wilder Flowers, Plant City, FL  
 Bobbi Wilson, Grateful Heart Farm, Centerview, MO  
 Sally Winchester, Windham Flowers, Brattleboro, VT  
 Andrea Woodhall, Luna Joy Flower Farm, Apollo, PA  
 Sheri Woolsey, Bijou's Blooms, Fallon, NV  
 Charles and Pam Wright, Round Mountain Farm, Long Creek, SC  
 Jingjing Yin, Cornell Coop. Ext., Voorheesville, NY  
 Marlene Yochim, Andover Flower Farm, Andover, MN  
 Jade Young, Frontera Flowers, Bisbee, AZ  
 Stephanie Young, Blue Berwyn Farm, Berwyn Heights, MD  
 Ashley Zehr, Yellow Door Flower Farm, Kitchener, ON

# ASCFG 2022 Election Slate

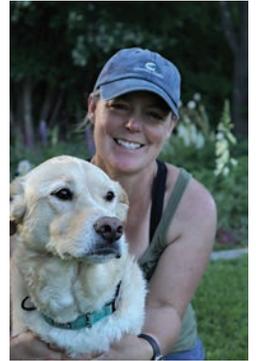
This year, all members will have the opportunity to vote for ASCFG Secretary and Treasurer; and those in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, and Canada Regions will elect new Regional Directors. Please review this information, and take just a few minutes to cast your vote when you receive an electronic ballot later this summer. Your participation is vital!

## Secretary (2023, 2024, 2025)

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### **Hillary Alger, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Albion, Maine**

As the flower product manager at Johnny's Selected Seeds for the past ten years, and a lifelong flower enthusiast I have enjoyed many years of membership in the ASCFG. My respect and admiration for the work and collaborative spirit of the ASCFG community is the core of my interest in serving on the board. I would value the opportunity give back by supporting and engaging more deeply with the organization and community of growers.



### **Linda Chapman, Harvest Moon Farm, Spencer, Indiana**



I'm a veteran flower farmer and ASCFG member—almost 36 years as a grower and 25+ years as an ASCFG member. I consider myself so fortunate to have found a vocation and a professional organization that I have enjoyed and loved for so long. This flower-growing “thing” just clicks for some of us and enriches our lives in so many untold ways. Yes, I wanted to pay my bills, but didn't realize at first how that goal would mean I got to live in an ecological paradise that showcased so much daily beauty. I didn't realize that I would meet and come to love so many wonderful people as employees, market friends, and business customers or that my children would grow up with strong work ethics—the list goes on and on. We are a very lucky bunch of people, even though we have to work so hard for all the benefits of our trade.

So, I'm downsizing my operation as I move towards my fourth working decade. I'm looking ahead at having more time than in previous decades. Consequently, I'd like to contribute more directly to the ASCFG and become more familiar with the “guts” of the organization: see how it works, help it work—kind of like running a farm!

I've had the pleasure of being involved in the Mentor Program for the past four years. Currently I'm working with my second Mentee, though I have guided quite a few “wannabe” flower farmers over the years outside of the ASCFG program. It's been a very satisfying aspect to my career and I anticipate I'll continue doing it for quite some time.

I'm running for Secretary. I've never been a secretary on a board before. Though I run a “mighty” little farm that's well regarded in my locale, I don't rock at social media so I expect I'm not known by many of you. Regardless, I hope you'll elect me to this position. I'm willing to give it my best shot and contribute as much as I can to the board.

### **Gretchen Langston, Blooms, Laporte, Colorado**

Hello! I am Gretchen, the owner of Blooms. We are a flower farm in our fifth proper year of operation in northern Colorado. Our farm is passionate about the local flower movement and we believe firmly that progress begins by building a community of people who can work together to propel their industry. We are very involved at the local level in Colorado and love every minute of it!

I would be honored to be of service as the Secretary for the ASCFG at the national level. I have almost 30 years of hands-on and executive-level business experience that has required me to be incredibly diligent in listening, participating, recording, structuring, and communicating information in a manner that supports and drives groups toward success. I have been both a participant and leader in working groups and task forces that drive change and implement new initiatives. I believe I could add great value in the position of Secretary because I have extensive experience in organizing teams, facilitating productive working sessions, memorializing information and constructing written plans that interpret and propel the intention of the group. I am excited and eager to contribute and feel the role of Secretary would be a perfect way!



## Treasurer (2023, 2024, 2025)

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### **Michelle Elston, Roots Cut Flower Farm, Carlisle, Pennsylvania**

As the current Mid-Atlantic Regional Director, I am thoroughly enjoying my time on the Board, and would be honored to serve as Treasurer.

My farm, Roots, was started in 2007, when we moved to central Pennsylvania to return to my family and raise our kids near their roots. The farm has grown beyond my wildest imagination, and we now have a crew of 16 and sell 25,000 supermarket bouquets each season.

I do the bookkeeping for both my farm and my husband's landscape business. I love numbers nearly as much as I love flowers, and while I have no formal finance background, I did work for my accountant for two winters because he liked the way I turned in my tax packet! Everything I know about flower farming, I learned from the ASCFG and its members. It would be true joy to continue serving this group that I love and regard so highly.

## Northeast Regional Director (2023, 2024, 2025)

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Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont

### **Jenny Marks, Trademarks Flower Farm, Clifton Springs, New York**

I'm the owner of Trademarks Flower Farm, located in the beautiful Finger Lakes region of central New York State. Our farm intensively grows flowers on about 1.5 acres for a 100+ member CSA, a thriving farmers' market, and direct-to-florist sales. We focus on growing high-value crops in the field and in our four high tunnels.

Being a part of the ASCFG is one of the most wonderful experiences I've had as a lifelong farmer. I have always been deeply passionate about personal growth and continuing education, which makes the ASCFG a perfect group to be a part of. I am interested in serving as Northeast Regional Director because I have found that connecting with and learning from other growers has been one of the most valuable assets to my business (and to my soul!). I believe that learning from others is one of the biggest reasons my business has been so successful.

I'd love to help create additional opportunities to connect growers with one another to foster positive relationships, and learn from each other's unique experiences, in addition to making education more available both in person and online. I would be honored to give back to this incredible organization that has helped me so much by contributing as Northeast Regional Director. Thank you!



### **Dave Rubino, Plumb Farms Flowers, Prospect, Connecticut**

It would be my honor to serve as Northeast Regional Director of the ASCFG.

I have a long background in Horticulture. I obtained a BS in Horticulture from Penn State, a MS from North Carolina State and a PhD from the University of Minnesota. I was a Research Geneticist at the USDA Florist and Nursery Crops Laboratory for four years before I moved to Connecticut to open Plumb Farms Flowers with my husband in 1993.

For nearly 30 years, we have been growing and selling flowers at our retail flower shop. Shortly after we opened, I heard about the ASCFG, an organization formed to support cut flower growers like myself. When I joined, what a change that made in my outlook for our business; a group of diverse flower farmers with the objective of producing and promoting quality, locally-grown cut flowers.

I have been a longtime member of the ASCFG and, in recent years, I have mentored two new flower growers through the ASCFG Mentorship Program. I have also served as a grant evaluator for the ASCFG Research Foundation.

I have gained much knowledge and support from the ASCFG over the years. I would be thrilled to be able to contribute to this organization as Northeast Regional Director.

## Mid-Atlantic Regional Director (2023, 2024, 2025)

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



### Dave Delbo, Dave's Flowers, Catawissa, Pennsylvania

Dave's Flowers began in 1981 when we started selling gladiolus on a table along the state highway we lived on in the small town of Elysburg, Pennsylvania. In the forty-plus years since then, we have grown a wide selection of successful cut flower crops and almost just as many failures. We have sold at farmers' markets, sold to florists, and even done a few weddings over the years. We grow on about 3-4 acres of land now, down slightly from our peak of 5 acres, along with our greenhouses and high tunnel.

I joined the ASCFG back in 2005 and have been a member since, participating in many years of the Seed Trials, and attending a few conferences over the years. I am now in a position in my life where I can become a part of the ASCFG board, and am running for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Director to help the ASCFG continue to grow for years to come.

### Crystal Giesey, Masterpiece Flower Farm, Parsonsburg, Maryland



I've operated Masterpiece Flower Farm on the Eastern Shore of Maryland for the past seven years. I grow high-end cut flowers and berries with organic practices and our farm is Certified

Naturally Grown. I am passionate about season extension and crop specialization. I hope that with an opportunity to be Regional Director of the Mid-Atlantic Region that I can put myself forward to help our area growers—new and seasoned—with navigating a new and ever-changing season of our industry.

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## Southwest Regional Director (2023, 2024, 2025)

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

### Niki Irving, Flourish Flower Farm, Asheville, North Carolina

I would be honored to join the ASCFG Board to support the larger flower-growing community, and the Southeastern Region specifically, and wholeheartedly believe in the ASCFG's mission. As a member, I have gained invaluable knowledge, access to resources and have made meaningful friendships with other growers. With the interest in cut flower production growing rapidly, I would love to connect with and support other members during this time of expansion. I am passionate about making positive connections and in promoting education, and I would love the opportunity to continue to learn from other members and share what I learn. Farming and owning a small business can be a lonely endeavor at times, especially since we tend to have our heads down in our own patches of soil, so fostering and serving the ASCFG community would be a privilege. Part of my own business's mission is to share beauty and caring for others through flowers, and it serving as an ASCFG Board member would be a wonderful way to continue to share the beauty and deep meaning of flowers.



I am a lifelong learner and will bring that mindset, combined with my professional experiences, to the ASCFG Board. As the daughter of a tree farmer and landscaper in South Carolina, plants were always an important part of my life and our family's livelihood. After college, I apprenticed on an organic vegetable farm in Georgia and fell in love with farming. However, I went on to have a 10+ year career in outdoor, environmental and traditional education. I am so grateful for the 10+ years of experience in business management because all of those skills have directly translated to running my own successful small farm business.

In the 7 years I have operated Flourish Flower Farm, I have hosted hundreds of flower-enthusiasts on our farm for workshops, taught private classes for farming and floral design, and now teach online classes on niche topics such as succession planting for bouquet-making. I started a blog as a way to document my own flower-growing journey, which led to publishing a best-selling book in 2021 called *Growing Flowers: Everything You Need to Know About Planting, Tending, Harvesting and Arranging Beautiful Blooms*. I am just as passionate about running a sustainable, profitable business as I am about farming – and hope to teach and inspire others to do the same – so that we can all continue to grow beautiful flowers to share with others for many years to come.



### Cathy Jones, Perry-winkle Farm, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

My husband, Mike Perry, and I started Perry-winkle Farm in 1991. As first-generation farmers, we began the process of converting worn-out crop land into a sustainable farm operation with little more than a few hand tools, a walk-behind tiller, and subscriptions to *Organic Gardening* and *New Farm* magazines. We sought advice from local growers and started attending regional/national conferences to broaden our “education,” and Perry-winkle Farm became one of the first “certified organic” farms in our county.

Our first serious step into cut flowers started when I attended the 1995 ASCFG Growers' School in Baltimore, Maryland. Our 25+ years of membership in ASCFG has contributed greatly to the success we have enjoyed as cut flower growers. We value not only the resources the organization provides but also our relationships with cut flower growers across the country.

After years of serving on the board of directors of Southern Sustainable Agricultural Working Group (SSAWG) and Toxic Free NC, I am hoping to support the work of the ASCFG in a similar capacity. With over thirty years of experience growing crops organically, I am particularly interested in including organic/biological/sustainable growing practices in the ASCFG's workshops and farm tours. I want to ensure that the organization continues to serve the needs of its more experienced members even as membership rolls greatly expand with newer growers.

## Canada Regional Director (2023, 2024, 2025)

All provinces

### Cathy Bartolic, Perennial Petals, Stouffville, Ontario

I started Perennial Petals Flower Farm a few decades ago when I worked for a seed company that encouraged its employees to trial their seeds. I seemed to be drawn to the flower seeds and was soon growing as many as I could. At that time, I had never heard of a flower farmer or knew anyone making a full-time living growing flowers.



I continued this passion on a part-time basis until April 2021 when I finally made the leap to full-

time flower farming. We sell our blooms at a local farmers' market, through bouquet subscriptions, to florists, and wholesale to on-farm markets. One of my goals this year is to develop some agri-tourism activities on our farm.

Associations can have a huge impact on their members' lives and businesses. Joining the ASCFG in 2013 was a game changer for me. Just knowing that there were other flower farmers out there struggling with similar issues was immensely comforting. Not to mention the conferences and libraries of educational material that suddenly became available to me. I now have many flower farmer friends all across North America and look forward to serving them on the ASCFG Board.

Education, networking, and the promotion of locally-grown flowers are important to me. I have a wealth of knowledge and experiences that have been accumulated from past professions, and I would be honoured to serve as the Canadian Regional Director and give back to a community that has given me so much.

**Sarah Kistner, Stone Meadow Gardens,  
Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia**



My husband and I started Stone Meadow Gardens in 2015, but my flower farming adventure truly began over 20 years ago when I took a job helping caretake a farm for a year. I dove in headfirst and before I knew it, that one year had blossomed into five and I never looked back! Life has taken me in many directions, but

since then farming and flowers have been a constant and meaningful part of my life.

For the last 7 years we cultivated 2.5 acres near Nelson, BC, of mixed perennials and annuals with a strong focus on dahlias, for both fresh cuts and tuber sales. We became well known for our bouquets which we sold direct to consumers through our busy farm stand, local grocery stores, and a bouquet subscription which we grew from 10 customers to over well over 200. But last summer, after another season of record-breaking heat and unbearable smoke, we made a huge decision to sell the farm and move across the country to make a new home in Nova Scotia. This season we are focusing on continuing our dahlia production while we build our new farm and learn about the climate and market. While we do this, we are allowing ourselves the time and space to reimagine our business and build it with a new set of guiding principles and goals for the future.

Throughout our journey, the ASCFG has been an invaluable educational resource for growing our business, and I would be honored to have the opportunity to serve as the Canada Regional Director. Moving across the country, I've had the opportunity to make connections with growers all over Canada, and I understand the unique set of challenges we face here. I believe my background and experience would bring a unique perspective to the board, and I would be proud to represent farmers from all cross the country and make sure that our voices and issues specific to Canada are heard.

As a member of the board I would encourage the Association to help the flower community prepare for the future by learning how we can build our businesses and farms to be more resilient in the face of our changing climate and economic uncertainty. Connecting with other growers, strengthening our relationships, and continuing the focus on research and education will be more important than ever, and I would be honored to serve the flower growing community by carrying on this important work.



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**Fresh Cut Flower of the Year**

Lisianthus ‘Corelli Light Pink’ Group III

This double-flowered variety is a florist favorite. The large blooms have fringed petals with a delicate curl. Light pink flowers are carried on branched stems up to 40 inches. One grower said, “Corelli Light Pink’ has been incredibly consistent with strong stems, amazingly fluffy blossoms, and a fantastic color.”

**Bulb Cut Flower of the Year**

Allium sphaerocephalon

Allan Armitage has named this “One of the finest alliums for cut flowers and use in the border.” Others call it “cute as a button.” The bicolor green and purple flowers are egg shaped on 24” stems. They open in mid June, and last about 3 weeks. Growers love that long vase life, and the great texture they add to bouquets.

**Woody Cut Flower of the Year**

Smoketree ‘Royal Purple’ Cotinus coggyria

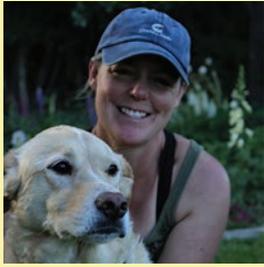
Smoketree is well named, due to its showy “puffs” that appear after the yellow flowers. It is useful for its green or purple foliage, as well as for flowers that appear May to July. Plants can grow 10 to 15 feet, and are hardy in Zones 4 to 8. ‘Royal Purple’ is a compact, purple-leaved variety of the European species. Cut flower growers and designers call it “the little black dress” of the foliage world.

**Foliage Cut Flower of the Year**

Physocarpus ‘Amber Jubilee’

This cultivar’s foliage not only makes a durable cut specimen, its color change from golden to orange to red makes it an unusual and useful foliage for all types of designs. Plants grow to about five feet tall, and are hardy to Zone 3. One ASCFG member noted “Never met a ninebark I don’t love, and can’t wait to try this one.”

# These Members Have Been with the ASCFG for Ten Years!



**Hillary Alger**  
Johnny's Selected Seeds  
Winslow, ME



**Shannon Algieri**  
Stone Barns Center  
Tarrytown, NY



**Laura Bigbee-Fott**  
Whites Creek Flower Farm  
Whites Creek, TN



**Nichole Campbell**  
Petal Pusher Gardens  
Green Bay, WI



**Shawn Campbell**  
Petal Pusher Gardens  
Green Bay, WI



**Liz Cardella**  
Collie Flower Farm  
Woodstock, IL



**Anouk Dupraz**  
Anouk Dupraz Fleurs  
VD, Switzerland



**Marlene Epley**  
Flower Essence  
Williamston, MI



**Jennifer Feddema Gerrys**  
Wendalane Farm  
Wellandport, ON



**Gwynn Hamilton**  
Stonecrop Farm  
Newport, VA



**Janis Harris**  
Harris Flower Farm  
St. Thomas, ON



**Mike Huggett**  
American Takii  
Litchfield, MI



**Heidi Joynt**  
Field & Florist  
Chicago, IL



**Gibby Knoebel**  
Gib's Farm  
Elysburg, PA



**Betsy Levy**  
Woodbine Farm Flowers  
Centralia, WA



**Rachel Lord**  
Alaska Stems  
Homer, AK



**Linda M and David Rau**  
Sunset Flower Farm  
Belle Blain, NJ



**Mimo Davis/Miranda Duschack**  
Urban Buds  
St. Louis, MO



**Art Modderman**  
Coopersville, MI



**Laura Paxton**  
Bella Flower Farm  
Oberlin, OH



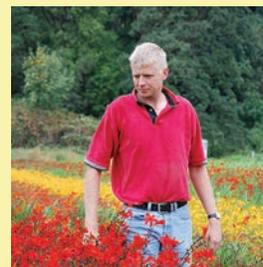
**Shirley Randon**  
White Oaks Farm  
Metairie, LA



**Rebecca Slattery**  
Persephone Farm  
Indianola, WA



**Raymond Van Essendelft**  
Dual Venture Farm  
Pantego, NC



**Niels Van Noort**  
Our American Roots  
Woodland, WA

Photo unavailable:

**Daniel Campos**  
Camflor  
Watsonville, CA

**Graham Garrod**  
Seasonal Flower Garden  
Tonbridge, Kent, UK

**Carrie Kling**  
White Oaks Farm  
Metairie, LA

**Phil and Diana Plant**  
Solar Hills Gardens  
Vacaville, CA

**Reuben and Verna Stoltzfus**  
Narvon, PA

**Sheila Wedel**  
Sheila's Garden Market  
Galva, KS

## Twenty Years and Counting

Judy M. Laushman



In December of 2020, the New York Times’ Tim Herrera wrote an article called “The 20 Phrases That Defined 2020”. It included COVID references that quickly became familiar, like “contact tracing”, “remote learning”, and “super-spreader”.

One description most relevant to the ASCFG was—and is—“essential worker”. While this typically applied to highly visible people like medical personnel or grocery store employees, in our case it perfectly describes the one person most vital to the seamless and continued success of this organization—Operations Director Linda Twining.



This year marks her 20th with the ASCFG, and although it’s commonly said that “No one is irreplaceable.” Linda is irreplaceable. Strike that—she could be replaced, by hiring a bookkeeper; a payroll supervisor; an office manager; a graphic artist; a membership and renewal processing supervisor; a

website(s) creator and administrator; a technology overseer; a hiring and training monitor; a promotions and advertising director; and a professional meeting planner.

I could go on—her formal job description is four pages long—but you get the picture.

I have been fortunate to work with Linda as a trusted colleague as we shared conference take-out dinners in hotel luggage closets; met the challenges and enjoyed the bounty of rotating Boards of Directors; and moved the ASCFG forward in an office space the size of one and a half trade show booths. It’s clear that I could not perform my job without her.

Every year she works harder than the year before, and every year the ASCFG is better for her professionalism, commitment, and relentless good cheer.

Each member has benefited from Linda’s dedication to the organization. Please join me in congratulating—and thanking—her for these twenty years. She’s at membership@ascfg.org

You’ll brighten her day—and yours.

### Don’t Miss These ASCFG Farm Tours!

Details and registration at [www.ascfg.org/2022-farm-tours/](http://www.ascfg.org/2022-farm-tours/)



**Monday, August 22**

Bloom WNC, Black Mountain, North Carolina



**Friday, September 9**

Piscasaw Gardens, Harvard, Illinois



**Monday, September 12**

Fernabelle Acres, Franksville, Wisconsin

**Daveco**

**Saturday, October 1**

Daveco, Clearwater, Kansas



**Tuesday, October 11**

River Twist Homestead, Jamestown, North Carolina



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