

The Cut Flower QUARTERLY

A publication of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers



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Joan Mazat
Cut Flower Business Manager



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Cut Flower Specialist

Ball CutFlowers

Members Helping Members: *The Core of ASCFG*

ONE THING I'VE NOTICED IN MY YEAR WITH THE ASCFG IS THIS ORGANIZATION IS FILLED TO THE BRIM WITH INFORMATION.

I've edited publications for several other non-profit horticultural organizations, and the information always came from the top down. Meaning, I would ask others to write about certain topics and if I was fortunate, they would agree and submit an article. This is a normal way of functioning and certainly the group benefited from the information provided.

What's different within the ASCFG though, is how information just bubbles up naturally. ASCFG members are such experts in their fields (although most would never claim that) and are so willing to share information with others.

For instance, in this issue, President Val Schirmer showcased a Facebook question where a newer member asked how she should best take advantage of her membership. Sixteen responses are printed in her column—all varied and offered in a helpful spirit—highlighting the wide variety of educational and personal development opportunities offered by ASCFG. “Regional Reports” in other organizations usually offer commentary on weather in the area or a summary of a meeting. While those are certainly legitimate, look at most of the reports ASCFG board members often send in. They are bona-fide long-form articles that provide actionable information to readers on a variety of topics. Instead of “Regional Reports,” I could easily have titled this issue's submissions as “Crop Selection: How to Choose and When to Say No” by Erin McMullen, “Tips for Growing in Abnormally Hot, Dry Weather” by Niki Irving, “How to Start a Bouquet Subscription” by Sarah Kistner, “Growing Gladiolus Successfully” by Dave Delbo, and “What to Consider When Buying New Mechanical Tools” by Helen Skiba. These are busy growers just like you—not professional writers, but what they share is impressive.

Talk about information bubbling up—Tracy Castro took a chance and sent in “Autumn Confession” just before deadline—unexpected, but it hit me in all the feels. Talk about “Flowers And...”, which was already being included. Flower farmers need to make a profit, which is a primary goal of course. But I think it's safe to say there are easier ways to make money, and most are also doing it because they love it and there are intangible benefits that are hard to articulate. Tracy did a great job of articulating some of these reasons.

I'm always open to article submissions or ideas. If you're not a writer, but have an idea, let me know. I can write it or someone else can. This magazine, like all ASCFG offerings, are meant to serve you.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Siktberg". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Editor, *The Cut Flower Quarterly*
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Cover photo: Cover photo by Sarah Kistner, Stone Meadow Gardens in Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia. These bouquets feature a lot of tried-and-true dahlia classics such as 'Cornel', 'Cornel Bronze', 'Ioanetti', and 'Sandra'.

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Historic Highways and Modern Flower Farms

THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER MONTHS

I have had the opportunity to travel to the ASCFG regional conferences and when possible, call on members, make new connections, and learn from passionate flower farmers. As I embarked on multiple journeys across the Midwest I noticed an intriguing pattern; many of the new vibrant flower farms are sprouting up along the country's oldest highways. This unexpected connection between historic routes and innovative floriculture sparked an association between the old roads where we live and the ingenuity of the cut flower farmer.

The highways at the heart of my summer travels are two of America's most iconic roads: U.S. Route 20 and U.S. Route 30, as well as Highway 3 in Ontario, Canada. These highways, established in the early 20th century, were once vital arteries connecting the East Coast to the Midwest and beyond.

U.S. 20, stretching from Boston, Massachusetts, to Newport, Oregon, holds the distinction of being the longest road in the United States. Its 3,365 miles cut through the northern states, offering a scenic journey through America's heartland. U.S. 30, also known as the Lincoln Highway, was one of the first transcontinental highways, running from Atlantic City, New Jersey, to Astoria, Oregon.

These roads played a crucial role in shaping the Midwest's landscape and economy, contributing to the growth of countless towns and cities along their paths. The highways became lifelines for rural communities, connecting farms to markets and opening new opportunities for trade and commerce.

During my recent travels along Highway 3, U.S. 20, and U.S. 30, I couldn't help but notice the number of ASCFG member farms that have



sprung up near these historic routes. This proximity is no coincidence. These old highways offer several advantages to flower farmers:

- **Accessibility to markets:** The roads provide easy access to nearby towns and cities, allowing farmers to quickly transport their perishable products to local markets, florists, and consumers.
- **Rich agricultural history:** Many areas along these routes have a long history of farming, meaning Midwest soil is often fertile and well-suited for growing a variety of flowers.
- **Affordable land:** As some traditional farms have consolidated, land along these routes has become available at more affordable prices, allowing new farmers to establish themselves.
- **Visibility:** The steady flow of traffic along these scenic routes provides natural visibility for flower stands and agritourism opportunities.





Above: Drew Groezinger leads ASCFG members through his fields at Clara Joyce Flowers. **Above Right:** (L-R) Ohio Flower Girls Hannah Stuckey, her sister Haley Fannin, and their mom, Karen. (Photos: Steve Crone)



THREE ASCFG MEMBER FARMS I VISITED DURING MY JOURNEY EMBRACE THESE ADVANTAGES:

Clara Joyce Flowers

Located just off U.S. 20 in northwestern Illinois, Clara Joyce Flowers specializes in varieties of dahlias. Owner Drew Groezinger, AmericanHort/Cultivate 2024 Young Grower of the Year, chose this location for its rich soil and proximity to several small towns along the highway. He sells his flowers at farmers' markets in these communities and even ships to florists in larger cities, all made possible by the farm's strategic location along U.S. 20.

Ohio Flower Girls

In North Central Ohio, situated on U.S. 30 in Bucyrus, Ohio Flower Girls Hannah Stuckey and Haley Fannin have turned their location into a destination. In addition to supplying local florists, they've opened a charming farm stand that attracts travelers along the historic Lincoln Highway. They offer U-pick experiences and flower arranging workshops, taking full advantage of their visibility along this well-traveled route.

Harris Family Farm

In St. Thomas, Ontario, Janis Harris owns and operates Harris Family Farm, hosts community groups like the local chamber of commerce and the local senior center, along with weekly visits to independent living communities. Highway 3 has been building on that same connection to the lakeshore communities of Ontario for a century. Today, Harris fosters the sense of connection and community through her thriving business model with creative pop-up U-pick events.

The relationship between these new farms and old roads points to an

exciting future for rural communities along these historic routes. As more flower farms establish themselves, they're bringing new life and economic opportunities to areas that may have been struggling.

There's also significant potential for agritourism. The combination of scenic drives along historic highways and visits to beautiful flower farms could become a draw for tourists seeking authentic, off-the-beaten-path experiences. This could lead to the development of "ASCFG flower trails" similar to existing wine or cheese trails.

These farms play a crucial role in preserving horticultural heritage. By adapting traditional farming practices to modern, sustainable methods, they're keeping the spirit of American agriculture alive along these historic corridors.

The unexpected connection between our oldest highways and our newest flower farms is a testament to the enduring impact of our nation's infrastructure on its economic and cultural landscape. As we've seen, the concrete paths laid down nearly a century ago continue to shape the way we grow, distribute, and enjoy nature's most beautiful products.

This relationship between old roads and new farms reminds us that innovation often occurs at the intersection of tradition and modernization. As we look to the future of North America's floriculture and rural development, we would do well to remember the lessons offered by these flourishing flower farms along our historic highways.

"Go" with Us,

Steve Crone

ASCFG Executive Director

It began with a simple question posted on the Members Only Facebook group

Hi farming friends!

How do y'all efficiently use our lovely ASCFG ...

What is your favorite way to get the most from your membership without going to a conference? It's time for me to renew and I feel like I am not actually using the membership besides the FB group.

Thank you, Amanda Kitaura of Bloom in Sacramento California, for your question! It sparked LOTS of great conversation. I especially appreciate all the members who jumped in to give examples of how they're taking advantage of their own membership and responding to other's questions.

This is exactly the kind of peer-to-peer sharing that makes our community SO strong!

Ashley Hutchison of Fern's Farmette in Eudora, Kansas: When I first joined, I watched every recorded conference session and other recorded webinars through the website during the winter. Like, probably hundreds of hours worth! I find myself using the website to look up information in addition to the FB group—there is so much knowledge there.

Susan Rockwood of Arcola Trail Flower Farm in Stillwater, Minnesota asked, "Do you know about the vendor/supplier discounts?" and was met with "Nope, No, Do tell." That's when Chris Gang of Rainbow in the Dark in New Orleans jumped in and shared the link to Supplier Discounts!

Robyn Scott of Blair House Blooms in West Brookfield, Massachusetts: Ask an Expert webinars, all of the resources on the website, including videos of past conferences, and honestly the Facebook group is an amazing source of information that I feel I can TRUST as a newer grower, rather than than all the randos out there on every free FB group.

Adrienne Gricius of Garden of Adrienne in Belvedere, Tennessee:

One of my new customers found me through the ASCFG and hired me for her wedding. I advertise on the site. Very beneficial for my business! (From Val: I think she might be referring to her farm listing on www.LocalFlowers.org, which is such a valuable free resource for ASCFG members).

Rebecca Kutzer-Rice of Moonshot Farm in East Windsor, New Jersey:

Coincidentally I just renewed today and was surprised (as always) at what a bargain it is. I search the Education section of the website or this group several times a week whenever I have a question—I probably get my membership's worth in revenue every week from what I learn here. Love the magazine and of course the farm tours and webinars. I've also been so lucky to participate in the Mentorship and Grower's Grant programs. Not to mention that I've met some of my closest friends through this org. Typing all this, I probably should have just renewed as a lifetime member...next year!

Barb Parry of Foxfire Fiber in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts:

I joined hoping to connect with a mentor, as that is mentioned as a benefit. Sounds like maybe a new feature. Then several members jumped in, saying they'd be interested in finding out more and Janis Harris of Harris Flower Farm in Ontario, Canada, posted that she is in her second pairing with a mentee and offered to talk with those asking questions.

Chandravir Ahuja of Great Ring Farm in Sandy Hook, Connecticut:

The Ask an Expert webinars and recordings are phenomenal.

Felicia Dee (D'Ambrosio) of Farmer Bailey:

Definitely the Education tab in the Member Center! There are so many recordings, presentations, conference talks, and a reference price list (and also posted the link).

John LaSalle of LaSalle Florists in Whately, Massachusetts: I find the best [benefit] is the relationships you form with so many experienced growers. We all learn from each other. (Amen to that, John! The learning just never stops!)

Mimo Davis of Urban Buds in St. Louis, Missouri: This is an excellent question. And you're getting lots of excellent answers. Having this broad-based group at your fingertips is worth the fee alone!! Look at all of these fantastic answers!!! Yes, there are other free forums. In my experience, this association is going to give you research-based information. Plus, the number of seasoned growers who are here to answer your questions is unparalleled. Look at the response you've gotten already! Proof of the pudding!!

Walter Perry of Perry's Florist and Gardens in Glen Rock, New Jersey: 1) Read the *Quarterly* cover-to-cover. Packed with information. 2) FB page—invaluable information and insights. 3) Vendor discounts—or better yet, a list of vendors. 4) Ask an Expert (the one idea thing below). 5) ASCFG website—ton of information—mine it! 6) Regional and national symposiums. 7) The ability through the membership list to reach out directly to a brother/sister grower and ask a question, or request a visit—most of us are more than glad to share information. ALL said if you only solve one problem, get one new idea, or prevent one mistake a year, it is worth it because you then multiply it by the years forward that you no longer have the problem, make the mistake, and reap the profits of a new crop. May I rest my case? Lol. Or should it be, I REST MY CASE! BTW—I know you know most of this; it's just sometimes hard to see the value when we work so hard for our \$\$\$.

Dianne Wardlaw-Reganess of Red Feather Ranch in Greensboro, North Carolina: I'm a new member this year and going to the conference in Raleigh this October! I'm really eager to meet and learn! Love the website, very easy to navigate and loaded with helpful info.

Laurie Hodges of Green Meadows Garden in Valentine, Nebraska: To learn not only the what but also the why. I'm always looking for insight into the what, why, and how.

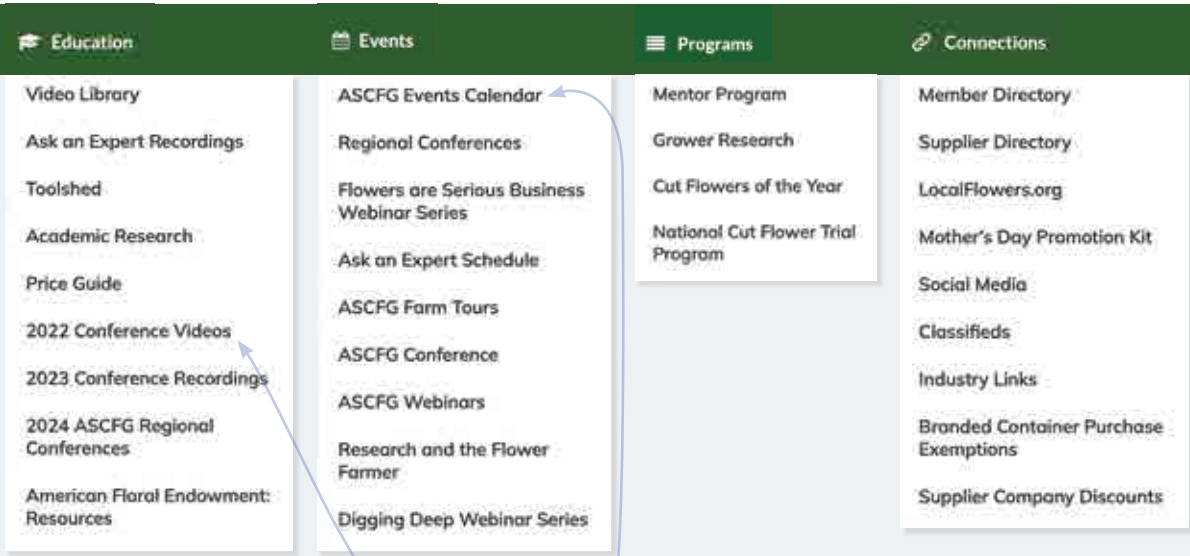
Michele Vaughan of Sunrise Hill Flower Farm in Holt, Missouri: I've never attended a conference. I've only been a member for two years, but I haven't been able to make it. For me, belonging to the ASCFG gives me credibility. It sets me apart from other growers. Professional credentials are important, particularly with the influx of new growers out there. I love having the library at my fingertips. When I want to do a deep dive into a particular topic, the first place I go to is the ASCFG website. I've learned about which perennials to plant that are best for cut flowers, growing stock in the fall in the open field, etc.

But, the most valuable thing I've received from the ASCFG so far has been the Facebook group. I know that people in this group are professional flower growers. Therefore, I expect the majority of the responses I get to any of my questions are being from people who have the experience to knowledgeably speak on that subject. There are a lot of other Facebook groups, but this is the only one in which I feel confident about the answers I get.

Kelly Garcia of Terra Flower Farm in Chattanooga, Tennessee: There's also a tutorial on navigating the Members Only section on the website that can help you find some of the best resources (and posted the link).

Ruth Ann of Abundant Blooms Flower Farm in Dorr, Michigan: I have watched a lot of old conferences. Yes, the audio and video are not always the best, but it still works. For example, I have never been to a conference (I'm going next week to Illinois), but I have listened to several whole conferences [online], and I also watch a lot of the "Ask an Expert" webinars. Also, I love the quarterly magazine. I read them cover to cover. Plus I go back and reread the old ones as info from three years ago is still relevant, and I am at a different point in my business now than I was then, so it's really fun to go back and reread them! I have found it an invaluable resource. I am planning [in my] budget to join for life next season!

Here's a quick look at the content under each of the website drop-downs:



MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WHAT'S AVAILABLE WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP

- Take five minutes to read every ASCFG email you receive, especially the monthly “Short Cuts.” Our staff team works hard to make sure that every single one is a quick and easy read—and they do an excellent job! This is the single SMARTEST, EASIEST thing we can all do.



- If you haven't looked at the ASCFG website in a while, take a fresh look, starting with the Members Only Guide. It's a quick review of what's available and where to find it. This link is the first thing you'll see when you sign onto the site.
- Thanks to our SEVEN regional conferences this year, there's LOTS of fantastic content to take a look at online. Yes, going to one is icing on the cake—nothing beats touring excellent farms and spending time with other growers (it's exciting to see how many of our past presidents, current and past board members, and long-time growers are registered)—but all of the slides for every educational session are posted on the Members Only website, and you never need to leave your farm.

- Sign up for the ASCFG Events Calendar. When you do, every single education session and event is added to your own online calendar—you never need to try to remember when something will be happening; it's automatically there! To subscribe, just click on the link that's at the end of every “Short Cuts” email, or go to the website and find the link under Events.



I was unbelievably fortunate to have been able to attend three of the regional conferences, and what a treat it was!! The tours and meeting the hosts and their teams were fantastic. The education sessions and workshops were beyond compare, but what was even better—spending time with the flower farmers who attended.

As John LaSalle mentioned above, the relationships you form in the ASCFG—which are the direct result of seeing and spending time with each other in person—are unbeatable. In fact, it's priceless.

I hope to see many of you next year at the Farm Tours and 2025 Conference! -Val ■



Val Schirmer is president of ASCFG and founder of Three Toads Farm in Winchester, Ky. Contact her at vschirmer3@gmail.com



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Flower Camp: Fun for Farmers and Florists

BY ELLEN FROST

POPSICLES! SPRINKLERS! FLORAL-INSPIRED SNOW CONES! SO MANY FLOWERS! This July, two farmers in my region, Maya Kosok from Hillen Homestead and Elisa Lane from Two Boots Farm hosted the first-ever Maryland Flower Camp for farmers and florists—designed as a day that flower pros could come together and “play” with flowers. I was excited when they asked me to be part of the planning process.

FROM ELISA: “Every July our farm struggles with having too many flowers and not enough sales outlets. Additionally, as my business has become more successful, I feel like I have more capacity to do things for joy rather than just hustling nonstop to make enough money. The camp idea came

from a conversation I had years ago with Holley Simmons from She Loves Me in Washington, D.C. I was really wanting to build more time for play in my life.”

FROM MAYA: “Elisa proposed this idea to me during our annual winter planning meeting, and although it was definitely her brainchild, I jumped fully on board and we ran with it. We were so lucky to have some florists like Ellen Frost and Kate Campbell help us out with the planning and execution.”

We planned the event for July 9, because this is typically a very slow time for farmers and florists in our region. And even though it’s slow, farmers often have a ton of beautiful product available. The

schedule for the day was full of activities including a farm tour at Two Boots, a Top Chef-style flower guessing game, stations for new products, and the main event, a creative team challenge to design a floral installation on the farm.

Most professional flower designers get into the industry because they love designing flowers. The reality is that we spend much of our time on tasks that have little to do with hands-on flower arranging. When we do design, it's almost always for customers who have their own aesthetics and goals for the designs. From the outside, it may look like floristry is a job where we "play with flowers," but creating for ourselves, just for fun, with no plan or goal is rare. Flower farmers love flowers too, but rarely make time to design just for themselves. The daily tasks on the farm take priority over "playing" with flowers.

The concept of play has been proven to fight burnout and boredom in creatives. In Ali Abdaal's book *Feel Good Productivity: How to Do More of What Matters to You*, he touts the power of play. He suggests embracing curiosity and then making time to pursue that curiosity, with no expectation of a practical result. That's the hard part, right? We always want to do something to move the needle, whatever that needle is, forward.

Making time for play in the flower world is hard. Flower farmers and florists hustle during the busy seasons. We don't prioritize creative playtime. That's why Flower Camp was such a hit. The highlight of the day was breaking into mixed teams of farmers and florists to create installations around the farm. Found items and farm structures were incorporated. One team decorated the porta potty!

I couldn't have imagined when I started Local Color Flowers 17 years ago, that an event like this would ever be possible. Thirty farmers and 30 florists spending the day together, just for fun. Back then, in 2008, there were only five farmers locally who sold to me. I didn't personally know a single florist that was doing what I was doing. It was a little lonely in the beginning, and I wasn't really sure that the business I was creating would work. Everything is different now. The local flower industry is growing and thriving today. The ASCFG currently has close to 3,000 members. The Maryland Cut Flower Growers Association is approaching 300 farmers. Slow Flowers has more than 800 members. My community is full of florists and farmers who have local flowers at the heart of their business. It's truly amazing!

"Hosting Flower Camp has already grown my florist customer base and increased sales during the summer months when sales are usually lagging. There has been a buzz about it all summer. Maybe next year we will take this camp theme even further and have an overnight camp out! I wonder who would actually do it with me!"

— Elisa Lane, Two Boots Farm



Facing page: Flower camp was well attended by 30 farmers and 30 florists. **Above:** Happy winners of some of the door prizes. *Photos: J. Sikora Photography*

We learned a lot from this first event and will take it all in to make improvements for next year! Here are our takeaways if you'd like to think about planning an event like this in your community.

- [We didn't do an open call for participants](#) or a social media blast—instead, [we targeted florists we knew were buying some local products](#) and [farmers we knew were actively selling to florists](#). You could cast a much wider net to try to reach florists who aren't familiar with local flowers or who you would like to build relationships with, but we took a more targeted approach for this first event.
- [We recruited a local photographer](#) who agreed to capture the day in exchange for flower credit from Two Boots Farm and Hillen Homestead—so grateful to have all these amazing images, and we definitely recommend having a photographer on hand.
- [We were way too ambitious](#) with how many activities we planned. Everything took longer than we planned. Transitions with large groups took a while, and many of the participants were craving downtime to chat and get to know each other. Luckily [we pivoted mid-event to make the agenda much more reasonable](#).



Above: Participants toured Two Boots Farm. **Facing page:** A porta potty has never looked so beautiful! *Photos: J. Sikora Photography*

- [Everyone liked the farm tour at the beginning of the day](#) before it got scorching hot (it was 100°F that day!) The only issue was that it was a very large group and it was a little hard to hear in the back. [We're considering breaking up the group into two tours next time](#).
- [The potluck lunch was a hit](#). This was the time that everyone was able to catch up, talk with old and new friends, and just relax. We joked that this could have been the whole day because people were just so excited to be together. In terms of the potluck lunch, there were a lot of leftovers. Considerations for next year include people bringing their own bagged lunches or participants signing up to bring specific dishes.
- [The installation activity was the most fun part of the day!](#) Everyone loved getting to “play” with flowers. We'd do a better job of assigning teams next year so that is an even number of farmers and florists per team.



Flower Camp was made even more special by all of the organizations and businesses that participated. All of the flowers were donated by local farms. The attendees got to use dahlias, zinnias, celosia, lisianthus, and more. There were flowers as far as the eye could see. The abundance was so beautiful. All of the flower mechanics were donated, too. Stephanie Duncan and Jessica Hall of Harmony Harvest brought their Floral Genius frogs for all of the participants to try out in their designs for the day. Stephanie and Jessica are full of energy and excitement over sustainable mechanics. Their participation was a ton of fun. Farmers and florists also got to experiment with Agra-Wool, OshunPouch, and a new compostable water tube from New Age Floral. There were also great door prizes donated by the ASCFG. The Maryland Department of Agriculture, Farm Credit, and Local Color Flowers sponsored the event to keep the costs down for participants (it only cost \$20 for florists and was free for farmers who donated flowers).

The attendees embraced a day away from their flower jobs to “play with flowers.” Even though it was blazing hot, everyone left feeling inspired and refreshed to try new things on their farms and in their shops. ■



Ellen Frost is owner of Local Color Flowers in Baltimore, Md. Contact her at ellen@locoflo.com



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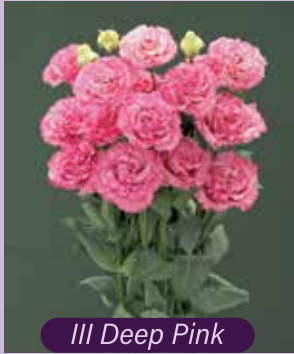
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III Yellow



I Light Lavender



III Deep Pink



I White



III Light Pink



III White



II White

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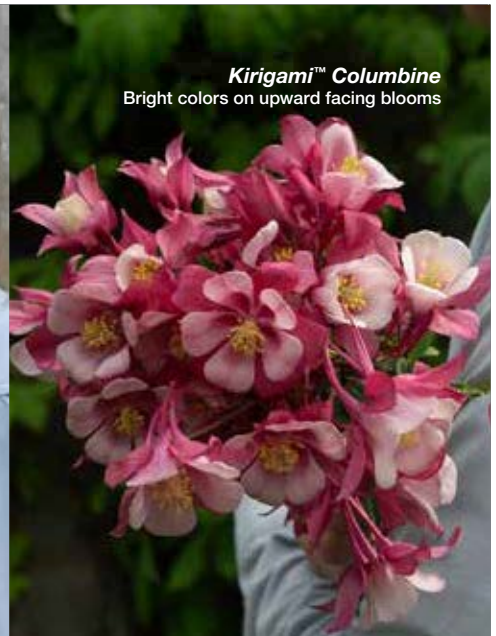
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Strategies for Achieving Your Goals

BY REBECCA MARRALL

I RECENTLY HAD THE PRIVILEGE of co-presenting a conference workshop with North and Central Regional Director Amanda Cook at the ASCFG North and Central Regional Conference at Clara Joyce Flowers. The topic? Achieving your goals by using project management principles.

While planning this conference, Amanda and I were fortunate to stumble upon a shared interest: How do we accomplish the goals we set for ourselves in our professional and personal lives? How do these goals contribute to and support our dreams for our futures? It's one thing to write a to-do list or a list of dreams. But we often struggle with the mechanics and logistics of making those dreams come true. How do we get from A to Z when multiple steps are involved and there are surprises along the way? When a goal seems overwhelming, there are specific strategies for making steady progress on your projects and tasks to accomplish your goals sustainably.

If you're busy making plans for 2025, here are some quick takeaways from the workshop that might help you get organized...

- **Need Help Getting Started?** If you don't know where to start with your project (or projects), try a Post-it Note Party. This tactile project management strategy is a wonderfully visual way to see all your projects and tasks at once. Writing down tasks on color-coordinated Post-it notes allows you to see everything at once and reorganize the tasks as needed.
- **STEP ONE:** Buy different colored Post-it notes of various sizes.
- **STEP TWO:** Dedicate each color to a specific project.
- **STEP THREE:** Make a list of tasks for each project using that identical color.
- **STEP FOUR:** Organize the tasks in sequential order and assign deadlines.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT LIFECYCLE

What does the process look like?



DON'T SKIP PLANNING

Good planning from the outset can help you anticipate potential issues and determine if you have the bandwidth and resources to execute the project.



Phase I: Planning

Planning involves identifying the scope of the project, what you need to accomplish, budget, and schedule.



Phase III: Monitoring

Monitoring involves communicating progress updates to team members and meeting (or adjusting) deadlines.



Phase II: Launch

Launch involves starting the project, updating employees and project participants, and identifying a communication strategy to share updates.



Phase IV: Closure

Closure involves completing the project, assessing the overall experience for lessons learned, and identifying any next steps.

- **Timeline:** “It always takes longer than you expect.” Simply put, life happens. A car may break down, or a fantastic opportunity comes up, and it changes the overall schedule of your goals. So, as a rule, try to add more time to your project timeline. Add an additional cushion of approximately 15–20%. For example, a six-month project plan with a 15% cushion is seven months.
- **Communication Strategy:** Keep everyone involved in the project informed by establishing a format, frequency, and date for updates and reports. For example, you could choose every Monday at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom for a progress report meeting on the project.
- **Manage Scope Creep:** People often get excited when they start an exciting project or service and want to add new features or services to a project after it’s begun. Thus, here’s a simple rule: If you add more complexity to your project, service, or product (for example, all custom bouquet options instead of three bouquet recipes), either a) charge more money or b) take something out of the project. Increased complexity in your project and tasks deserves financial compensation, so be sure to pay yourself accordingly.
- **Specificity is Your Friend:** When writing down your goals, be specific. Instead of, “I want to launch a flower delivery service,” try this alternative: “Launch a subscription-based service within six months that delivers fresh flowers to customers on a monthly and weekly basis, with three tiers of bouquets at different price points and different recipes. Aim for 75 subscribers within the first three months.” Getting this detailed in your goal setting helps you identify exactly what you want to accomplish.

If you’re interested in learning more about this workshop, you can find a copy of the presentation slides and supporting materials on the ASCFG Members Only website within the Regional Conferences section. I wish everyone a wonderful 2025. Have fun writing down your dreams and goals! ■



Rebecca Marrall is the ASCFG Education Director. Contact her at education@ascfg.org




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Announcing the 2024 ASCFG

Cut Flower of the Year Winners

Each year ASCFG members select cut flower varieties as top performers based on their ease of culture, productivity, and marketability.



Fresh Cut Flower

'Potomac Appleblossom' Snapdragon

Ribbon-candy spikes adorned with pink and-white blossoms, create a lovely contrast against the glossy dark-green foliage.

One Zone 6 grower reported,

"'Appleblossom' has the best stem strength and length out of every snap cultivar I've trialed, plus the colors are lovely and blend well with many other colors. They are insanely productive, throwing multiple flushes throughout the season." Another reported that "The Potomac series changed the snapdragon game—in Zone 7a mine produced through 90°F summer heat and overwintered through weeks of single-digit cold, shooting out fresh blooms in spring. 'Appleblossom' is probably the most versatile and elegant of the series!" This group 3-4 cultivar does best during the main season, from mid-spring to mid-fall. Grow close together for long, single-stem production and further apart for multiple flushes. Does well in the field, tunnels and greenhouses.

Woody Cut Flower

Viburnum 'Brandywine'

Deep green, glossy foliage turns dark purplish red in fall and has multi-season uses. Foliage holds up well in water, and can be harvested from early June to October. **The flower buds are pearl-like clusters** and make charming additions to early June bouquets. Additionally, the fruit turns beautiful shades of blue and pink in September. One grower said, "I love the full seasonality of *Viburnum* 'Brandywine': the pinkish spring flowers, leaf coloring, and the two-tone berries." Native to eastern North America and hardy in Zones 5 to 9. Tolerates wet sites. While a pollinator is not required for fruit set, growing the related *Viburnum nudum* nearby will likely increase fruit set.



Fresh Cut Flower

'Cheerfulness' Daffodil

'Cheerfulness' daffodil is very fragrant and makes an excellent cut flower. Multiple blooms per stem

combining white and shades of yellow make a cheerful display

in the spring. An ASCFG member shared, "Lovely scent, very fragrant, long-enough stems, and a cute accent flower for design work! This variety is sure to stand out." These versatile daffodils can be forced as one cut-and-done flower in greenhouses or tunnels, or grown as a long-lived field perennial. Plants are cold hardy to Zone 5.



Foliage Cut Flower

'Joan J' Thornless Raspberry

One grower raved, "I can't imagine not having this in the field. It's a favorite source of greenery for mixed bouquets. It's prolific, easy to grow, trouble free and very reliable" 'Joan J' produces loads of long stems all season long, from late spring through to a heavy frost. Cut for the foliage or the green berries. One grower says, **"One of our top foliages in the field in terms of production and profit** from selling direct to florists. So reliable and carefree!" Bonus—you can leave a few to produce berries. This is a primocane-bearing cultivar, meaning it bears fruit on the current year's growth. Stems that overwinter should flower early in the season, while new stems may flower in the fall. Cold hardy in Zones 4 to 8, but generally does better in the cooler part of its range.



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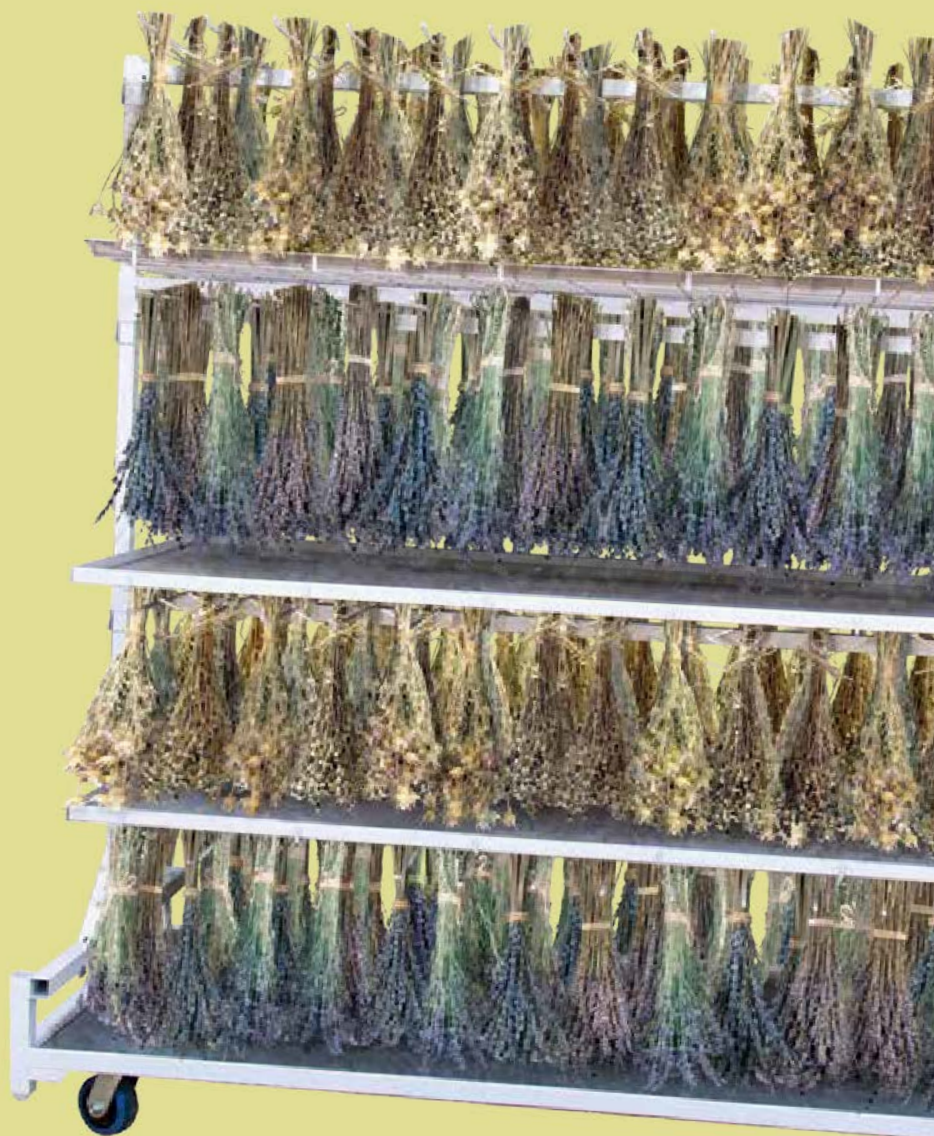
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SUSTAINABILITY IN FLOWER FARMING

Farmers are the original sustainability gurus. Climate-smart practices just come naturally when you're growing and harvesting crops. What does sustainability look like on a flower farm? Learn how three flower growers bring that term to life.

BY JULIE MARTENS FORNEY

T

he concept of sustainability comes to life—with feet and hands—on a farm. Anyone who's tending the land understands the importance of longevity and doing what it takes to preserve today's resources for tomorrow's generations. Climate-smart practices and resource preservation are buzzwords of the 21st century, but for flower growers, they're purely old hat, the warp and woof of everyday life on the farm.

Try to define sustainability and the topic gets complicated—fast. So many practices comprise growing sustainably. Talk to 10 different flower growers, and you'll get 10 different answers about what sustainability actually looks like on the flower farm. We talked to three farmers who embrace sustainability through a variety of practices. Let their stories inspire your own journey with sustainable farming.

Designing with flowers grown on the farm or within 50 miles means Stacey Denton can offer clients a distinctly local arrangement. She sees eco-floristry and defining what "local" means as vital to growing sustainably.

Meredith Nunnikhoven

Barnswallow Flowers
Oskaloosa, Iowa



THE BASICS: A fifth-generation farmer in rural Iowa, Meredith Nunnikhoven and her mother, Kerrilyn Loynachan Nunnikhoven, were first adopters when it came to raising field-grown flowers, doing it before any resources were available. “Everything at that point was directed to greenhouse flower growing,” Meredith says. “Mom knew that a more diverse resiliency was the key to the future of our farm’s survival. She was the spark behind the Barnswallow Flowers’ flame that’s now burning.”

Kerrilyn loved growing from seed and investing in perennials, which helped catapult the farm’s five acres of flowers into profitability that rivaled—and exceeded—five acres of rotational corn and soy. The floral business model is 100 percent direct-to-consumer sales, including farmers’ markets, an on-farm weekend farm stand, CSA programming, wedding and event florist work, pick-your-own flowers, and educational/private tour events.

PHILOSOPHY: “Flower farming with perennials or no-till processes is conservation farming. On our farm we grow row crops without disturbing the soil, as well as chestnut trees that help reduce carbon dioxide. Our flowers aren’t no-till, but we’re chemical-free. Each part of the farm is good for the environment—it’s a win on all fronts: for pollinators, farm employees, and the earth,” Meredith says.

Continued on next page

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Perennial Beetle Banks—After seeing vegetable farms using beetle banks of flowering perennials to help with pest control, Meredith has adapted the practice to her farm. With growing rows that are 15 feet wide and 200 feet long, 12-foot-wide weed fabric leaves three feet on the edge—a perfect spot for a beetle bank. She plants the empty space with tough, easy-care perennials that provide habitat for beneficial insects, while also offering stems for cutting.

The beetle bank also provides an ideal spot for trialing new hardy perennial varieties. Iowa’s harsh climate, especially with wind and severe weather, forces varieties to show their mettle. “If the flowers can’t survive the weather or we aren’t a fan of its habit, then it serves its original purpose,” Meredith says. “We let it bloom out, and the you-pickers can enjoy it.”

These are the beetle banks Meredith has planted with good success:

- 2020 (Original Beetle Bank): Hyssop, globe centaurea, lupine, globe thistle, yarrow, feverfew, eryngium, goldenrod, dianthus, veronica, nicotiana (self seeds)
- 2024 (New Beetle Bank): Phlox, yarrow, hyssop, goldenrod, echinacea interplanted with columbine, monarda, orange milkweed, sage, thyme, ‘Fama’ scabiosa interplanted with rudbeckia and dianthus
- 2025 (Upcoming Beetle Bank): Campanula, foxglove, dianthus, veronica, etc. Early spring perennials and late summer new variety perennials (to be determined).

Below: Globe centaurea (*Centaurea macrocephala*) is one of Meredith’s go-to crops for beetle banks. “It puts on foliage early and doesn’t ask for anything,” she says. Planted tightly, they help smother weeds, while also providing excellent fresh-cut flowers for early season bouquets.





Perennial Flower Buffer Strips—Much like the beetle banks, perennial buffer strips create habitat for good bugs, who earn their keep attacking pests, like corn rootworm beetle. “It’s basically growing something around a tender crop to balance out the ecozone,” Meredith explains. “Another benefit for us is that these buffers serve as mini windbreaks that give early crops a fighting chance.” A typical buffer strip is 30- to 50-foot wide.

Meredith recommends tucking perennial buffer strips between hoop houses, too. These strips create diversity and benefit flower farms surrounded by other field crops. “It traps a lot of insects that never make their way to the flower crops,” she says.

Buffer strips can be expensive to install correctly, including soil prep, seed choice, and drilling installation. The good news is that many government and private non-profit groups are available to assist. “There’s a growing emergence of cost-share for drilling or providing money for all the seed or the equipment to put it in,” Meredith explains. “Some of the funding depends on if you farm the land or not, or if you’re taking it out of production. Non-profits may have fewer restrictions than state agencies.” She suggests checking with the Xerces Society to find state organizations, as well as with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Meredith pulls from native plant genera for perennial buffer strips, including milkweed, rudbeckia, native aster, monarda, mullein, native sage, and native grasses. In her design, she surrounds the perennial flower buffer strip with a windbreak where mock orange, highbush

Left: Allen Nunnikhoven, Meredith’s father, monitors Barnswallow Farms’ Conservation Reserve Program Pollinator Habitat. Kerrilyn, Meredith’s mother, enacted the 100-acre project in 2021. Hoksey Native Seeds served as seed vendor, installing seeds of 30 native plant varieties via drill. “Ground that was formerly too fallow to row-crop farm or produce hay is now a haven for bees, songbirds, wild pheasant, quail, and turkey,” Meredith says.

Right: Meredith developed her compostable vase to create a container that complements the farm’s field-grown flowers, which are shorter due to non-stop wind pressure.

(continued from page 26)

Representing Practical Farmers of Iowa, Meredith traveled to Washington, D.C. earlier this year to meet with Iowa lawmakers about preserving funds to support continued conservation efforts in agriculture. “I tried to explain that conservation crops are beyond mainstream pollinator CRP and strips. Fresh cut flower farming is a great conservation crop,” she shares. “Why aren’t we supported for that? It seems other farmers growing mainstream crops easily get awarded cost share government programs. Why can’t flower farmers?”



Embracing Sustainable Practices:

“Match your convictions to your actions. Our mission statement is on our website and social media ... we started a pick-your-own program: to exhibit our farming practices and back up our mission statement.”

-MEREDITH NUNNIKHOVEN

cranberry, ninebark, flowering trees, and lilacs grow, backed by bigger trees, such as white pines (highly resistant to chemical drift from surrounding row crop fields), white oak, hickory, and hackberry.

Cover Crops—Meredith gleaned her cover crop techniques by observing nearby Amish farmers. “I saw how healed their flower and vegetable beds were yearly. I wanted my soil to look like theirs.” Meredith achieved that goal. “The flower field was formerly in row crop production and was low yielding. Soil health improvement has led to happier flowers and weed reduction,” she says.

Hairy vetch is tilled in after frost for the spring cover crop. White buckwheat provides warm-season healing for soil after cold crop harvests in spring. These cover crops with broad leaves also help keep weeds out. “Cover crops work hard for you well beyond what you know,” Meredith says. “Soil tests every year show improvement, and our inputs and weeds have gone down.” She stresses that cover crops should not be allowed to flower and set seed. Instead, till them in before bloom, or you risk having them reseed.

One obstacle with cover crops is cost, especially if you’re cropping a large area. Occasionally there are crop failures, which make seeds difficult to source. “But in general, we only use what we have and have what we use,” she says. “Making the best of the resources or knowledge we have has led us to this great solution for feeding our soil.”

Compostable Vase—Every aspect of Barnswallow Flowers aims toward executing a growing involvement in conservation farming. Each of the farm’s products comes in paper or compostable materials. Her passion for reduce, reuse, and recycle led her to invent a compostable vase. “Everyone is vased out, and in some places in the country, glass isn’t allowed at farmers’ markets or even recyclable,” she shares.

She envisions the vase as a revenue stream for the farm, offering an affordable option to other growers that provides space to celebrate their branding. The compostable vase invention is patent pending and trademarked. “We just started the beta test for Prototype 1.0 with flower farmers all across the country,” she says.

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SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Seed Saving— In addition to growing cut flower crops, Stacey also grows about 10 to 20 different seed crops on contract for small U.S.-based seed companies: Siskiyou Seeds, Uprising Seed, and Fedco Seeds. “All of these seed crops provide a finished product that’s adapted to my soil types and climate,” she says. “It’s something I sell as a cash crop, and I use the excess for my own planting stock.” By rotating different crops and varieties each year, Stacey helps build her own diverse seed supply.

“Saving seed is a super important sustainability element because the global seed supply is largely controlled by a few major corporations,” she shares. “If we don’t know how to take a plant all the way through its life cycle, we’re in a precarious position as farmers. It’s really vital that I have a portion of my seeds that I rely on that I grew myself. It’s a key element to resiliency.”

Obstacles to seed saving include know-how. “It’s really something of a lost art, especially for the less familiar crops,” she says. Knowing how to harvest and clean seed most efficiently and selecting for certain petal shapes, colors, disease resistance, or flower yield are other skills to learn, along with the process of roguing out off-type plants.

Eco-floristry—When Stacey launched her floral design



Above: Stacey embraces permaculture design principles on her farm. A swale at the bottom of her field retains irrigation runoff, providing standing water of varying levels throughout the droughty summer. She planted the swale with a hedgerow featuring fruit trees, basket willow species, nitrogen-fixing and berry-producing shrubs, and spring flowering shrubs.

Stacey Denton

Flora Farm & Design Studio
Williams, Oregon

THE BASICS: Stacey Denton has operated an organic flower farm since 2009 and has been certified organic since 2022. The location in Southern Oregon, the least populated portion of the Western Coastal U.S. demands a varied approach to sales. “The major portion of my business focuses on wedding clients, but I also have a lot of sales channels to make it work,” Stacey shares.

The fresh flower harvest from January through September fuels work with wedding clients, custom orders for special occasions, and some straight bunches to a couple of regional natural food stores. Stacey reserves labor-intensive mixed bouquets for custom orders, CSA customers, and this year, Mother’s Day bouquets for the food stores. “The price point has to be high enough to justify doing those,” she says.

Dahlia tubers and seed sales deliver winter income, as do dried flower items, which are also sold through an online store. Wedding deposits round out winter receipts. Through the growing season, Stacey teaches classes and hosts workshops on-farm. “Diversifying farm income is important,” she says.

PHILOSOPHY: Studying ecology in college set Stacey on a course toward “a lifestyle that was just a little lighter on the earth, where I could imagine passing on to my daughter a future she could imagine living in,” she shares. Her early influences include:

- *Permaculture: A Designer’s Manual* by Bill Mollison
- *The One-Straw Revolution: An Introduction to Natural Farming* by Masanobu Fukuoka

More recently, she’s been finding inspiration in:

- *Organic No-Till Farming Revolution* by Andrew Mefferd (“It’s a good companion, a great place to look for ideas,” she says.)
- *The Regenerative Growers Guide to Garden Amendments* by Nigel Palmer (“It offers recipes on how to make your own biological and mineral amendments on the farm,” she adds.)
- *A Biodynamic Manual* by Pierre Masson

business about 15 years ago, she incorporated things she grew or could source within 50 miles of her farm. She did this to reflect the beauty of southern Oregon—the second most biologically diverse temperate climate region in the country. But there’s also another reason. “In viticulture, you can taste the terroir of the land where a wine is grown,” she explains. “In a floral design, you can get a sense of terroir, as well.”

This aspect of sustainability is easily overlooked, but it plays a significant role not only in reducing the carbon footprint of an arrangement but also in supporting a local economy. “It’s a slippery slope to offer locally grown flowers but then supplement with imported flowers, whether they’re from somewhere else in this country or elsewhere in the world,” she says. “If a wedding client wants to spend \$5,000 with me, if I use 10 percent local flowers, only \$500 of that purchase goes into the local economy. It’s also confusing for customers when farmers/florists have different definitions of what local means. Customers can end up with an experience of being green-washed if their vendor uses a very small portion of local flowers in their designs but calls it local.”

Below: Stacey sees saving seed as a key aspect of sustainable growing. She’s currently part of an Organic Seed Alliance research project with the goal of putting together data regarding how much seed different flower crops yield. *Photo by Shawn Linehan Photography*

It’s tricky running a floral business using only local flowers. It means Stacey ends up growing a large diversity of flower and color types. At times she must turn down clients who want a particular flower at a time of year when it’s not available. One solution to meeting demand is building a network of local flower growers. “I work with other local farmers if I come up short in a given week,” she says. “Networking makes us stronger because, between us, we have the volume and diversity.”

No-till Practices—Flora Farm has about three-quarters of an acre in active annual and perennial crops, and Stacey uses no-till practices on 90 percent of that growing area. “I want to avoid inverting soil layers because I’m working so hard to tend microbial life in the soil. Tillage disrupts that by bringing air into the soil and exposing those microbes to the sun,” she says.

She wasn’t always a no-till farmer. “After years of using a rototiller, I could see and feel the deadness in the soil. That sent me looking for alternatives to get back into the way I was introduced to gardening: using handwork, permaculture principles, and sheet mulching,” she says.

When a crop finishes, she mows or cuts it down, leaving plant residue in place. Roots remain in the soil to nourish



microorganisms. She top-dresses with any mineral or biological amendments (usually feather meal or worm castings) before covering the bed with a tarp. “I leave the tarp in place for 4 to 12 weeks, depending on the time of year, outdoor temperature, and my needs for advancing to the next crop,” she explains.

At planting time, she removes any leftover woody debris, which goes to the compost pile. Seedlings take root quickly in the organic-matter-rich soil. After crops grow for a few weeks, she weeds and then mulches with organic rice straw. “The mulch is important to this system. It covers the soil, which allows soil microorganisms to be active higher up in the layers. Mulch also prevents erosion, cools soil, and controls some weed growth,” Stacey says.

The benefits of no-till are readily visible: healthier crops and reduced disease and pest pressure. Soil tests reveal higher organic matter. In a wet year, she can get into the field earlier for planting because tarped soil isn’t as wet. The challenge with tarping is getting into a forward-thinking mentality to ensure you get tarps in place soon enough. It’s especially important if you’re tarping crops like perennial grasses, which could take 6 to 12 months to decompose fully.

Advice on Embracing Sustainable Practices

“What’s been most successful for me is to try something every year. Sometimes the new habit sticks, and sometimes it doesn’t. By having the goal of trying something new, I maintain that spirit of innovation on the farm. I’m always looking for ways to improve [our sustainability], and I keep it top of mind when I’m doing my farm planning in winter. I try to integrate the new practice when I’m less busy—in the very early transition time between winter and spring.”

—STACEY DENTON, OREGON

“Educate customers about sustainable flowers and floristry. Make it the reason for people to choose you and your products. I really credit the growth of my relatively young business to speaking my mind and taking a stand about these issues that are important to me. It has channeled the right customers in our direction.

“One of the biggest hurdles in the industry right now is that it’s so easy to compare oneself to others. That can lead to farmers trying to grow popular crops that aren’t well-suited for their environment or climate. That in turn leads them to take steps that aren’t sustainable, maybe using more sprays or experiencing more financial losses. Dahlias are native to the highlands of Mexico. Growers might be trying to force them into their crop plan in areas where it might not make sense. Instead, embrace what you have and where you are and use that to help differentiate your company. Make it a positive, instead of ‘I’m so sad I can’t grow the biggest zinnias.’”

—LINDA D’ARCO, NEW YORK

Linda D'Arco

Little Farmhouse Flowers
Jay, New York



THE BASICS: Linda D'Arco started her flower-growing journey during a summer break from teaching. What began as a hobby blossomed in 2017 into a full-fledged 2.5-acre flower farm. Linda carved out a niche with high-end design work for destination weddings and events. “That was the most profitable outlet for our sales,” she shares. Currently, the farm sells via local retailers, small batch orders to the public, and wholesale shipping to florists in New York City and nationwide.

The product line at Little Farmhouse Flowers is shifting more toward wholesale goods and consulting/educational services. In 2020 Linda and a fellow farmer created The Tulip Workshop, which features online courses where they share their bulb-forcing methods. This year, a wholesale bulb division, Ampersand Bulb Co., has sprouted. “My work has really turned toward mentoring growers and sharing high-quality wholesale products with them,” Linda says.

She's also active in the Sustainable Floristry Network, with Little Farmhouse Flowers being named a Founding Ambassador of the group in 2019. “This group has developed an international accreditation program in sustainable floristry based on research and international climate goals and standards,” Linda explains. “It's a great soup-to-nuts resource for farmer-florists who want to learn about cleaning up our industry.”

PHILOSOPHY: Little Farmhouse Flowers is tucked into the northern Adirondacks, where locally farmed produce, dairy, and meat are part of the community ethos. Linda found “a gaping hole,” however, in the public's knowledge of flower sources and what that meant. “It only made sense to marry my vision for a sustainably minded farmer-florist operation with the customers who come to our area for the natural beauty of our beloved six-million-acre Adirondack Park,” she says.

As a floral designer, Linda sees the whole pursuit—growing, appreciating, and designing with flowers—as “nature's innovation process. Plants fascinate me and present the same kind of potential that I feel in an art studio or maker space.”

Above: Linda D'Arco uses a high-volume, in-vessel composting machine to produce disease-and weed-free compost for the farm. The resulting compost has delivered cost savings by replacing clean compost and planting mediums the farm had been purchasing.

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Careful Plant Selection: Linda looks to nature for inspiration on the plants she grows. “Our goal is to grow plants that can sustain the business with as few negative impacts on the environment as possible,” Linda explains. “For example, we choose plants that need or appreciate very cold temperatures during winter and minimal heat to bloom.”

At the tree line and in the meadows surrounding the farm are viburnum, elderberry, decades-old lilacs, and dogwood, along with St. John's wort and Christmas ferns. “We choose ornamental varieties of plants that naturally do well here, rather than try to change our land or grow plants that will fall prey to our growing conditions or pests,” Linda says.

The farm is moving away from annuals and toward more perennials and programmable bulb-grown flowers, crops that demand less time, labor, and energy inputs. That requires testing different plants and varieties that haven't been tried in colder climates. “We love to tinker here. I'm a big fan of testing different kinds of plants and seeing what we can grow in unconventional ways,” Linda shares. “We take advantage of our cold climate to extend the season of floral standards like peonies, tulips, daffodils, mums, and sweet peas, which we harvest all summer long.”

Linda is most interested in the industry trend “where a relatively pedestrian flower, like a zinnia, is elevated through hybridizing to become more valuable. I think there are lots of opportunities for growth in this area, and I'm excited to see where people go with it.” She's

working on some projects with species that she hopes—in the future—will help to shrink industry reliance on imports.

Creative farming techniques: “The goal of our farming methods is business survival and conserving resources in our harsh climate,” Linda says. Building and nurturing permanent beds allows the team to plant earlier in the season, eliminating the need to wait for soil to dry out for spring tilling. Using row covers extends the short growing season, which has a last-frost date of June 1 and a first-frost date of September 1.

The farm also uses spaces that are already heated such as the farmhouse cellar to nurture plants for sale during the dark days of winter. “We grow tens of thousands of tulips and other plants each winter in the tiny farmhouse basement using the ambient temperature of the space,” Linda explains.

Building soil health: Little Farmhouse Flowers has focused on producing their own compost so they can eliminate ordering truckloads of compost and mulch from far away. “We worked with an organization called Compost for Good to help us bring a high-volume, in-vessel composting machine to our farm,” she explains. The machine runs on a single household outlet for a couple of hours every day or every other day. The result is disease- and weed-free compost.

“These machines are expensive, but the Natural Resources Conservation Service has recently added grants for them and the accompanying pads or shelters to its soil conservation program,” Linda adds. “It’s a great time to look into a composting machine for your farm.” (Linda shared about the compost machine at the 2022 annual conference. That talk is posted in the Members Only section of the ASCFG website.)

Sustainable design: With floral design work, Linda has researched and shared information about the products and practices that concern her. She does this through writing on the farm’s blog and also via one-on-one interaction with customers during sales efforts. “Educating people about the environmental benefits of local flowers HAS to be a part of our work,” she says. “It’s the reason we’re all reining back in the flower sales that were largely lost to imports since the 1980s.”

Linda also conscientiously celebrates fellow growers and designers who are making waves in sustainability, referring interested individuals to the people she’s learned from. “The more we all work to normalize the purchase of local flowers over imported ones, the stronger our collective industry becomes,” she says. ■

Winter bulb forcing helps sustain Little Farmhouse Flowers during winter. The addition of wholesale bulb sales through Ampersand Bulb Co. ensures year-round employment for workers like Moussa Mahaman (below), while offering high-quality goods to other growers.





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FLOWERS AND ...

CHOCOLATE



This article is the second installment in a three-part series about how to make flowers a must-have purchase instead of an either/or decision.

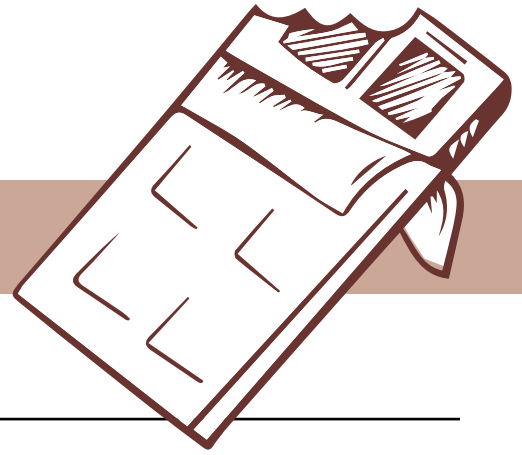
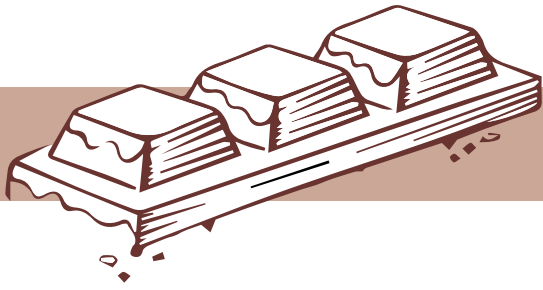
BY MELINDA KNUTH, PH.D

I was inspired to write this article series based on conversations from the ASCFG National Conference held in November 2023. One of the points of discussion was how to make flowers more inelastic. Inelastic in economic terms means that even as the price goes up, consumers' buying habits stay the same. Or, conversely, when presented with an alternative product that has a similar value from the consumer perspective, they will stay "sticky" and remain unchanged in the amount of floral products they buy.

This got me thinking: What are ways we can make flowers more indispensable in the consumer's mind? How can we convince consumers to buy the alternative products AND flowers because they MUST buy flowers? The first topic was pet products (refer to the Spring 2024 *Quarterly* for details) and in this issue, we will discuss flowers and chocolates.

Chocolates

Americans have a long history of loving chocolate. In brief, the cacao bush is native to South America and native populations have been using the fruits from the tree, specifically the beans within the fruit, going back 5,000 years. There are archaeological records of North Americans consuming



drinks with cacao beans in them from 900 to 1200 C.E. and with European colonists in 1600 C.E. (Source: *Smithsonian Magazine*, 2017). Immigrated Swiss inventors were the first to advertise and sell chocolate for eating in the mid-1870s, which is when it became popular to eat as a sweet treat and became a mainstream part of American culture that continues today. At this time, chocolate was a luxury because it was made with sugar—a highly coveted product only the wealthy could afford.

During this period, a chocolate maker from Britain, Richard Cadbury, started packaging his chocolates in a heart-shaped box. These traditionally were used to store keepsakes such as love notes, hence the heart shape of the box (CNN, per Dr. Charles Feldman). These became wildly successful as gifts during Valentine’s Day when men were targeted to “express their taste by choosing the right box for the particular woman,” especially during romantic seasons. Hence, the association with Valentine’s Day!

A 2024 statistic showed the average American consumes four kilograms of chocolate per year (Euromonitor Snacks Forecast Model—Chocolate Confectionery, 2024). For those of us who measure via imperial standards, that equates

to roughly 8.8 pounds of chocolate annually. In fact, the United States is the world-leading importer of chocolate and chocolate products, buying \$28,122 million in chocolate confectionery products, and 1,359,000 tonnes (1,498,042 tons) of retail volume (Euromonitor – Industry and Economic and Consumer Data, 2024). Some of you really like chocolate! This level of consumption has remained steady through the past 10 years alluding to the “sticky” inelastic factor—people want to buy chocolate and they do so no matter the economic or social conditions.

There’s even a chocolate professor, aka a researcher who specializes in all things chocolate. Read Dr. Alan Levy’s blog here: thechocolateprofessor.com

Flowers versus chocolate products

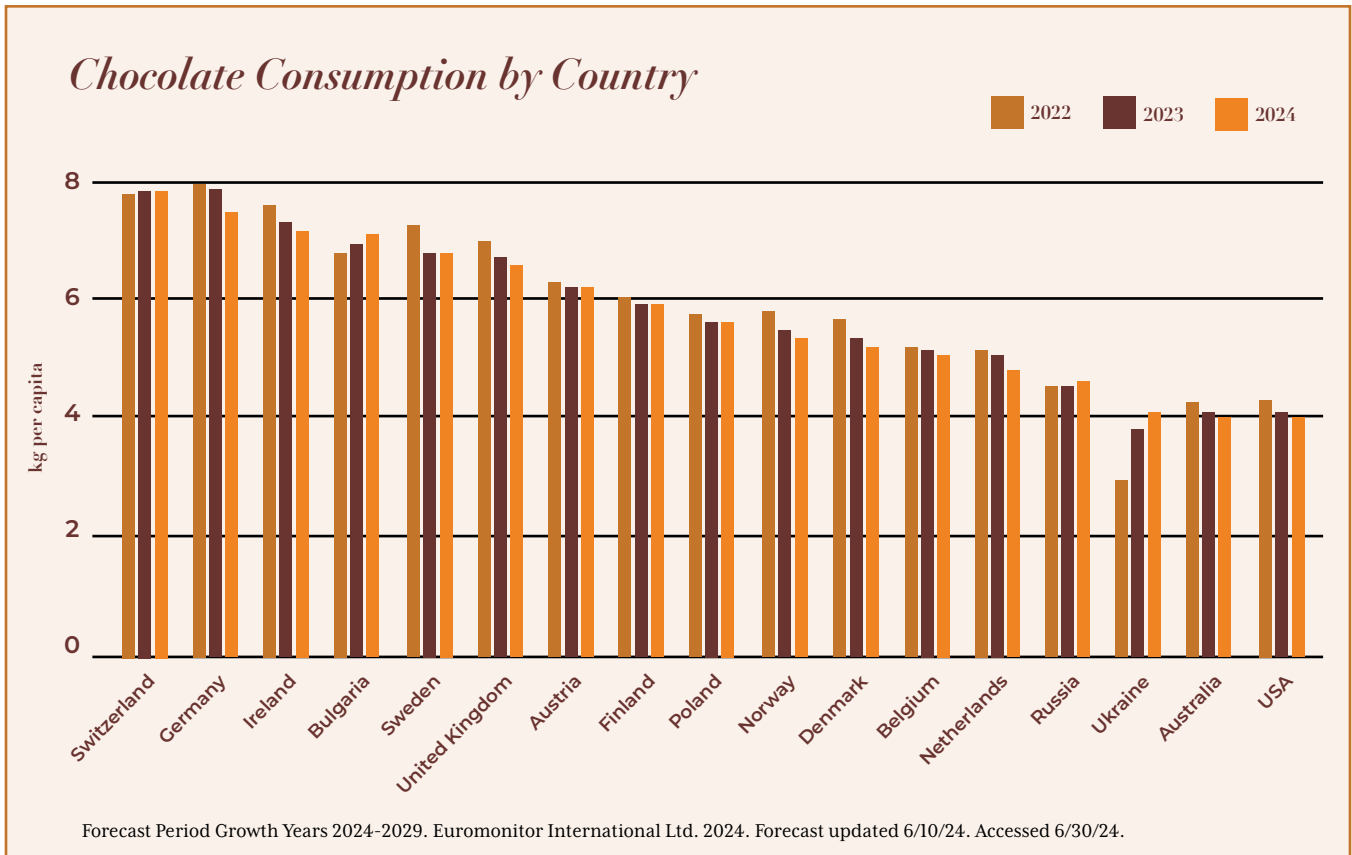
Now that we know the context of chocolates, we come to the comparison as an alternative product to flowers. I think many of us have seen the advertisements saying, “Buy chocolates for her instead,” alluding to buying sweet treats instead of lovely blooms. This

can be rather irritating for industry members, and duly so. Flowers, like chocolate, have a long history in American culture. However, I believe that a way to gain favor is to share with consumers the experience of flowers and the representation: a two-pronged approach.

Continued on next page



Above: An 1886 chocolate-eating advertisement (Source: *Smithsonian Magazine*, 2017)



First, like with pets, chocolate is an experience—though a little different. A person can feel, taste, smell, and see the chocolate. If it’s a fancier chocolate, it garners the prestige and luxury of consuming a high-end product. Eating chocolate (aka, sugar rush) releases a dopamine response in the brain that creates those happy, fuzzy feelings in the body (Casperson et al., 2019). This is why chocolate makes you feel “better” when you eat it after a sad moment. This also creates a craving for sugar. We can create similar responses in the body with flowers.

You can receive flowers as a gift or for personal consumption. If it is a satisfactory purchase, this can also release dopamine (surprise gift experience, dopamine rush) and serotonin in the brain. Serotonin is the long-term, steady “love” hormone that the brain releases to create a feeling of connection with others or for things that have meaning to a person. For example, a person can increase serotonin by hugging a family member or by participating in a hobby they highly enjoy. Think of it like a bonding, social hormone that your body releases.

In addition, flowers can be felt, smelled, seen and, in the case of edible flowers, tasted. Our consumers may achieve similar experiences with flowers as with chocolate. The key, I believe, is communicating that loving feeling and expressing that buying both create an enhanced sensory experience for the loved one or

friend. If you are skeptical, stay with me here!

The Love Language of Valentine’s Day

So, instead of saying “chocolate or flowers,” I encourage you to say “flowers AND chocolate.” Both products communicate love, affection and kinship. In addition, if you enjoyed reading my section on the history of chocolate in this article, why not share this historical information on social media with your customers? Weave a romantic story of flowers and chocolate and how our ancestors in America and across the globe used these two gifts to communicate affection and status. I also encourage you to upsell flowers by including chocolate as part of the sale. The term upsell means to encourage the purchase of more expensive upgrades or other add-ons to generate

more revenue with a product offering. In essence, sell a dozen lisianthus and pop in a small box of chocolates for an additional increase in price. In this situation, not only are they getting flowers ... but they are also getting chocolates. Bonus points to businesses that work with local confectionaries and chocolatiers. We are far off from Valentine's Day, but I hope that this information will help you create a game plan, and plant seeds of success for the Valentine's holiday. ■

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AN AUTUMN *Confession*

“Flowers And...” isn’t just about the economics of selling more flowers. Here’s another perspective, where “Flowers And...” means something without price. **BY TRACI CASTRO**

Confession: Fall is always my hardest time of year. Maybe it’s the fact that I’ve been going nonstop since May and I’m tired, or maybe it’s the weeds that somehow have grown taller than me and are now staring me in the face (literally) as I begin the daunting task of cleaning up a season’s worth of “going nonstop since May.”

And especially this fall. After excessive rain early on, which led to fungal disease, and then something of a drought and dragging hoses around, some crops will simply have to wait until next year to shine. And I’m ready for winter.

Amid these trials, there are moments when I stop and ask myself, “What am I doing? What have I done?” When I left teaching five years ago to stay home with my girls, I had no idea or intention of landing here... but here I am. And now I just can’t leave the flowers behind. But do I ever have my doubts about this change? Wonder if I made a huge mistake? Yes, I do. And—especially this time of year—I have plenty of “What am I doing?” moments.

At an event recently, someone stopped to chat and said something that made me think twice. It was a simple statement, but I had never stopped to consider it before. She said, with a pat on my shoulder, “What you’re doing here is so important.”

I truly had never thought that growing and selling flowers could be very important—sure, it was a nice thing to do, but could we survive without flowers? Probably. Until now, this was just a passion of mine and I felt lucky to share the joy with the people around me. Lovely, beautiful, nice—yes. But important? I started reflecting.

I used to sell produce at markets from time to time along with a few bouquets mixed in. As I ventured into flowers only, I began to see a shift in my customers and in my interactions with them. When people stopped to buy cucumbers and squash, I always got a friendly greeting, and maybe a recipe or two. But when I started selling flowers, I noticed a trend.

As they hand me the bouquet they’ve picked out, people often share why they are buying flowers, or what they plan to do with them. It’s an inside look at monumental events in their lives. They share things—deep things, funny things, little things ... little things that in reality are big things.

“My grandmother always had sweet peas in her garden,” as she breathed them in and remembered.

Nostalgia.

“I’m actually getting married today,” with excitement brimming and a smile barely contained.

Love.

“I’m going on a fishing trip and my wife is freaking out,” with a frantic look of PLEASE HELP ME. I laughed and asked him, “Well, when are you leaving?” And sheepishly, he replied, “In about twenty minutes.”

Forgiveness.

“These are for my daughter’s baby shower,” she said softly, then with glistening eyes, “After five miscarriages, I can’t believe we’re finally getting to throw her one.”

Joy.

“The doctors told me there’s nothing more they can do. And so I should enjoy life. And so . . . flowers.”

Peace.

These are the beautiful things that customers share that I carry with me, and these are things I always go back to when that question pops into my head, “What are you doing?” I’ve decided that maybe a better question to ask myself is not “WHAT are you doing?” but rather, “WHY are you doing this?”

A customer and friend recently sent me a card, and ended it by saying, “You and your flowers have been brightness on some darker days.” That sums it all up really. To be the brightness for those around us is WHY I push through when there are doubts, droughts, and weeds that are taller than me. It’s reason enough to take a deep breath, pull out my planner, and get going on next year’s crop plans. Because the truth is—we all need the flowers. We really do. ■



Tracy Castro owns Schell Farm Gardens in Norwalk, Wis. Contact her at traci@schellfarmgardens.com

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QUANTIFYING THE INFLUENCE OF VERNALIZATION,
DURATION, AND TEMPERATURE AND PHOTOPERIOD ON

Ranunculus Cut Flower Production

BY JESSIE BROWN AND
DR. ROBERTO LOPEZ
MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT
OF HORTICULTURE



Specialty cut flowers are largely produced outdoors in open fields or high tunnels. However, in northern latitudes, production in these systems is limited to late spring, summer, and early fall. Due to a rising demand for year-round availability of locally produced cut flowers, growers in northern latitudes are interested in transitioning to year-round greenhouse production. The use of greenhouses allows growers to control environmental parameters such as temperature and light for uniform and consistent successive plantings, hastened flowering, and the production of high-quality stems throughout the year.

Many Persian buttercup (*Ranunculus*) cut flower growers report inconsistent flowering and stem quality between successive plantings. Therefore, the concept of developing vernalization and photoperiod protocols to hasten flowering and improve

uniformity between plantings is of great importance. Though some research has been conducted, the literature has inconsistent and contradictory vernalization and photoperiod recommendations (Carillo, et al., 2020; De Hertogh, 1996). We proposed to determine the most effective vernalization temperature and duration of commercially relevant Persian buttercup cultivars to hasten and stimulate flowering, as well as the most effective photoperiod to force sprouted plants.

Ranunculus Vernalization and Photoperiod Study

'Butterfly Artemis', 'La Belle White', and 'Tecolote Salmon' Persian buttercup corms (*Ranunculus asiaticus* L.) were received from a commercial bulb supplier (Ednie Flower Bulb, Newton, New Jersey) and stored at 50°F (10°C). In the research greenhouses at Michigan State University, corms were rehydrated

in running water that was kept at 68°F (20°C) for eight hours before planting. The rehydrated corms were planted into 18- or 72-cell trays filled with 50:50 (v/v) commercial soilless medium composed of 70% peat moss, 21% perlite, 9% vermiculite, and 50% coarse perlite. Trays were then placed into walk-in coolers for a pre-sprout period where environmental conditions consisted of a temperature of 40°F (5°C) and under ~200 $\mu\text{mol}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ of light for 12-h-d-1.

After four weeks of pre-sprouting, the trays were placed into vernalization treatments of (38°F, 41°F, or 45.5°F (3.5°C, 5°C, or 7.5°C) for zero, two, or three weeks and under the same light intensity and duration as previously described. Treatment durations were staggered so all plants were removed from vernalization treatments on the same day. Young plants were transplanted into bulb crates and placed into greenhouse compartments and under 12-, 14-, or 16-h photoperiods (Fig. 1). The average daily temperature in the greenhouse was 55°F (13°C), with day temperatures of 64°F (18°C) and night temperatures of 46°F (8°C).

Data collection consisted of recording time to the first visible bud, open flower, and harvest for each stem on each plant. Stems were considered “marketable” and harvested when the terminal flower bud was 50% open. Additionally, we measured stem length, stem caliper, the number of branches, and the total number of stems harvested from each plant.

Our results indicate that vernalization duration and temperature, and sometimes photoperiod during finishing stages, influenced the time to visible bud and harvest. For example, time to first visible bud and harvest of non-vernalized ‘La Belle White’ forced under a 16-h photoperiod was 43 d and 70 d and 32 d and 53 d for plants receiving three weeks of vernalization at 45.5°F (7.5 °C), respectively. However, stem length and caliper and the number of stems harvested were not different between these treatments. The greatest number of stems per plant (seven stems) were harvested from ‘La Belle White’ plants not receiving vernalization and forced under a 12-h photoperiod. Plants forced under a 16-h photoperiod were harvested on average four

days earlier than those under a 12-h photoperiod. However, stems under a 16-h photoperiod were on average 1.6 in. (4 cm) shorter than those harvested under a 12-h photoperiod (Fig. 2).

For non-vernalized ‘Teacolote Salmon’ forced under a 16-h photoperiod, time to visible bud and harvest was 42 d and 72 d and 33 d and 61 d for plants receiving three weeks of vernalization at 45.5°F (7.5°C) and forced under a 16-h photoperiod, respectively. The number of stems per plant was not influenced by vernalization temperature and duration or photoperiod (Fig. 3). On average, plants forced under a 16-h photoperiod were harvested 11 days earlier than those under a 12-h photoperiod. Time to first visible bud and harvest was hastened by 11 to 13 days and 13 to 15 days, respectively, when ‘Butterfly Artemis’ was vernalized at (45.5°F (7.5°C) or 41°F (5°C) three weeks compared to non-vernalized plants. Time to visible bud and harvest of non-vernalized plants occurred on average between 40 to 45 days and 61 to 66 days, respectively, and was not influenced by forcing photoperiod. Vernalization had no impact on stem length, caliper, or stems per plant.

Our results collectively indicate that time to visible bud and harvest of the Persian buttercup cultivars we tested was hastened by vernalization. However, three weeks of vernalization added approximately one week of production time and did not result in increased stem length, stem caliper, or harvestable stems. Persian buttercup should not be immediately



FIGURE 1. Ranunculus cultivars after transplanting into bulb crates for photoperiod finishing treatment.

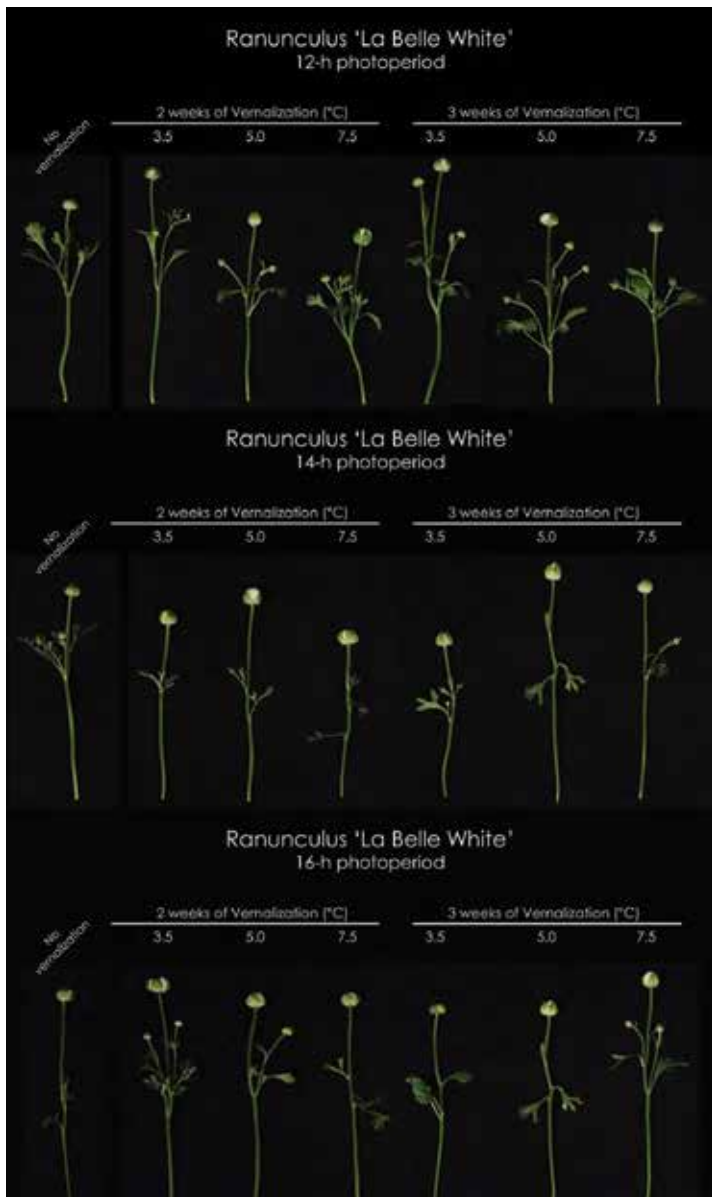


FIGURE 2. Potted *Ranunculus* 'La Belle White' corms were vernalized at 38°F, 41°F, or 46 °F (3.5°C, 5.0°C, or 7.5°C) for 0, 2, or 3 weeks and forced under 12, 14, or 16-h photoperiods.

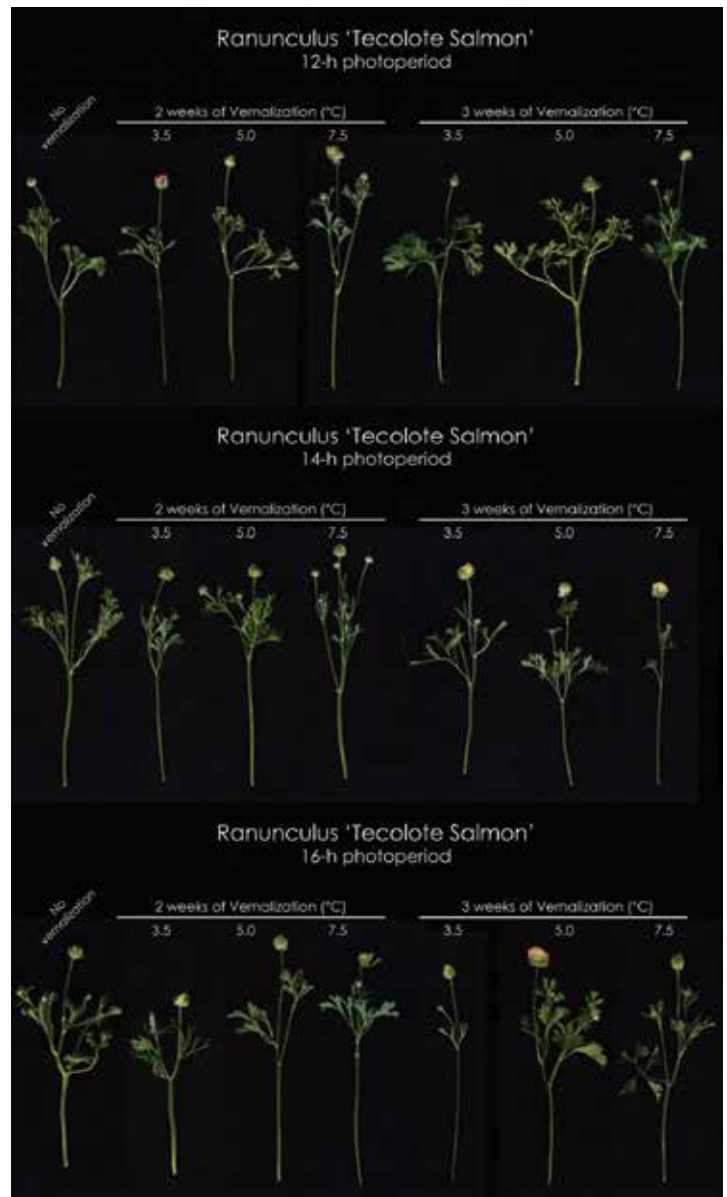


FIGURE 3. Potted *Ranunculus* 'Tecolote' corms were vernalized at 38°F, 41°F, or 46 °F (3.5, 5.0, or 7.5 °C) for 0, 2, or 3 weeks and forced under 12, 14, or 16-h photoperiods.

forced under a 16-h photoperiod as it negatively affects stem length and yield. Instead, they should be allowed to grow vegetatively under a short day (≤ 12 -h) and then placed under a 16-h photoperiod to hasten flowering. ■

Roberto Lopez, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor and Controlled Environment/Floriculture Extension Specialist, Dept. of Horticulture, Michigan State University.

Jessie Brown is MS Graduate Research Assistant at Michigan State University's Department of Horticulture.

Special thanks to the ASCFG and the American Floral Endowment for funding, Ednie Flower Bulbs for corms, East Jordan Plastics for trays, Hydrofarm for supportive netting, PanAmerican Seed for bulb crates, and Nate DuRussel for greenhouse assistance.

**CULTIVATING GROWTH IN THE
CUT FLOWER COMMUNITY**

Our Roots, Our Future:

The ASCFG 2024 Research Foundation Campaign

BY STEVE CRONE

Dear ASCFG Cut Flower Friends and Supporters,

The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers (ASCFG) has been the cornerstone of our vibrant community for years. Today, we invite you to join us in nurturing the future of our industry through our “Cultivating Growth” fundraising campaign. We have set the ambitious goal of raising \$70,000 to support vital programs and initiatives.

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Help Us reach \$70,000

Every dollar you contribute helps:

- Fund groundbreaking research
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- Promote diversity and inclusion in our industry

Together, we can ensure that the cut flower industry continues to thrive. Your support today plants the seeds for a vibrant, sustainable, and diverse future.

- \$50 can help provide educational materials for a student.
- \$250 can help fund on-farm research.
- \$1,000 could sponsor a member to attend the 2025 ASCFG Conference.
- \$5,000 could fund a significant research project.

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THE SEEDS OF INNOVATION: ASCFG Research Foundation

Meet Sarah, a third-generation flower farmer. Last year, Sarah's farm was hit hard by unexpected weather patterns, threatening her livelihood. Thanks to research funded by the ASCFG Research Foundation, Sarah learned about new drought-resistant varieties and innovative irrigation techniques. Today, her farm is thriving, and she's sharing her knowledge with fellow growers.

Your donation to the Research Foundation doesn't just fund studies; it cultivates resilience in our community. With your support, we can continue to address pressing issues like climate adaptation, pest management, and sustainable farming practices.

NURTURING NEW IDEAS: ASCFG Grower Grants

Tom, a small-scale grower in Michigan, had a revolutionary idea for extending the growing season of peonies. With a \$2,000 ASCFG Grower Grant, he turned his concept into reality. Now, Tom's farm supplies local florists with peonies well beyond the traditional season, boosting his income and setting a new standard in the industry.

Your contribution to the Grower Grants program directly supports innovation at the grassroots level. It empowers our members to experiment, learn, and share their findings, benefiting the entire cut flower community.

PLANTING SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE:

Dave Dowling Scholarship

Meet Maya, a horticulture student with a passion for sustainable cut flower production. The Dave Dowling Scholarship not only eased her financial burden but also connected her with mentors in the industry. Today, Maya is on track to graduate and start her very own cut flower farm, bringing fresh ideas and enthusiasm to our community.

By supporting the Dave Dowling Scholarship, you're not just helping students; you're investing in the future leaders of our industry.

GROWING DIVERSITY: Fund a Farmer Program

Carl, a first-generation farmer from a historically underserved community, dreamed of attending the ASCFG Continental Conference but couldn't afford the expenses. Thanks to the Fund a Farmer program, Carl not only attended but also formed valuable connections that have helped his small urban farm flourish.

Your donation to the Fund a Farmer program helps create a more inclusive and diverse cut flower industry, enriching our community with new perspectives and talents.

*Thank you for your support and for being an
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Cut Flower Kale ‘Crane Early Red’ (F₁)

Developing color approximately one week earlier than the standard Crane Series, ‘Crane Early Red’ also has a taller stem, 31.5-33.5 in. (80-85 cm)—about 8” (20 cm) taller than ‘Crane Red’. ‘Crane Early Red’ has sturdy stems and great vase life.



Cut Flower Kale ‘Crane Early White’ (F₁)

Colors approximately one week earlier and exhibits a slightly more open flower head than ‘Crane White’ and has a stem length of 20-30 in. (50-76 cm). Stems are sturdy and have great vase life.



Cut Flower Kale ‘Crane Feather Snow’ (F₁)

The newest addition to the Crane Feather series, ‘Crane Feather Snow’ has a whiter center with no blush and is slightly later to color compared to ‘Crane Feather King’. The Crane Feather series is a creative way to add long lasting texture to bouquets and arrangements.



Eustoma ‘Corelli II Pink’ (F₁ Lisianthus)

Vigorous variety featuring a large, double flower with elegant, fringed petals. This variety is also less sensitive to tip burning. The Corelli series is an ideal choice for florists due to its large, elegant flowers, great stem length and strong stems.



***Eustoma* 'Corelli Sugoi III White'**
(F₁ Lisianthus)

This large-flowered series stuns with heavily fringed, strong petaled, well-shaped, highly doubled blooms. The unique flower shape lends itself to any florist arrangement or bouquet with its great resilience and vase life.



***Eustoma* 'Corelli Sugoi I White'**
(F₁ Lisianthus)

A high number of heavily fringed petals form a large, magnificent, well-shaped flower. This variety delivers sturdy stems on standard height plants with good branching and a long vase life.



***Eustoma* 'Corelli I White' (F₁ Lisianthus)**

Featuring a stable flower shape and pure-white color even under low temperatures, flowers average 3 in. (8 cm) in width. This variety also has excellent branching and normal stem strength.



***Eustoma* 'Corelli I Pink' (F₁ Lisianthus)**

Lovely pink flowers with green centers are almost 3.5 in. (8.9 cm) in width. The entire Corelli series has excellent vase life and petals that are fringed with curl along their edge.



Celosia ‘Sunday Bright Orange’

This blazing orange *plumosa* type offers a longer stem length of 28 to 40 in. (71 to 102 cm), with a nice full plume and intense flower color. Good shipping and vase life.



Ageratum ‘JJ’

‘JJ’'s small, dense, purple flower clusters resemble fluffy pompons on 26- to 28-in. (65- to 75-cm) stems. They add a touch of freshness and vitality to any floral arrangement. The delicate and abundant flowers stand out for their durability.



Dianthus ‘Kiwi Mellow Cool’

Exceptionally large, perfectly ball-shaped green spiky flower heads stand tall on straight, strong, distinguished, 27- to 35-in. (69- to 89-cm) stems. ‘Mellow Cool’ has an extraordinarily long vase life and adds volume to floral bouquets.



Dianthus ‘Kiwi Bunny’

Extra-large, ball-shaped, 3- to 4.25-in. (8- to 11-cm) flower heads stand tall on straight, strong, 27- to 35-in. (69- to 89-cm) stems. ‘Kiwi Bunny’ brings a standout accent to any floral bouquet and has an exceptionally long vase life.



Dianthus ‘Goblin’ (Standard Carnation)

Goblin has a distinctive color and is a perfect combination flower! It features a greencolored, scented bloom on a strong, 22 to 31-in. (56 to 79-cm) stem. Goblin o/ers very high productivity with a long vase life and tolerance to *Fusarium*.



***Dianthus* ‘Bizet’ (Standard Carnation)**

‘Bizet’ features a cerise-colored bloom on a strong, 22- to 31-in. (56- to 79-cm) stem. It adds a touch of luxury to any floral arrangement! It offers very high productivity with superior vase life and tolerance to *Fusarium*.



***Dianthus* ‘Megan’ (Standard Carnation)**

‘Megan’ has an orange-colored bloom on a strong, 22- to 31-in. (56- to 79-cm) stem. Its shade is on trend with today’s consumer color pallet! This standard carnation offers very high productivity with a long vase life and tolerance to *Fusarium*.



***Dianthus* ‘Nirvana’ (Spray Carnation)**

Elegant spray carnation features pink blooms on 22- to 31-in. (56- to 79-cm) stems with a very long vase life. ‘Nirvana’ offers very high productivity and is faster to finish, along with tolerance to *Fusarium* and nematodes.



***Dianthus* ‘Romany’ (Spray Carnation)**

Deep-orange blooms are borne on 22- to 31-in. (56 to 79-cm) stems, which stand out in bouquets and have a good vase life. This spray-type carnation offers very high productivity with tolerance to *Fusarium*.



***Dianthus* ‘Arctic’ (Spray Carnation)**

Spray-type ‘Arctic’ features very high productivity with *Fusarium* tolerance. It is the grower’s choice for productivity and pure white color in a spray carnation. It features 22- to 31-in. (56 to 79-cm) stems.



***Astrantia* Magical Melinda series**

Much sought after but oddly hard to find, we are pleased to offer this new series of cut flower astrantia from Kolster. The stems are tall and the plants are vigorous. We are offering the full color range including deep reds, various pinks and pure white.



***Campanula* 'Evergreen Blue'**

A few of you were lucky enough to trial Evergreen campanula for 2024 and we are thrilled that it is back! This tissue culture train from the Netherlands is a true biennial require a cold winter to flower well. If its needs are met it can reward you with up to eight long-lasting stems per plant in the springtime.



***Clematis* 'Magical Blue'**

Non-clinging large flowered clematis are hard to find, but the breeders at Kolster in the Netherlands have been breeding specifically for this. These long-lasting clematis can still get 4-5 ft. tall, but they won't grab onto each other or to a trellis—simplifying harvest. They will rebloom after each harvest.



***Cotinus* 'Magical Torch'**

A major breakthrough in cotinus breeding is heading to America. 'Magical Torch' flowers on new growth! You can harvest its flowers year after year, unlike traditional varieties which take two years to flower. This is the perfect choice for northern growers who often miss out on cotinus flowers due to frozen flowering buds.



***Viola* 'Flamenco Terracotta' (Pansy)**

Congratulations to you ASFG growers who have unlocked the secret to growing pansies as cut flowers! They need to be crowded, perhaps shaded, and then just given time and they will eventually stretch to a cuttable length. They love the cold and are a great way to start off your spring season. They are surprisingly long-lasting as cuts.

***Aster* 'Liz'**

New England asters (*Symphotrichum*) are a common roadside sight in the autumn, but have been conspicuously missing from American growers' lineup despite being readily available as an import. These short-day flowers should flower alongside chrysanthemums and caryopteris adding a much needed pop of color to the late season.





***Phlox* ‘Magical Pink Tenderness’**

This new line of phlox has been bred specifically for cut flower use and for resistance to powdery mildew, the bane of every phlox grower! Ruthless harvesting will just make this phlox grow back bigger and better, so don't be shy with your clippers.



***Physocarpus* ‘Magical Springfire’**

This looker stopped us in our tracks in Holland last summer! You can cut the glowing bronze new growth, or dainty white clusters of flower, or its bright crimson seed heads. This long-lived American native is tough as nails and can be harvested hard once it is established.



***Limonium* ‘Sinuet Keta’**

We love seeing how many of you are finding success with tissue culture statice, and this new variety from Danziger is not to be missed! Tissue-culture statice is larger and more productive than its seed-grown counterparts, and the color range can't be beat.



***Oxypetalum* Blue Double Mix (Tweedia)**

This improved strain from Japan has a mix of doubles, singles, and semi-doubles with larger flowers and a truer blue color than previous strains. Sure it's a little sticky, but the color alone makes it all worthwhile.



***Celosia* 'Sunday Bright Orange'**

The brightest, most true orange celosia on the market. Bold colors and high yields for summer and fall harvests. The Sunday series varieties branch well, and each stem creates a nice plume for good fill in the bouquet. Bred by BloomStudios by PanAmerican Seed.



***Dianthus* 'Barcelona Red' (F₁)**

Barcelona is a standard sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*) with larger flower heads than other varieties. Will flower the 1st year from planting as it does not require vernalization like older, traditional types. Red has been a favorite in grower trials, but the series is also offered in Purple, Pink, and White. Bred by Evanthia.



***Dianthus* 'Sparkz Raffine Petit Faye'**

A collection of unique carnations, Sparkz Dianthus is now available in North America! 'Petit Faye' stood out in our trials this year; growers loved the unique bicolor pattern and highly productive plants. Available as unrooted cuttings or liners. Bred by Hilverda Florist.



***Dianthus* 'Sparkz Solomio Clif'**

'Solomio Clif' has a spray of large, single flowers in an attractive salmon/orange bicolor. It performed well in our trials this year and can be used as a filler or grower bunch. Available as unrooted cuttings or liners. Bred by Hilverda Florist.



***Helianthus* ‘Vincent’s Choice DMR’ (Sunflower)**

The breeding team at Sakata has done it again! They made one of the best sunflowers in the market even better by developing resistance to downy mildew and breeding it into their most popular ‘Vincent’s Choice’ variety. The NEW ‘Vincent’s Choice DMR’ gives growers added protection where the weather conditions or disease pressure will overwhelm non-resistant varieties. Bred by Sakata.

***Matthiola* ‘StoX Silver’ (Stocks)**

‘StoX Silver’ is a beautiful pale lavender, perfect for when pure white is too bright in your arrangement. The StoX series allows you to select during the young plant stage for nearly 100% double flowers in your finished production. Be more efficient with your space, no waste from the single flower stems. Bred by Evanthia.



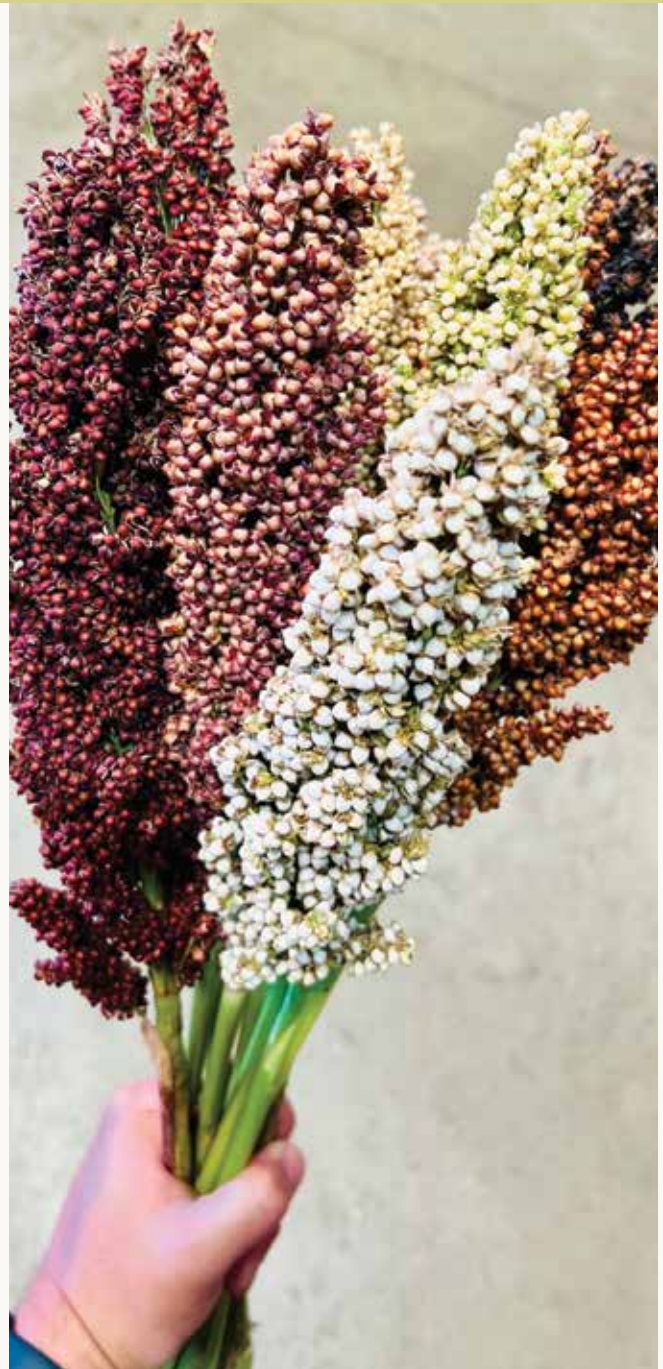
***Tanacetum* ‘Cameron’ (Feverfew)**

Tanacetum ‘Cameron’ is the newest selection and is improved for uniformity and petal fill in the flowers. If you’re looking for the best feverfew for your program, you should give this one a try. Trials in Michigan and California this summer proved it performs well in our climate. Bred by Evanthia.



***Ranunculus* ‘Aazur Champagne’**

NEW ‘Aazur Champagne’ is beautiful pastel color in line with the trending colors in lisianthus. The recently introduced Aazur series is the first hybrid, seed-raised ranunculus selected for professional cut flower production. Traditionally grown from corms, the Aazur series is now available from seed and gives growers easier availability, reliability, lower disease risk and reduced input costs. Bred in partnership for InFlora Cut Flowers by Versem.



***Sorghum* ‘Prairie Pearls Burgundy’ (F₁)**

Burgundy is the latest addition to the recently introduced Prairie Pearls series. This new ornamental sorghum produces flower stems about 36-40 in. tall, making it much more manageable than older varieties. Green seed heads form 70-80 days after sowing, turning a beautiful burgundy purple color about 10 days later. Great for both fresh and dried use. Also available in White, Cream, Bronze, and Pink. Bred in partnership for InFlora Cut Flowers by Richardson Seed Company.

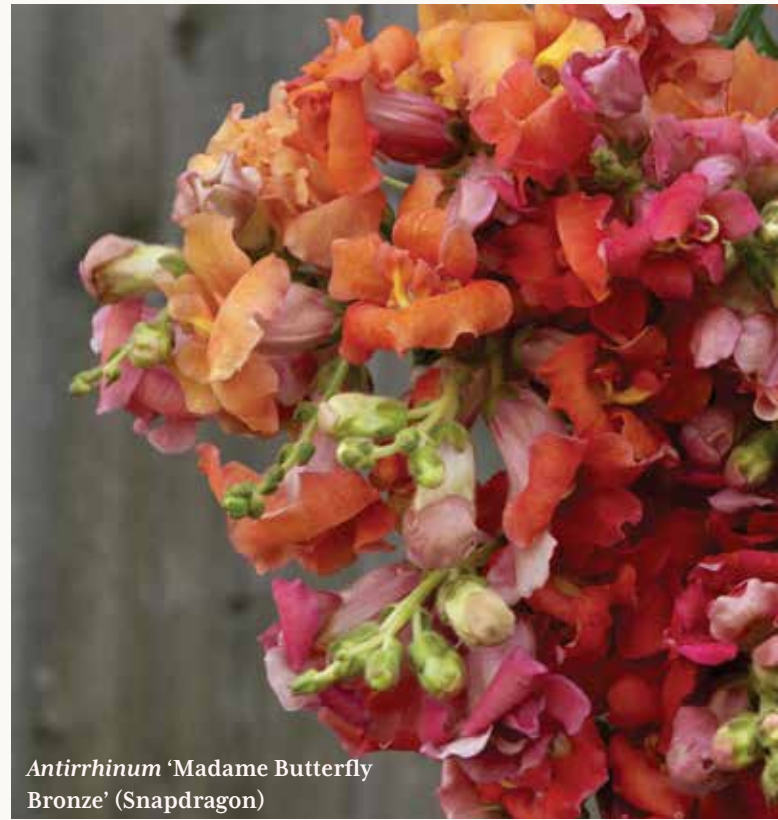
***Antirrhinum* ‘Toulon Lavender 4’ (F₁) (Snapdragon)**

The first new cut flower snapdragon series in years! Toulon is a group 4 and was selected for the long days and warm temperatures of summer production. Spikes develop slower under these conditions, but the end result is the thickest and best quality stems for summer harvest. ‘Toulon Lavender 4’ is an excellent light lavender color; the series is also offered in Rose (Pink color), Velvet (Red/Burgundy color), Purple, and White. Bred by Evanthia.



We are most excited to expand our snapdragon selection this year. Since these are difficult to start from seed, we've seen a large demand for snapdragon plugs. With these new items in our program, we now have snapdragons suited for each growing season and temperature range, as well as new colors and double bloom varieties from which to choose.

We are also excited to be adding the sought-after 'Scoop' scabiosa to our program on a trial basis this year. Please contact sales@kubepak.com, or call our office at 609-259-3114 for availability on this specific item.



Antirrhinum 'Madame Butterfly Bronze' (Snapdragon)



***Antirrhinum* Legend Double Series (Snapdragon)**

Pink, Yellow, and White Available in 288 and 162 trays. New-to-market variety with unique double blooms.



***Antirrhinum* Madame Butterfly Series (Snapdragon)**

Bronze, Pink, Yellow, and Mix. Available in 162 trays. Popular in our program already, we decided to add straight colors to give growers more selection



***Antirrhinum*
Monaco Series
(Snapdragon)**

Orange, Rose, and Yellow. Available in 162 trays. New to our program, this series is a great year-round performer with both heat tolerance and cold tolerance. It's a perfect crop for those "in between" seasons.



***Eustoma* Corelli Sugoi Series 1,2, 3
(Lisianthus)**

Lavender, White, Pink, Yellow, and more! Available in 288 and 162 trays. By far the most ruffled lisianthus we carry with multiple blooms per stem.



***Celosia* Neo
Series**

Gold, Green, Orange, Pink, Red, and Rose. Available in 288 and 162 trays. The first cockscomb variety of celosia in our cut flower program.



Butterfly Lilies

Lilies are super easy to grow, available year round, yet floral designers are hesitant using lilies in arrangements. It may be due to the scent, or pollen. Pollen-less lilies have been available for a while (double orientals) but finally there is a line of pollen-less LxA hybrid varieties. These new varieties, introduced as Butterfly Lilies, are all non-scented, semi-double flowering and are still very easy to grow. They'll work great in arrangements and bouquets and a lot more affordable. Like last year, we'll include some to our American Classic LxA mix.



Italian Colibri Poppies

The wizards at Biancheri Creazioni has not only focused on improvements, new colors, shades and/or types of Italian ranunculus and anemone; they've also worked on new colors in their line of Icelandic poppies (aka Italian poppies). This year a few new colors will be introduced, including a light yellow, cyclamen, light pink and coral.



Ranunculus Cloni Moderna Series

Biancheri's new lines of Moderna ranunculus are finally coming our way. Lots and lots of new types have been introduced and a lot of sorting is still required. Of the hundreds of new varieties only a few will make it to the next level.

These interspecific crossings also bring strong genetics to the regular *asiaticus* ranunculus. As a result, future Cloni Success varieties will have more and more of these blood lines, resulting in varieties like 'Cloni Success Nebbia'.



Tulips

While Onings is not new to the tulip industry—our office in Holland is a large supplier of tulips in Japan and China—but we are relatively new on the U.S. market. The taste and type of tulips used in the U.S. is a lot different than in Asia. Now that we've grown in the U.S. market, we will introduce some new varieties such as 'Wild Romance', 'Wyndham', 'Paleis het Loo' and 'Louvre Orange'.



Anemone Levante Series

Also by Biancheri Creazioni (Italy); Levante, a double flowering anemone series. Absolutely stunning and available in several different colors. So far 'Levante Bianco' and 'Levante Rosa' are our best sellers, but soon the consumer will discover the beauty of more colors of Levante. New hues like light pinks and light blushes will become available soon.



***Helichrysum bracteatum* ‘King Size Frosted Sulfur’**

Featuring large, delicate pastel sulfur-yellow blooms with a subtle silver tinge. This tall annual reaches up to 39 in. (100 cm) and thrives in full sun, making it ideal for fresh and dried arrangements.



***Helianthus debilis* ‘Italian Green Heart’**

Unique and elegant cut flower, featuring creamy-yellow blooms with a striking green center. This unusual sunflower variety boasts a long flowering period. Its branching habit produces multiple flowers on each plant, providing abundant harvests.



***Helichrysum bracteatum* ‘King Size Silvery Rose’**

Large double blooms with pale-pink petals and silvery-white highlights. These everlasting strawflowers open to reveal vibrant yellow centers, creating a striking color combination. Great for fresh or dried arrangements.



Eucalyptus pulverulenta
(Silver-leaved Mountain Gum)

Known for its striking silver-grey leaves that add a unique texture and color to floral arrangements. The leaves are egg-shaped to heart-shaped and arranged in opposite pairs, creating a lush, dense canopy.



Eucalyptus populnea (Poplar Box)

Commonly known as bimble box or poplar box, *E. populnea* is an excellent choice for growers looking for different foliage. This evergreen tree features glossy, dark green, oval-shaped leaves with a significant menthol scent, adding a refreshing aroma to floral arrangements.



Eucalyptus melanophloia (Black Ironbark)

Commonly known as black ironbark, *E. melanophloia* features glossy, dark green leaves that are ovate to lanceolate in shape, providing a lush backdrop for floral arrangements. The juvenile leaves are particularly noteworthy, as they are opposite, sessile, and glaucous, adding a unique texture and color contrast.



Eucalyptus forrestiana

Blooming in summer, the red flowers attract pollinators and add a unique color contrast to floral arrangements. This eucalyptus thrives in full sun and well-drained soils, making it a resilient addition to any flower farm.



Centranthus ruber Pretty Betsy Mixture

A vibrant perennial with striking clusters of red, pink, and white flowers. Blooming from July to October, this hardy plant thrives in full sun and well-drained soil, making it ideal for low-maintenance areas.



Celosia spicata 'Xantippe'

Plume-like spikes that transition from soft pink to elegant silver as they mature. The long-lasting blooms are perfect for fresh arrangements and also dry beautifully, adding texture and color to bouquets year-round.



Ammobium alatum 'Grandiflorum'

Long-lasting, button-like blooms with papery white bracts and yellow centers. This flower blooms from spring to early fall, and is a great addition to dried flower arrangements.



Ilex x meserveae 'Castle Rouge'

All season long, the new growth emerges a glossy red-burgundy color for spectacular effect, and once winter comes, the whole plant turns a deep, dark burgundy. 'Castle Rouge' is male and will serve to pollinate the rest of the Castle series as well as other blue hollies, but unlike conventional male hollies, this one is handsome enough to give pride of place in your fields. 5-8 ft. tall and 4-5 ft. wide.



Bouvardia 'Estrellita Scarlet'

Wow—that's the only word to describe the color of the red flowers on *Bouvardia* 'Estrellita Scarlet'. They are such an astonishingly vivid and true red, you're may think they're fake. Not to worry, though, the hummingbirds know they're real and will bring come by the score. This Southwestern U.S./Mexico native blooms all summer long. Heat and drought tolerant.



Rosa 'Flavorette Pear'd'

'Flavorette Pear'd' rose creates delicate, pink flowers that have a distinctive light pear flavor and a lush, soft texture. The semi-double flowers are borne on a sturdy, healthy plant that's easy to grow. Plants are 3-4 ft. tall and 3 ft. wide.



***Rubus* 'Taste of Heaven'**

'Taste of Heaven' is a vigorous, thornless blackberry that produces large, luscious fruits over several weeks in summer and adds interest to bouquets. It's a florican variety, fruiting only on second-year canes, and does not strictly require trellising or support, though in the garden, it is easier to care for and harvest with something in place.



***Diervilla* x*splendens* 'Kodiak Red 2.0'**

This 2.0 version has brighter, more intense red foliage than the original 'Kodiak Red', and it holds better through the season. Yellow flowers appear all summer and appeal to a variety of pollinators, especially native bumblebees. 3-4 ft. tall and wide.



***Syringa* 'Bloomerang Ballet'**

The Bloomerang series of reblooming lilacs has come a long way since the introduction of the original, and there's no better evidence of that than 'Bloomerang Ballet'. It's our strongest, most prolific rebloomer yet! After an abundant spring display of fragrant, pink-purple flowers, it takes a brief rest then comes roaring back with a heavy set of flowers in late summer through fall. 3-4 ft. tall and wide.



***Cornus alba*
'Sgt. Pepper'**

The clean green and white variegated foliage emerges in spring with vivid pink tones. In summer, those give way to white and green, until the shorter nights of late summer usher in a return of pink, and all the formerly white leaf margins transform to a bright pink. The stems also begin to turn a lovely deep red then for unforgettable color.



***Hydrangea* 'Fairytrail Green'**

We are thrilled to introduce these two new members of the Fairytrail™ series of Cascade Hydrangeas™: Fairytrail™ Green and Fairytrail™ White. Each shares the graceful habit of arching, cascading branches with a flower bud at every node, but the blooms of Fairytrail Green hydrangea are a cool, refreshing lime green. It has irresistible container presentation and impulse appeal, and makes a beautiful choice for landscapes, gardens, and decorative containers - even hanging baskets.



***Hydrangea* 'Fairytrail White'**

We are thrilled to introduce two new members of the Fairytrail series of cascade hydrangeas: 'Fairytrail Green' and 'Fairytrail White'. Each shares the graceful habit of arching, cascading branches with a flower bud at every node, but the 'Fairytrail White' is a mophead version of the world-famous 'Fairytrail Bride' hydrangea. It makes makes a beautiful choice for weddings decorations and bouquets. 4 ft. tall and 4-5 ft. wide.

Sakata has an abundance of color, especially in our cut flower portfolio. This year, Sakata is introducing thirteen new cut flower colors, including three new series.



***Helianthus* ‘Vincent’s Fresh DMR’
(Sunflower)**

‘Vincent’s Fresh DMR’ is a high-performing variety also offering downy mildew resistance; it is slightly earlier than ‘Vincent’s Choice’.



***Helianthus* ‘Vincent’s Choice DMR’
(Sunflower)**

Take a look at this new addition (one of three!) to the already fantastic Vincent’s series. ‘Vincent’s Choice DMR’ is our most popular sunflower, now offering downy mildew resistance.



***Helianthus* ‘Vincent’s Tangy’ (Sunflower)**

‘Vincent’s Tangy’ is the third new addition to the Vincent sunflower series and is earlier flowering under short day length. The blooms are a deep-orange color with a dark eye.



***Delphinium* ‘Candle Lavender Shade Improved’**

This is a beautiful addition to its current series. This light-lavender flower produces large flowers with high flower density. ‘Lavender Shades Improved’ has a second flush that appears earlier than other competitor varieties.



***Eustoma* ‘Rosita Bright Blue’ (Lisianthus)**

A new color for the Rosita series, ‘Rosita 3 Bright Blue’ has a bright-blue flower with a green center and intermediate *Fusarium* resistance. It is easy to produce plant height and volume.



***Eustoma Viviana Series* (Lisianthus)**

A gorgeous new series in our lisianthus portfolio, available in Pink and Blue. Both ‘Viviana Pink’ and ‘Viviana Blue’ have pollen-free blooms and a long vase life, which are sure to make any arrangement look beautiful.



***Eustoma* ‘Rosita 3 Yellow II’ (Lisianthus)**
 This is an improvement from our current yellow. The improved light-yellow flower has been proven to have less tip burn. Like others in the series, it is easy to get plant height and volume.



***Eustoma* ‘Voyage 2 Series’ (Lisianthus)**
 These flowers are eye-catchers! This beautiful lisianthus series has large double flowers abundantly filled with lightly fringed petals. Our new ‘Voyage 2 Blue Flash’ has attractive blue-and-white flowers, less tip burn, and easy-to-get plant height and volume. This latest introduction would be a great addition to vase arrangements.



***Matthiola* ‘Early Arrow White’ (Stock)**
 Introducing ‘Early Arrow White’: the first in this new series. With very straight, strong stems, this highly uniform flower might be just what you are looking for. ‘Early Arrow White’ is a high double type, with 90% doubles without seedling selection. It also has less crop failure under hot conditions.



***Matthiola* Early Iron Series (Stock)**
 This is a new stock series with three magnificent colors: Cherry Blossom, White Improved, and Marine II. This new stock variety makes getting plant height easier than the current Iron series and is 5-10 days earlier than Iron. ‘Early Iron Cherry Blossom’ has lovely light-pink flowers, ‘Early Iron Marine II’ has a light-blue color, and ‘Early Iron White Improved’ has a pure-white flower.



INFLORA™
CUT FLOWERS

We're growing our assortment to continue to serve you!

New programs for next year: Dahlia Tubers, Vegetative Cutting Dianthus, Lily Bulbs, and Tulip Bulbs. And, we've added dozens of great, new varieties to our existing programs.

InFlora™ Cut Flowers represents a dedicated team of breeding, technical support, and industry experts that connects cut flower growers to the optimal varieties, product forms, supply chain, and growing recommendations.

The InFlora™ Cut Flowers team along with our strategic suppliers created an assortment optimized based on your production location. These strategic suppliers include leaders in the cut flower market: Syngenta Flowers, Danziger, Sakata, Kapiteyn, Evanthia, Headstart Nursery, HilverdaFlorist, Kubepak, Raker-Roberta's, PanAmerican Seed, UNEX, and VWS. This avant-garde group is excited for you to get to know our capabilities and the varieties we represent.

Dahlia
Cafe
Au Lait

Dianthus
Sparkz®
Green
Wicky®

NEW
Dianthus Sparkz®
Solomio® Sem

NEW
Lily
Double
Curiosity®

PRODUCT FORMS OFFERED



BAREROOT

BULBS

CUTTINGS

PLUG & LINERS

SEED

TISSUE CULTURE

TOP CROPS



DAHLIA

DIANTHUS

LISIANTHUS

PEONY

SNAPDRAGONS

SUNFLOWERS

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NEW
Sorghum
Prairie
Pearls™
Series

Dahlia
Sylvia

Nicotiana Whisper Series

Available in Appleblossom, Rose Shades, Deep Pink, and mix. Features prolific flowering, lovely scent, and showy blooms on 24-36 in. stems. With a whimsical look, it offers multiple harvests, fast blooming, and reflowering, and thrives in heat. Vase life of 7-10 days with commercial preservatives.



Photo: Lori Hernandez



Photo: Robin Siktberg

Dahlia 'Karma Caroline'

'Karma Caroline' is a dynamic blend of purple, yellow, orange, and pink colors on a strong, well-branched plant. Like all of the dahlias from Syngenta Flowers, 'Karma Caroline' is offered from an unrooted cutting (URC) and as rooted liners rather than tubers. There are many benefits to this including: 1) disease- and virus-free material, 2) easy to schedule and plant, and 3) produces uniform, productive, high-quality flowers. Reach out to your favorite supplier and ask for dahlias from Syngenta Flowers!



***Achillea* 'Firefly Red Pop'**

This new yarrow collection will light up your summer garden. These plants differ from other yarrows due to their taller nature without compromising beautiful habits and sturdiness. 'Firefly Red Pop' has bright cherry-red flowers that have small yellow eyes. Silvery-green foliage. A Proven Winners® perennial.



***Allium* 'Bobblehead'**

Globe-like 3-3½ in. pale-lilac flowers appear in midsummer, persisting for many weeks before leaving behind perfectly spherical seedheads. Foliage is glaucous blue-green with a twist to each individual leaf. 'Bobblehead' has good heat and drought tolerance and is capable of surviving in a wide variety of soils. A Proven Winners® perennial.



***Baptisia* 'Golden Anniversary'**

A color breakthrough as the first commercially available baptisia combining both indigo-blue flowers and golden-yellow foliage. A ball-shaped habit with ovate leaves is held on sturdy stems. In early summer long spikes of indigo-blue flowers begin to appear, starting just above the foliage.



***Coreopsis verticillata*
‘Designer Threads
Golden Needles’**

Each variety in the Designer Threads series was selected only after showing exceptional mildew resistance to preserve that fine foliage. Blooms on this series persist for many weeks—opening cleanly with broad, flat petals. Golden yellow flowers contain sharp maroon central eye zones. Flowers are notably large for *C. verticillata* at 2” diameter. A Proven Winners® perennial.



***Echinacea* ‘Double Coded
Everything’s Rosy’**

Varieties in this series have prolific floral production seated atop dense rosettes of foliage. Broad, horizontal ray petals maximize flower size. Plants are low, wide, and well-branched. ‘Everything’s Rosy’ has 4-in.-diameter flowers with rosy poms and soft pink ray petals. A Proven Winners® perennial.



***Heliopsis helianthoides* ‘Touch of Blush’**

‘Touch of Blush’ gains its name from the pink tones that appears on new foliage. This “blush” coloration nicely accents the bright-white variegation of the dark green leaves. Semi-double yellow flowers have multiple layers of overlapping petals. Like other variegated heliopsis, ‘Touch of Blush’ is hardy to Zone 4. A Proven Winners® perennial.



***Salvia* ‘Living Large Big Sky’**

This super-sized new salvia is a must-have. A magnificent floral display of violet blue flowers is supported by a dense rosette of large green leaves. Later to bloom than other perennial salvias. A Proven Winners® perennial.



***Penstemon barbatus* ‘Bejeweled Pink Pearls’**

This midsize series was selected for dense habits and large flowers. Native to rocky hillsides in the southwestern U.S. these plants thrive in areas with full sun and good drainage. ‘Pink Pearls’ has medium-pink tubular flowers that appear in late spring and early summer. A Proven Winners® perennial.



***Stokesia laevis* ‘Totally Stoked Riptide’**

Good basal branching creates numerous flowers from early to late summer, completely covering the plant. These selections are from the North Carolina State University’s hybridizing program and are proven to thrive in the heat and humidity of southern summers. ‘Riptide’ has 2½-3-in. flowers that are periwinkle blue. A Proven Winners® perennial.



***Thalictrum* ‘Cotton Candy’**

This upright selection creates a dense pillar of foliage before being topped with wispy lavender flowers in late spring. The tall stems and long-lasting flowers make this selection excellent as a cut flower. Thalictrum are not commonly bothered by browsing deer and rabbits. A Proven Winners® perennial.

Prisma Gladiolus

Since 2009, Prisma Gladiolus has been at the forefront of breeding and cultivating new gladiolus varieties. During the past 15 years, the company developed a diverse and vibrant collection of gladiolus flowers, renowned for their stunning color combinations and robust qualities. In 2024, Zabo Plant proudly took over Prisma Gladiolus, including all aspects of cultivation, breeding, and export. Diverse varieties, resilient hybrids, and proven quality are hallmarks of Prisma Gladiolus.



'Adele'



'Bartok'



'Cornelli'



'Deep Purple'



'Fortarosa'



'Julio'



'Lennon'



'Mount Victoria'



'Smokey'



'Thalia'



'Yellowa'



'Yvonne'

SAKATA®

BLOOMING SAKATA GENETICS

Sakata offers a full array of top-quality cut flower genetics, including aster, campanula, lisianthus, and sunflower. Every single stem is backed by Sakata's stellar reputation for quality, reliability, and service, and is specifically bred with grower and consumer needs in mind. With several NEW additions to our lisianthus offerings, Rosanne 2 Terracotta stands out with unique colors of browns, purples, and clay, all in the same flower, while Rosanne 1 Green II offers a soft green hue and larger flowers. Vincent's® Fresh sunflowers features a crisp, green center; a clear alternative to current selections. Azumi XL provides four bold colors for extra large aster blooms, while campanula Champion II requires only moderate growing temperatures and maintains an excellent vase life. With a comprehensive program like this, Sakata cut flower genetics and high quality seed bring ultimate satisfaction from start to finish. To learn more, please visit us at www.SakataOrnamentals.com.

Lisianthus Top:
Rosanne 2 Terracotta
Lisianthus Bottom:
Rosanne 1 Green II



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Sarah Kistner
Stone Meadow Gardens
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where farmers are paid in advance to deliver weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly bouquets or bunches throughout the growing season. Many people offer direct-to-door delivery, eliminating forgotten bouquets or working around the schedule and capacity of another business to serve as a drop point. Others offer a pick-up location by collaborating with another local company. This can be mutually beneficial and a great way to cross-promote each other's businesses.

about crop planning and how much I need to harvest each week. As a newer farmer (four years), it's also helped me get into a flow of consistently cutting and moving flowers each week—no more crops sitting unused. The good chunk of off-season cash flow helps immensely with bills over the winter!”

“You can market your product and acquire customers in the off-season when you have time to do so. Once those crops start rolling in, it's hard to acquire customers, harvest and sell if you are a new business.”

“Market sales are unpredictable,” and subscriptions are a sure thing.

So, this sounds great, right?! Well, we know nothing is perfect, and subscriptions are no exception. This list of members' challenges was long:

Today, the Bouquet Subscription is common among flower farmers, and I wanted to identify some of the key benefits that members cited when asked why they offer subscriptions:

- Off-season cash flow. (This was the top reason by far!)
- Easier to crop plan
- Sales can be spread across the week.
- Gets customers excited about and anticipating our flowers during winter.
- Good way to guarantee sales of spring products when flowers can come on very quickly
- Showcase the beauty of local flowers and how they change across the season.
- Build stronger customer relationships
- Take advantage of a slower winter schedule for marketing.
- Managing customer communication and difficult or forgetful customers (This was number one, by far!)
- Managing a wide variety of product offerings (i.e. weekly, bi-weekly options, multiple drop spots, delivery days etc.)
- Marketing and communicating the value of a subscription
- Predicting availability
- Travel time (drop-off spots or direct delivery)
- Managing weather complications and or crop failures

If you run a subscription, you're probably nodding in agreement to many of these things, so let's address a few of the challenges.

CANADA

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

THANKS TO FELLOW MEMBERS LIKE LENNIE LARKIN AND JENNY MARKS,

talking about farm profitability (or lack thereof!) has come out of the shadows and into the light. Talking numbers can be uncomfortable, so I'm thankful that these ladies are helping start the conversation.

Analyzing our various sales channels is a key part of understanding our farm's profitability, so for this quarter's article, I thought we would look at an enterprise popular on many flower farms—the CSA or Bouquet Subscription. I reached out to our Canadian members to get their perspective. Thanks to everyone who replied!

A CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) or subscription can take many forms. Essentially, it's a program

I loved what these members said: “Having a subscription program has relieved a lot of stress for me

1 • **First, simplify your offers.** In our first year, we had way too many different configurations. We offered different bouquet sizes at three pick-up sites twice a week. It was confusing not only for us but also for our customers. If given too many choices, customers can feel overwhelmed and walk away. So, we pared it down to one size (the larger one, of course!) and for most locations, we only offered one pick-up day. (We didn't provide door-to-door delivery, but that can be a good option for some folks.) To spread out our harvest, we delivered to drop-off sites in certain towns only on certain days, which we scheduled to coincide with grocery store deliveries.

When you're just getting started, it can feel scary. The fear of losing customers because you don't offer everything to everyone is common. But you'll find that's just not true. If people like what you're doing, they'll figure out how to make it work—or they won't! The subscription model isn't a perfect fit for all customers or all farms. Start small, learn, and grow gradually. It's okay to take it one step at a time.

2 • **Get started on the right foot.** Managing customer communication was probably the top challenge for most members. Customers forgetting to pick up bouquets and requiring extra attention and communication was a big part. For our first couple of years, this was a problem for us, too. But we quickly realized that if this was going to be a success, we needed to nip that in the bud. As one member said, "Make sure that you develop Terms and Conditions sheets and provide this to

your members." Guys!! This is key to stopping problems before they start. We would email each subscription group before the season began with the subject line, "RESPONSE REQUIRED: Important information about your upcoming bouquet subscription." We laid out the dates for their group, explained the pick-up window (which we made very generous), informed them of our policy, and told them we would not send them an email reminder before each bouquet pick-up. That's probably much easier to do now, and if you can easily automate it, it's a nice touch. But we asked them to stop what they were doing and immediately add this to their virtual or physical calendar. Then, come back and reply to our email with "got it" so we knew they understood what to expect for the summer. When they replied, we checked their name off our spreadsheet. A week later, we would remind those who hadn't responded. As the start date approached, we would contact the stragglers by phone (ensure you're getting a phone number!). Out of 225 subscribers, there would only be two or three. By keeping it simple and using a bold, straightforward headline on our emails, we would get most of the replies within a couple of days. Once the season got rolling, we had surprisingly few problems, and after the first week, it was smooth sailing (for the most part!).

Our policy allowed people to skip one week per season with advance notice of at least three days. We then gave them the option to either pick up a bouquet from our farm stand any time we were open, or if they hadn't picked one up over the summer (track everything on our spreadsheet), we would double up on the last day (we usually had tons of

Tips for Running a Successful Subscription

- Be organized and create a subscriber database or spreadsheet (I love Airtable for this).
- Be clear about what your subscription is and for whom it's a good fit.
- Keep your offers simple.
- Keep communication simple and straightforward. Eliminate the problem before it starts.
- Have clear and concise terms and conditions and get an acknowledgement (other than just checking a box in your online shop) that they understand how the program works.
- Stay in touch with your subscribers through email and social media (it doesn't need to be complicated!) to continuously build your relationship.

“I love what this member said, ‘Approach your setup as if you had 100+ customers. Flexibility for your customers is nice, but offering too many catered options can lead to burnout on a bigger scale.’”

dahlias at that point, so we knew we’d have plenty of flowers, and it wouldn’t be that many people). No exceptions.

Subscribers were allowed to “transfer” their bouquet to a friend any time they couldn’t pick it up, but if they forgot to pick up within the allotted window, they would forfeit their flowers. On the rare occasion this happened, we gently reminded them that they had acknowledged that they read our policy in the spring and that we had delivered on our end of the deal.

Sticking to your guns can be challenging, especially if you’re new and running a small CSA. But you will thank yourself later! I love what this member said, “Approach your setup as if you had 100+ customers. Flexibility for your customers is nice, but offering too many catered options can lead to burnout on a bigger scale.” This is how you stay sane. Trust me; people appreciate knowing the rules and expectations.

I want to mention that in our earliest communications, I would offer an “out.” Often, people

receive a subscription as a gift, and the giver might not realize that Sally plans to be gone for half the summer. This will end up being a terrible gift for her that causes her more grief than enjoyment, so allow people the chance to trade for a gift certificate or another offer if you have one available.

3. **Availability** was a concern for many newer folks and people considering starting a subscription. This member offered solid advice, “I would highly recommend a subscription program, but only after you’ve been growing for at least a year or two. Once you’ve got a better handle on timing and selection of crops, it will be easier.”

Someone wondered about having the “right” mix of flowers. I understand the concern, but that’s something to consider when designing your program. Do you promise that every week will feature a bouquet? Maybe reconsider that and explain that some weeks might be straight bunches. How can you advertise your offer that leaves you some wiggle room? If you’re keeping up with a newsletter, you could advertise that this week’s bouquets have a “meadow vibe” or that your foxgloves and campanula were so incredible that you’re letting them speak for themselves. It’s a time to get creative! Another idea is to work with your local flower community and see if you can source something from a fellow grower. But if you have beautiful flowers—even if they don’t feel like the “right” ones—try using them before incurring another expense.

4. **People also struggled with travel/delivery time.**

The more subscribers on your list, the easier it is to spread out the cost of driving. You almost certainly need to charge a fee if you offer direct delivery. If you drop them at pick-up sites, can you encourage more people to sign up? Can you offer an incentive for people already on board to sign up their friends? Can you condense your delivery locations to serve more people with a single drop-off? The strategy here is going to vary greatly depending on the individual situation.

5. **Customer Retention**

is an area many folks want to work on. About a third of people weren’t sure what their retention rate was. I think this is an essential piece of info to track! Creating repeat, dedicated, loyal customers and farm fans is one of the best things about a subscription. On our farm, it became an annual event for people to buy a subscription for their loved ones or themselves. Whether it’s Christmas, birthdays, Mother’s Day or Valentine’s, the subscription was hugely popular.

Of course, the most essential part of a subscription is delivering beautiful, high-quality, long-lasting flowers, but people can get flowers from anywhere. You want to build a relationship with your customers that makes them want to keep buying from and supporting you. By keeping in touch via a newsletter and social media, you can create a connection with your customers and serve them in other ways. (We’ll go deeper in the next section!)

Let's talk about marketing

because it's a big hurdle for many members. People wondered what effective ways to get the word out about their subscriptions, and here were the top channels:

- Social media
- Email newsletter
- Word-of-mouth
- Farmers' markets
- Collaborations with local businesses and veggie farms

Remember, building a customer base takes time and effort. You won't reap the reward immediately, but it's exponential and slowly builds on itself!

I know I can't be the only one who feels like social media is becoming harder and less effective, but it's still an essential part of the overall strategy. It allows people to interact with you and glimpse what life as a flower farmer is like. It also can serve as a portfolio where people see your flowers throughout the season. It's also an excellent place for keeping people up to date on when and where to find your flowers.

Don't underestimate the power of "old-school marketing" and word-of-mouth. If you have a good product and put yourself out there in your community, the word will spread. At the farmers' market or your farm stand, have a subscription pick-up. Set those bouquets beside a big sign that says "For Subscription

Customers Only." Then, be prepared with marketing materials that explain your subscription and get people signed up for your newsletter. This is how we got many of our subscribers. Even though we had other flowers for sale, they wanted what they couldn't have, saw it as exclusive, and wanted in on that club.

If you have a great customer who is a big cheerleader for your flowers, don't be shy about offering them an extra bouquet (with an informational postcard attached) to gift to their friend. You can also bring a bouquet to your hairdresser or drop one off next time you're at the library. Pique people's interest, drive them to your website and encourage them to sign up for your newsletter.

If you do nothing else, start an email newsletter. One member said this:

"I have emailed my list bi-weekly since I started my farm (even before I had flowers!), and it is my number-one sales driver, especially for subscriptions. When I send out the launch email in November, email subscribers usually take about 75% of the spots before I even need to launch "publicly" to social media." YES!! This is what email newsletters can do!

We've discussed it before: writing a newsletter is linked to success, especially in direct-to-consumer marketing. We own our email list and aren't at risk of having it hacked or at the mercy of changing algorithms. But I get that it can feel overwhelming. You're not alone if you never know what to say!

Here are just a few ideas for Building Connections:

- **TALK ABOUT THE BLOOMS THROUGHOUT THE SEASON.** Create a visual bloom calendar on your website that you link to from an email. Then, in season, you can remind them to refer to it to identify the flowers in their bouquets.
- **TELL THEM WHAT YOU'RE SEEDING AND PLANTING.** Create a "how-to" on your blog to share about seed-starting and scheduling.
- **SHARE GARDENING TIPS SPECIFIC TO YOUR AREA.** Subscription customers are local and can relate to the quirks of your growing region.
- **SHARE WHAT YOU LIKE TO DO DURING THE OFF-SEASON.** Maybe you have book recommendations or favorite winter recipes. While this isn't flower-related, it can show off your personality and make people feel like they know you! It's all about building connections.



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I loved the idea Melanie Harrington of Dahlia May Farm shared at the regional conference in Ontario: “Serve, serve, serve, sell.” Email is where we start building relationships with our customers. Share stories that allow customers to get to know you personally, and then start thinking about how to serve your customers (and potential customers).

Then, when you’re ready for “the sell,” talk about how your flowers can improve their lives. To quote Jenny Marks, from Trademarks Flower Farm, “Talk about the benefits, not the features.” For example, instead of saying, “We offer mixed seasonal bouquets for pick up in Toronto,” you could say, “Feeling overwhelmed? We make self-care easy! We deliver a weekly dose of happiness right to your neighbourhood. Sign up for seasonal flower beauty with our convenient Bouquet Subscriptions.”

This member shared a great tip: “I am finding that a drip marketing campaign works well. The more you get your message in front of people, the more they are reminded of you. If you can get them to think about your flowers, they are more likely to buy. I also find setting deadlines for orders creates momentum, a sense of scarcity, and people don’t want to miss out.”

The last question I asked our members was if they would recommend the subscription model to another farmer. While about 10% said no, citing the extra communication and commitment, an overwhelming 90% said yes. Here’s what they had to say:

“I say yes because it spreads out harvesting. The flowers ready at the beginning of the week go straight out the door for CSAs and later in the week to market. Also sales in the off-season is fantastic!”

“People love ‘em! :) I find our returning subscribers feel like they’re personally connected to our farm and a small local business, and they are making an impact through their support.”

“It can be a great way to get to know your customers and develop deep relationships.”

In summary, the subscription model isn’t for everyone. As pointed out earlier, it’s not a good idea for those just starting their farming journey. But it can be a great option if you’re willing to put in the effort and get prepared during the slow season. Once you create an organized system, you can put that in motion, and the work becomes a little less each year.

I highly recommend listening to Corrina Bench’s podcast, “My Digital Farmer,” for more CSA/ subscription marketing tips. There’s also a great episode on “The Dirt on Flowers” where hosts Lyndsay and Shannon interview Corinna! ■



Dave Delbo

Dave's Flowers
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MID-ATLANTIC

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

Even though by the time you are reading this,

the Mid-Atlantic/Northeast regional conference will be a distant memory, I would like to once again thank Mark Ginsberg and Rebecca Kutzer-Rice of Moonshot Farm, and everyone at Kube-Pak for their hospitality and for opening their farm and facility to more than 150 flower farmers. Also, thank you to all the speakers on the second day for their great presentations. I'm looking forward to the continental conference in late 2025 and the farm tours throughout the year.

The first flower I ever sold was the gladiolus. The tall colorful spikes were my grandparents' favorite flower. Growing up as a young teenager, we would visit my grandparents every week during the summer and take them a dozen or so stems. One summer, when blooms were especially abundant, my dad suggested we put them out by the highway and try to sell them. This began our business.

During those early years, we always dug the glads, stored them through

the winter, and replanted them in early spring. This was always a major chore when you were growing a thousand or more plants. We would either pull by hand if the ground was wet enough or if it was on the drier side, we could use a shovel. After digging, the corms were stored in the greenhouse for a short period. Once they had dried for a time, we would cut off the stem just above the corm and separate the old corm from the new corm. The new corms would be placed on bread trays and stored in our basement for the winter.

In late April, it was time to start planting again. We planted in straight furrows by hand, placing the corms about an inch or two apart and covered the furrow with a rake. After about a month of growth, we would till between

the rows and make a furrow in between the rows of gladioli. We'd then hill up the glads by pulling soil up against them. This covers the weeds growing between the glads and gives them added support to withstand storms during the bloom period. It also prevents them from drying out as quickly during dry spells in the hot months of July and August.

After hilling, we would usually spread leaves between the rows to keep the weeds down and moisture in the ground. Our source was bagged leaves from the town collected the previous fall; we'd store them until the summer months. As the years went by, the number of glads we grew increased to several thousand annually.

Sometime in the early 2000s, I realized that some of the glads



Dave Delbo has been growing glads for many years and is seeing a rise in their popularity. *Photo: Dave Delbo*

“Glads are no longer associated with funerals; they are now being used as the more upward flower in bouquets and other special event floral designs.”

-KO KLAVER



Above: Delbo cuts glads daily just as they are starting to crack color, bunches them in tens, and stores them in the cooler in plain water until delivery.

Right: Dave's son Greg many years ago with glads larger than he was!

Photos: Dave Delbo

were surviving the winter and regrowing the following year. And being the lazy flower farmer that I am, I decided to leave a crop in the ground and just mulch them in the late fall and see if they would survive. To my delight, they did! I have never dug a glad since then.

We leave a crop in the ground for three to five years and then plant new bulbs and repeat the cycle. I have found that after a couple of years in the ground, the corms do eventually freeze or get too crowded and need to be replaced. I also do not fertilize the gladiolus at any time—I just add leaves every fall. Of course, doing it this way, most bloom from July to mid-August. You could always plant a few more corms in late spring to have successions through the fall months.

While at the conference in New Jersey, I was speaking with Ko Klaver, and he mentioned that because of the regained popularity of gladiolus, Zabo Plant will “be on the forefront and will supply corms starting in 2025.” With the recent acquisition of the complete Prisma Gladiolus breeding line, his company is taking a huge step forward in gladiolus bulbs worldwide. “Glads are no longer associated with funerals; they are now being used as the more upward flower in bouquets and other special-event floral designs,” Klaver told me. Henk Onings of Onings America is selling corms again this coming year after a short hiatus. Henk says glads are “becoming more popular because

of the new ruffled form and new colors, like peach and unique bi-colors that are available now, not just the dull red and white.” Personally, I have found a slight increase in sales to florists over the last several years.

Glads are susceptible to a few root rots and diseases including *Fusarium* and *Rhizoctonia*. Most growers have issues with thrips. Personally, I have not had issues with thrips since I do not dig up the corms anymore. When I did have thrips pressure, I used the chemical Conserve.

When growing glads, it is best to have a cooler. I cut glads daily just as they are starting to crack color, bunch them in tens, and store them in the cooler in plain water until needed for my florist route. I can hold glads for approximately two weeks or even longer, however, it is best to sell as soon as possible.

Do you grow glads? If not, why not try them next year? And if you do, have you seen an increase in sales? For most of us in the mid-Atlantic region, the growing season is coming to an end or has already ended. A few grow year-round and don't get the “relaxing” couple of months off. Are you growing a new crop this coming year? Is there a new variety that you are excited to try? As always, I can be reached at davesflowerspa@gmail.com or by phone or text at (570) 245-8889. ■





Jennifer Marks

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Attendees toured the gardens and beautiful barn and event center at Dahlia May Flower Farm. Photo: Jennifer Marks

NORTHEAST

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

AS OUR SEASON WINDS

DOWN, I am reflecting back on a fun year full of learning with the ASCFG!

Over the summer I was honored to both attend and speak at two of the ASCFG regional conferences: the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic conference in New Jersey and the Canadian conference in Trenton, ON.

The in-person nature of these conferences is truly invaluable. Getting to see flower friends, learning from other growers, seeing other flower farms, and being surrounded by like-minded people is such a rewarding experience. The connections and friendships built at the ASCFG conferences are hard to replicate with online learning, which is why I always prioritize attending at least one in-person event a year.

Personally, the highlights of attending these conferences were seeing Moonshot Farm in New Jersey and Dahlia May Flower Farm in Trenton, California. (Thanks Rebecca Kutzer-Rice, Mark Ginsberg, and Melanie Harrington for hosting us!) I

always learn to see business through a new perspective with each farm I visit. Every farm is so unique, and it's fun to see how other farms make decisions, invest in infrastructure, lay out their farms, implement systems, and grow flowers. I always get new ideas whenever I visit another flower farm. It is perhaps my favorite thing about being a part of the ASCFG!

At both of the conferences I attended, I learned new things and was given gentle reminders of things to revisit on my farm.

Some of my favorite things I learned and appreciated were:

- I added tansy to my must-grow list, thanks to Melanie at Dahlia May Flower Farm.
- To NOT pinch my Neo celosia, and how to run my own seed trials better, thanks to Michelle Elston at Roots Cut Flower Farm.
- I'm giving in and planting some new perennials, thanks to Karl Vahrmeier from Green Park Nurseries.

- Delicious mocktail recipes thanks to Sarah Kistner at Stone Meadow Flowers.
- I learned some really neat science behind dahlia forcing thanks to Alicain Carlson of Syngenta Flowers.
- I can potentially harvest tunnel delphinium in May (going to give it a try) thanks to Joy Longfellow from Johnny's Selected Seeds.
- Saw some beautiful curcuma/tropical flowers growing at Moonshot farm which were really beautiful!

It can be tough to get away from the farm for events like these, but it's always been worth it for me. I love seeing the way other people do things, and getting to "talk shop" with other flower farmers is the best therapy a farmer could ask for. Plus, it feels rejuvenating to take a break from the daily farm grind and get a fresh perspective on flower farming life!

Planning is well underway for the 2025 Continental Conference and other in-person ASCFG events! Keep your eyes peeled for future details! ■



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SOUTH AND CENTRAL

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

MECHANIZING: WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU?

Congrats, you made it through summer! I adore fall because for us, it's time to start slowing down: no more farmers markets or weddings, only a few on-farm workshops left, and we're just wholesaling what we have to florists and our local collective. Of course, we're not done yet—we're planting our overwintered plugs into the hoop houses, prepping our raised beds and crates for tulips, planting freesia and ornithogalum in the greenhouse, and gearing up for the dahlia dig. But it's a time of stock-taking, introspection, and planning as we start to have more time on the edges of the day, space in our brains to analyze our season, and less physical strain as the temperatures have cooled. Not to say that everyone's season is the same—I know

some of you are in an extremely busy part of your year—maybe you're winding up for Day of the Dead or Thanksgiving and Christmas sales! But how does your body feel?

What I'm thinking about in this season's time of reflection is how to take more and more of the physical burden of farming off our bodies, and more and more of the time-commitment out of our lives. In the spring, we received a grant from our county to buy a tractor and implements, and we're thrilled with how it's going so far. But there's a lot to know and consider when adding machines to your farm, especially if that's not the way you've farmed before. But I think there is room on almost any farm, of any size, to add some mechanization so you can keep doing this for years to come. By the time you read this, we'll have welcomed our first child into the world and I know for sure we'll be relying on our tractor and walk-behind to help us get more done so we can spend more time with our daughter.

What is mechanization anyway? On the farm, mechanization is removing physical human labor from a task by replacing it with machine labor. What are the trade-offs? Less physical labor hopefully means a higher quality of life, a reduction in time spent on these tasks, increased precision in the timing of these tasks, and the addition of an asset to the balance sheet; but it also means an increase in spending for both purchase and maintenance, likely an increased use of fossil fuels and byproducts, and a higher risk of farmer and worker injury.

When we first considered buying a tractor, we worked on defining the tasks it would need to do so we could find the right size and horsepower. That meant listing out the tasks that are most physically demanding and time-consuming. For us, that was bed prep, spreading compost, digging dahlias, and terminating cash and cover crops. So we needed a tractor and implements that could help us with all of that. We ended up getting a 65-horsepower compact tractor, which came

“... there's a lot to know and consider when adding machines to your farm, especially if that's not the way you've farmed before. But I think there is room on almost any farm, of any size, to add some mechanization so you can keep doing this for years to come.”

-HELEN SKIBA

Key Questions to Ask When Considering an Equipment Purchase

We've talked about what tasks you might start delegating to machines, and when you might want to do so—but what else do you need to consider when you're thinking about adding some more cogs and belts and gears to the mix? Here's what I would start with:

- **WHAT IS MY CURRENT SCALE**, and do I want to scale up or do I just need help with my current tasks?
- **DOES THE MACHINE FIT MY CURRENT PRACTICES?** For example, the widest tiller and power harrow a BCS two-wheeled tractor can run is 33 inches. My beds are 48-inches wide, which means I have to do two passes on my beds and I'm driving the BCS on top of the beds, which I don't love. But my hoop house beds are about 32-inches wide, and the BCS fits perfectly.
- **DO I HAVE ROOM ON THE FARM** to accommodate the movement, turning radius, and storage of the machine I'm considering? For example, our tractor can't fit in about half of our main field because it can't clear the shrubs we planted at the back, and because there is a copse of trees very close to the field's edge. So we can't get the tractor and the implement out without whacking ourselves in the face with tree branches. Also, we know that flowers are tall—there aren't many tractors that can pass over a five-foot crop of cosmos—so we don't expect to do tractor work in the field in the middle of the growing season, depending on the crops in the bed.
- **AM I MECHANICALLY MINDED?** Will I sit down with the user's manual and figure out what kind of coolant and fuel and oil this thing needs, at what intervals, and how to check those levels? Will I do the maintenance to protect my investment, or do I need someone else to help me with these tasks?
- **BEYOND THE PURCHASE PRICE**, what are the other costs of owning this machine, and can I afford them? We thought the tractor would fit in an old animal shed on the property, but because of the non-foldable roll-over protection bar... it doesn't. Now we have to figure out if we're going to somehow modify the shed, build a carport, or buy a giant tractor cover to protect it over the winter.
- **AM I OKAY WITH STANDARDIZING** some things to make the most of the machine? For example, a set of basket weeders is not infinitely adjustable, so to make the most of it I'll need to plant lots of crops in the same pattern.
- **WHAT WILL I DO IF THIS THING HAS PROBLEMS?** Who do I know that can do repairs, or where can I take it for troubleshooting mechanical issues?

Here's a short list of difficult tasks and some machines that might be able to help:

TASK	SMALLER SCALE	LARGER SCALE
Prepping Beds	Tilther, electric wheel-hoe, or walk-behind with tiller or power harrow	Tractor with tiller or power harrow
Spreading compost or fertilizer	Walk-behind tractor with compost spreader	Tractor with compost or manure spreader
Laying plastic mulch	Manual mulch layer	Tractor with mulch layer
Spraying	Battery or gas-powered backpack sprayer	ATV or tractor-mounted sprayer
Transplanting	Rolling dibbler, tube-type transplanter, Paperpot system	Tractor with water wheel transplanter, Drängen-type cart, lots of other fancy options
Mowing crops/weeds/grass	Walk-behind tractor with flail or sickle-bar mower	Tractor and flail mower
Weeding	Electric wheel-hoe with finger weeders or stirrup hoe	Tractor-mounted basket weeders, finger-weeders, sweeps, and many other attachments; Drängen-type cart
Digging tubers	Not much... What are your ideas? There's a walk-behind potato digger but it only goes 6" deep	Tractor with undercutter, potato digger, or plant-lifter
Moving heavy things	ATV or farm truck	Tractor with bucket and pallet forks
Pruning perennials	Battery or gas-powered hedge trimmer, electric shears, sickle-bar mower on walk-behind	Tractor with sickle-bar mower or potentially a flail mower

with a powerful auger (watch out, more peonies and shrubs are coming!). It also has a loader and bucket so we can pick up compost or leaf piles (or, alas, large expired hogs on their way to heaven) and move them much more easily. We bought a flail mower to take down crops and weeds, a power harrow for shallow tillage that doesn't overturn soil layers, pallet forks

and a frame for lifting anything and everything (usually silage tarps and sandbags and sling bags of soil), a compost spreader that we can fill and then drive over our permanent beds to lay compost instead of using wheelbarrows and shovels (WIN!), an undercutter

and weight set for lifting dahlia tubers, and finally a toolbar with hilling discs for building new beds.

What to Mechanize

What are the things that are most difficult for you on your farm? Is it laying plastic mulch,

transplanting, spreading compost or manure, planting shrubs, spraying for fertility or for pests or disease, weeding, pruning? I guarantee there's a machine that can help you. Even if you feel like you can't afford these things right now, it's worth looking at what's out there to help so you can set your sights and goals and intentions on getting that thing. It was only last summer that I started saying, "I'm getting a tractor," not knowing how I would ever afford it, but as I started window-shopping I knew I could figure out a way to make it work; it was absolutely necessary for the size of our new farm and the way our business was evolving.

Mechanization doesn't have to mean a tractor. It can mean a small tiller, a BCS or other walk-behind, or a tiller powered by a drill. It can mean a farm vehicle so you're not schlepping buckets back and forth to the field by hand or in a cart. Maybe the first step isn't even quite a machine: a mechanical seeder like an Earthway or Jang can get you started on the path to mechanization. Sometimes, mechanization might mean automation: can you get your drip lines on an automatic timer so you don't have to open valves and you can water in the wee hours while you're still sleeping? Many of those tools will remain important parts of your arsenal even as you continue to scale up: we still use our BCS in the hoop houses and other hard-to-reach areas, and we use wheelbarrows and shovels when necessary.

When to Mechanize

How do we know when it's time to mechanize a task? That's a difficult question with a lot of nuance, but I think there are two moments to reevaluate the way you're doing a task: when the task becomes too physically demanding, or when it becomes too time consuming. It's up to you to determine what "too" means in those phrases.

So how much physical labor are you able to or willing to tolerate? As I get older, my body is less and less able to do things like broadforking, long sessions of wheel-hoeing, or wheelbarrowing without a couple days of feeling like I've been run over afterward. But even if you're a young and spry farmer, who might not feel like the physical tasks are a burden yet, mechanizing what you can will maximize your body's useful life on the farm, and it will keep employees from burning out because the work is too hard.

Even if a task is not physically demanding, it may be demanding of time. An example: cutting and removing peony leaves from the field in the fall. I could go through with shears or a sickle and cut each plant individually, and it would probably take at least two hours in our field. Or I could go with my battery-powered hedge trimmers and be done cutting in half an hour. Time, of course, is our most precious resource, and if I can save some of it with an investment in a quality machine, especially one that has more than one use, I'm absolutely going to do that. We use our hedge trimmers all the time!

Even in just this half of the season alone, our tractor and implements have made our lives a lot easier. Plus, we got to learn a lot of new skills about how to operate and maintain it (that may not be something you want to add to your plate, but I love how farming keeps us learning!). I'm grateful to our community for helping us get to this level of mechanization faster than we could have on our own. I hope you found some good ideas here about how to start easing some of the physical burden of farming—it's worth it, so you can keep doing your beautiful work far into the future. ■



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SOUTHEAST

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Above: Despite the difficult weather conditions this season, Niki was able to grow a beautiful variety of zinnias at her farm. (Photo: Niki Irving)
Top right: Niki and Allan Armitage



THIS SEASON HAS BEEN A CHALLENGING ONE

for many of us in the southeast. Here in Western North Carolina, we received some of the lowest amounts of rainfall ever recorded during the first half of the summer. No amount of irrigation can replace the magic of rain, especially when the temperatures reach into the 90s (°F), which is atypical for our area. I heard from many folks that they had a very tough start to the summer growing season. I have been experiencing challenges on my farm as well. As of writing this article in mid-August, things are looking better overall with more consistent rain and less intense temperatures. I had the pleasure of hosting one of my flower heroes, Dr. Allan Armitage, at my farm over the summer. While it was a short visit, his perspective of having weathered the highs and lows of many decades of growing flowers was a huge encouragement to me. Plus, I was able to have him sign my beloved copy of *Specialty Cut Flowers*.

I asked the members in our region about challenges they faced this year, adjustments made to crop plans based on weather patterns, and whether they tried any new growing practices this year. It's always interesting to hear about the problems faced by other growers because we can find similarities, such as a few folks experiencing damage to lisianthus from bees. Here is what some of our region's members shared:

“Although we’ve been experiencing some much-needed rain lately, it was also a brutally hot and dry June and July for us. The current economy has greatly affected our sales, primarily our on-farm events. Our dahlias are growing, but are very slow to set buds, which seems odd. We are planning to take July and August off next season to avoid burnout and recognize that most people are on vacation. On a positive note, the February-planted lisianthus were perfection, and hydrangeas in our area of the state were the prettiest I’ve ever seen!”

-SHELLIE WATKINS RITZMAN OF MY GARDEN BLOOMS IN KERNERSVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

“I’m a second-year flower seller (many years growing) in central North Carolina and am working to improve my flower quality this year. I tried succession planting my dahlias this year (also grown under shade cloth for the first time) with limited success. I think in a “normal” year it would have been a good plan, but the hot, dry June followed by a soaking wet July caused rot in many of the second-succession tubers. Pest pressure feels heavier this year too, or am I just paying better attention? I did make a startling discovery that my potted dahlias, which are surrounded by scented geraniums, have been largely untouched by bugs. Since the oils may be confusing pests, I’m interplanting my in-ground dahlias with other scented things and allowing rogue basil to remain in dahlia beds instead of weeding it out.

“I also had an unusual first: bumblebee damage on lisianthus! We had such an abundance of bumblebees (hundreds!) eager to collect pollen that they were literally clawing their way into buds causing discoloration on the petal edges of light colors. Worse, some damage wasn’t apparent until AFTER being removed from the cooler or sold! This resulted in a complete loss of two beds (lavender and white). Darker colors were also damaged, but a bit less so, and the damage was less visible. I plan to cover the lissies with insect netting in hopes of a better fall flush.”

-JENNIFER HOWARD OF BUCK NAKED FARM IN MONCURE, NORTH CAROLINA

“Our biggest challenge so far this year has definitely been irrigation during the ‘flash drought.’ We irrigate from our well and it’s never failed us before, but there have been some concerning noises from the well house once or twice. It’s also been so hot here (Person County, North Carolina) that we changed our work schedule to be indoors from about one in the afternoon, and even earlier on the hottest days. A couple of times I picked after dark with a headlamp rather than first thing in the morning, which went pretty well. The greenhouse temperature soared up above 130°F a couple of times, but some of the things that were planted in the ground there loved it—the strawflowers especially are the healthiest I’ve ever grown.

“We had fewer insect pests in general on all of our crops, but I did notice a surge in Japanese beetles, both adults and larvae, which is pretty worrying for us. Furry pests with big brown eyes and fluffy white butts were another issue, and we lost significant numbers of young plants to deer. We’re currently working out details of an experimental lightweight deer fence that’s movable for the spring. We’re also putting in a hedge of wax myrtle and sweetbay magnolia along one edge of the property in the hope of reducing accessibility, with the plan being to hedge in our production areas with plants that are deer-repellent, as well as useful for cut stems. Our peonies were slightly earlier than usual, possibly because of the heat, and it meant we had some to show around before Mother’s Day. Every single stem sold, mostly to a florist who comes to our Saturday market.”

-SUNSHINE JULL OF ALDERGROVE FARM IN ROXBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

“We tried an experiment this year that was very successful! No spring planting of sunflowers or zinnias certainly changed my pest pressure for the better. Japanese beetles have always been a huge problem, regardless of my efforts. We only had a small handful of the beetles this year, but lost revenue on the two crops. We gained revenue on lisianthus and dahlias because they were in perfect shape! I have sunflowers and zinnia going into the ground in August, so we will enjoy them for fall. A big risk, but some experiments are!”

-SHERRY KELLY OF CHATUGE SPRINGS FLOWER FARM IN HAYESVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

“This is my second year growing flowers, and the heat, bugs, rabbits, and drought ruined so many flowers in the field that were successful last year. I am thankful that I planted Maryland-variety snapdragons in November in our greenhouse and lisianthus in March in our hoop house. Then there is the seasonal problem of lack of demand by florists during July. The recent rains have caused the weeds to overtake my field flowers, but there is still hope that recent flower plantings will succeed this fall. I am very grateful for what I have learned from ASCFG.”

-SUZANNE THOMASSON OF THOMASSON NURSERY IN HAMPTONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

“This year has definitely had some challenges so far. One new thing I've tried, with great success so far, is using alpaca fleece as mulch. There is an alpaca farm down the road from my farm, and I used their “thirds” (the dirty fleece that they can't sell or otherwise use). I spread it about an inch or two thick around my transplants in the middle of June and, so far, it has been great to reduce weed pressure, retain moisture, and hold soil temps. I'm excited to see how it will work through the remainder of the season and into next season.”

-HOLLY STRAWN OF HARPP FLOWER FARM IN MURPHY, NORTH CAROLINA

“We, too, have struggled mightily with hot and dry weather. I am presently trying pulse watering, which uses much less water than the traditional drip-tape watering I normally do. I haven't had a lot of time to implement it and see how it truly works, because we finally started getting rain about a week and a half after starting the pulse method. I also saw another way to support my lisianthus in a photo from the Moonshot Farm regional tour. It looks like hog wire, which would be so much more sturdy than the Hortonova netting I now use. Even when I get it as tight as possible, the long stems will start leaning with the wind. (I have no hoop house, therefore, everything is field grown.)”

-JEAN BARKER OF BARKER'S BLOOMS IN BRISTOL, TENNESSEE.

“Yes, this year has been challenging with the lack of water and heat! There are a few ways we are responding to it. We are a you-pick flower and berry farm. We are addressing the water issue by using the Catawba River as a backup water source. The river runs along our property, and we will only be pumping out a small amount of water as needed. Initially, we attempted to drill a well but it did not yield enough water, and we did not want to take that risk again. Expanding our existing pond is too expensive. As a result, we will soon install a three-inch pipe from the river to our field.

In our cut flower section, I have raised rows and used mulch and leaves to help hold in the moisture. Leaves work incredibly well. We have to suck up the leaves from the wedding venue side of our property, so I spread it out on my rows in the fall. After a while, the leaves

dissolve and I have to add mulch. I am avoiding plastic or landscape fabric because I think it will make it much hotter.

“Next season, I am going to install railroad ties to line a few of the raised beds to help retain water. Additionally, my goal is to have as many cool-season crops as I can. I believe hitting that early April season will put less pressure on the summer crop. I already started my fall seeding. This July, with the heat, people did not want to cut flowers at all; my sales were down from last year. My summer flowers were slow to get going and flourish. They are shorter.

So much time and energy has gone into fertilizing and watering this year. I am going to really focus on soil prep next season and on amending my soils very heavily. They contain too much clay and I literally had giant cracks in my rows, even with daily watering. We are also trying to understand what people expect from a you-pick flower farm and will be focusing on making it more of a cut flower garden experience rather than straight rows. It is only my second season and I still have so much to learn.”

-NANCY GRAHAM OF THE IVY PLACE IN LANCASTER, SOUTH CAROLINA

“Each year certainly has its own challenges. This year makes our sixth year growing! When we first started farming, we were totally flooded in 2020 and 2021. My husband had brain surgery in 2022 and 2023. So this year, we were still in recovery mode from his November 2023 surgery. We moved our farm in 2023 after it flooded, and it has been very different growing conditions. We have less airflow, with lots of rain storms coming off the mountain, so we’re working on the best time and method to plant dahlias to keep them from rotting out. And you can say good riddance for field-grown lisianthus because I just culled more than I took home to the cooler. Plus, we need to succession-plant zinnias and cosmos about every three weeks!

We’re making adjustments to what’s being grown in the hoop house, trialing a bed shaper to get more height on our beds, and we’ve already spaced out our zinnias and cosmos. We’ve also been trialing a paper-pot transplanter, which we hope to purchase in the coming year or two and hone our processes to save time and money. What hasn’t worked is using the zipper for dahlia planting—they don’t get deep enough and some washed out.”

-RACHEL HARDING OF WET KNOT FARMS IN MARIETTA, SOUTH CAROLINA

We’re facing animal pest pressure for the first time in our five-year history.

It’s unusual for us because we’re downtown in a small city. Someone once warned us year five was when the pests find you, and that is holding true for us. It could also be the drought conditions and animals needing that extra moisture. Regardless, it’s the least amount of zinnias we’ve ever had! It makes me glad there are other flower farmers around and we can pool together to stretch resources when necessary.”

-MEG KINZY OF THE FLOWER GIRL IN GREENVILLE, TENNESSEE

“I found the dry weather incredibly challenging. We had three-and-a-half weeks here with just .001 inches of rain. I saw rain clouds in the sky but it never got to us. I irrigated out of a creek and it actually went dry. Now we are getting plenty of rain and it feels like a distant memory. BUT... I am changing what I plant. I have been slowly transitioning to perennials anyway, and find with the hot and dry weather I should do more perennials and fewer annuals that need plentiful water in June when getting established.

This is a new problem: My lisianthus were looking so good, but now as the bees wiggle their big butts into the buds, it appears they are creating staining on the flowers... particularly the white ones. I thought this may have been from overhead watering, but when I changed to drip lines they were still getting stained; I am pretty sure it is caused by the bees. The lisianthus are in my high tunnel. I’m not sure if anyone else has had this problem.”

-ABIGAIL HELBERG MOFFITT OF BLOOM WNC IN BLACK MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA

“I took a few big leaps this season and really wanted to get serious about growing my business this year. **This is my third growing season, and before this year I only sold to florists. My goal was to have flowers for Mother’s Day and put myself out there this year.** I am pretty introverted so that has been scary, but I did it. It has really made me see all the possibilities with a new perspective. I hosted a small market the weekend of Mother’s Day and the response was so eye-opening. I immediately started planning events and brainstorming. I am keeping them small so I don’t get overwhelmed. My first event was this morning and everyone loved it. I am also growing in a new area on our property this year, which seems to be working out well.

“Another big leap was planting about 1,500 dahlias. The most I have grown at one time has been about 100. It has been an undertaking, but it has honestly gone quite smoothly. It has been hot and dry but I think the new growing spot and the shade it provided have worked to my advantage. It doesn’t feel as challenging of a season as I know others are having, and I don’t take that for granted. This has also been the first year I have used silage tarps and it has been a game changer.”

-APRIL DURDEN OF FIELD CUT FLOWERS IN MACON, GEORGIA



ON ANOTHER NOTE, I had the privilege of attending the Canadian Regional Conference hosted by the fabulous Melanie Harrington of Dahlia May Flower Farm in early August. Not only is her farm incredibly beautiful and tidy, but the operation is well-organized and efficient. I came home feeling inspired, ready to jump into the fall season, and with a few new tricks I'd like to incorporate into my own operation. I know how much work goes into hosting groups on your farm—in fact, I'm teaching an "Ask an Expert" all about hosting successful and profitable workshops on November 18. I commend Melanie, the Dahlia May farm team, Canadian Regional Director Sarah Kistner of Stone Meadow Gardens and all of the wonderful speakers for a fantastic conference!

Above (Left and Middle): Top: Dahlia May Flower Farm's gorgeous barn and garden. Middle: A Floral installation on a canoe for Canadian Flowers Week by Unicorn Blooms. **Bottom left:** Conference attendees touring Dahlia May Flower Farm (Photos: Niki Irving) Bottom right (L-R) Sarah Kistner, Niki Irving and Valerie Schirmer in Ontario, Canada.



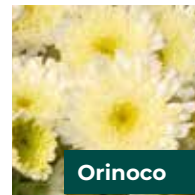
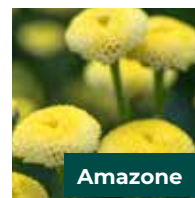


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WEST AND NORTHWEST

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

EVERY SEASON we take a hard look at the crops that we are growing and determine if they'll make the cut for the next year. In the early years, we had a constant stream of crops that hit the bricks, for one reason or another. Some were poorly suited to our climate or growing capabilities. Some we couldn't sell to save our lives, and some we just didn't like. Maybe they were a color that didn't jive for us, they were a pain in the butt to harvest, or had an aroma that didn't sit well with someone on the crew. It always feels like a relief when the decision is made and we can move forward unburdened by whatever crop wasn't serving us.

Sometimes they make their way back into the lineup. This year, for example, we brought back gomphrena. After years of seeing other farms grow beautiful, robust gomphrena it felt like maybe we should try again, so we did. Truthfully, it was partly influenced by a trial variety that I was excited to get in the ground. Am I happy we brought it back? Meh, the jury is out, though the trial was amazing. I still don't

like harvesting it, but having healthy plants does make a huge difference. Apparently, our inability to grow it in the past was mostly a user error. Our customers love it and our crew is quite fond of the little ball flowers, so it's probably going to make an encore appearance in 2025. We'll see after that.

Most times once something gets the ax, it's gone forever (looking at you, calendula), so the decision is not made lightly. We consult our sales records, survey our customers, and ask for input from the crew before we make the final cut. Usually, we're all on the same page and the numbers tell the real story. Spending time for the last few seasons doing time trials and assessing the actual cost of growing certain crops has been super helpful and I'm grateful

for the tools and information to use that data.

There are a few crops that have caused heated debates over the years, most notably lisianthus. As anyone who has ever grown this stunner of a flower knows it is slow and tedious and takes up valuable space wherever it goes. The return can be breathtaking, but it can also go so horribly wrong. This is a cautionary tale.

We started growing lisianthus about seven or eight years ago after I first saw them at an ASCFG conference. How could you not fall in love with these fluffy, voluptuous flowers? Add in a two-week vase life and a high stem price and I was sold. We started small with a row in a hoop that we started from seed ourselves. We harvested about 15 stems out of a 40-foot row. It was not the most impressive



Lisianthus has made its way back into Erin's fields, with a few rules attached.



Erin's husband Aaron with bunches of lisianthus blooms.

start. I hadn't realized how much time they would take and subsequently lost interest and focus, resulting in an impressive weed patch with very few surviving plants, in one of two small hoops we had at the time.

The next year, we had seeds started by a contract grower and had pretty good success. We planted them in the field (we are Zone 8) at the end of April after spending days bumping plugs into soil blocks in early March. The plants were planted through burned weed mat and supplied with drip irrigation, and they thrived. We had an amazing harvest and couldn't believe all the money we were making! What made sense was to double or even triple the amount of plants that we were growing for the next season, right? Not so much.

That next season, we went big and planted about 30,000 plugs in the field. It was a huge undertaking. We planted them through weed mat, again, and were pretty happy with ourselves imagining all of the cash we'd be rolling in at the end of the harvest.

It didn't pan out that way exactly. We discovered that the area we planted into was full of crabgrass and thistle and despite spending well over 100 hours weeding throughout the season we barely got a harvest. It was a real low point in my campaign to grow lisianthus. Maybe it was better to have open ground to more easily weed them? So we tried without weed mat and with a firm commitment to weed them weekly. Guess what? We didn't. The season pulled us under and we barely had time to breathe, let alone weed the divas in the back of the field. Once again I found myself arguing to grow a crop that was beautiful, that I loved for the sake of loving it and that wasn't profitable at all for us. Aaron was not impressed. We decided that we weren't going to grow lisianthus anymore. That was the year that broke us.

One of my favorite things to do as a grower is to try new things, and to that end I often participate in the ASCFG seed trials. Turns out that the next year there were lisianthus in the trial. What's a farmer to do? I had to fulfill my commitment to the organization and grow the trials, so off to the greenhouse the seeds went, along with a few thousand of their closest friends that I thought we might as well try.

With that small trial of a few thousand seeds, we started to tiptoe back into the lisianthus game, but with a much more



Lisianthus have become profitable again at Rain Drop Farm due to careful variety selection and disciplined maintenance.



Erin has found a sweet spot this year with her selection of lisianthus and how many to grow.

thoughtful and informed approach. We did our due diligence and made extensive customer inquiries to narrow varieties down to the most in demand. We assessed our inputs through time trials and sales data to determine how much labor was too much and where the balance was. We discussed options with our crew and got on board with their suggestions to grow through weed mat and put a single crew member in charge of heading up weekly weeding sessions. Most importantly I got my head straight as to how many lisianthus are right for our farm. Until this year I have always felt that more would be better. More of everything! Let's rule the world with our flowers! We can do it all! Turns out, we need to limit ourselves to not just what we CAN

grow, but what we can grow WELL.

So, 2024 was the season of the perfect amount of lisianthus for our farm. We grew about 10,000 plants, we weeded them three times, and we got the best harvest we've had in five or six years. Lesson learned.

Hopefully, the takeaway is the same for you as you assess what you're growing on your farm. This story of lisianthus illustrates just one crop in our lineup, but its path is parallel to almost every crop we grow. Finding the sweet spot where you can manage the crop to a successful harvest and then sell it through is the ultimate goal, whether that's two bunches or 200. So get out there and try something new, but maybe not more than you can reasonably keep weeded. ■



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NORTH AND CENTRAL

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

WOW! Two amazing North and Central Regional Conferences, all wrapped up. All I can say is thank you from the bottom of my heart to each of you who tore yourself away from the farm and ran away to enhance your knowledge. It's always hard to sacrifice today's work for a better future, but it's always worth it. I know farming is a tough business, but you should never have to go it all alone. That is one of the main things conferences help facilitate—new flower friends and mentors.

We started the season with a wonderful meetup at the fabulous Raker and Roberta's. We had presenters from the amazing staff at Raker's, InFlora Cut Flowers, and Express Seed Company. Dr. Raymond Cloyd helped us combat pests, while Dr. Roberto Lopez taught us how to trick plants into bloom under augmented day lengths. We oohed and aahed over Adam and Jennifer O'Neal of PepperHarrow Farm's gorgeous bouquet recipes. Finally, the truly talented Emily Patrick of Carolina Flower demystified spreadsheets and showed us how to

wrangle all those wild metrics our farms produce. Between all the presentations we toured the Raker-Roberta's greenhouses and trial gardens. I learned so much by just strolling through the trial gardens. Seeing so many varieties side by side helped me hone and fill my 2025 grow list.

The deeply talented Drew Groezinger of Clara Joyce Flowers rolled out the red carpet for us in Illinois. Just getting to stroll through the fields, greenhouses, and workshop would have been enough, but we also had a dynamite lineup of speakers to complement the gorgeous settings. I furiously took notes as Maggie Taylor of Delight Flower Farm spoke about "How to Grow Your Farm without Losing Yourself." Then Steve and Gretel Adams of Sunny Meadows Flower Farm rocked out enterprise budgets, which can really be an amazing asset to any growing farm. Phil Mueller, a longtime director of sales and marketing at Star Valley Flowers regaled us with the story of growing Star Valley Flowers, which is a larger wholesale-only flower farm. It's always amazing to get to see how a farm progresses and grows over the years.

At this point, the presentations were so smokey hot with knowledge we had to relocate to under the trees to cool off. As we all reclined in the shade like picnic-goers, the dynamic Adams duo spoke again, sharing how they use the H2A program to bring skilled labor to their growing farm. Next, Joe Schmitt, from Fair Field Flowers, presented on Developing Systems for Farm Employees. Joe is truly one of the most generous flower farmers I have ever met, and the slide show he put

together for this presentation is incredibly comprehensive. The one and only Dave Dowling from Ball Color Link helped us explore perennials beyond the beloved peony, and there are a lot of them to consider! We wrapped on Day One with one the best grower panels I have ever seen as Drew Groezinger (Clara Joyce Flowers) and Maegan Williams (Puddlejumper Flowers) shared what it's like to build businesses with family, how to mindfully and demurely fire customers and employees, and generally how to have a good time as you build a business.

Not to play second fiddle to Day One, on Day Two we toured! Drew and Megan lead amazing tours all over the farm. They answered all our questions and gave us a behind-the-scenes look at their systems, irrigation, and so much more. In between tours we hosted our dating show, with date the pros: Steve and Gretel Adams, Karl Vahrmeier, and Joe Schmitt. The amazing Rebecca Marrall and I rounded out the last session on Goal Setting with Project Management Principles. We had so many wonderful conversations with fellow growers about the fun and frustrating parts of setting and keeping goals. Rebecca has a special resource coming soon to support the continuation of those conversations.

Speaking of which, all the amazing presentations from the regional conferences will be available in the Members Only Learning Portal for your viewing pleasure. I think you should go ahead and make a Frostmas celebration plan that includes a deep dive into all these resources. Once again I can only say thank you to all the amazing hosts, presenters, team ASCFG, board members, and to you brave farmer! I can't wait to catch up with you next year.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE PHOTOS



Attendees participating in the "Speed Date the Pros" session at Clara Joyce Flowers.



Maegan Williams leading the "Behind the Scenes" at Clara Joyce Flowers session in Illinois.



Gretel and Steve Adams of Sunny Meadows Flower Farm presenting on implementing and managing successful H2A programs.

Illinois



Drew Groezinger of Clara Joyce Flowers leading the farm tour of his operation.

Michigan



Joanne Feddes of LaPrimavera Farms in Ontario and Sabrina Vanderwal of Express Seed Company share a moment across a row of zinnias.



The ASCFG banner provided a great photo op for flower friends.



The trial gardens at Raker-Roberta's were exquisite! Greg Gabrels of Sakata Seed shared his expertise.



Amanda Cook, North Central Regional Director, kept smiling through the rain and wind.



Rebecca Kutzer-Rice and Mark Ginsberg, owners of Moonshot Farm, provided a fabulous tour of their farm and operations.



Design workshop participants at Dahlia May Flower Farm choose flowers for their creations.

New Jersey



Team Delbo: (Left to right) Thank you, Alicia Delbo, Dave Delbo, Jessica Delbo, and Lily Sudol!



Jenny Marks, ASCFG Northeast Regional Director, and Dave Delbo, ASCFG Mid-Atlantic Regional Director welcomed everyone on the second day in New Jersey!



Thank you, Melanie Harrington and crew for a fantastic tour of Dahlia May Flower Farm.

Canada



An aerial view of gorgeous Dahlia May Flower Farm, host farm of the Canada Regional Conference.

Colorado



John Dole and Mimo Davis



Chet Anderson leading the tour.



Clark Harshbarger gives his presentation.

Meet the ASCFG's *Newest Members*

CANADA

Jeanne Bernardin
Jeanne Lepoucevert
Moncton, NB

Paula de Jong
Bloom & Breeze Farm
Garibaldi Highlands, BC

Krystyna Delahaye
Seed of Life Farm
Surrey, BC

Sara Deschamps
Dame Haven Farms
Harrow, ON

Anna Gerrard
Peterson Farms North
Prince George, BC

Dawn Harper
Oops A Daisy Flower Farm
Erinsville, ON

**Savannah Freeman and
Kimberly Demerling**
Young's Point Flower Farm
Goderich, ON

Rachel Klausen
Local Flora
North Vancouver, BC

Agnes Koreny
Redix and Roses
North York, ON

Thea Lodewyks
Dear Dahlia
Red Deer County, AB

Moira MacKinnon
Love and Fantasy Flowers
Edmonton, AB

Lee Anne Mansueti
Whiffle & Hum Flower Farm
Duncan, BC

Stephanie Martel
Flower and Fleuve
Summerstown, ON

Katrina McQuail
Meeting Place Organic Farm
Lucknow, ON

Danielle Munroe
Nested Acres Flower Farm
Russell, ON

Lauren Rigato
Firefly Farm
Slate River, ON

Michelle Schulenberg
Floreille Farm
Lincoln, ON

Leslie Scott
Point Anne Flowers
Belleville, ON

Stephanie Slaman
John Slaman Greenhouses Ltd.
Burford, ON

Marika Tiessen
Flowers by the Fraser
Abbotsford, BC

Kassia Vandenberg
Copper Flower Co.
Harriston, ON

Gillian Wannop
Honey Hill Farm
Markham, ON

Louise Warner
Unicorn Blooms
Peterborough, ON

Becky Williams
Maple Ridge Farm
Sydenham, ON

MID-ATLANTIC REGION

Carey Birgel
Lunette Flowers
Fogelsville, PA

Melissa Boring
Wye Knot Flower Farm
Johnstown, PA

Vicki Cronis-Nohe
Derby Mill Farm
Dover, MD

Madelyn De Lisle
De Lisle Gardens
Mount Airy, MD

Zoe Dellinger
Dell Acres Farm & Greenhouse, LLC
Edinburg, VA

Carol Golden
Golden Grown Flowers
Fairfax, VA

Megan Haworth
Pink Sky Flowers
Harleysville, PA

Margaret Higby
Blooming Valley Flower Farm
Front Royal, VA

Erin Keegan
The No Name Farm
Mohrsville, PA

Maura Kenny
Society of American Florists
Titusville, NJ

Stacey Miller
Felicity Fleur Farm
Ottsville, PA

Olivia Osley
Unicorn Blooms
Baltimore, MD

Diane Owen Garber
Ambleside Flowers Limited
Wrightsville, PA

Margaret Pickoff
Love 'n Fresh Flowers
Philadelphia, PA

Caitlin Robinson
Sungold Flower Co. LLC
Dickerson, MD

Marisa Shea
Shea Hill Made
Hollywood, MD

Daniel and Rebecca Stoltzfus
Sunrise Valley Farm
Christiana, PA

Amos S. Stoltzfus
Stoltzfus Flower Farm
Ephrata, PA

**Rebecca and Richard Taylor
Welch**
Rebecca's Roses, LLC
Grantsville WV

Meme Thomas
Baltimore, MD

Anna Tikhomirova
Tenth Muse Flowers
Trenton, NJ

Karlie Tucker
Kenbridge, VA

Jeni Tyson
The Quiet Seed
Glen Gardner, NJ

Amber Tyson-Wright
Blueberry Hill Flower Farm
Centerville, PA

Abbey Vanderlin
Scythe & Stem
Jersey Shore, PA

Autumn Zaminski
Dahlia House
New Oxford, PA

Spenser Zydlewski
Hidden Gem Farm, LLC
Chesapeake, VA

NORTH AND CENTRAL REGION

Sarah Arnold
Bloomcroft
Minneapolis, MN

Emma Barber
Rhubarb Botanicals, LLC
Springville, IA

Navraaz Basati
TRB Global, LLC
Hoffman Estates, IL

Bailey Brennan
Second Street Farm
Lander, WY

Erin Burns
Hiawatha, IA

Jessica Butteris
Cedar Hills Farms
Richland, MO

Kim Canole
Sand Ridge Farm
Marshfield, MO

Dina Cirino
Fiorella Flowers
Chagrin Falls, OH

Becki Conner
Green Trail Flower Farm
La Porte, IN

Walter Conner
Green Trail Flower Farm
La Porte, IN

Willem Conner
Green Trail Flower Farm
West LaFayette, IN

Adlynn Cope
Floraly
Mount Olive, IL

Heather DeLap
Heather's Garden
Lexington, NE

Allison Dhabalt
She Blooms Flower Farm
Mason City, IA

Edith Dubree
Earl Grey Fields
Pendleton, IN

Meghan Dudenhoeffer
Mostly Meg, LLC
Jefferson City, MO

Stephanie Duston
Petal Patch Farm
Bates City, MO

Steven Dyme
Flowers for Dreams
Chicago, IL

Kate Estwing
City House Country Mouse
Saint Louis, MO

Danielle Evans
Fields of Laughter Flower Farm
Circleville, OH

Brianna Faust
Back Forty Flower Farm
Long Prairie, MN

Kayla Franco
Bouquets for Strays
Kirkwood, MO

Kelvin Frye
Syndicate Sales
Kokomo, IN

Esther Guess
Guess Gardens
Kouts, IN

Janell Happ
Flower Child Fields LLC
Mendota, IL

Carla HarlaQuinn
Garden Forest
Campbellsport, WI

Ellie Harris
Lilac Farms
Lone Jack, MO

Deanna Hasse
Blooming Burrow Flower Farm
Lexington, IL

Hannah Hultz
Harvest Blooms
Palmyra, MO

Peter Kane
Whipoorwill, LLC
Oregon, WI

Tina Lewis
Two Dogs Flower Farm
Holly, MI

Bailey Ligibel
Storeybook Blooms
Milford, MI

Molly McCleary
Maypop Flower Farm
Neosho, MO

Ann McGaffey
Firefly Farm
Carsonville, MI

Patsy Moore
The Acers
Albia, IA

Angie Naumann
Old Red Truck Flowers
Wymore, NE

Kellie Niedermier
Sandy Meadows Flower and
Tree Farm
Blissfield, MI

Tricia Ostransky
Wahoo, NE

Pam Pierson
The Flower Field
Auburn, IN

Allen Pyle
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Green Bay, WI

Kay Spiros
Kays BouKays
Oberlin, OH

Kandi Terwilleger
Kandi's Flower Market
Graettinger, IA

Connie Waggaman
Flower Dogs
Chrisman, IL

Chris Yamamoto
Little Ducky Flower Farm
Barrington, IL

Kara Young
True Colors Flower Farm
Nebraska City, NE

Bradley Youngstrom
On The Farm
Mears, MI

NORTHEAST REGION

Katja Andreo
Winding Waters Flower Farm
Warwick, NY

Keleigh Aten
Rebel Flower Farm
Mendon, MA

Loren Atkins
Pleasant Valley Flowers
Fort Edward, NY

Rosanne Berman
Rocky Ridge Farm
Greenwich, CT

Vanessa Cefalo
Beachcroft Compositions
Gloucester, MA

Erin Clements
Full Moon Blooms
Londonderry, VT

Erika Didrikson
Bakie Farm Flowers
Amesbury, MA

Liridona Duraku
Sea Change Farm & Flower
Kerhonkson, NY

Bonny Durbin
Z4 Flowers and Farm
Moira, NY

Elizabeth Farrell
The Wild Child Flower Company
Southwest Harbor, ME

Lauren Giroux
Johnny's Selected Seeds
Winslow, ME

Alexandra Kirby
Superbloom Flowers
Napanoch, NY

Phyllis Leck
Scottish Lion, LLC
Bristol, ME

Anna Liu-Gorman
Saratoga Springs
Saratoga Springs, NY

Ashley Madl-Geurtze
Wink Botanicals
Hannacroix, NY

Barbara Parry
Foxfire Fiber & Designs LLC/Patten
Hill Flowers
Shelburne Falls, MA

Rebekah Rice
Nine Mile Farm
Delmar, NY

Jenna Ryan
Elodie Farm Flowers
East Montpelier, VT

Ankit Singh
University of Maine Cooperative
Extension - York County Office
Portland, ME

Crescentia Slovinsky
Sea Change Farm & Flower
West Shokan, NY

Wendy Stokna
Bloom and Harvest
Hagaman, NY

Deborah Sweeney
Sunrise Blossoms
Centerville, MA

Mary Liz Veling
Clark Organic Farm
Somerville, MA

Kristina Wentzell
Catbird Flower Farm
Waldoboro, ME

Maegan Williams
Puddle Jump Plants
Gilsum, NH

**SOUTH AND CENTRAL
REGION**

Annie Amrich
Janniebird Farm
Gunnison, CO

Michelle Bair
Livingston TX

Elizabeth Bivens
Firefly Gardens, LLC
Norman, OK

Nancy Dockter
Great Day Natural Produce
Mabelvale, AR

Adam Finch
Fiddlehead Flower Farm
Colorado Springs, CO

Chris Gang
Rainbow in the Dark
New Orleans, LA

Lindsay Hergert
Garington Field
Atlanta, TX

Ana Jenkinson
The Flower Potion
San Antonio, TX

Elizabeth Jensen
Sunburst Flowers and Plants, LLC
Murray, UT

Deepa Krishnamurthi
Sustainable Stems
Dallas, TX

Charles Longoria
Beatriz Farms
McAllen, TX

Claire McCullough
Butterfly Outpost
Grand Junction, CO

Susan McReynolds
Sonrisa Gardens, Inc
DeRidder, LA

Ryan Mihajlov
Fiddlehead Flower Farm
Colorado Springs, CO

Chad Miller
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO

Kyle and Jerry Monroe
Monroe Organic Farms
Kersey, CO

Sarah Rodriguez
Beatriz Farms
McAllen TX

Aimee Shaner
Pearls Blooms
Collinsville OK

Sonya Stice
Deep Roots Farm
Westville, OK

Carlyn Thompson
Wild Willow Gardens
Springville UT

Natalie and Marta Viramontes
Valley Farms NM
Anthony, NM

Joan Yates
Peaceful Soul Farm
Keenesburg, CO

SOUTHEAST REGION

Vicki Banks
Legacy Flower Farm WNC
Weaverville, NC

Whitney Baugh
Breezy Acres Flower Farm
Henagar, AL

Whitney Bernal
Sugar Bees Bloomery
Dover, NC

Margaret Cain
Among the Wildflowers
Atlanta, GA

Jonalyn and Clay Carver
Blossom Lane Farm
Baker, FL

Racile Casey
Maggie Ruth's Nursery
Montgomery, AL

Kimberly Corso
The Green Door Gardener
Ormond Beach, FL

Jennifer Culberson Wood
Belle & Allen, LLC
Raleigh, NC

Elizabeth Cummings
Burnsville, MS

Kathryn Denman
Riparia Gardens, LLC
Hillsborough, NC

Tiffany Dewitt
Mooresville, NC

Melinda and Craig DuBois
Rackity Hall Farms
Mooresville, NC

John Farrell
Import Flowers Nashville
Nashville, TN

Janet Faulk
Bloom Fusion
Garner, NC

Wendy Fitzpatrick
Brinson Blooms
Elizabeth City, NC

Malinda Fortner
Knoxville, TN

Joe Freeman
Mistletoe Meadows
Laurel Springs, NC

Jeannie Guess
Elizabethton, TN

Bill and Robin Hampton
Hampton Oaks Farm
Holly Springs, MS

Carol Hendley
Fresh Cuts Farm, LLC
Nashville, GA

April Hermann
Rogersville, TN

Kathleen Herrmann
Herr Garden
Hawesville, KY

David Hill
Heze Farm
Newington, GA

Amanda Irwin
Snow Creek
Nashville, TN

Adrienne Johnson
Leaning Oak Farm, LLC
North Wilkesboro, NC

Kasse Jones
Moonchild Blooms
Greeneville, TN

Lawrence Land
McLawland Farms, LLC
Charlotte, NC

Joyce Lazzara
Brinson Blooms
Elizabeth City, NC

Jessica Lynn
Fika Acres Farm
Wilmore, KY

Diana May
Country Fresh Flower Farm at
Jordan Lake Christmas Tree Farm
Apex, NC

Anya McBrayer
One Fun Gal Flowers
Durham, NC

Ashley Morris
Cultivated Creations
Easley, SC

Damita Powell
SpankyJo's Landscape & Nursery
Castalia, NC

Krystal Pusser
Sid's Creek Farms
West End, NC

Elizabeth Rogian
Bluegrass Hills Flower Farm
Ezel, KY

Lisa Rudick
Clear Spring Gardens, LLC
Leesville, SC

Deborah Scott
Highlands, NC

Todd Scott
Willow and Stone
Mocksville, NC

Melinda Screws
Parker Dairy Flower Farm
East Dublin, GA

Shelly Spencer
Trippy Blooms, LLC
Deland, FL

Toni Swaim
Sweet Petals Flower Farm
Dunn, NC

Rebecca Taylor
BLOOM! By Taylor Creekside
Wilmington, NC

Sarah Torgerson
The Kentucky Flower Market
Frankfort, KY

Angie Trask
Trask Family Farms
Wilmington, NC

Rachel and Keith Weber
First Cut Florals
Loudon, TN

Katie Wolter
Nourish Blooms
Opelika, AL

WEST AND NORTHWEST REGION

Blaire AuClair
Folk Life Farm
Covelo, CA

Meghan Brady
Wild River Blooms
Lewiston, ID

Linda Knight
Bijou Blooms
Twisp, WA

Laura Morimoto
Joy Blooms Farm
Issaquah, WA

Amanda O'Doul
Mandalion Designs & Flower Farm
Petaluma, CA

Julie Richey
Poppy's Flower Farm
La Center, WA

Carey Rule
Poppy's Posies Flower Farm
Creswell, OR

Lindsay Schwinn
Delameter Valley Farms
Castle Rock, WA

Vera Smail
Patch and Petal Farms
Red Bluff, CA

Melissa Stewart
Sweet Bloom Farm
Battle Ground, WA

Kim Sweet
Wells creek Flower Farm, LLC
North Bend, OR

Sophie Whittaker
Moonlight Flower Farm
Winthrop, WA

Emily Wilson
Bird Dog Flower Farm
Vacaville, CA



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Field Gate Flowers
Lathbury, Bucks, United Kingdom

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