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The *Cut Flower*

QUARTERLY

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We're Ready to Roll with In-person Events in 2022!

Val Schirmer



Happy early spring, everyone!

As I write this column, I've just returned from the first in-person Board meeting we've been able to hold in TWO years. It's impossible to describe the pure joy I felt in being able to see just about the entire Board in person, instead of remotely over Zoom.

Can you believe that some of our newer Board members have never been to an in-person board meeting, or met each other face to face? Sure, that's been the way of the world for what seems like forever, and now it feels like a miracle, just to be able to sit side by side, catching up, planning, chatting...connecting.



Naturally, not everyone was able to come in person due to ongoing COVID restrictions or schedules and I'm especially grateful to Janis Harris, our Canada Regional Director, who stuck with us, actively participating on Zoom *for a solid day and a half of meeting*—definitely not for the faint of heart!

Before I came on the Board five years ago as Southeast Regional Director, I occasionally wondered what the Board actually did (well, if I thought about it at all), outside of our national conferences and smaller, often regional, meetings.

As we approach 3,000 members (wow! It's hard to believe we were just a hair over 1,100 five years ago),

your Board members keep the ASCFG's mission squarely in front of us:

Our mission is to support specialty cut flower growers by creating accessible educational opportunities and research for growers at every stage in their development of financially sustainable businesses. We build community through peer-to-peer learning and mentorship. We share an interest in environmental sustainability and the pursuit of personal and financial well-being and success.

The words "accessible educational opportunities" are a particularly prominent theme for us in 2022.



At our first in-person Board meeting in two years, we celebrated Managing Director Linda Twining and her 20 years with the ASCFG. Back row, from left: Susan Rockwood, Val Schirmer, Lennie Larkin, Judy Laushman, Shanti Rade, Michelle Elston. Front row, from left: Erin McMullen, Linda Twining, Bailey Hale, and Linda Doan.



What does your Board do when they're not sitting in the Board meeting? They head to the New Orleans Botanical Gardens, of course!



The Spring Board Meeting, held at an airbnb in New Orleans, also included a visit with Denise Richter at Pistil & Stamen's new farm location.

By the time you read this, we hope to have announced the hiring of our first-ever Education Director, an exciting new role for the ASCFG!

As background, in our 34-year history, the ASCFG has produced a wide range of educational events, and we've expanded our offerings to online platforms as the organization has worked to unite and educate members across North America and several other countries. As part of our broader strategic plan (yes, we have one and it's posted on the www.ascfg.org site, under About Us, last summer we contracted with a consultant who created a Comprehensive Education Content Development Plan after evaluating our current membership and our educational programs. The Plan includes a series of recommendations to systematically align our educational content to the needs and wants of specific audience groups within our membership. Central to the plan is the additional of a new staff role: Education Director.

The ideal candidate for Education Director will have a passion for educating growers, along with the experience, skills, and collaborative approach to develop and implement broad-ranging educational offerings for our diverse members—from longtime seasoned growers, to intermediate growers, and to growers who have been at it only a year or two. This is a BIG role and I'm excited to bring her or him on board!

A second HUGE aspect of the "accessible educational opportunities" I mentioned is to bring back in-person meetings for those who can and are able to join in person—just like we did for our spring Board meeting.

Our Conference Planning Committee has been hard at work putting together a GREAT event!

If information hasn't come out about this already, it will, very soon.

It will be a two-day conference held in the Boston area on August 1-2, followed by a farm tour the morning of the third. This date was chosen because August is a bit of a summer slump for many growers, who take a break in the heat of the summer (plus it might be really nice to head to the cooler north when it's steamy throughout other parts of the country!).

The Conference Committee, led by Southeast Regional Director Linda Doan, has put together a STELLAR program with an exciting group of presenters. Our goal has been for it to appeal to beginning as well as experienced growers (which is no small task!).

As soon as the Educational Director comes on board, one of his or her top priorities will be to immediately set to work on conferences (yes, plural) for 2023, held in other areas of the country so more members can easily attend.

Just a heads up: registrations at the Boston conference will be capped at 250 (due to constraints at the venue), so if those dates will work for you and you're interested in coming once you see the full agenda, please be sure to register as soon as you can.

Finally, a word about Farm Tours

Last year's nine stand-alone Farm Tours quickly became one of the most popular programs we've introduced. We are hoping to be able to announce more of these events throughout North America very soon, and add even more throughout the season.

The chance to meet top-notch experienced growers and farmer-florists—in person, on cut flower farms—and mingle with old friends and new also there, is a benefit that no other organization can offer its members.

We will continue to support the farms who host a Tour by helping them organize and produce the event, reimbursing their expenses, and paying them a stipend for the time and trouble they take to prepare for and host the Tour, while keeping the cost low for attendees to register to come.

Last year I was able to go to two (one on the other side of the country and one just a state away) and it was SO incredible to be back together with fellow growers again. *And I can't wait to do it again!*

For now, here's to a great year for all of us, and can't wait to see lots of you soon!

*Val Schirmer is founder of
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Contact her at vschirmer3@gmail.com*

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Providing Flowers in Uncertain Times

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick



Dealing with uncertainty is part of every small business owner's experience. Dealing with uncertainty can be challenging, stressful, and make us feel out of control. We like things that are knowable, predictable, and foreseeable. As flower growers and designers the weather is unpredictable. COVID is unpredictable. Customer buying habits are unpredictable. And the list goes on. We wanted to share a couple examples of how we've been dealing with uncertainty recently. We're not experts, but we're trying.

Laura Beth

Uncertainty: the pandemic wrote that word on each of our doorsteps. For two years, we watched each other cope, and struggled ourselves with the unknown future. I had an abundance of unhealthy coping mechanisms just like everybody else, but I had a few healthy ones too, namely staying busy, peanut M&M's, and therapy.



I learned a trick in therapy that helps me deal with uncertainty and all the other emotions to boot. Here's how it works. When I start to display signs of emotional stress (cheeks reddening, snapping at people, whatever it may be), I say to myself: "I'm noticing that I'm feeling _____." I know that sounds simple, but it lifts me out of my body for a moment. There up above, I can objectively see that the strong emotions coursing through my veins are not me; they will pass.

This trick has come to my rescue countless times, but as we are here to talk about flower farming, I'll share a real example of how this trick helped me in business during uncertain times. One day mid-pandemic, a florist called me to complain that our prices were too high, and she insisted on a discount.

Here are the first two responses that came to mind:

Option A: "I'm worried about the future and don't want to turn customers away, so okay, I'll give you a discount."

Option B: "How dare you undervalue all my hard work, I'm trying to feed my family, expletive, never call me again."

Neither Option A nor B seemed ideal, so I used my therapy trick: "I'm noticing that I'm feeling FURIOUS that this customer doesn't get what I'm doing." Ah, rage! I could see myself from above, standing out in the field clutching my phone to my ear, fuming that this person doesn't understand flower farming. It was a little comical.

That tiny moment of perspective sparked empathy in me. My shoulders relaxed, and I chose Option C: to respectfully explain why our flowers cost what they do. "I completely understand where you're coming from. We pay our employees a living wage. We feel we are competitive with the local wholesaler; in many cases, our flowers are more affordable despite being consistently better quality. I can't give you a discount; but I hope you can see where I'm coming from, and that we can work together in the future."

To my complete shock, she responded that she'd like to place an order—despite our prices. She was a reliable weekly customer all season after that. I'm still amazed that my response was so effective. It was a real victory for me—not that I got her business, but that I was able to catch myself before letting my emotion of the moment (rage) dictate my response.

I've used this therapy trick constantly during our search for farmland. "I'm noticing that I'm feeling terrified we will never find a place." helped me look inward to discover that I truly believed, underneath all my fear, that we would eventually find home. "I'm noticing that I'm feeling frustrated." prevented me from yelling at my loan officer when they wouldn't loan us as much as we wanted.

I can even use the trick to navigate happy emotions: "I'm noticing that I'm feeling grateful." helps reinforce that marvelous warmth of gratitude. Right now, I'm noticing that I'm feeling grateful for all of you reading: this community is special, and I'm glad that our connection through the ASCFG is there through a pandemic, through global unrest, and all the other uncertainty of living.

Ellen

For us at Local Color Flowers, COVID continues to be the most unpredictable thing we have had to navigate since we began our business fifteen years ago. About five years ago, we consciously decided to try to transition our business to doing more in-person things in our shop including more design classes—special events like Open Studio, and Saturdays at LoCoFlo, and special Flower Club events.

When COVID hit, we were doing about 60% of our work in person in our shop. Another 30% of our work was wedding work with only about 10% of our work being daily deliveries and subscriptions. After a few weeks of being shut down in March of 2020, we realized how uncertain the future of our business was proving to be. We didn't know when we would be able to resume in-person events. We didn't know when weddings would be safe again. We didn't know if we would be able to generate enough work to keep our team employed. The uncertainty was overwhelming.

During the first six months, I worked hard on not dwelling on the uncertainty. Rather, I funneled all of my energy into the things I could control. We had access to flowers since our growers were still able to grow, and people wanted flowers in their homes. We created a new product (the LoCoFlo Bucket) and promoted home deliveries and subscriptions. While I was feeling sad, frustrated, and stressed about all that we were NOT able to do, I remained focused on what we were able to do.

When the summer of 2021 arrived, our city's mask mandate was lifted and we were ready to start in-person events again. We scheduled six months' worth of classes and events. Registration opened and our community was excited about in-person events again. This plan lasted about a month before Delta and then later Omicron halted these plans as well. We taught one class before we canceled everything again. The disappointment was heavy. Again, we worked hard to figure out what we COULD do rather than dwelling on what we couldn't do. We ramped up the sale of products like dried flowers, dried wreaths, and evergreen wreaths. We created and offered an online class for the first time. I knew there would be a time that in-person events would come back, but I had to let go of my hope and expectations about when that would happen and focus on the old mantra One Day at a Time.

So here we are on March 1, 2022, ready to open our doors for in-person classes and events again. We're beyond excited because so much of what we love about our work is being in community with our flower people. I'm also fully aware that things can change at any moment. Uncertainty has been normalized and we're all finding tools to help deal with it better.

How do you deal with uncertainty? We're all dealing with uncertainty. Do you have any great coping mechanisms? Anything that helps you when the going gets rough? Let us know! You can email at ellen@locoflo.com or butterbeefarm@gmail.com.





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Alaska Stems is Farming on the Last Frontier

Jodi Helmer



Homer might be known as the City of Peonies but almost no one was growing cut flowers in the coastal Alaska community when Rachel Lord started Alaska Stems.



Rachel Lord

Hot Commodity in a Cold Climate

Alaska Stems grew quickly. Lord added high tunnels, a greenhouse, and an irrigation tank to the farm. With a quarter acre of land in production, she grows 40 different varieties of annuals and perennials, including amaranthus, poppies, stock, gladiolus, echinacea, sunflowers, and lilies.

There are a lot of misconceptions about growing flowers in Alaska. The farm is located in USDA zone 6a and Lord harvests from mid-April to October. High tunnels and the greenhouse extend the growing season. Temperatures rarely get above 70 degrees, even in the middle of summer, and overnight lows in August can dip down to the mid-40s in the coastal region.

“Flowers seemed like a great niche opportunity—and they were,” Lord says.

The decision to establish a flower farm coincided with the introduction of the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) hoophouse grants program. Lord received funding to install a 30 x 72 hoophouse on her 13-acre hillside property, and turned “terrible ag land” into a thriving flower farm. She sold her first flowers in 2012.

Rachel took a slow and steady approach to building the business, signing up for a “space available” booth at the farmers’ market, selling to a small grocery store, and supplying flowers for one wedding. While she describes her success as a “slow burn,” her love of flower farming was instantaneous.

“It was 100 percent trial and error,” she says. “The first time I delivered a bucket of flowers to the bakery and café and saw people light up when I walked inside, I realized, ‘Wow, this is soul feeding.’”

The community also loved having access to locally-grown flowers; Lord even convinced a skeptical friend to embrace the fresh cut blooms.

“When we first started, she was very kind but thought we should be growing food people could eat,” Lord says. “I started bringing her flowers; I would drop them off at her house and that winter she started buying them at the grocery store. She said, ‘It’s so powerful to have fresh flowers in my home.’”



“One of the biggest challenges is the brevity of our growing season,” says Lord. “But we have a huge benefit here: There are a lot of plants that are considered to be ‘one-shot wonders’ that burn out quickly, and we don’t get burnout on our plants.”

Ranunculus is a prime example. Most growers have to start ranunculus early so it blooms before the heat of the summer; in Homer, the temperatures are never hot enough to hamper ranunculus production, she adds.

There are some flowers, like celosia, that need hot weather; Lord stopped trying to cultivate them on her farm. Zinnias, which are staples in the lower 48, are rare in Alaska.

“Here, when I bring them to the farmers’ market, people are like, ‘What are those? Those are so cool,’” she says.



Growing into the Next Decade

The climate isn’t the only challenge.

Homer has a population of just over 5,000 residents and Anchorage, the nearest city, is four and a half hours away. Residents of the small town have shown big support for the farm. Alaska Stems has a bustling weekly subscription service and is a go-to vendor for tourists who travel to Alaska to elope.

“It’s hard to go with one foot in every pot from a marketing perspective, but in a small community and a small state, it might also be what is necessary,”

Lord says. “We do have a really large tourism economy; we have beautiful mountains and glaciers and beaches so this is a hot destination for weddings.”

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on tourism (and business) and ongoing supply chain issues remain challenging. In fact, Lord, normally plants 20,000 tulip bulbs but was able to get only 8,000 thanks to shipping delays, and local bulb suppliers are nonexistent.

It was 100 percent trial and error. The first time I delivered a bucket of flowers to the bakery and café and saw people light up when I walked inside, I realized, ‘Wow, this is soul feeding.’

After a two-year hiatus from the farmers’ market, Lord plans to return for the 2022 season. While she admits selling at the market has a lower return on investment than other sales channels, it offers a benefit she can’t get anywhere else.

“The farmers’ market takes a massive amount of time; we make money but not a ton of money and I’m definitely not there for the cash,” she says. “It’s a soul-feeding, community-building experience and I love it. I get to chat with half the town plus a lot of people visiting from out of state; I get a lot of energy from that.”

Although Homer boasts 25 thriving commercial peony farms, Lord isn’t interested in shipping flowers to states in the lower 48, but she is considering expanding into new markets. This season, Lord is exploring the potential to increase sales to florists, especially in the Anchorage market.

“I’ve never done sales to florists because we don’t have that many of them,” she says. “Because shipping is such a mess up here, I’m playing around with whether we could shift some focus to cranking out high quality, beautiful, in-demand stems and how profitable and satisfying that could be.”

A “major scale up in employment” will give Lord the time to consider her next move. She’s hired a full-time farm manager and part-time staff to help on the farm this season.

Although Lord has been running Alaska Stems for a decade, she is still amazed at the impact fresh flowers can have on a community.

“The more people who are loving flowers, the better it is for everybody,” she says. “We want to develop that

culture and appreciation for the impact of fresh flowers in your home or in your business, [and] it’s been really cool to help nurture that here in town.”

Jodi Helmer is a freelance writer in North Carolina. Contact her at jodi@jodihelmer.com





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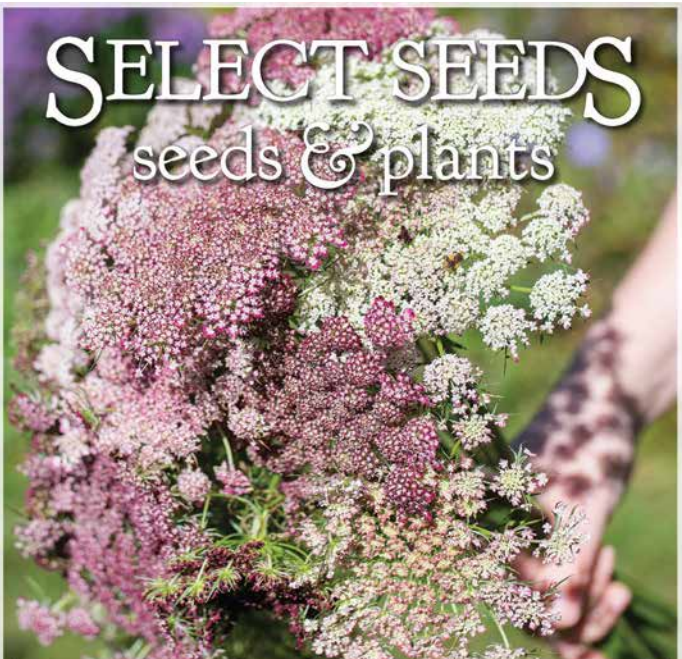
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Ten Ways to Improve Education on the Use of Biologicals

Brian D. Sparks



Because the use of biological products is still relatively new among specialty crop growers, the learning curve remains steep. But there are ways to educate yourself. We asked product manufacturers how growers can take their education process to the next level. Here's what they had to say.

1. Focus on the Environment

One of the first things growers must remember is that many biological products are live microbes that need a good environment to thrive in to maximize efficacy. According to Tristan Hudak, Vice President of Ag Biotech, Inc., general farming practices such as reduced tillage or no-till systems help build organic matter levels and improve soil structure to allow for microbes to live, respire, and reproduce.

“Cover crops to build organic matter, maintain moisture levels, and improve soil structure are also beneficial to incorporate into farming systems to support the biology of the bioproducts being utilized,” Hudak says.

2. Don't Neglect Nutrition

Balancing nutrition and plant-available calcium are critically important, and excess nitrogen causes many problems, according to the team at Creative AG Products. Magic bullet solutions to problems are misguided. A better idea? Adopt a holistic approach to avoid disease and insect problems through soil health and balanced plant nutrition.

Hudak echoes these thoughts.

“We are seeing a lack of inclusion of nutrient management in biologicals in training materials, which is unfortunate because it's an area where biostimulants and biofertilizers fit in extremely well and are being underutilized,” Hudak says.

3. Get Mobile

Bioline Agrosiences has put together educational workshops called Bioline Academy that are designed to inform and share knowledge and experience with growers about biological pest control and biological control agents (BCAs). Bioline Academy is a mobile training unit visits growers at their location, gives educational information on their biocontrol needs, and shares expert knowledge and advice.

4. Seek Out Early Adopters

Experience matters, and the wisdom gained from early adopters of biological products has demonstrated the proven performance and implementation of biologicals for disease and pest control, according to Mike Allan, Certis USA Vice-President North America.

“Over time, the experience gained from the use of biologicals has been essential to educate growers on the proper handling and timing for optimal performance and success,” Allan says.

5. Safety Is a Big Benefit

The safety aspect of biological products is something that needs to be promoted more within the industry, says Michael Hull, Technical Services Manager for Kemin Crop Technologies.

“Essential oil-based products are safer for workers and the environment, compared to traditional synthetic materials,” Hull says. “They have zero-hour preharvest intervals and re-entry intervals, so growers can apply them at and up to harvest time.”

6. Education Starts with the Supplier

Historically, biologicals companies have struggled to communicate their fit and value within a grower's crop protection program. This is why Angela Keyser, Senior Strategic Marketing Communications at Marrone Bio Innovations, says the company has put a considerable amount of effort into working with private researchers, universities, external Pest Control Advisers (PCAs), and growers to conduct on-farm and field trials so it can generate insights into the proper timing, rates, and combination needed to ensure biological products can truly add value.

Deb Shatley, Director of Commercial Horticulture at Terramera, agrees, noting that the best education growers can receive often comes from manufacturers working in conjunction with educational and research institutions. “These collaborations yield credible data results based on high-quality field research,” Shatley says. “Results from field trials provide growers with the knowledge of how biological products work based on best use practices.”

7. Production System Can Affect Use

Growers need reliable, rigorous recommendations about how, when, and where to use biologicals, and this will often differ based on their production system.

“We have developed different formulations of our products to suit different cultivation systems and provide clear guidance on which formulation to use for a wide range of application methods and timings,” says Virginia Corless, Chief Growth Officer at Novihum. “We also inform our customers about circumstances that may not yield substantial benefits from some application strategies, so that they can efficiently use a product only where they will see significant benefit.”

8. Mode of Action Matters

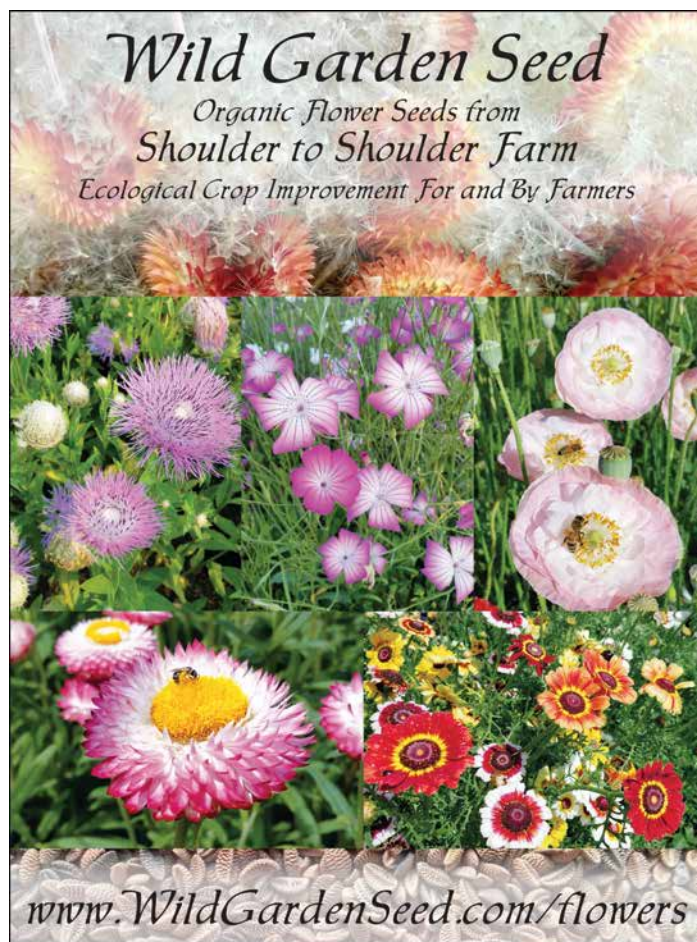
One important thing growers need to remember when using biological products is the mechanism of action of the particular product. Understanding and trusting the mechanism of action, and how to use the product most effectively in their operation, can provide an enhanced level of comfort when adopting something new, according to Emily Symmes, Senior Manager of Technical Field Services at Suterra.

“This is not dissimilar to the learning curve encountered in earlier transitions from broad-spectrum to more selective insecticides, or from conventional to organic materials,” Symmes says. “Greater emphasis on understanding the pest’s biology, life cycle, and how the product achieves the desired result is needed for successful and secure adoption of any new approach.”

9. Know the Product Inside and Out

There are a few areas where growers can maximize their efforts when using biological products, according to Mike Riffle, Field Development and Sustainability Manager at Valent USA.

“It is important for a grower to remember three things when it comes to biologicals: 1) Understand the product’s labeled use and efficacy to create realistic expectations, particularly where it relates to pest pressure and stage of growth, 2) Keep product shelf life in mind, as the shelf life of some biological products can be limited, and 3) Pay attention to recommended storage conditions, especially temperature,” Riffle says.



10. The Importance of Timing

For microbials, multiple applications are better than one application at a high rate. Chemistries work on toxicity, and having sufficient populations is paramount to effectiveness, according to Margaret Lewis, Sales and Marketing Specialist at Westbridge Agricultural Products. “For biochemical-based biological products, timing as it relates to first occurrence is critical,” Lewis says. “If the pest gets a good head start, biologicals have a hard time catching up. But with effective timing and dosage, they are equivalent to synthetic, conventional products.”

Brian D. Sparks is senior editor of Greenhouse Grower and GreenhouseGrower.com. Reprinted with permission from Greenhouse Grower, February 2021

Florists Love Local Flowers!



Julie Martens Forney

Photo Dave Delbo, Dave's Flowers

Are you thinking about selling wholesale to florists? Learn tips and tricks to succeed with this farm model. Four flower growers share their strategies for nurturing a profitable farm-to-florist business.

Florists are breaking records in their businesses, thanks to events of the last two years. Pandemic lockdowns and rescheduled events have combined to create unprecedented demand for flowers. At the same time, supply chain disruptions have more florists scrambling to find local flower farmers. It's a perfect storm of opportunity for flower growers. The trick is knowing how to leap into the waves without wiping out.

For growers like Dave Delbo, owner of Dave's Flowers in Catawissa, Pennsylvania, busy florists have pushed his sales to new levels. "The last two years have been record sales for us, but not a drastic increase over the years before, maybe five to 10 percent," Delbo says. He's been selling his specialty cut flowers to florists since the late 1980s. His current customer base is about 45 florists, with 90 percent of them brick and mortar—what he calls "old school florists."

Christian Ingalls, founder of Daisy Dukes Flower Farm, is three years into flower growing in Papaaloa, Hawaii. She runs a wholesale business that caters primarily to florists. “I started with twelve 60-foot rows in 2019, and now I’ve grown to three-quarters of an acre,” she says. She can’t keep up with demand from her florist clients—every single stem is taken.

In Waverly, Nebraska, Jamie Rohda, owner of Harvest Homes Flowers, sells to a combination of event, and brick and mortar florists. “We had a 60 percent increase in gross sales from 2020 to 2021,” she says. “One hundred percent of our florist clients had their best year ever in 2021.”

For 21 years, Karen Yasui has raised flowers on a Century Farm in Bedford County, Tennessee. Her business, Petalland Flower and Herb Farm, uses organic practices. She grows crops that “no one else is offering locally, things that don’t ship well. For me, 2020 was the best year I’ve ever had.” Her wholesale florist business felt the pinch brought on by COVID event cancellations, but she’s anticipating a busy season this year.

The market is definitely strong, and opportunities are there for enterprising flower growers. The question is: What do you need to know to succeed in selling wholesale to florists?



Rohda uses social media to promote what’s new on the farm. Her florist customers watch her feed, and often it’s just a matter of minutes after posting photos that florists start reserving what she has available.



Ingalls has built her florist business on standing year-round weekly orders from multiple florists who buy her grower’s choice buckets. She delivers a \$300 bucket twice a week for these accounts.

Why Florists Like Local Flowers

The freshness factor with locally-grown flowers is something that simply can’t be beat. “The advantage of local flowers the way I do it is that they’re delivered in water,” Yasui explains. “They’re never put dry into a box and shipped.” Delbo agrees. “Florists see the product they’re getting right away. They’re not ordering blind and possibly getting something that’s been in a cooler for a week and getting moldy.”

Ingalls harvests to order each morning, with stems picked by 4:00 a.m. She works this way for two reasons: first, to beat the scorching Hawaiian heat, and second, because she’s a full-time first grade teacher. “I actually drop my standing orders at florist shops between the farm and school,” she says. “Those clients know they’re getting literally fresh cut flowers.”

In Nebraska, where Rohda grows, everything floral is shipped in. “We don’t have big flower markets here. My florists are used to getting everything in a box. When my flowers

arrive in buckets, picked at the right stage, processed and ready to go, they can start using them even as I’m standing there. Last summer a client showed me dahlias they had ordered that arrived packed in a box. They were crispy—like something I’d put on my compost heap.”

Be a Floral Teacher

There is one caveat to delivering fresh-picked flowers to florists: Be prepared to educate them on the particulars of your blooms. “There’s a learning curve with fresh materials. One crop at a time, a florist needs to learn how to use what you’re growing. With something like a sunflower, there aren’t big differences in using locally-grown versus what’s shipped in. But you could be growing something a florist stopped using because they couldn’t get quality stems through the wholesale chain,” Rohda explains.

Examples she cites are dusty miller and tuberose. “With dusty miller, you can’t ever let it dry, or it won’t hydrate again. My crop is never dry.” To convince a florist who had sworn off dusty miller to try her crop, Rohda gave him a bunch to take home. He’s bought it ever since for wedding work. She encountered the same thing with tuberose. “Florists had quit buying it because it wasn’t picked at the right stage,” she says. “They really need a few buds open for them to continue to open.”



Unusual crops have helped earn Yasui florist customers. In fall she harvests fruited stems of beautyberry and persimmon to sell to florists.



Delbo raises flowers on four acres and delivers to florists four days a week. He keeps one day a week free for mechanical work on the truck or other chores around the farm.

Sharing information with florists is one of Ingalls' keys to success. "You have to tell them what needs to be inside and what works outdoors in our heat. Explain if flowers go in the cooler or need to stay out, like zinnias. Beautiful basil foliage lasts two or more weeks, but not if it's put in a cooler. Florists don't always know this," she shares. "Being humble and super real is critical with your clients. They're trusting you for product they'll be using in extremely expensive and elaborate weddings. They need to know the product will last and be beautiful."



Landscape fabric is a must for Hawaii's insane weed pressure, which includes non-native invasive guinea grass, also known as green panic grass.

Know how long your stems last by testing them. "Stick a few stems in a vase or in a block of Oasis foam so you can evaluate vase life," Delbo says. "That way you can give your florist clients the right information so they know how best to use the flowers. Things that hold up for only four to five days are still great for event work, but not the best for everyday arrangements, where florists need flowers that last longer."

Strategies to Win New Clients

Connecting with florists is an area where many flower growers new to the wholesale market find themselves unsure. Ingalls describes it as a "gaping hole" in flower-growing information. The technique that Delbo has used consistently—and with great success—through his 30-plus years of selling to florists is cold calls.

"I have always loaded up my truck, driven to florists and asked if they wanted to buy flowers. Of the 100 to 150 flower shops I've visited through the years, only has ever one refused to come out and see the flowers," he says. And that's the trick: getting the florist to come to see your flowers. "If I can get them to come to the truck, they buy," he adds.

But there's more to Delbo's approach: He's methodical in the way he introduces himself and his flowers to potential clients. "I show up in the middle of the season with a truckload of peak-season product—we're talking a wide variety of flowers. They can't say no to that," he says. After that, though, the real work begins. "It's important to be consistent. Show up at the same time on the same day of the week for each customer. If you say you'll have something for them, make sure you have it."

Citing a similar tactic, Rohda adds that "florists are such visual people. Winter marketing via email isn't great. Just show up with the product." Once you start selling to a florist, be sure to translate what scale you're at. "They're used to buying from a wholesaler who has everything. It's not a problem if you tell them what you have and what they can expect. One of my biggest events clients contacts me first and finishes her order with the floral wholesaler."

Ingalls stresses that it's important to realize that there's likely "already a culture and history of flower farmers selling to florists in your area. Understand who you are as a player in the field around you." For instance, if someone is already growing sunflowers, don't make that your signature crop.

She has found that the best way to get known by florists is to establish yourself with a brand identity. "I have one color, one logo, one vibe—black buckets with my sticker on them. It makes me stand out. I used Instagram posts to become visible and showcase my flowers. I played with the flowers, trying them out in arrangements to help me get to know how they do. It's visual and florists responded. The flowers really sold themselves. Once you have those clients, really follow what they're designing and get to know their colors and textures."



Keep it simple when it comes to your product branding. Ingalls sticks with one color bucket bearing her farm's logo sticker. She drops buckets to clients on her way to her full-time teaching job, so this way she never loses a bucket. Her clients know what belongs to her farm.

Exceed Expectations

How you present your flowers to your florist clients is important. Yasui suggests exploring traditional grades and standards for cut flowers. Search this term online and you'll find several resources that describe how wholesale flower growers prep their flowers for market. "Florists are used to standard bunches, and many times new growers don't present their flowers that way. It can put off a florist," she shares. "But at the same time, not everything can be bunched and not every florist cares. Some want curvy flowers or unusual things. For new flower growers, though, it's better to aim for a professional look."

Delbo packs most of his flowers in 10s or 5s, with fillers sold by the bunch, which "is basically a guess," he says. "My bunch sizes vary throughout the year and even year to year, depending on crops and performance. The bottom line, though, is that a florist sees what they're getting when they buy from me."

Cutting your flowers at the right stage and conditioning them properly are other keys to success with florists. "I think approaching them with what they're used to buying, in terms of form, makes a huge difference. You want the florist to know that it's grown by someone who knows what they're doing," Rohda adds.

Ingalls' dual career drives her to do things differently. "For me, every decision comes down to time and money. I don't bundle anything. Every stem I sell is in a five-gallon bucket—period. My clients love it," she says. "It's so important to know your customer's style. I can sell the same five-

gallon bucket to different florists and the look is so insanely different in the final product."

Another trick she stresses relates to stem length. In Hawaii, destination weddings dominate, and floral crowns—known as haku or po'o—demand short stems. "I ask every single person who orders from me what stem length they're looking for," she adds. "It depends on what they're using it for and what their style is. They might not need long stems." With direct-to-florist sales, you can easily market short stems, which means you're selling more of the flowers you're growing.

Ingalls also leaves more foliage on her stems because it helps to fill out bouquets. "Florists are good at making money. The pieces that are taken off can be used in arrangements or saved for haku. Why not conserve and use more instead of just stripping it all in the field where it goes to waste? Sell everything you grow."



This vanload features some of the crops that Jamie Rohda's florist customers love: dusty miller, tuberose, dahlias (she's locally known for those), and zinnias. Eucalyptus is another item her florists "are crazy for."

Refine Your Crop Mix

When selling to florists, focus on a crop mix that offers diversity in texture, bloom, and color. “Anything that’s fresh and local you can sell to florists, even things that are short. Just be sure to price accordingly—you can’t charge top dollar for a short stem,” says Delbo. “Crops that sell well for me include sunflowers, Matsumoto and China asters, lisianthus, and delphinium. Color-wise, you can always sell white and light-colored flowers to florists for weddings and funerals.”

Ingalls also aims to hit the colors everyone wants, which means “pinky, peach, and blushy tones. Those aren’t just for weddings,” she says. “If your flowers are heavy in those shades with some pops of color and then some foliage and fillers, you can sell to florists. Then there are certain things I can grow that no matter what the wholesaler can’t compete with on sheer beauty, like maroon *Daucus*.”

Snapdragons grow year-round in Hawaii’s Zone 12b. Ingalls calls it her “gateway flower. I have sixteen 60-foot rows of just snapdragons, and they’re completely sold out. I can always put those into a grower’s choice bucket, which is the wholesale product I sell the most. Having a reliable crop like snapdragons in enough color combinations means that everyone will want it and order it from you. That creates a staple that a florist knows they’ll always get from you.”

That’s one of Ingalls’ secrets to building a business. Focal flowers are hard to grow in Hawaii, but having a hot commodity like snapdragons or eucalyptus—something florists know they can always get from you—keeps the business humming. She actually uses her florist grower’s choice buckets as a place to “dump” extras. “Florists get my primo stems, too, but I’ve created this grower’s choice bucket that I sell—and florists love. If I have a million lilies going off, I can dump them into the grower’s choice.” Ingalls has standing year-round weekly orders with multiple florists for her \$300 grower’s choice buckets, which she delivers twice a week on her way to school.

One of Yasui’s favorite products is a curated bucket. “I have one long-term client who will say this is my event color scheme, send me a mood board, and tell me to bring her \$100 of whatever will fit that scheme. I like having a little leeway on what looks good each day in a color range,” she says.

At her farm, Yasui has invested in shrubs and perennials. “Every year I try to plant a few more shrubs. I’ve been adding spirea, which is so good for weddings, smokebush, and *Hydrangea tardiva*, which blooms in late summer. I finally figured out how to pick viburnums—in real tight bud for the blooms to hold up,” she says. Other favorites feature heirloom beauties: mock orange, pearl bush, Japanese kerria, weigela (from her grandmother’s yard), and deutzia with its gorgeous white blossoms.

“I lucked into some of these shrubs, being on a 150-year-old farm. I’ve made the most money on autumn olive (*Eleagnus umbellata*). Florists love the foliage, which I cut in May and June, before the beetles start biting the leaves,” she shares. Yasui refines her crop mix each year by going through her ticket books and tallying her top 10 sellers, which she plants more of the following year. “I like a lot of variety, and you have fewer pest problems if you mix it up. But within that, I’ve honed my mix according to what sells.”



Christian Ingalls calls snapdragons her “gateway flower.” It’s a reliable, year-round crop in Hawaii that her florist customers know they can buy from her consistently. She sells snaps for \$1 a stem, compared to the local wholesaler price of \$1.68 a stem.



A dream florist client is one who lets the farmer create curated buckets in a color theme. Karen Yasui does this for one of her long-time florist customers, who gives her a mood board to use when selecting stems.



It’s important to try new crops on a regular basis. Delbo often grows new lisianthus varieties because the improvements—thicker stems, better looking blooms—are worth the investment.



For payment, Rohda works with her florists in different ways.

Some write a check upon delivery; others send a weekly or monthly check. One shop sends her a Venmo the week of delivery. If it's possible, she suggests training your florist customers to do things the way you want.

Each year Rohda also lists her flowers and the dollar amount each brought in. "I look at the bottom of the list and consider if I should get rid of the low end of things that might bring in only \$200 per year. Maybe I should give that space to something more profitable," she says. For new growers selling to florists, she suggests narrowing your variety list. "Focus on growing less variety so you have more quantity of the crops you offer." Remember that you don't have to provide everything your florist clients need; they can always source things you don't grow through other avenues.

Don't neglect the opportunity to try something in the off-season that fits your growing model—and that florists would like. For Delbo, that includes bulb gardens. He starts in January with small 4- and 6-inch potted spring bulb flowers that he forces early for florists to sell. The list includes tulips, hyacinth, mini daffodils, and scilla. It's popular with just one area of his market, but those florists jump-start the season for him. His wholesale cut flowers kick into gear in May.

What about Pricing?

For new flower growers selling to florists, probably one of the toughest things to figure out is pricing. Start the process by knowing your costs, and then uncover some wholesale prices, locally if possible. Most wholesalers send out a fresh sheet every week, and if you have an account or relationship with the business, you can sign up for that. You can also look at the Boston Terminal Market for an idea.

Delbo has an account at the local wholesaler, Dillon Floral Corporation, for picking up supplies, such as wrapping paper or tissue paper for the holidays. "I also use that ac-

count to get a look at prices. When you're at the wholesaler, walk into the cooler and look at flower quality, stem length, how things are bunched and prices," he says.

He also has another in with the local wholesaler: His wife works there. "I also sell to Dillon, mostly sunflowers or anything else that comes on really well that gives me extra," he says. "I don't grow the volume to sell everything to them, and frankly I'd rather get the top wholesale price from florists." Delbo says he's probably doubled his wholesale prices over the last 10 years.

Despite the fact that Rohda keeps her prices steady through the season (to help her bookkeeping), she says, "Pricing is a moving target. I'll ask florists what they're paying for something, and if something isn't moving, I'll offer discounts on quantities. For example, if it's \$15 a bunch but not selling and I have tons of it, I'll give a discount if they buy more quantity—maybe a buy two bunches, get one free deal. I don't lower the price. I aim to move the product," she explains.

Yasui hasn't raised her prices in the last two years, but plans to, especially with the price of gas. "Most wholesale prices have gone up at least 15 percent in the last year," she says. While some growers charge a mileage fee, Yasui's



Yasui is always looking to expand her perennial and shrub offerings. Vitex berries have become an important fall crop for her. The fall seedheads, which hold up really well in arrangements, are an item florists clamor for.

Nashville clients are 60 miles away, and she can't add \$1 per mile fee like other growers do. Instead, she establishes minimums for orders. "For Nashville customers, I have a \$200 minimum. Not everyone has to order that much, but at least one person does. For florists who live closer (30 minutes), the minimum is \$50," she says. "It might sound arbitrary to them, but it's time on the road, gas, vehicle wear—there's a lot that goes into it."

The theme for Ingalls on pricing is to keep it simple—for herself and clients. She charges \$3 a stem for wholesale lilies (she doesn't count buds), \$2 a stem for focals (dahlia, anemone, ranunculus) and \$1 a stem for fillers and foliages (includes zinnia, cosmos, eucalyptus). "Customers will ask me to pick \$100 in purple tones, I put together a bucket, and they have an idea what they're getting," she says.

With her streamlined approach, Ingalls prices orders as she cuts, puts totals into her calendar on her phone, and the information is handy for billing. "My flowers are within a dollar—up or down—of any wholesale list anywhere," she adds. "I keep it simple for time and efficiency. My goal is to get stuff off my farm and into people's hands. With all that's happening in the world, people want beauty more than anything—and that's what we have to offer."

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

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TIP BOX

Advice You Can Use

If you're considering selling your flower directly to florists, it's a good idea to network with other growers and learn from their experiences. We asked these growers to share any wisdom that might help new farmers. Here's what they had to say.

Dave Delbo, Dave's Flowers "The way to make money is to go to large cities to hit busy florists—they'll buy more product from you, along the lines of \$100-\$150 per week. In a larger city, you'll also spend less time driving between florists. You might have four or five florists in a 2-mile radius. Back in the 1980s I started out selling to smaller florists in small towns. I could have done better with the elite florists of the larger cities."

Christian Ingalls, Daisy Dukes Flower Farm "Trust your own gut instincts. Don't do what you don't need to. I don't separate my dahlia clumps looking for every eye. I just cut them in half or quarters and re-plant. It saves time. Also don't hesitate to throw in five to 10 stems of randomness for florist clients—things they would never ask for, like 'Blushing Lanterns' (*Silene vulgaris*) or Jewels-of-Opar (*Talinum paniculatum*). They'll use it and then come back and ask for it again. Introduce new crops in your own designs on Instagram. Florists will respond to that."

Karen Yasui, Petalland Flower and Herb Farm "It can be hard to bring new crops into production. It takes time to switch gears when fashions change. When I first started, I couldn't sell a pink flower in the fall. With the internet, brides have become conformists and all want blush. Staying ahead of color trends helps. Also keep good records. Florists often want to know how many of a certain color flower I'll have on a specific day. With perennials I can predict by going through my sales tickets. The amounts are harder to judge. You never know if it's going to be a good year."

Jamie Rohda, Harvest Home Flowers "I always tell people not to go into debt for this business, but I wish I would have invested in some time-saving equipment or tools early on. My golf cart comes to mind. How many hours would I have saved if I'd had it sooner? Of course, I probably didn't have the money to do that. Take advantage of all the resources available for learning now. When I started out, you were doing good if you could find a book to read. But don't get so caught up in learning that you never plant anything. You learn most by doing it."



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A 100% Effective *Writing Hack* That Will Help Build a Better Business

Andy Snyder

Here's a question we've all asked ourselves: What makes a successful flower grower? I could pull out my old MBA books, I could list a litany of skills and traits, and we could all point to somebody who has made it big and say, "Now, they have what it takes."

But there's one thing all successful growers have in common. In fact, all successful people claim this trait. If you've followed the last two pieces I've written, you know what comes next.

It's writing—the ability to string a few words together into a cohesive sentence that clearly conveys a message.

Some might say writing is dying. We don't need to know how to write in the modern world. We've got all sorts of new ways to communicate—who needs the antiquated drudgery of the written world?

You do. We all do.

Whether we are selling to our customers or communicating to our employees, whether we're crafting an email to a displeased buyer or writing a press release for the local journalist, it is imperative that our words appear as splendid as our product.

Good communication is what separates the struggling from the successful.

My last two pieces focused on key parts of running a business. The first focused on the value of a well-written e-letter. We wouldn't have a flower farm without ours. It's how we communicate our mission, our vision and our brand. It's what separates us from the others.

In my second piece, I described the value of strong website copy. This one is huge. I don't have to explain the value of a good website. I merely have to ask a question. When was the last time you bought from a site that used bad grammar, had misspelled words or that failed to gain your trust?

Even if the decision wasn't conscious, it's what happens behind the scenes in our brain that makes the big choices. The deep recesses of our minds don't tolerate compromise. One twisted word, one misplaced phrase, and our brain is screaming to move on and find something better.

You've seen it. You get an email from a Nigerian prince. It's a hyperbolic example, but what is your conscious mind saying as you trudge through each grammatical error? It's not pretty. Now imagine what your oh-so-savvy unconscious mind is saying.

It does this all the time. Every ad we see, every site we visit, every email we get—our mind is scanning, looking for signs of trust and authority. That's why good writing is so important. Whether you're submitting a quote to a wholesale client or responding to a customer's inquiry, good writing is essential.

Fortunately, good writing is not an art. It's not a gift a lucky few are born with. It's a science we can all learn. In fact, follow the mathematical equation that I'm about to show you and you'll instantly become a better writer, if not a great writer.

We've all been taught that simpler is better. We all know it is true.

Yet, this is a hard rule for a lot of folks. We naturally want to show our smarts to our readers. We want to impress them with our big words and our robust vocabulary. Who hasn't tossed in the Latin name of a flower just to show we know it? We must not fall for it.

Instead, we must impress readers with the beauty of a simple, well-honed sentence.

Ernest Hemingway—the king of simple writing—put it best. "If I started to write elaborately," he wrote, "I found that I could cut that scrollwork or ornament out and throw it away."

Big words and long sentences have no place in effective writing. The best sentences are short. They get in. They get out. And they keep the reader moving.

Very few folks know it, but there's actually a math formula that tells us when we're hitting our mark. It's a tool that you should use every day. Getting a passing grade from it should be the foremost idea as you write. It's called the Flesch-Kincaid readability score. It looks like this.

0.39 (total words/total sentences) plus 11.8 (total syllables/total words) – 15.59

They don't teach this math in schools but it's a wonderful thing.

The F/K equation gives us a very powerful product. It gives our writing a grade level. Counter to common belief, the lower the grade, the better. Grade 8 is considered the benchmark. Above it and your work is too complex. You have revising to do. Below it and you're on track—the further, the better.

All the words above are written on a fifth-grade level. It doesn't mean I'm insulting your intelligence as I write. I know you know bigger words. Instead, I'm doing you the favor of writing a piece that's easy to read and doesn't take too much time. The folks who read your messages—perhaps a loan officer, a client or an employee trying to figure something out—will appreciate it, too.

What things affect the score?

Simple. It measures two main things. First, it counts the number of words in a sentence. Less is more. Second, it averages the number of syllables used per word.

The shorter the word and the shorter the sentence, the higher the score.

"See Spot run." It's a short sentence with very few syllables.

“Observe as the canine with the moniker ‘Spot’ travels at a fast-moving velocity,” pushes the gauge the other way. That sentence is written at an 11th-grade level. It’s quite bad. Never write a sentence like that.

Both lines mean the same thing. But only one sentence will stick with us from first grade until retirement. Now you know why.

Here’s the great news. Checking your F/K score is easy. Again, most folks have no idea. Even English teachers don’t know about this writing hack.

If you use Microsoft Word, the feature is a bit buried, but it’s easy to turn on. Simply go into your “proofing” options and check the “Readability Statistics” button. After that, each time you check your work for spelling errors, the system will show you your score.

If you’re not using a program that has the F/K equation built into it, easy. There are all sorts of free online offerings. Just search for “Flesch Kincaid check” and you’ll see a host of sites.

Again, if a piece has a grade level of eight or higher, you have some cuts to make.

Use short sentences, replace long words and break up your paragraphs. The goal is to make your reader enjoy your message. It must not feel like work.

Each day, I hear the same woe. “But, Andy, I’m just not a good writer.” It’s hogwash. Anybody can write well. Anybody can communicate effectively through the printed word.

I just showed you the most effective trick out there. Use it. You need to. Thanks to the internet, there are more words in front of us each day than ever before.

Good writing simply means following the rules. Don’t be fancy. Don’t dazzle with big words. It won’t work. Dazzle with a piece that gets readers happily from one end to the other. Start with the basics. And end with the basics.

There’s more math in effective writing than there is art. Cut one third of the words you write. Make sure you hook the reader with intrigue (not false brilliance) in the first three lines. And be embarrassed each time you repeat a word. Keep your sentences short, and your words shorter.

Do that and I promise you won’t just be a better writer. You’ll be great. That means more sales, happier customers and a much more successful business.

Writing is our most powerful tool. Keep it sharp.

Andy Snyder and his wife, Loni, own Terra Farms, a popular u-pick farm in southern Pennsylvania. Andy is a full-time writer and copy consultant. He can be reached at andysnyder605@gmail.com.

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True to Size

How to measure your greenhouse for poly film covering.

Keith Barry

The easiest way to measure for poly on a freestanding greenhouse structure is to throw a 100-ft. rope or tape measure up and over the greenhouse. You'll also need something with some weight that you can tie to the end of your rope or tape measure. Give yourself enough slack to make it over the greenhouse and have it land on the other side (Figure 1).

Once completed, put the "dummy" end of the tape you just threw over to the baseboard. Have both people pull tight over the entire arch of the house; this will account for the arch's radius accurately. Read your length from the side you threw from. Now you have the total measurement from ground to ground and you can select your poly width accordingly. As always, give yourself extra slack on each side (2 ft. is recommended) so you don't come up short.

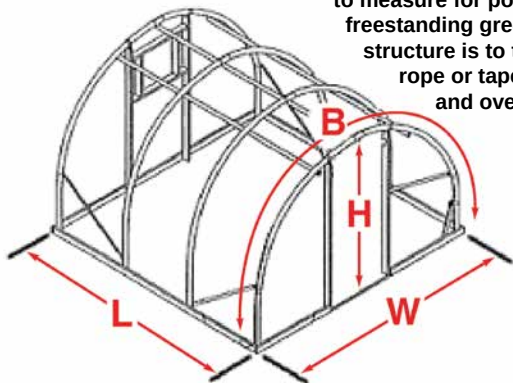
Off with the old, in with the new

If you're measuring for roof poly on your gutter-connected house, the process is a little different. Most of the time, your roof covering, sidewall covering and end wall covering are installed in separate stages.

For measuring your roof poly, the easiest way is to lean a ladder up against the side gutter of the house with at least a 25-ft. measuring tape. Have another person go inside of the greenhouse bay and stand directly below the ridge to look up and make sure the tape measure is creeping toward the peak of the bay.

Now remember, we're only measuring for roof poly from gutter to gutter, not ground to ground like we did for the freestanding house. Once the tip of the tape measure reaches the peak of the house, have the person inside tell the tape wielder to stop and measure to the gutter. Record your measurement from gutter to peak and multiply by 2 to get the full gutter to gutter footage.

Figure 1. The easiest way to measure for poly on a freestanding greenhouse structure is to throw a 100-ft. rope or tape measure up and over the greenhouse.



As always, we want to add a couple of feet on both sides to make sure we don't end up short. Note that not all bays of gutter-connected greenhouses are the same width, so make sure you check all the bays, and if there's a smaller or larger bay, make sure you measure that one as well, for it will take a different size poly sheet.

Things to consider:

1. There are seasonal versions of poly. The typical life span of poly is one-year and four-year plastic (3 mil. and 6 mil.).

2. The ideal time or special weather conditions to consider when planning to replace poly is a day with no rain or wind. Preferably early in the morning when winds are minimal.

3. If you know it's been four years since the replacement of poly, then it will be close to having to replace it again. It's recommended to check the corners or arch of your greenhouse to make sure there aren't any tears and to make note of where they are.

4. A typical size greenhouse (30 ft. x 96 ft.) can take up to a couple of hours with four to six people.

5. The most common tools to have on hand are a wire lock base with wiggle wire to attach the poly to your greenhouse. Also have a roll of poly film mending or repair tape.

6. Be mindful of the elements, particularly in the North-east, or other regions prone to heavy snow and high winds. This should be a factor to consider, not only from the standpoint of what type of covering and structural supports to purchase, but how to position and protect greenhouses against the elements.

Keith Barry is a Construction Specialist with Griffin. Reprinted with permission from GrowerTalks, April 2021



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NORTHEAST

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Bailey Hale

Ardelia Farm & Co.
ardeliafarm@gmail.com



Brunch & Blooms at Ardelia Farm

One of our favorite parts of summer is filling our “Party Barn” with guests for our Brunch & Blooms event. We started this event in 2016 as a way to combine the two sides of our business. As some of you know, my husband Thomas is a professional pastry chef. We used to sell our flowers and baked goods from the same stand at farmers’ markets, and we quickly learned some valuable information. Food and flowers make people happy, and when you combine the two, the joy seems to multiply. I’d like to share with you some of the ins and outs of this successful event so that perhaps you can do something similar on your farm!

Brunch

Guests arrive between 10:00 and 11:00 am. After parking near our high tunnels and greeting our beef cows and pastured pigs, guests walk up the drive towards the Party Barn. On arrival in the barn, soft jazz is playing, and Thomas and I are there to meet and greet. We hire two servers, which frees us up to be the hosts. This is crucial, and absolutely worth the added expense.

Guests help themselves to coffee and tea, or perhaps a mimosa (it’s brunch after all!), then move onto the buffet where they’ll find scones, muffins, coffee cakes, breakfast sandwiches, fresh donuts, cinnamon rolls, our own bacon and sausage, fresh fruit, local yogurt and cheese, granola, frittata, cheese grits, and more. We use mismatched china from thrift stores, as well as real silverware, glassware, and cloth napkins purchased wholesale from a restaur-



ant supply company. Not only is this more sustainable than disposables, but it elevates the experience.

After a leisurely meal, guests are encouraged to explore the farm. We have five high tunnels full of sweet peas and other cuts, as well as a half-acre herbaceous perennial field and a two-acre field of woodies. I always designate an area where folks can cut some of their own flowers if they so choose. They are welcomed to forage in the wild areas of the property as well. I am also very clear where they cannot cut! Most folks don’t cut anything, preferring to use the pre-cut material, but they appreciate the option.

Blooms

Flower time! To begin, I do a literally 90-second demonstration of how to make an arrangement just to put those at ease who have no experience. I remind them this is not a workshop, but simply an opportunity to express themselves with flowers, and that they need only to like the final result. I throw stems on the floor. If I break a flower I toss it and grab another. People don’t do this at home. It excites them and gets them in the mood to be just a little carefree. After my demo, guests grab a pair of clippers (which we provide), select a container, then go to town on the wall of flowers!

Vases are included in the price of the ticket, and we have a range of shapes and styles available. We try to find containers with a 3-4” opening, which limits how many flowers can be used. It is also easier for amateur designers to work with a smaller vessel. We order most of our containers in bulk from Accent Decor with an average price of \$3-5.

The flowers are set up buffet-style in metal sap buckets or glass jars. I feel that plastic buckets cheapen a display, so we keep plas-



tic out of sight. The wall of flowers is set up during brunch so that guests can gaze upon (and photograph) the blooms while they dine. The flowers are simply an assortment of whatever we have on hand that did not sell earlier that week. We may have only 4 or 5 stems of a certain crop, and that's fine. Similarly, we may have five buckets of one kind of flower. Even if we expect only a few stems to be used, we'll put them all out. The experience of abundance is highly valuable. When else does someone get to gorge on a flower buffet?

The vast majority of the flowers are our own, but we sometimes need to supplement with flowers from other local growers in order to add varieties or colors. We are transparent about this with our guests, and we love the opportunity to support other farms! We have also bartered event tickets for flowers if we know other growers are attending. Again, abundance is the key here.

Some folks are done within five minutes, while others take hours. Some use seven stems, others use fifty. Some ask for help, and some want to be left alone. I am on hand for as much or little intervention as needed. I always compliment something about an arrangement, and ask those who seem to be struggling if they would like assistance. Most gladly take some advice, but others are just having fun and don't care. It's a low pressure, high fun experience.

By 2:00 p.m. most people are packing up and headed home, but some linger and keep playing with flowers. If there are stems I know I can't sell, I try to force them on the guests. Some people are shy about using "too many" flowers, but they've paid for them, so I encourage them to take more.

The Numbers

The event is limited to 50 guests. We charge \$100 per ticket (\$25 for food/\$75 for flowers) and sell out every time. We approximate our food and beverage cost to be \$400. We spend about \$200 on extra flowers if needed, \$250 on containers, and \$300 on labor. We allocate an additional \$250 per event for overhead costs (clippers, insurance etc.) and port-o-potty rental.

Before considering the cost of our flowers, expenses are approximately \$1,400. Of course our flowers DO cost us money to grow, but we grow nothing specifically for this event. These are simply the fresh flowers I was unable to sell that week to other outlets. Even if I budget a theoretical \$600 for the wholesale cost of our flowers, that still leaves a net profit of \$3,000, which more than covers our labor preparing for this event.

Why it Works

People love food and flowers, even moreso when they're brought together. Being on a farm is exciting for those who don't have one. The perceived value of a large buffet of food or flowers is greater than the actual amount of food and flowers consumed. We create a friendly and warm environment, and people feel welcomed and relaxed on arrival. We also don't have to leave home, which is priceless. It is a short event, and the guests create their own experience. By Sunday, we have sold any flowers we are going to sell for the week, so what remains is likely to become compost without such an event.





MID-ATLANTIC

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



Michelle Elston

Roots Cut Flower Farm
 michelle@rootsflowerfarm.com

Fun Perks for Employees

The job market is as competitive as it's ever been. Offering a unique culture and experience can be the perfect draw to your farm. Here are a few fun perks we offer at Roots.

Swim at lunch! We are fortunate to have a swimming pool, and it's not unusual for half of my crew to be in it during lunchtime. It's my belief that lunch break is the employee's time, so why not? A creek or water trough could serve the same refreshing purpose.



Snacks. Last year we delegated the role of Snack Master to a crew member who makes two of our weekly grocery deliveries. She kept the snack bin full of non-perishable treats, and I was surprised at how much everyone appreciated this inexpensive gesture. We also keep cold drinks in the cooler that are always up for grabs.

Personality testing and training. We do a staff-wide personality test each spring. It really helps me to get to know my crew and how they will work together. But I've also learned that this is a valuable training that everyone can apply to all aspects of their lives.

Considerations

If you don't have your own chef, food costs will of course be higher. This would be a great chance to collaborate with another local producer, and could easily be adapted to a wine and cheese type event, or any number of other variations depending on your resources and customer base. Insurance, zoning, and department of health laws vary by region, so do your research and ensure that you are compliant with all local regulations.

Parking is a concern. Make sure you can accommodate the crowd you expect. Clearly communicate expectations with your guests before arrival. Provide signage and clear directions to the farm, information on when to arrive, what to wear, where and how to park, and what to expect throughout the day. This puts the guest at ease and makes your life easier. Some people won't read. Be patient with them.

We do one such event per month, from June to October, which is when we have flowers. Each event has a different selection of flowers and a different feel, and several guests attend multiple Brunch & Blooms in the same season. We get many requests per year to visit our farm and we direct them to one of these events. This is the perfect setting to show off our space and our flowers and to get to know our customers on an individual basis. It is just one piece in the puzzle of keeping our little farm profitable.



Bring your mom (or family) to the farm. Since we're closed to the public, this is a special thing that only employees can offer to their tribe. I encourage them to show their family the beauty of where they work. If I can be around when they come, it also strengthens relationships to know someone's family.

A really good holiday party. Lots of drinks and food, partners, and families invited. We've had to get creative on implementing

this over these past two COVID years, but patio heaters and fires made it possible. Making sure everyone has fun, feels appreciated, and that their families understand how much we value them is super important. I either hire a caterer or order catering from a restaurant. This past year we over-ordered food, but I realized that sending people home with leftovers was surprisingly appreciated during hectic holiday seasons. We've also had summer employee-appreciation meals or Roots reunions some years.

Schedule Flexibility. There are a few times of year when we cannot be flexible about schedules or time off. I communicate those during interviews. Beyond those intense seasons, I try really hard to give flexibility. We hire many part-time people. Recognizing that they have other commitments and interests and submitting to those schedules can go a long way. A side note: get clear on what's inflexible or non-negotiable. Do you want people at your farm during evenings or weekends? Is it important to start morning meeting together as a crew? Where can you be flexible vs. where will it cost your business efficiency?

I love rules and boundaries and clarity. We have lots of them here on the farm. And yet we also strive to be generous and fun whenever possible. Most farming work is not high pay. How can you differentiate yourself as the best employment choice?

SOUTHEAST

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



Linda Doan

Aunt Willie's Wild Flowers
auntwillies@gmail.com

Reinvent your Workspace

For the first few years of growing, we were making market and wedding bouquets outdoors on tables or in Aunt Willie's house if it was raining. When outdoors we were close to the cooler but had to carry all the hard materials. If we worked inside, we had to carry buckets of flowers a longer distance, and had to clean up floors and workspaces for upcoming workshops, etc. We were wasting steps, wasting time, and wasting energy, which translated to wasting money.

After first reading *The Lean Farm* by Ben Hartman, we looked at our wedding/design workspace and decided we needed to find a better option. We didn't think it would be cost effective to build a new structure so we looked around.



A chicken coop from the 1940s stood right next to the cooler. It was full of about 40 years of good farm junk but was still structurally sound so we went to work.

We cleaned and pulled out the roost and chicken boxes, and moved the chicken ladders to another storage shed. We added a new tin roof, water, and brighter lighting. Roy built a working bench/shelf on one wall and we moved in several tables. We extended the partial wooden floor, leaving some of the floor dirt for easy cleanup. The coop had a large enough main room to work comfortably if well organized. One smaller room became vessel storage and a second smaller room converted to workspace for bouts, crowns, etc. We made sure the main flower shelf was high enough that we weren't bending over and could set buckets of taller flowers, especially spike flowers, underneath. More flowers or foliage were set on a table adjacent to the workbench or off to the side and made the area a bit of a semicircle. This set up allowed us access to all the flowers with few steps.

Ribbon, pins, tape, rubber bands, and all that's needed for bouquet making are located in one central area, and are visible and in easy reach. The scissors that actually cut ribbon (there's usually only one pair that fits that description) hangs on a nail right where the bouquets are ribbon wrapped. The tape hangs on a nail so we can see it and reach it easily and rubber bands are out of the bag and in a bowl so no fumbling is necessary. Just the ribbon for this particular wedding is out of its box and sitting by the pins. We take the fewest steps in the shortest amount of time when everything is in plain sight and right where we need it.



Leftover buckets are on the floor tucked underneath and out of the way.

The exception to this rule is the bridal bouquet. Because this takes the most time and uses the best flowers, I often make it Wednesday evening before we begin the full wedding Thursday morning. I work in the cooler so I don't have to carry anything to a different space and just work from the buckets in place. If I have time I'll make one

maid's bouquet so I have a template and an idea how I'll set up in the coop the next day. Ribbons are added the next day when those supplies are out.



We tested whether it was quicker to create the bouquet, set it in water, and come back later to finish with ribbon, and discovered the quickest way is to never put the bouquet down. Once it's created, we band, tape, clip stems, ribbon wrap, and then drop it into a water-filled vase or jar that is in a carrier ready to head to the cooler. I sometimes hand it to someone else to finish it off, but we don't set it down. The first time we put a bouquet down it's ready to walk down



the aisle. I try not to look at a bouquet again or I might end up taking the ribbon and tape off to add another stem or two and that wastes an amazing amount of time, and adds stress.

We have created two places nearby to take a quick photo—one just outside the coop door on a wooden box, and a second behind the coop on a self with a view of an old barn. We take a picture of the bridal bouquet and a maid or two before we put them (the bouquets!) into the cooler, again so that there is as little handling of the bouquet as possible with as few steps. Once the bouquets are in the cooler, we leave them there! They are in travelling carriers and ready to load into the van and they sit on tables and shelves with easy access.

Because the table pieces are generally using the same colors and flowers as the wedding party, after the bride's and bridesmaids' flowers are in the cooler, we begin again.

We generally do wedding party first, table pieces next, and large pieces last. Bouts and other wearables are made by a separate team member in the small room that holds all those supplies. Nothing magical about the order, but it seems to work out best flower wise.



We also try to streamline moving the flowers from the cooler into the workspace. We move only the buckets we'll be using to the coop in several trips in a flower cart and arrange the buckets/vases/jars so they are easiest to work with. We try to organize the flowers by color and by purpose. Focal flowers are together, fillers and spillers together. Taller flowers are at the back of the shelf or on the floor and shorter in the front. Tiny items are in the bout room. There is nothing magical about how we set up the flowers, but we use the same general system week to week so we always know foliage will be on the table on the right and snaps and larkspur will always be under the work shelf. We try to begin with focal flowers so they sit on the left of the table and we work from left to right.

After we clean up the wedding mess, we try to make sure everything is ready for the next wedding: glass put away, ribbons back in their boxes, scissors back on the nail, etc. Of course, there are weeks when we just aren't ready and it shows. We're more stressed, we waste more time, and we promise to do better next week.

This can be adapted easily to farmers' market and CSA bouquets, keeping the same lean principles in mind. I hope something here helps you save a minute or two of your very valuable time in the days ahead and if you have a good idea to pass along, please email me at auntwillies@gmail.com. Happy Flowering!

NORTH AND CENTRAL

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



Susan Rockwood

Arcola Trail Flower Farm
Susan@ArcolaTrailFlowers.com

Spotlight on Montana

“We are here to expand the reach of Montana grown cut flowers, to connect growers with florists and buyers, and help new growers step into the market.” When I read the first Instagram post of the recently formed Montana Cut Flower Association a few months ago, it piqued my interest. I reached out to Andi Thatcher, President, to learn more.

When did the idea of forming a collaborative of flower farmers in Montana begin?

Our journey began in February of 2021. An email was sent out to a long list of growers throughout Montana asking if anyone would be interested in collaborating to form an association. After many Zoom meetings, phone calls, and texts, we launched the website in December of 2021.

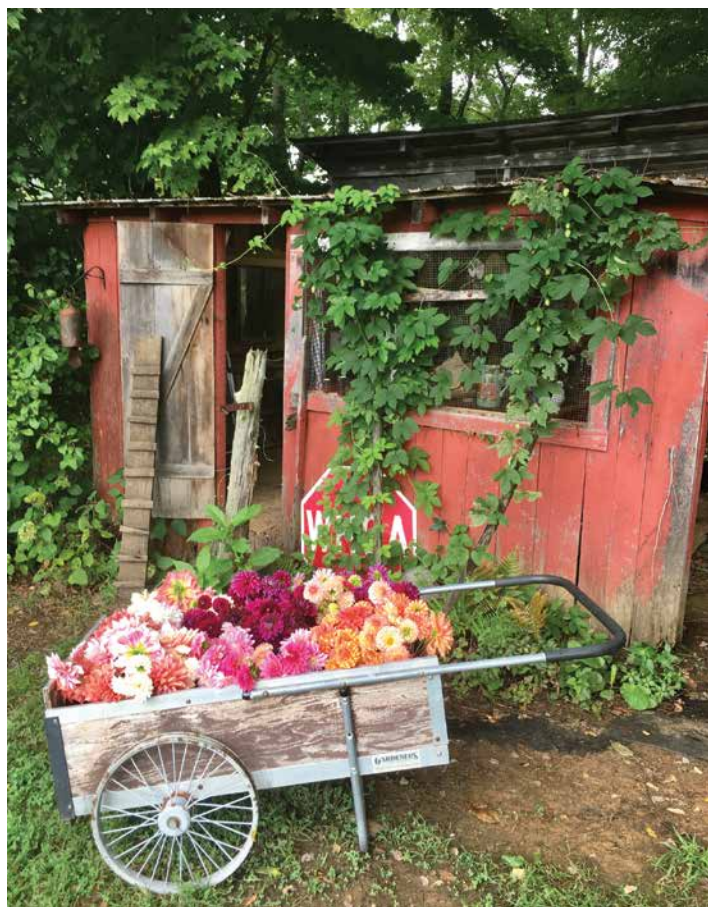
What model did you choose for the collaborative (e.g. co-op, farmer-owned, etc.)?

We decided to form our association as a grower-operated non-profit. With this type of group, we can easily facilitate networking, education and community among growers.

Who are the board members and what are your roles?

President: Andi Thatcher, Rimrock Flower Farm. I oversee the website, email communications, assist with social media, and work on connections with other industries throughout Montana (state florist association, distribution companies, television networks, etc.). Vice President: Jennifer Barnard, Millay and Meadowlark Flower Farm. Jen oversees our social media account, researches opportunities for our association to gain traction with local Montana flower buyers, and has a talent for conveying our mission and goals in the most beautiful way.

Secretary/Treasurer: Crystal Allison, Two Kays Flower Farm. Crystal handles all finances as Treasurer, and as our Secretary manages our meeting agendas, keeps us on sched-





Andi Thatcher



Jennifer and Connor Barnard



Crystal Allison

ule with time-sensitive tasks, and has spent countless hours writing our Specialty Crop Block grant with the department of agriculture, which will hopefully give our Montana flower industry a huge boost!

Board Member: Megan Leach, Dragon’s Breath Farm. Megan is our resident growing guru. She provides our group with a plethora of valuable growing information, writes articles for our member resource page, and runs admin for our member communication forum.

Board Member: Sandy Perrin, Missoula County Extension. Sandy is knowledgeable with association boards, grant writing, and the cut flower industry. She helped us narrow down our target goals, what we hoped to achieve and how to accomplish those goals.

How has the Association been received by farmers and designers?

We have had nothing but positive responses! We asked our members what they wanted most out of the MCFA and the answer was a resounding “grower networking and com-

munity”. In Montana, a large percentage of flower growers are new to the scene. With only a handful of growers having more than 5 years of experience, we have an opportunity to band together and expand this great industry together! We reached out to the Montana Florist Association, and they are excited for us to collaborate with them.

How many flower farmers and designers do you currently have and how does one join?

We currently have 23 farm members and one local-only co-op. There is a \$75 annual fee for growers, florists, suppliers, and a \$50 fee for “aspiring growers”.

What is your marketing plan?

We currently use social media and email marketing. This year, in conjunction with the grant that we have applied for, we are working on producing a commercial that will air throughout all of Montana. Our commercial will aim to educate Montanans of flower growers across the state, where “other” flowers are coming from, and the importance and uniqueness of buying flowers in their optimal season. Other plans include inviting news stations to our farms to air stories about flower farming in Montana. Networking with local Chambers of Commerce and tourism groups, we can highlight the farms that offer agritourism.

What are the biggest challenges facing the Association? Are there specific challenges related to the Montana market?

There is a joke in Montana that we are always about 10 years behind everything. In western Montana, where flower farmers are more common, locally-grown flowers are better known. But in central and eastern Montana, our biggest challenge is educating Montanans that flowers don’t have to come from the box stores, that they can be sourced from a local grower. Another big challenge is playing with the big dogs in the agriculture world here. Montana is known for its production of grains, lentils, and beef. But Montana also is a huge destination wedding location, and does big business when it comes to pur-



Narcissus from Dragon’s Breath Farm

chasing flowers. We are working on educating our growers on how to capture some of the funding that comes down to commodity producers through the Department of Agriculture and NCRS, so that we can sit in the same room as the wheat and beef producers. By moving forward together as a group, we have a better chance of achieving goals than if a few of us tried to go it alone.

What are some of the logistical issues connecting farmers and designers in such a large geographic footprint such as Montana?

The biggest challenge we face is solving the distribution problem of getting flowers from a farm in Kalispell to a florist in Lewistown. This year we are working to find a distribution company that services much of the state and can

get our flowers from one end to the other without damage. We recently connected with a local company that operates as a courier service (mostly for medical supplies), but has experience in transporting flowers. Our farm will be running the distribution tests to see if this new connection can help solve our logistical problem. Once we have this piece of the puzzle solved, we will launch a statewide marketing



Zinnias from Rimrock Flower Farm

campaign that will target local florists into seeking out product from Montana farms.

How many months of the year will you be selling flowers? What are some of the most popular flower varieties in your market?

Our growers with greenhouses and high tunnels start as early as April and grow into late October. Field growers are about May to September. Because our summers are more mild, many of our growers can grow cold-loving flowers all summer! So some popular varieties are peonies, sweet peas, ranunculus, anemones, snapdragons, and rudbeckia.

How will you define your success? Is there money to be made with the model you have chosen?

I believe our success will come as growers utilize our resources and find economic gains from them. Our goal is to help get Montana-grown flowers into the hands of peo-

ple who already do, or perhaps will, buy flowers. We have chosen a non-profit, so we will invest income back into the resources for our members. This year we will hold a MCFA conference for networking and education, and have future plans to fund trials for growing practices here in Montana.

Your mission is very similar to that of the ASCFG and your board members all belong to the ASCFG. What has that relationship meant to you?

The ASCFG has been instrumental in the success of all of our farms. As we worked to develop this association, we often looked at how the ASCFG serves their members. For the Montana Cut Flower Association, we started with the fundamental needs: education, resources (for seed, bulbs, equipment orders, etc.) and networking. The ASCFG gives endless support to its members, allowing them a leg up in this tough market. That is what we hope to be to our members.

Thank you, and good luck reaching your Association goals in Big Sky Country!

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SOUTH AND CENTRAL

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



Shanti Rade
Whipstone Farm
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Edibles for your Bouquets

I don't know about you, but I am always searching for more foliage, greenery, and other interesting ingredients to add to my bouquets. Herbs are a great place to look. Being vegetable farmers first, back in the day we were already growing a ton of herbs, and we quickly realized they were an easy bouquet amendment. There are so many herbs that make great additions to floral arrangements. They add fragrance, texture, and unique elements that will set your flowers apart. I am sure many of you are already using some herbs, but maybe something new will catch your eye here.

For the most part herbs are really easy to grow. Using both perennial and annual herb varieties will help extend your potential harvest season. Many herbs are great insectary plants, attracting beneficials to your fields—both pollinators and predatory insects.

One thing to note is the stage of harvest for fresh edible herbs is almost always different from harvesting for a cut flower. For a cut, you will generally need it to be in the flower stage for it to condition well, which can be a bit different for each flower. You must experiment with the right stage of harvest to determine this for each variety if you can't find information on it elsewhere, especially for things like mint and basil. These two are quite wilt prone, and determining the right stage of harvest is critical. While I love the look of these in the foliage stage, I have to wait until they have started to flower to harvest them so they hold up.

We had some fun making all-edible bouquets the last few years. I advertised them as such, even if I know people won't eat most of what goes in the bouquet, and I refrained from using hydration solutions or flower food in these, in case people did want to eat them. But most of the herbs I use in mixed bouquets are being mixed with non-edible flowers anyway and I treat them just like I do the rest of the flowers I cut, with hydration and holding solution.



All edible bouquets

There are so many options, but here is a list of herbs I have used successfully in bouquets:

- Fennel—bulbing varieties
- Bronze fennel
- Mint—apple, spearmint, and others
- Mountain mint
- Oregano—'Kirigami' is a favorite, but short
- Garlic chive flowers
- Basil—cinnamon, lemon, African blue
- Cilantro flowers and immature seed heads
- Monarda (beebalm)
- Anise hyssop (*Agastache*)
- Lemon balm
- Shiso—*Perilla frutescens var. crispa*
- Feverfew
- Lemon verbena
- Sorrel
- Rosemary
- Lavender
- Lovage
- Borage
- Calendula
- Parsley
- Dill
- Sage

There are tons of other things in the edible category, not necessarily herbs, which make unique additions to flower arrangements. Some of these may take a special type of event to make them work, either because of the appeal, or perhaps because of not a long enough vase life, but other are very versatile and quite common in the flower trade. It's certainly fun to experiment in the crossover realm between flowers and edible plants.

Here is a short list of edibles to try:

- Chiles (chile de árbol are my favorite)
- Artichoke/cardoon
- Ornamental cabbage
- Kale
- Leek flowers, and other edible allium flowers
- Garlic scapes
- Cherry tomatoes on the vine
- Green beans and edible peas on the vine
- Okra pods
- Grains like millet, sorghum, and wheat
- Fruiting branches (with fruit or just foliage)
e.g. blackberries, raspberries, etc.

Are you using anything fun in the edible department? I would love to see it. Tag me on Instagram @whipstonefarm #ediblebouquets



Kale, fennel, basil, and feverfew



Fennel and Italian basil



Mondarda, calendula, apple mint



Leeks, fennel, millet

WEST AND NORTHWEST

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



Erin McMullen

Rain Drop Farm

raindropfarm@peak.org

One benefit to growing slowly, over time, is that we've had the opportunity to hone in on what we really want to grow. Over the years we've stumbled into some crops that we've run away from, some that have made the list, and some that we could never imagine not growing. Dahlias are one of those crops that was an easy add for us—grows well in our climate, high demand, easy to harvest, I could go on and on. Conversely, after years of struggles we determined that gomphrena is not for us. Oh, well. Then, there are those crops that come out of nowhere that you never even consider. For us, ornamental pumpkins and squash are that kind of crop.

The next year, we soil tested. We found that our soil had a silly low pH and nearly no organic matter. We amended heavily with compost, limed, and laid down substantially more fertilizer. We also used biofilm and drip, to help with moisture retention and weed control. That year our yields were amazing! Across the board, healthy plants, healthy pumpkins, beautiful as we headed to fall.

Timing is critical, however. While our first successful crop of pumpkins looked great coming out of the field in early October, we found that we were a touch late for optimal sales. People wanted to be buying them in early-mid September. As farmer Aaron says, "When Labor Day, hits it's time to put away those white pants, and start harvesting pumpkins."

This year will be our fifth season growing pumpkins and we've keyed into the varieties that we like. Our sales are mostly to designers and wholesale customers (think retail nurseries and decorators), so the hues and shapes of what we





grow are skewed heavily to the demands of that crowd. We love white pumpkins, green and brown pumpkins, tan and pink ones, bumpy ones, strangely-shaped ones—the weirder the better, for the most part.

Here's a quick rundown of the pumpkins that we grow every year and love!

'Jarrahdale' (green), 'Casperita' (small white), 'Rouge Vif D'Etampes' (Cinderella orange), 'Blue Doll' (blue), 'Long Island Cheese' (tan), 'Porcelain Doll' (pink), 'Jill-be-Little' (small orange), 'Musquee de Provence' (brown), 'Black Futsu' (dark green). These are all solid growers and sellers for us in all aspects of our fall sales. If you do you-pick or farmers' market sales, growing some more standard orange carving or pie pumpkins is an easy add-on.

Don't discount the use of edible varieties either. We find that the shapes of many edible squash are really attractive in fall displays, and the added bonus is you can eat them if they don't sell! Acorn squash, turban squash, kabocha squash (particularly 'Sunshine'), Hubbard squash, 'Grey Ghost', even delicata and butternut make a nice addition to harvest decorations.

There are a few gourds that we also grow to put into "gourd packs", which are 5-7 pieces in a mesh bag for our grocery customers. Top varieties for that are 'Autumn Wings' and daisy gourds. Some are just for fun, like 'Goblin Eggs', 'Speckled Swan', and 'Birdhouse'.

Add some broom corn, mums, and flowering cabbage and you've got a full slate of offerings for the late summer/fall shopper at farmers markets! If you have a design element to your farm, or do workshops, the simple addition of dried flowers or succulents to the top of a small pumpkin will thrill your customers and add extra sales.

Knowing that space is limited and there are hundreds of great varieties of flowers to grow, we still grow good quantities of these pumpkins, squash, and gourds every year. Having the extension into the fall, when flowers are petering out, really helps us to keep income rolling in. As we see continued improvement in the soil in our fields we have taken back some of the pumpkin ground for flowers, and will need to make decisions on who will get priority. But, for the time being, they are a great cover to discourage weeds and keep ground in production that we haven't designated for more permanent crops.

While the maintenance on these crops is pretty low during the season, really just a quick weeding and continued water, once we hit the fall things do get a bit more labor intensive. Pumpkins are heavy and we are often enjoying the first of the fall rains when they are ready to pull out of the field, so prepare for mud and the cleaning that comes with that. Make sure to incorporate lots of squats and bicep curls earlier in the season to ensure that you're ready to lift, come fall.



CANADA

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



Janis Harris

Harris Flower Farm
janisandmarkharris@hotmail.com

Teaching an old dog new tricks.

I know I’m not really considered old. But with this past milestone birthday I know I’m climbing that hill. Forty is the new thirty, right?

In the spring of 2021 we underwent a huge learning curve on our farm. We purchased a kit to construct a heated greenhouse. It has always been something we wanted to do. With the huge floral craze and “through the roof” local flower demands, we decided it was the best time to get flowers sooner—and later—than we normally would. We already grow in several high tunnel/unheated spaces but heating was new. Our zone is 6a, southwest Ontario, Canada.

I am speaking only from my personal experiences and costs in this process. I felt the need to share because of all the roadblocks and learning I had to do along the way. My brain grew a few sizes, that’s for sure.

I knew for a while that I wanted to expand our controlled growing space area so I signed up to take the “Growing Cut-Flower Crops in Hoop and Greenhouses” course taught by Steve and Gretel Adams presented by The Gardener’s

Workshop. I was very happy with the information that I learned from that course and I’m glad that I am able to go back to the course information often to review. Every greenhouse is different so there isn’t an exact manual or “how to” that is the same for everyone.

There are not a lot of choices of suppliers for production greenhouses. I looked at the websites and info sheets from the suppliers in our area. We decided to construct the 30x96 “Growers Choice” gothic style greenhouse from DeCloet Greenhouses in Simcoe, Ontario. Their facility is about a one-hour drive from our farm.

With the greenhouse kit, we chose double-inflated poly, a motorized roof vent, manual roll-up side walls, a 300,000 BTU natural gas furnace, and an automated Bartlett Controller to program the greenhouse to our specifications.

We had to apply for a building permit from our county. The building permit application was fairly straightforward and I was able to get any of the necessary documents that the county wanted.

Production time for the greenhouse was 9-10 weeks. The greenhouse was delivered on a flatbed truck in mid-March. DeCloet doesn’t build the greenhouse, they only sell the kits. They were able to recommend a company that has built many of their kits. The construction company was a little distance from us but they agreed to the travel time.

The first learning lesson was “The build happens when it happens”. They wanted to build the greenhouse days after the kit arrived at the farm. This was not possible because the farm was wet—a spring mud pit. They needed to wait until the ground dried up a bit. I didn’t want them tearing up the field with their equipment. They are accustomed to building over a concrete pad and in a sandier area than our farm.

Building started in May. I have been around a few greenhouse builds in my time, growing up on my parents’ vegetable farm, but I have never seen a structure go up so quickly. The “plastic morning” was a sight to see. My husband left for work and called me to say “I think the plastic is going on today.” The plastic was rolled out along the greenhouse roof.



The installers were walking along the roof line, and within an hour the top was on and secured on the greenhouse. The build took about 10 days.

Once the greenhouse was built, we were able to work the ground with my compact tractor. The tractor will fit through the rolling doors of the greenhouse. We chose to have rolling doors at each end of the greenhouse so that tractor can go in. With the roll bar down on the tractor I am able to work quite close to the sides of the greenhouse.

We went back and forth on choosing the layout for the beds. In my mind and for my sanity, I like full beds. So instead of having a few full long beds that went the length of the greenhouse I chose to have an offset pathway the length of the greenhouse. There are two long beds that go the length, then I have quite a number of beds that are perpendicular to the length of the greenhouse. This way I can visualize the bed and what I am putting in each “hump”.

For the first summer we had two beds of dahlia going the length of the greenhouse, and mixed flowers in the shorter beds (lisianthus, tweedia, statice, snapdragon, etc.). We also chose to have a small eucalyptus forest at the south end of the greenhouse. We are not always able to overwinter eucalyptus successfully without protection so we chose to have some that will be permanently in the greenhouse.

We hired a local electrical company to wire the greenhouse and bring it to life. We did the trenching of the hydro line underground ourselves to decrease the costs. We buried the water lines four feet deep, then filled back in to two feet, laid the hydro lines, then filled in the trench. We put the lines in the same trench (different depths) to reduce the number of trenches we had to make.

We decided to put a frost-free hydrant on the outside corner outside and one inside the greenhouse. Once the greenhouse had electricity the controller was set to factory settings. The roof opened and closed as it pleased. We left the manual side walls rolled up. It was a pleasure to be in the greenhouse even on a hot day.

Once the weather started to change and fall was coming, we arranged to have a gas fitter come to hook up the natural gas to the furnace. The furnace was hung by the construction company and the gas fitter. Again, we dug the trench to decrease the labour cost. I also think my Dad just likes running the mini excavator. The gas was hooked up to the furnace but we didn't turn it on until the weather got colder.

The next step was learning the controller. This was probably the hardest part to learn. I assumed (my fault) that DeCloet had someone on staff who knew how to operate the Bartlett controller and that they would come and teach me how to use the equipment. WRONG. The instruction I was told was that I can watch the Bartlett YouTube videos or call their technical support line. The manual provided is best described as being written in Latin. It was not easy to understand. I found



myself Googling definitions as I was reading the instructions. The YouTube videos are helpful, once you understand what you are doing and your end goal with the programming. The videos also are best viewed in front of the device so a Wi-Fi or data signal is required.

Once I had a handle on the programming, we were good to go. I felt good going into the winter. I had my temperatures set and the greenhouse was running. Then winter hit. About a week before Christmas, we had the coldest temps we had had so far. Suddenly I started getting alerts in the middle of the night telling me that the greenhouse was WAY too cold. I woke up my husband, bundled up, and we went out to figure out what was wrong.

We found the furnace not running but the controller was telling it to turn on. We couldn't find the problem and our only idea was to reset the breaker for the furnace on the panel. The furnace fired up! We thought we had solved the problem, but I continued to get alerts when the temperature dipped. Of course, always in the middle of the night. I called DeCloet; they said to call Bartlett. I called the electrician to ask for advice, he couldn't diagnose the problem. I called the gas fitter. He came to verify and set the gas pressure. We thought this was the issue. But after he left the farm the same fail code on the furnace was happening.

Itemized Costs of Greenhouse Build	
Greenhouse kit 30x96 double poly inflated greenhouse with motorized roof vent, manual sidewalls, 300,000BTU furnace, Bartlett Controller	33,035
Building permit from county	3,000
Construction of structure	15,400
Gas line installation	3,375
Electrical line installation (cost of the buried wires, trenching our labour)	965
Electrical hook up, hydro panel and installation in greenhouse	8,030
2 frost free hydrants and hose	500
4 metal racks on rollers, for spring plug production	40
UbiBot transmitter (temperature monitor and alert system)	165
Renting a mini excavator 2x (water and hydro line, natural gas line)	450
Total	\$64,960
Permit refund	-1000
Grant money	-20,000
	\$43,960
Added costs before and after greenhouse construction that still relate to the greenhouse operation:	
Growing cut-flower crops in hoop and greenhouses course	595 (US)
Tiling around the greenhouse to deal with wet conditions	3,000
Total costs	\$46,960

Luckily the crops in the greenhouse could handle a little cold. We added frost cloth to anything that was more tender. Then I called another greenhouse grower, asking him if this was normal—am I going to be at the mercy of my greenhouse and the alerts on my phone? What had I done? I remember newborn baby stage, this felt similar. I thought I would never leave home again. He suggested to call the furnace manufacturer. I looked up the information and called him. I told him that the “Rollover sensor is alerting and causing the furnace to not fire unless I reset the breaker on the panel.” Almost immediately he had a suggestion. There is a hood cover on the back of the furnace that is in on place for transport, and in the instruction manual it says to move that cover from its place to the burner hood after the furnace is installed. Sure enough, I looked up and the hood cover was not moved to the correct installation and functioning position. I climbed up and moved the hood to the correct position. The furnace has been functioning correctly since.

It is late February as I am writing this and I am admiring the first few ranunculus buds in the greenhouse. So, all the stress and concern was worth it. The flowers are blooming over a month earlier than we would normally have them. Throughout my learning curve of the heated greenhouse, I was the only common denominator. This greenhouse build and operation came together because I learned what I needed to make it work. It was a huge challenge to try to mesh together so many people who all did their part but didn’t understand how the other parts of the puzzle worked. So, as you are dreaming and planning of your next expansion, or seeing another farm’s early blooms, I challenge you to think what was behind that flower and how did it come to bloom. This investment in our farm and our knowledge will be used to produce A LOT of blooms for many years to come.



Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

Garrett and Emileah Aguilar, Silver Braid Group, Glenmoore, PA
 Jenna Aldrich, Brown Farm, Scotland, CT
 Lisa Allen, Clarksburg, WV
 Crystal Allison, Two Kays Flower Farm, Kalispell, MT
 Sara Alsup, Thrive Flower Farm, Stillwater, OK
 Christina Angott, Growing Faith Farms, Moravian Falls, NC
 Van Anunson, Pollinated Flower Farm, Las Vegas, NV
 Stacey Austin, Rock Hill Botanicals, Gainesville, GA
 Maile Auterson, Springfield Community Gardens, Springfield, MO
 Laura Aziz, Flora Gardens, Mississauga, ON
 Lori Babiar, Hidden Gem Flower Farm, Asheville, NC
 Barbara Baker, Array Flower Farm, Homer, NE
 Chris Bakutis, Mugfords Flower Shoppe, Westborough, MA
 Alison Bale, Maple Ridge, BC
 Sarah Bankowski, Quiet Corner Flowers, Pomfret Center, CT
 Andrea Bannister, Backyard Bloomery, Dundas, ON
 Glenda Bargeman, Lotsa Hostas, Lynden, ON
 Leah Bauer, Bauerhouse Blooms Flower Farm, Bend, OR
 Sue Beck, Maple Lane Farm, Burlington, KY
 Elizabeth Becka, Becka's Blooms, Coal Center, PA
 Elizabeth Bivens, Firefly Gardens, Norman, OK
 Allison Blanchard, Sunshine and Stems Farm, Jenks, OK
 Christa Bletcher, Blue Llama Designs, Fort Collins, CO
 Melissa Blindow, Benedikt Dairy, Goffstown, NH
 Beth Blinn, Blinn's Blooms Flower Farm, Ellwood City, PA
 Lyndsey Boekenkamp, Secret Garden Guru, Orlando, FL
 Kelly Booth, Honeycomb Hill Flower Farm, Holden, MO
 Kendra Boots, Winifred Farms, Post Falls, ID
 Liz Bosak, Halifax, PA
 Sarah Bradford, Vacaville, CA
 Tracy Bradley, Cross Roots Farm, Royse City, TX
 Kathy Bressler, Fish Creek Peonies, Wilson, WY
 Caley Brooks, Four Root Farm, Middletown, CT
 Ashlee Brotherton, Thistledown Flower Farm, Grand Rapids, MI
 Caitlin Brown, C.N. Flower & Grain Farm, White Hall, MD
 Tina Brown, Rogers, AR
 Chiara Bruckner, Foxfield Flowers, Phoenixville, PA
 Stephanie Bull, Indigo Iris Farm, Clover, SC
 Amy Bunge, HareandBear, Dardenne Prairie, MO
 Dana Burns, Love Land Flowers and Herbs, Johnstown, CO
 Sheletha Butler, Lele's Petals, Burlison, TX
 Julie Cado, Gertrude's Garden, Madison, MS
 Samantha Cahill, Blooms on Clay, Herald, CA
 Ann Call, Montpelier Flower Farm, Mechanicsville, VA
 Laurie Carter, Moon Garden Designs, Millis, MA
 Anastasia Casale, Anastasia's Flowers, Sag Harbor, NY
 Brittany Cassidy, Britt's Blooms, Rosedale, IN
 Shali Casto, Given Flower Company, Given, WV
 Leslie Chan, C & C Flower Farm, Centerville, UT
 Robert Chang, Echo Farm, Woodstock, CT
 Kaley Charlet, Colline Flowers, Paso Robles, CA
 Sylvia Cheng, Growing Tkaronto, Toronto, ON
 Brenna Child, Sherborn, MA

Holly Christensen, Grace Lilly Flowers, Madison, AL
 Suzy Church, Suzy's Posies, Port Townsend, WA
 Fred Clark, Woodbury, CT
 Lisa Clow, Beachdog Farm, Georgetown, DE
 Laura Cook, Chanticleer Blooms, Cowpens, SC
 Erin Cornay, Little Schoolhouse Flower Farm, Franklin, TN
 Alicia Correia, A Bunch of Joy, Oregon City, OR
 Caitlyn Corrigan, The Watering Can Flower Farm, Norwalk, OH
 Christopher Cosentino, Little Sunflower Farm, Lancaster, MA
 Carla Costello, Concord Flower Farm, Oak Grove, LA
 Rachael Cotchett, Absolutely Wild Flower Artistry, Santa Rosa, CA
 Alison E. Craig, Sweet Pea Specialty Flower Farm, Plymouth, NH
 Jessica Crass, Wild Hickory Homestead, West Fork, AR
 Vicki Cronis-Nohe, Derby Mill Farm, Denton, MD
 Amanda Cruze, Clementine's Flower Farm, Knoxville, TN
 Elizabeth Cryderman, Evergreen Flower Farm, Richmond, MI
 Ann Dahm, The Meadows Flower Farm and Finds,
 Fort Wayne, IN
 Bruce Dancause, Back Rhode Flower Farm, Charlestown, RI
 Beth Davis, Davis Manor Flowers, Rockville, MD
 Sarah Davis, Foothills Flower Farm, Charlottesville, VA
 Brooke Desmond, Ipswich, MA
 Rachel Detweiler, Helmstead Farm, Washington Depot, CT
 Sandra Devaney, The Collected Garden, Cranford, NJ
 Susan Dietze, Pine Grove Gifts, Milford, CT
 Margaret Dillon, Black Dog Flowers, Hendersonville, NC
 Clare Dombrowski, Amesbury, MA
 Mary Dondlinger, Frenchstone Gardens, Menomonee Falls, WI
 Dena Doverspike, Petal and Paw Flower Farm, Forest, VA
 April Durden, Macon, GA
 Christine Dutton, True Bloom Farm, Saxtons River, VT
 Kathy Dyar, End of the Valley Flower Farm, Summerville, GA
 Shelly Eckels, Savvy Acres, Shelbyville, KY
 Shanna Edwards, The Ever Lea, Appleton, WI
 Taylor Endres, Bees N Blooms, Grayson, GA
 Kinga Erdelyi, Florasyva, Basking Ridge, NJ
 Erika Eschholz, Teton Full Circle Farm, Victor, ID
 Cory Evans, Emlia Acres, Harbor Springs, MI
 Jennifer Fattore, Deerfield Flowers, Hopewell Junction, NY
 Linda Feathers, Feathers & Fields, Walls, MS
 Mary Beth Felts, Nashville, TN
 Deb and Katherine Fisher, Deb's Flower Farm, Julian, PA
 Deborah Fitzgerald, Osgoode, ON
 Sarah Flint, Farm on Third, Delavan, IL
 Morgan Folsom, Woodland Gardens, Winterville, GA
 Thomas Fox, One Fox Farm, Aiken, SC
 Valerie Fradette, Acres Abloom, Chichester, NH
 Haley Franklin, Franklin's Small Town Flower Farm, Dushore, PA
 Brooke Fraser Slack, Sweetbriar Flower Farm, Langley, BC
 Aubrey Frost, Frost Farmstead, Xenia, OH
 Heather Fry, Twiggs Ferry Flowers, Dutton, VA
 Theresa Fulginiti, Dahlia Acre, Doylestown, PA
 Elizabeth Gaines, Breezy Hill Blooms, Hoosick Falls, NY

Lynn Galloway, Mariposa Flower Farm,
Mariposa, CA

Emily Garcia, Running Stitch Farm,
Muskegon, MI

Sarah Gentry, Madison, MS

Danielle Gibbs, The Garden Muse,
Provo, UT

Pamela Gill, P&J Projects, Pinetta, FL

Kathleen Gingerich, The Farm at
Henderson Hill, Kensington, OH

Kim Glover, Backyard Blooms
& Bouquets, Eudora, KS

Michelle Gnam, Grow North Gardens,
Fairview, AB

Shannon Goshen, Casa Blanca
Flower Farm, Reno, NV

Alison Graves, Buxton Hills Farm,
Banks, OR

Sarah Graves, The Magic Bean Farm,
Marshfield, VT

Terry Gray, Mugfords Flower Shoppe,
Shrewsbury, MA

Kathryn Griener, Fig and Oak Farm,
Folsom, LA

Geri Grossi, Breezy's Blooms,
Saint Clair, MI

Katelyn Hale, Solstice Flower Works,
Troutdale, OR

Julia Hall, Maple Bloom Flower Farm,
Mapleton, UT

Gina Hamilton, Black Barn Blossoms,
Vernon, FL

Keri Hamming, Sunset Fields,
Pitt Meadows, BC

Carole Hammon, Trailside Organics,
Apple Valley, UT

Christine Hansen, Spirit Trading Company,
Ravena, NY

Kelsey Harris, American Stems,
Spencer, MA

Christa Harrison, Flowers on Quince,
Salem, OR

Ginny Harrison, Vandalia, IL

Amy Heap, Heap Acres, Wright City, MO

Samuel Hebert, Ferme Samuel Hebert,
Saint-Armand, QC

Laura Heeney, Haven Farm Flowers,
Horn Lake, MS

Lori Herrala, Pastel Petal Farm, Citrus Springs, FL

Gwen Hersha, Gwen's Greens, Concord, MI

Gayle Hines, Silver Oak Farm, South Prince George, VA

Susan Hines, Sue Hines Floral, Medical Lake, WA

Judith Hook, River Farm, Scottsville, NY

Sharon Hoskins, Brilliant Dahlia Flower Farm, Rehoboth, MA

Christal Houghtelling, Alaska Flower Farm, Palmer, AK

Olivia Imoberdorf, New City, NY

Jen Irving, Jenny's Edibles & Blooms, Falmouth, MA

Donna Jackman, Country Air Nursery, Pembroke, ME

Joy Jackson, Rooted in Joy Flower Farm, Newport News, VA

Kelli Jackson, Long Acres, Ramona, CA

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Shannon Jacobson, Shannon's Flower Stand, Jacksonville, NC

Samira Jerkovic, Forget Me Not Flower Farm, Chesnee, SC

Angie and Jim Jimenez, Avia Gardens, Avilla, IN

Jamie Johnson, Enchanted Gardens of Minnesota, Minnetonka, MN

Jane Johnson, Kenosha, WI

Stephanie Kalch, Fleming Island, FL

Sean and Katie Kane, The Grand Lady, Austin, TX

Mary Kay, Verdant Flower Farm, Avon Lake, OH

Erin Keegan, The No Name Farm, Mohrsville, PA

Marisa Keris, Farmer Lady Flowers, Princeton, NJ

Brenda Kerton, Forty Hills Farm and Flowers, Lions Head, ON

Wendy Kingery, Petals, Wooster, OH

Carolyn Klemens, Bleuquet, Pipersville, PA

Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members (continued)

Lori Knight, Lakeside Blooms, Norfolk, VA
Marci Krieger, S&H Farm, Longmont, CO
Penny Kristek, Farm Road 530 Cut Flowers, Hallettsville, TX
Willow Lake, Keep'N Thyme, Somers, CT
Winse Lam, Garden Ardent, Markham, ON
Linda Lambert, Flowers of Faith Farms, Bay City, MI
Jeff Lanman, Buck Creek Flower Farm, Lewisville, IN
Stacey Laschen, Sweet Es Flowers, North Barrington, IL
Tinuviel Lathrop, Vashon Peony Co., Olalla, WA
Allison Lavigne, ONECommunity Museum, Norfolk, VA
Steph Leininger, Botanica Floristry, Fargo, ND
Kaitlyn Leonard, Santa Clara Home & Garden, Austin, TX
Angie Lewis, Canadian Valley Technology Center,
Anadarko, OK
Miranda Ley, Local Color Farm, Mount Pleasant, MI
Leni Liakos, Lula Flower Farm, Montara, CA
Tara Lichtenberg, Columbus, OH
Kathleen Liska, Noble Hearts Blossoms, Anchorage, AK
Tearsa Little, Pelham, NH
Kate Livengood, Moonflower Farm, LaVale, MD
Jennifer Loyall, Hemingway Hill, Dallas, TX
Trina Ludvik, Pinson, AL
Angie Lundt, Orangeroot, Berlin, WI
Christine Mahoney, Wayflowering Flower Farm,
Charlottesville, VA
Mary Mante, Warwick, NY
Dyanna Marquardt, Marquardt Ranches, Enilda, AB
Nicki Marquis, Heather's Flower Farm, White Salmon, WA
Kate Martin, Arise & Shine Gardens, Batavia, OH
Stacey Martin, Bridlebrook Farm Flowers, Whitby, ON
Shannon Mason, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO
Sarah Matteson, Farm Sauvage, Hopkinton, NH
Yvonne Maurel, Yvonne Fleurs Paysannes,
Saint-Jean-de-Matha, QC
Amanda McAllister, Five Acres Flower Farm, Abbotsford, BC
Jake McCollum, Flowers on Fifty-Three, Eldridge, AL
Jane McCutcheon, The Flower Basket, Monroe, NC
Justine McFarland, Tupelo Farm & Garden, Urbanna, VA
Hilary McNamee, Cloca Mora Floral, South Strafford, VT
Delaney McNeill, Milk and Honey Flower Farm,
Vancouver, WA
Amanda Miller, Chesapeake Gold Farms, Rising Sun, MD
Candace Minster, White Violet Center for Eco-Justice,
St. Mary of the Woods, IN
Jen Mitchell, Rooted Cut Flowers, Lake Sherwood, MO
Nancy Mitchell, Kimberly's Greenhouse, Jewell Ridge, VA
Emma Mobley, The End of Nowhere Flower Farm,
Suffolk, VA
Lily Montgomery, Annandale, Bowdoinham, ME
Ed Morgan, Morgan and Moss, Kingston, WA
Theresa Morgan, Drifting Prairie Farm, Blue Mounds, WI
Laura Morris, Sourwood Creek Farm, Hendersonville, NC
Todd Murphy, Trees to Please, Rome, ME
Renee Nelson, Grumpy Chicken Farm, Sandpoint, ID
MaryAnne Nestor, Nestor Flower Farm, Ashland, OH
Denise Newberry, Petals & Papers, Fort Collins, CO
Lindsay Nichols, River's End Farm, Derby, KS
Natasha Nichols, The Flower Farm, Arlington, TN
Brenda Nickels, NickelsWorth Gardens, Broken Arrow, OK
Misty Nixon, Nixon Holler, Rockmart, GA
Holly Norton, Tehachapi, CA
Jennifer Opheim, Bloom Flower Farm, Decorah, IA
Leslie Otto, Big Bloom Flowers, Santa Margarita, CA
Jessica Packa, Sunny Days Flower Farm, Wasilla, AK
Julie Pal, Julie Pal Peonies, Lenexa, KS
Kathy Palmateer, The Hippie Hen Flower Farm, Amsterdam, NY
Jennifer Palmer, Appling, GA
Jamie Parker, Elora, Wilmington, DE
Annie Paullin, Chicago, IL
Belinda Peebles, Mary-Anna Farm, Sparta, GA
Mia Pelletier, Fleur & Gather, East Port Medway, NS
Mendy Pelster, Mossy Rock Farm, Bardstown, KY
Christina Penfield, Penfield Flower Company, Holland, MI
Laura Penwell, Miss Molly's Sunflowers, Dayton, OH
Azure Peters, Cottage Grove, OR
Mark Petersen, Deer Ridge Estate, Tonganoxie, KS
Verna Petersheim, Poly Haven Farm, Ronks, PA
Mary Peterson, Pete's Petals, Gibsonia, PA
Tara Peterson, Peterson's Patch, Sterling, CT
Samantha Pfister, Cherokee Country Gardens, Marianna, FL
Margaret Pickoff, Penn State Extension Bucks County, Philadelphia, PA
Pam Pierson, The Flower Field, Auburn, IN
Marie-Josée Prince, St-Leonard-d'Aston, QC
Jessica Purks, Root to Rise Market Garden, Hinesburg, VT
Cherry Qu, Highway Falls, NY
Susie Raker-Zimmerman, Raker-Roberta's Young Plants, Litchfield, MI
Sam Rasmussen, Pine Hollow Farm, Melrose, MN
Lindsay Rassmann, June and Jane Flower Co., Cambridge, MN
Katherine Ray, Running Wild Farm, New Portland, ME
Justin Reis, 289 Main, Hampton, CT
Emilie Reyome, Reyome Flower Farm, Adrian, MI
Renee Ricaud, Rico Family Farms, Ball Ground, GA
Patti Riccardo, Stone House Flowers, Kodiak, AK
Geoffrey Rigney, Homer's Bay Art & Garden, Marysville, OH
Stephanie Robinson, Sacramento, CA
Heather Rocheleau, Heather's Bloomers, Ballinafad, ON
Sherri Rodgers, Sweet Lovin' Blooms, Valley Center, CA
Cynthia Romero, Rowan & Wren Flowers, Albuquerque, NM
Katrina Rosa, Rosa Moon Farm, Greenfield, NH
Scott Rusch, Express Seed Company, Saint Charles, IL
Laura Sabolefski, Red Fire Farm, Guilford, VT
Partha Saha, Owllet Farms, Pilesgrove, NJ
Sangeeta and Soumya Sarkar, Vidhata, Herndon, VA
Sally Satterfield, Shawnee Stems, Vienna, IL
Megan Schuknecht, Missoula, MT
Deb Schunk, Iris' Cut Flower Farm, Mason, MI
Mary Shaffer, The Studio, Arlington, VA
Sarah Shipley, Cultivate Flower Co., Timberlake, NC
Kathy Simpson, Dos Gatos Flores, Baroda, MI
Raylene Sinnett, Alpenglow Flower Farm, Wasilla, AK
Carol Slater, The French Hen Flower Farm, Soap Lake, WA
Amy Slaybaugh, Petal & Vine, Kansas City, MO
Jessica Smedley, 3 Girls Garden, Idaho Falls, ID
Ashlee Smith, Fort Worth, TX

Hunter Smith, Mother Flowers,
Berlin, MD
Jessica Snobelen, Snobelen Homestead,
Kent Bridge, ON
Paula Soghomonian, Derby Mill Farm,
Dover, DE
Cassandra Steinkrauss, Dedham, MA
Heather Storteboom, Secret Garden
Colorado, Fort Collins, CO
Kasey Stott, Bloemen Flower Farm,
Visalia, CA
Susan Stout, Roundwoods Farm and
Nursery, Warwick, MD
Holly Strawn, Harpp Flower Farm,
Murphy, NC
Steven Stup, Stelo Nursery Garden,
Rockville, MD
Brittany Styers, Flower Cow Farms,
Newton, NC
Melinda Swanson, Lake Girl Gardens,
Elkhart Lake, WI
Lauren Tamraz, Alchemy Farmhouse,
Gardiner, NY
Shannon Terrian, Ardas Acres, Leesburg, GA
Kelli Testa, Edisto River Flower Farm,
Summerville, SC
Rosalina Thomas, Wheeler House Flowers,
Fairfield, CT
Katie Tiehen, Salt Farm Flowers,
Bar Harbor, ME
Beth Timmer, Legacy Corner Farm,
Zeeland, MI
Stephanie Tittle, Hermitage Farm Garden,
Goshen, KY
Donna Tribble, Rabbit Crest Farms,
Greenville, SC
Holly Trimble, Becky's Flower Basket,
Falmouth, KY
Emilie Turcotte-Cote, Les jardins d'etc,
Bury, QC
Joy Turingan, A Joyful Farm, Melbourne, FL
Rob Tvelia, Bloom Farm Guesthouse,
Mount Vision, NY
Britin Van Brocklin, Cherry Petals Flower
Farm, Kaysville, UT
Ginger Vander Broek, The Gingered Petal,
Cuba City, WI
Julieta Varron, Fairfax, VA
Michele Vaughan, Sunrise Hill Flower Farm, Holt, MO
Amber Wallace, Green Butterfly Garden, Columbia, SC
Brooke Wallace, 1541 Farms, Hallettsville, TX
Joanna Wang, Three Berry Flowers, Mattoon, IL
Renee Ward, Renee's Petals & Edibles, Interlachen, FL
Tara Watkins, Firmly Rooted Flowers, Frankfort, KY
Shellie Watkins Ritzman, My Garden Blooms, Kernersville, NC
Rachael Watman, Swann's End Flowers, Powhatan, VA
Jessica Weeden, Willow River Flowers, Sidney, NY
Debbie Wickham, Wickham Farms, Penfield, NY
Cynthia Wilson, The Garden House on Butterfly Lane,
Flagstaff, AZ

The Cut Flower Quarterly

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Kim Wilson, Scott Twp Flower Farm, Angola, IN
Tina Wister, Auburn Adventist Academy:
Academy Farms, Auburn, WA
Brigitte Wolinski, Fayetteville, AR
Emily Wood Good Fight Flowers, Marshall, NC
Jackie Woodruff, Two Dog Flower Farm, Newcastle, ME
Tracy Yang, JARN Company, Everett, WA
Teresa Young, Fab Farms, Rockmart, GA
Andrea Yutzy, Willow and Pine Farm, Timberville, VA
Nova Zaro, Earth Angel Flower Farm, Spokane, WA
Allison Zeeb, Takii Europe B.V., Naperville, IL
Tiea Zehnbaauer, Zehn Naturals, Bonita Springs, FL
Claire Zimmermann, Cool Hollow Flower Farm, Hagerstown, MD

2022 ASCFG Farm Tours

Friday, June 3

Sunny Meadows Flower Farm

Hosts Steve and Gretel Adams
Columbus, Ohio
8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Limited to 125 attendees



Monday, June 20

River and Sea Flowers

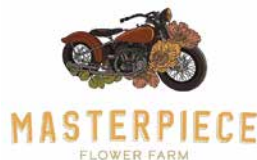
Host Rachel Ryall
Delta, British Columbia
10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Limited to 25 attendees



Friday, July 22

Masterpiece Flowers

Host Crystal Giesey
Whaleyville, Maryland
10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Limited to 15 attendees



Tuesday, August 9

Berry's Blooms

Hosts Bob and Teri Berry
Medina, Ohio
4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Limited to 120 attendees



Monday, August 15

Harris Flower Farm

Host Janis Harris
St. Thomas, Ontario
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Limited to 50 attendees



Monday, August 22

Bloom WNC

Host Abigail Helberg Moffitt
Black Mountain, North Carolina
4:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Limited to 75 attendees



Monday, August 29

Cross Street Flower Farm

Host Nikki Bartley
Norwell, Massachusetts
10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Limited to 30 attendees



Thursday, September 8

Dirty Boot Farm

Host Patricia Poulin
Flagstaff, Arizona
9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Limited to 40 attendees



Friday, September 9

Piscasaw Gardens

Host Jennifer Kinney
Harvard, Illinois
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Limited to 75 attendees



Monday, September 12

Fernabelle Acres

Host Emily Watson
Franksville, Wisconsin
1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Limited to 75 attendees



Saturday, October 1

Daveco

Host Clarence Denton
Clearwater, Kansas
1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Limited to 32 attendees



Tuesday, October 11

River Twist Homestead

Host Carl Galloni
Jamestown, North Carolina
9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Limited to 50 attendees



Details and registration information can be found at www.ascfg.org/2022-farm-tours/



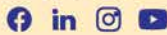
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syngenta.flowers

Thanks for the Good Word!

You connected some of our new members to the ASCFG!

Gretel and Steve Adams

Krista Albright

Chet Anderson

Allan Armitage

Frank and Pamela Arnosky

Chris Bakutis

Erin Benzakein

Briana Bosch

Shelli Bourque

Wendy Brubaker

Joe Burns

Lynn Byczynski

Sabine Carey

Jessica Chase

Jill Coutts

Christina Cover

Mimo Davis

James DelPrince

Linda Doan

Dave Dowling

Sarah Jo and Matt Eversole

Julio Freitas

Karey Ann French

Ellen Frost

Foothills Flower Farm

Carl and Jan Galloni

Jen Gerrys

Nancy Hamner

Janis Harris

Sharon Hays

Robin Holland

Joyce Holzapfel

Mike and Polly Hutchison

Jeri Irby

Nikki Irving

Julia Keel

Michael Kilpatrick

Maya Kosok

Grace Lam

Allyson Lambert

Barbara Lamborne

Elisa Lane

Bethany Little

Robert Lopez

Jennie Love

Aishah Lurry

Jennifer Maloney

Nan Matteson

Erin McMullen

Susan Miller

Ann Munson

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Mandy and Steve O'Shea

Laura Paxton

Keith Pierpont

Christy Ralphs

Laura Beth Resnick

Jamie Rohda

Kim Santolla

Annie Sasseville

Joe Schmitt

Val Schirmer

Heather Staten

Adrienne Stutzman

Lynsey Taulbee

Angela-Marie Turner

Mary T. Turner

Nancy Wellener

Mike and Rita Williams

Lisa Ziegler

Dave Dowling Scholarships Awarded for 2022

Congratulations to these outstanding young people who received Dave Dowling Scholarships, based on their academic success and horticulture activities. We look forward to working with them throughout their cut flower careers, and welcome them to the ASCFG.



Sophie Greenberg, University of Georgia

Sophie explained her theory of cut flower production in her application this way: “Any farmer-florist knows that a person in this profession must be a jack of all trades. You have to possess the scientific knowledge to anticipate the needs of your crops and troubleshoot any issues that arise. As an artist, you create arrangements that symbolize the significance of important events and people’s affection for one another. Lastly, you must draw upon the magic of the natural world to bring flowers into the world.”

With a BSA in horticulture under her belt, and a planned return to UGA for an MBA, Sophie seems to be taking all the right steps to achieve her dream of running a cut flower farm that combines full-scale production with agritourism.



Madison Jones, University of Maine

As well as being a popular wedding and tourist destination, Downeast Maine provides the perfect background for Madison to cultivate many cut flower cultivars. Working with accomplished flower farmers at Salt Farm Flowers in Trenton, she developed her passion of bringing joy to people with flowers.

Madison plans to develop her own cut flower farm with low tunnels, raised beds, and a roadside store to sell her bouquets, homemade food and crafts, and honey from her own bees.



Allison Niddifer, North Carolina State University

Allison had long assumed she would become a cut flower grower. Her experiences working on a large agritourism farm in North Carolina, where she managed everything from social media posts, staff schedules, inventory and field trips—on top of growing and selling cut flowers—led her to the realization that her true passion lay in education.

As she puts it “I want to be a flower farmer, yet with a few extra titles.” She now has the confidence and knowledge to become an “agricultural advocate”, by seeing her cut flower farm as a classroom, where visitors will come to learn to grow their own flowers and produce, and the importance of supporting local farmers when they can’t grow themselves.



Dave Dowling owned a successful cut flower farm in Maryland for several years. He placed great emphasis on introducing young people to horticulture through employment on his farm, bringing them to ASCFG conferences, and mentoring them as they moved into their own cut flower businesses. Dave is responsible for the success of many new growers across the country. His generosity and enthusiasm for sharing are unparalleled.



NEW! Rosanne 2 Clear Green

SAKATA Makes the CUT

Sakata offers a full array of top-quality cut flower genetics including sunflower, lisianthus, campanula, and anemone. In fact, every single stem is backed by Sakata's stellar reputation for quality, reliability, and service and specifically bred with grower and consumer needs in mind. Throughout our comprehensive program, our breeding emphasizes large blooms, strong petals, unique colors, sturdy stems, and extended vase life – resulting in ultimate satisfaction from start to finish! To learn more, please visit us at www.SakataOrnamentals.com.

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Being There

Judy M. Laushman



Bookmarking ASCFG President Val Schirmer's remarks at the beginning of this issue, I'll add my thoughts on the value of meeting colleagues face to face after two years.

The members of the ASCFG Board of Directors who were able to meet in New Orleans this February were pleased to be together on several counts; for many of us, that included being able to step outside without first pulling on wool mittens to shovel the sidewalk.

Most importantly, of course, is the sense of camaraderie, forged after eight straight hours around a meeting table, which renewed and strengthened this Board's intent to serve ASCFG members. You just don't get that same sense of purpose from a Zoom meeting, no matter how well intended are the participants. Even well-crafted emails, or files easily accessed in a Google drive, don't provide the immediacy, and the easy back-and-forth that organizations like ours thrive on.

This sense of tangible accomplishment also lends itself to my perception of the twelve Farm Tours scheduled for this summer, and the grower conference that will be held in Framingham, Massachusetts in August.

Organizing events like these, with innumerable details to be confirmed, and reconfirmed, require countless hours, and constant and accurate communication. The difference is that at the end of the day, you can look back at your day and realize that you've created something that will soon benefit, and be appreciated by, hundreds of cut flower growers.

The manifestation of the ASCFG's intent to educate and unite cut flower growers is never more evident, more tangible, than during a tour of a cut flower farm in Ohio, or between speaker sessions at a conference in Massachusetts. It's a fulfillment that's been missed the last two years, and we're looking forward to making it happen for all of you in 2022.



ASCFG Conference

August 1 - 3, 2022

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Hotel & Conference Center
Framingham, Massachusetts



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