

Volume 35, Number 2 Spring 2023

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Cover photo courtesy of Ellen Frost, Local Color Flowers

The peony is 'Etched Salmon' grown by Karen Gesa of Midsommar Farm in Virginia.

The rose is 'Queen of Sweden' grown by Lauren Uhlig at Florxeight in Baltimore City.

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Here's to a very, VERY good 2023 (pretty please, Mother Nature?)

Val Schirmer



As your Board headed home from our two-day Spring Board Meeting—which was held at a restored elementary school in Portland, Oregon, just as the area experienced its second highest snowfall on record—my mind was a whirlwind of thoughts about what 2023 will bring.

This meeting was particularly important because we welcomed SIX new members to the Board:

- Mid-Atlantic Regional Director—Dave Delbo of Dave's Flowers in Pennsylvania
- Northeast Regional Director—Jenny Marks of Trademarks Flower Farm in New York
- Canada Regional Director—Sarah Kistner of Stone Meadow Gardens in Nova Scotia
- Southeast Regional Director—Niki Irving of Flourish Flower Farm in North Carolina
- Secretary—Linda Chapman of Harvest Moon Flower Farm in Indiana
- Industry Liaison—Hillary Alger, product manager for flowers, herbs and trial gardens for Johnny's Selected Seeds in Maine

Meeting in person is essential to us getting to know each other and building relationships and strong connections so we can work together more effectively to lead our organization. "Getting to know each other, our talents/strengths and communication styles" was an important component of our first-day agenda, before we moved into a full slate of discussions, reports, and planning sessions. Jenny wasn't able to join us in person (her first child is due in March!) but actively participated with us for the entire meeting on Zoom—definitely not for the faint of heart!

The Board has a Zoom check-in call every month and two formal Board meetings a year, in spring and fall. This year our fall meeting will be held over two days in early December via Zoom. Not something we like doing, but it's difficult for some of us to be away from our farms in November and December, and we're all hoping to be at the 2023 Conference in St. Louis.

Speaking of 2023, it feels like Mother Nature has been throwing an absolute tantrum across much of the country. Flower farmers are a hardy group and well used to dealing with often abrupt changes in conditions, some pretty severe challenges, and whatever else life throws at us, but flooded farms, devastated greenhouses and high tunnels, plus every-



After the the indoors Board Meeting, we were able to get in a visit to the Oregon Flower Growers Association facility (and see Raindrop Farms' booth there) and Mayesh before the snow made roads dangerous.

one dealing with so much unusual weather and too-warm temperatures, makes me look at 2023 and wonder how things will turn out.

### **Here's what I know for certain — 2023 is a milestone year for the ASCFG**

It's our 35th anniversary. We have nearly 3,000 members in North America and across the world—3,000 of the BEST flower farmers on the planet and the ONLY ones dedicated to bringing the superior beautify, variety, freshness, and vase life of LOCAL FLOWERS to consumers.

We have an incredible lineup in place for our 2023 Conference, to be held November 6-8 in St. Louis, along with our third year of member-hosted Farm Tours across North America. There are also Ask an Expert, Research and the

Flower Farmer, Supplier Showcase, and Digging Deep live webinars (with recordings of all free sessions archived in the Members Only Learning Portal at [www.ascfg.org](http://www.ascfg.org)). As additional Farm Tours are added—yes, we’re still taking applications for Farm Tours!—they’ll be posted on the website under Events, and you’ll get updates via Short Cuts.

At this time last year, we had begun our search for our first-ever Education Director, which brought Rebecca Marrall to us. In our history, the ASCFG has produced a wide range of educational events, and we had also expanded our offerings to online platforms as the Association worked to unite and educate our members. But in less than a year, Rebecca has worked in collaboration with Operations Director Linda Twining, Executive Director Judy Laushman, and the Board’s Education, Mentor, and Conference Planning Committees to grow the variety and richness of our educational offerings by leaps and bounds. And they’re not anywhere close to being finished! There’s even more in the works, so be sure to take a look at all *Short Cuts* emails as they hit your in-boxes for announcements and updates.

### **2023 is also the year that we will welcome just the second Executive Director in our history**

As you know, Judy Laushman — who was there at the first organizational meeting in 1988 of what would become the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers and then became the fledgling organization’s Executive Director—is retiring at the end of the year. 2023 is the year we celebrate Judy, as we also celebrate what the Association has become.

As we formally launch the search for our new Executive Director, we will keep members updated via Short Cuts. We believe it’s entirely possible that good candidates for this essential leadership role may be among our members, or be someone one of you already knows.

The job announcement will also be posted on the ASCFG’s public site, so that anyone can access it. Our intent is to have the incoming Executive Director hired before the November conference so that s/he can join us there and celebrate the ASCFG’s and Judy’s 35th anniversaries.

### **Finally, let’s make 2023 the year of LOCAL FLOWERS!**

This is the time to update your profile in [localflowers.org](http://localflowers.org) with new photos that highlight the incredible specialty florals you’re growing so that when designers, consumers, writers/news teams or anyone craving the BEST in locally-grown flowers—say, for Mother’s Day—will easily find you! The Board’s Marketing and Outreach committee is also working on ways to publicize and promote [localflowers.org](http://localflowers.org), so don’t put off updating your profile.



Here’s to a knockout of a year—in a very, very good way!



A little excitement during the Board meeting when Hillary Alger got stranded after returning a rental car to the airport in advance of streets shutting down, then resorted to walking the five miles back to the School. Sarah Kistner and Niki Irving “pinged” Hillary’s location and set out to bring her gloves and a hat — what a team! From left: Hillary, Sarah and Niki.



Outside The Kennedy School, when 1” of projected snowfall turned into 11” in just a few hours.

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## The Pros and Cons of the Peony

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick



Ellen

Peony season is right around the corner. Here in Baltimore (zone 7a-7b) we always hope for peonies to be blooming for Mother's Day. Our first peony of the season always comes from Seaberry Farm. This early single peony is affectionately called 'Mel's Peony'. Mel Heath, owner of Bridgestone Farm, was one of the first growers we ever bought flowers from. His peonies were perfection. I loved going to his farm and walking the fields just as the sun was coming up, and helping him harvest the flowers I would use in my designs. Sadly, Mel passed away many years ago. Before he died, he invited his dear friends (and ours) Rick and Wen Fei Uva of Seaberry Farm to come dig up his peonies and take them back to their farm to continue growing them. This act of love (love of people and flowers) is the reason Mel's legacy lives on, so we celebrate the beginning of peony season every year with this special variety lovingly renamed 'Mel's Peony'.

Peony season is always a little crazy because everyone loves peonies. For the few weeks that they're available locally, people can't get enough of them. We buy from about 6-8 grow-

ers during the peony rush, including Laura Beth. When we are purchasing peonies, we are looking for different things for different situations. For single stem retail sales, bridal bouquets, our MVP customers, and for our Spotlight on Peony class, we are looking for the most interesting, unique hard-to-find varieties. These often include 'Etched Salmon', 'Pastel Elegance', 'Jan Van Leeuwen', and 'Lois' Choice'.

We're willing to pay a little extra for these because we know they are what excites customers, and sets us apart from other florists at that time. All of these special varieties are sourced from Karen Gesa at Midsommar Farm in Virginia. If you want more info on the varieties Karen grows, she has a great new book called *Peonies for Perpetual Profit*. For single orders (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.), wedding centerpieces, and mixed bouquets, we are using more readily available varieties like 'Sarah Bernhardt', 'Festiva Maxima', or 'Coral Charm'. These varieties are still super beautiful but they are more plentiful and often can be purchased at a lower price point than the specialty varieties.

Peonies are always a little challenging for us in design because they're so big and they're such showstoppers. They don't necessarily play well with others. They like to be the star. Peony-only arrangements are classic, easy to design, and always a hit. Our local peonies and local roses often overlap by a few weeks and that pairing in designs is always a special treat. Things that don't pair great with peonies in design are small flowers like bachelor's buttons. I feel like they come on at the same time and are the most mismatched two design elements. We've used them together, but I'm never pleased with the outcomes. For me, if I'm mixing peonies with other types of flowers, it really helps to have a wide range of sizes and shapes to bridge the gap from largest to smallest.



Ellen uses a variety of cultivars in her Spotlight on Peony class.



Our peony season here lasts about 6 weeks. Growers and designers can often extend the season by weeks or even months by dry storing peonies in their cooler. We have one vegetable grower who dry stores peonies in something we fondly refer to as the “magic box”. This is some kind of apple storage container in her cooler that manages humidity. It’s all very hush hush, but it works. Don’t ask me how. Selling dry-stored peonies is a common practice among flower farmers. It’s a way to continue making money on a product that has a short harvest season.

While I’m all for this practice, I strongly believe that growers that are selling dry-stored peonies (or tulips) to florists should disclose that they have been dry stored. This information allows me to make the best buying decision for my business. I likely will not use dry-stored peonies for single orders or arrangements for which the client expects a long vase life for the flowers. I don’t have enough experience with dry-stored peonies to stand behind the product in those conditions. I will definitely buy them to use in wedding and event design where vase life is not an issue and the flowers need to shine for one day only.

Laura Beth \_\_\_\_\_

I met my best friend Jean when I was ten years old. It was the nineties, and on weekends we walked around the mall for hours. We would inevitably pop into Bath and Body Works, where Jean headed to the peony-scented section to smell her favorite flower in all forms of soaps and lotions. To this day, I think of her each peony season, and often get her peony-related gifts for her birthday.

Other than that wonderful association, I am not a huge fan of selling peonies. I know—blasphemy! I find them stressful here in the Mid-Atlantic Zone 7, where they typically bloom out in just a couple of short weeks. There are so many growers in our region with fantastic peonies; my strategy is to let them do it, and offer a moderate amount to our customers during peony season.

As our business grows and changes, I reserve the right to amend our approach to peonies, so ask me again in ten years and I might say we’re peony-possessed! But currently, we grow fewer than 200 plants, and stick to the standards: ‘Sarah Bernhardt’, ‘Duchess de Nemours’, ‘Bowl of Beauty’, ‘Coral Charm’, etc. My motto is to plant a new variety or two every fall to diversify our color offerings, sticking to varieties that are affordable.

When we moved to our new farm, we dug as many peonies as we could from our Pikesville location. We dug up the roots in September, dividing any that naturally came apart during the process, and put them in bulb crates. We didn’t add any packing material; I had low expectations for survival and we had too much going on with the move to think twice about it. We stored the crates in our garage at the new farm for a few months before we got around to planting them. We learned that the roots that had not been divided, and therefore had more mass and soil on them, survived much better. About half of what we dug dried out in storage. As you might expect from my tone, I wasn’t too miffed about it; the peonies were low on my priority list.



‘Mel’s Peony,’ named after the late Mel Heath.

Come spring, we sell as much as we can to our florists, picking at marshmallow stage and holding in the cooler no more than 5 days. Some of our lucky DIY wedding customers get peonies too. I don’t attempt to dry-store them; we actually don’t dry-store anything at all. Maybe one day I’ll get excited about long-term storage, but for now we grow only as much as we can sell fresh.

Because we grow in heated greenhouses, peonies don’t need to be our bread and butter. This allows me to have a generally laidback approach, rather than feeling pressured to cut and sell every last stem. I’m especially excited this year to give peonies to Jean, who just had her first baby, born on the same day I sowed larkspur. I’m hoping her little girl is as obsessed with flowers as we are!

---

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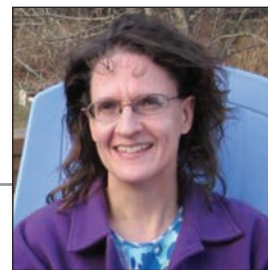
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### A Farm Flourishes without Annual Flowers

Julie Martens Forney



*A business model built on branches and berries transforms fall and winter into top-earning seasons at Star Valley Flowers.*

Tucked into southwest Wisconsin's Driftless Region, Crawford County looks like a scene out of Italy. Green, rolling hills and lush valleys exude Tuscan charm. At Star Valley Flowers in Soldiers Grove, thousand-foot rows of woody shrubs snaking along hillside contours add to the ambience. Founder John Zehrer bought the 80-acre farm in 1983, intent on dairy farming.

But John had a passion for horticulture—even as a child he had sold plants that he propagated. So by 1986, his love for plants won out on the farm, and he shifted his focus from dairy to flower growing. In the beginning, he produced annuals and perennials, marketed to Minneapolis floral wholesalers and at farmers' markets.

Those early crops of sunflowers, amaranthus, and zinnias financed John's vision to grow more unusual plants, such as different willow varieties, hydrangeas, lilacs, and bittersweet. His keen interest in plants fueled creative crop mixes, with a strong focus on hardy crops that would survive the region's harsh winters. As a result, Star Valley became known in the industry as a source for hard-to-find and novelty items.

In 1999, John purchased an adjoining 160-acre farm, making Star Valley the largest field-grown cut flower producer in the Midwest. That title remains today, with total production closer to 260 acres following the 2017 acquisition of the former Blooming of Beloit, located three hours south of Star Valley. That southerly expansion not only added acreage to Star Valley's production, but also extended the season by at least a week on some items. Beloit is three hours closer to Chicago's freight options, enhancing Star Valley's transportation options.



Star Valley Flowers has 9 percent grade on some hills, which makes soil conservation a top concern. They have the local county extension agent mark out contours on the fields so they can plant with the contour of the hillside and not create waterways where water can move quickly. Groupings of perennial grasses fill 12- to 14-foot strips

Today the farm specializes in fruiting, flowering, and decorative branches—things like hollies, forsythia, dogwoods, and willows. Bittersweet is another big seller, which the farm's tagline reflects: "Probably the largest bittersweet farm in the world." Close to 20 acres of the berried vine are trellised, cultivated, and harvested every September.

#### Defining a Competitive Edge

Phil Mueller, General Manager, explains the farm's business model very simply. "Our biggest competitor is South America. While we can't compete with them head to head on products, we can compete by capitalizing on what we have that they don't—winter."

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*He also advises that whatever you're doing—building, buying a truck, or planning a plot of plants—“always go bigger than what you think you need.*

*When you do more like that, you position yourself to grow and make more money.*

---

From mid-October to December 1, the farm sells over 50 percent of their products. “We actually make over 50 percent of our annual sales in that window,” Phil says. “In fact, some of what goes on through the rest of the year here really just keeps the farm rolling and going in preparation for that big push in the fall.”

He categorizes the farm as having two seasons: the growing season and the freezing season. The growing season headlines more floral crops—things like lilac, spirea, snowball viburnum, and peonies. Growing season customers include floral wholesalers, designers for weddings and events, and grocery stores. But Phil stresses that the farm doesn't put a “lot of emphasis on flowering material—we don't grow any annuals.”

When fall and freezing seasons arrive, the product focus shifts to dormant, decorative branches. At the same time, the customer base also changes, featuring garden centers and landscape maintenance companies. “These clients are trying to extend their season as well, because at this time of year, they're not cutting grass or replacing spent annuals. They're basically waiting for snow to fall so they can plow in January and February,” Phil explains. “They bridge their income with seasonal decorating in containers, which is where our crops come in.”

From the start of September to mid-April, the “branch people,” as Phil calls them, are buying Star Valley's products. Farming this way yields a “wildly cyclical and seasonal business with customers and crops,” he adds. “It just changes from flowers, to branches, to dormant things in the freezer.”

Years ago, Star Valley's business model reflected that of a more traditional flower farm, where blooms drove sales. At that point, curly willow branches



Woody branches with eye-catching berries (holly, bittersweet, and crabapples) extend the growing season into fall and winter. The farm grows three winterberry colors: gold, red and orange.



One secret to success at Star Valley is focusing on crops that can be harvested when the market demands, like decorative branches, instead of having a distinct time when the crop is ready and comes to market all at once, which is typical with most blooming crops. “All winter-harvested sticks go into cold storage, where we hold them and sell as the orders come in,” Phil says.

were dubbed an “unemployment fund” by owner John Zehrer. It was a crop that kept workers busy through winter until the spring growing season arrived. Now the model has completely flipped, and flowers have earned the “unemployment fund” moniker.

### A Crop Mix in Demand

Star Valley offers solid zone 4b growing conditions, almost zone 5. “If we were zone 6, we could grow so much more,” Phil says. But one of the farm's greatest strengths is that John always recognized what they could grow best in a cold climate—and what was unrealistic. His genuine interest in how plants grow guided his crop choices and resulted in some decisions that were pure horticultural genius.

“John taught me this guiding principle years ago. Why struggle with something we can possibly grow when we can just grow what we can do well? We don't grow weird things that are hard to grow. It has to be something that really thrives here. So we look at those plants and ask, ‘How do we make that a crop?’ Much of what we grow are just woody weeds that, 25 to 30 years ago, were not a product.”

The top five crops at Star Valley include willows (pussy willows, curly willows or simple decorative willow branches); dogwood branches; several colors of *Ilex* (orange, gold, red); bittersweet; and forsythia. After those, hydrangeas, viburnums, lilacs, and peonies are closely equal in their sales figures.

Like all flower growers, Mueller is always looking for new plants, but with woodies, it takes three to six years after planting before you really see a result. With the luxury of rural land prices lower than some areas and plenty of it, Star Valley can afford to plant crops that take time to mature. What they can't af-



Choosing when to harvest can extend the harvest window and improve profits. For instance, blueberry viburnum blooms late May to early June. “Some people cut it as a flower, which has to be done at the right stage in one to two days,” Phil says. “But if you let it sit there and get pollinated, in August you have three weeks you can cut it. The fruit doesn’t wilt for the most part or get damaged like a flower petal. It’s much more forgiving.”

ford is choosing crops based on social media trends, which change rapidly.

But sometimes an on-point trend and existing crop happily collide, creating a synergism that results in sales. “For years we’ve grown ‘Tardiva’ hydrangeas. That’s basically a PeeGee style with a lace cap flower. We had a hard time selling those years ago,” Phil recalls. “People would point out the brown spots on blooms, saying they look burned.”

Fast forward to today, and customers are clamoring for “antiqued” flower colors. “That’s just a sun-scorched one!” he laughs. “It doesn’t matter how beat up or toasted these flowers are, people want them. The market changed the demand for it. Now we just leave flowers on the plant longer and let them burn.”

Has Phil noticed any trends in demand for specific decorative branches? Just one. “People call us constantly looking for birch branches. There’s definitely a shortage of that,” he says. “I also feel that the warming climate is

already adversely affecting the availability of winter greens like holly. Hydrangea has really picked up. I expect sales will be strong unless we really get into a bad depression.”

Other trends Phil sees include the ebbing of peonies. “I do feel that is something coming to an ebb,” he says. “I have an idea that if we get into a real recession, we’ll see the slimming down of product in floral things—a starkness, not a cheapness, but a less overflowing design. Some of the crops we grow can satisfy that demand, but others may take a back seat.”

### Labor Is a Challenge

Like most businesses these days, labor is the top issue Star Valley faces. “We are more than willing to adapt and adjust and alter our expectations depending on what we have to do to get the job done,” Phil says. “We’re now partnering with labor brokers who can bring people up from blueberry or potato fields and the local apple orchards to help with our fall harvest.”

Being able to tap into a true migrant labor pool (meaning, laborers who actually migrate or move around) has also helped the farm tremendously, as has working with one of Wisconsin’s cranberry producers.

“Last year we hired three people who worked temporarily through summer helping to weed plantings. But when we have fast food restaurants paying people \$17 to \$18 an hour—and that’s in a pretty poor area—that makes it tough for us,” Phil explains. “We try to create an environment that isn’t oppressive and is flexible if someone has something else to take care of, at least in the slow time.”

Star Valley keeps 10 full-time, year-round workers. “They are the base to help institute our big hiring push in fall when we bring in 40 to 50 people,” Phil adds. “Ultimately, we’ll tailor how many people we keep on for the job we want to do with crops that make us the most money.”

Labor issues have helped spur the farm toward mechanized harvesting of some branches, like curly willow. They’ve also mechanized a cutting tool to rejuvenate a plant, cutting it to the ground. “We’re currently in talks to develop a dogwood harvest machine,” Phil says. They work with European manufacturers because those companies are used to developing equipment for use in the specialized, tight spaces typical of European production.

### Secrets to Success

Star Valley has been in the flower farming business for 37 years, tending the land and providing jobs in a rural area. That’s something John has always stressed: the role of family-owned farms in supporting the local economy. Phil admits that he himself “eviscerates sentimentality from everything, distilling things down to intentional actions. The romance of a flower farm helps sell, but I don’t get caught up in it. If I have to use it, I will, but the bottom line is that it’s a job that helps keep local people in an unpopulated area employed.”



Despite the farm’s large size, Star Valley promises grocery store customers that they’re nimble enough to bunch things specifically for individual clients, like these lily of the valley, and lilacs. “Being able to straddle that line of a romantic, cutesy personal farm idea with the idea of creating semi-loads of up’ed, identical product—we can handle that,” Phil says. “Our customers like that.”

Instead of selling the romance of the farm, he urges new flower farmers to sell reliability of production. “You need to be good at something that people remember about you. Don’t try to be too much to everybody. That dilutes your effectiveness or power. Instead tell potential customers, ‘Here’s what I grow, and I grow it really well.’ To make the money, you need to be good at one thing. Don’t grow a menu—grow several in-demand ingredients.”

He also advises that whatever you’re doing—building, buying a truck, or planning a plot of plants—“always go bigger than what you think you need. When you do more like that, you position yourself to grow and make more money.”

Most recently, Star Valley Flowers has made some moves that position it for growth. Tim Clesen of Clesen Wholesale, Inc., a third-generation wholesale grower-florist in Evanston, Illinois, has purchased the farm and business. “They have bought from us for years and helped build our business,” Phil says. “It’s as synergistic a move as it was for us to buy Blooming of Beloit six years ago. It’s a natural progression of things.”

The business transition has thrust Phil, who’s always handled sales and marketing, into a new role as General Manager. What’s John up to since the sale? “He’s enjoying retirement,” Phil says. “What Star Valley is today is really a tribute to John’s vision. It shows the vitality of the farm John created that it’s able to be passed on to the next generation.”



Two hours southwest of Madison, Wisconsin, Star Valley Flowers grows with no greenhouses, minimized fossil fuel use and stringent soil conservation practices. Originally homesteaded in the 1850s, the farm came into floral production in 1986.

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*Julie Martens Forney is an avid gardener and freelance writer who’s been writing about flower and plant production, horticulture research, and consumer gardening for over 30 years. Contact her at [julie@wordsthatbloom.com](mailto:julie@wordsthatbloom.com)*

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*Such bugs and goblins in my life!*

—William Shakespeare

Among the more frustrating pests for flower growers, tarnished plant bug often arrives suddenly and undetected, until the unpleasant surprise when the damage shows several days later. Attacks on flower buds result in lopsided blooms or ones that completely fail to open. Feeding on stems and unexpanded leaves (as in basil) can cause splitting or small holes.

It's a pest for many other crops too, with a very wide host range that includes more than half of all U.S. crop plants. On asparagus, stems die back or ferns will be distorted; tomato fruits develop small black sunken areas; snap beans flowers are aborted or pods develop brown spots; celery and lettuce develop small rusty or dark lesions on stems or veins. Feeding causes dimpling or "catfacing" symptoms on apples, peaches, brambles, and strawberries. In alfalfa, damage to terminals, flowers, and pods results in stunting, dead buds, flower drop, and shriveled seeds. In conifer seedling nurseries it can cause a kind of bushy stunted growth and split stems. Tarnished plant bug is an occasional indoor (greenhouse) pest though more often troublesome in outdoor production.

Tarnished plant bug (*Lygus lineolaris*) is a native insect established throughout the continental U.S. In the western U.S. it is joined by two other *Lygus* pest species, part of the "Lygus bug" complex, including western tarnished plant bug



Tarnished plant bug adult on *Osteospermum* flower.



Tarnished plant bug nymph.

(*L. hesperus*) and pale legume bug (*L. elisus*). *L. lineolaris* adults are nearly ¼" long and vary in color from dark brown or grayish to yellow or pale green with dark markings. Between the wings in the center of the back is a small triangular plate (scutellum) with a pale wedge-shaped mark.

The immature stages (nymphs) are pale to medium green and resemble aphids, but lack the backwards-facing "tailpipe"-like structures (cornicles), and unlike aphids move rapidly when disturbed. The adults overwinter in crop debris, under leaf litter or bark, in rock piles, or weedy areas, emerging in spring to feed on developing growth. During the growing season they live around 30-40 (males) to 40-60 (females) days. Eggs are laid into plant tissue, hatching in around 7-14 days depending upon temperature. The small, green nymphs pass through five stages, lasting around 15 (86°F) to 30 (68°F) days. There are two to perhaps five generations a year according to climate zone.



Several aspects make tarnished plant bug challenging to manage. The adults are highly mobile and migrate into production areas especially as hedgerow areas dry down, adjacent fields are mowed or crops reach maturity in summer. Their populations tend to be clumped, not evenly dispersed, making early detection and monitoring more difficult. Crops tend to be susceptible over a long period of time. In our experience populations vary considerably from year to year and we lack good tools for predicting infestation levels. Treating preventively and during bloom is undesirable to protect pollinators, and for economic, worker exposure and handling reasons.

Sweep nets are sometimes used for sampling in field crops and some vegetables (like snap beans) and may be useful in some flower production areas. They can be purchased, or check the Penn State reference below for directions on making your own. They might also be used in adjacent non-crop areas to detect populations lurking nearby to provide a kind of early warning. In orchards, white sticky panels placed around 1.5' high are also used to trap and detect adults. Tarnished plant bug has many biological controls, including a parasitoid imported from Europe that has reduced levels in New Jersey 75%. These don't always provide adequate control, however.

Cultural management can help considerably, by growing cut flowers away from host crops, like alfalfa and cotton, where high populations can build, and by keeping fields clear of weeds (especially pigweed, lambsquarters, and those with composite-type flowers) that are alternate and attractive hosts. Avoid mowing weedy spots that drives insects out and into production areas during susceptible periods. Row cover or exclusion netting can protect plants from tarnished plant bug and other pests; the additional complications and expense might be offset by improvements in quality, reduced need for other insecticides, and durability (multi-year use) of some netting materials.



Tarnished plant bug damage to peony buds.



Tarnished plant bug damage to chrysanthemum.



Tarnished plant bug injury to African violet flowers.



Tarnished plant bug adult on anemone.



Tarnished plant bug damage to dahlia.

Insecticides may be helpful particularly during periods when plants are particularly attractive and vulnerable starting around early bud stage, limiting treatment up to budbreak to reduce impact on non-target insects. Insecticide options include several pyrethroids (bifenthrin, cyhalothrin, cyfluthrin, fluvalinate, permethrin) and pyrethrins, malathion, flonicamid (Aria), insecticidal soap, Ancora, azadirachtin (nymphs), carbaryl, *Beauveria bassiana*, Grandevo, Venerate, acephate, and acetamiprid. Verify labeling, uses, efficacy, and state registration before using any product and consult with your regional specialists on products and options best for your particular situation.

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# Grow Your Business through Efficiency



Julie Martens Forney

*Learn about the principles of lean farming from one farmer who makes it work every single day. Ben Hartman's drive to embrace lean practices shifted his farm to a smaller footprint while delivering steady profits and work-life balance.*

If someone told you that by changing your mindset and approach to flower farming you could work fewer hours, generate consistent revenue, and craft a lifestyle that balances work and family, would you dig deeper or dismiss it as 21st century snake oil? Ben Hartman and his wife, Rachel Hershberger, did just that at Clay Bottom Farm in northern Indiana, where they raise vegetables for local restaurant, CSA, and farmers' market clients.

Clay Bottom Farm has been in business for 15 seasons and practicing lean farming for 10. By adapting lean manufacturing concepts to farm practices, Ben and Rachel created significant changes to their business model, resulting in reduced working hours—from 60 to 35 hours per week—with no decrease in revenue. The size of the growing area dwindled, too, from 3 acres to one-third of an acre.

The lean philosophy hinges on removing waste. "With lean, eliminating waste is the way to increase capacity," Ben says. "As you root out waste, you free up capacity to be more productive without having to do more. It's basically a less but better approach." For Ben and Rachel, that "better" includes both sane hours and the ability to take vacations.

While the concept of lean is simple, it's also a very powerful management system—and difficult to implement. Why? "Because it's counter-intuitive and takes discipline," Ben explains. "All the cultural forces tell us the opposite: that we need to constantly grow our business. Applying the discipline to be choosy about what crops we grow and which accounts we're selling to, sticking to the metrics we've chosen, is difficult." In fact, Ben says resisting that impulse to get bigger and do more is the hardest part of lean farming for him.

He grew up on a 450-acre corn and soybean farm, a classic example of North American agriculture where mass production and automation fuel the idea that growth indicates success. "Growing more, doing more, getting bigger tractors and more grain bins—that's how you grow an agricultural business according to conventional wisdom in our culture," Ben says. In lean farming, the exact opposite is true. The more you can pare down equipment, motion, over-production and any other waste, the more you increase efficiency and profits, ultimately with less work.

## Where Lean Started

Lean manufacturing principles originated with Toyota production systems developed by Taiichi Ohno, Japanese businessman and industrial engineer. He's famously quoted as saying, "The Toyota style is not to create results by working hard. It is a system that says there is no limit to people's creativity. People don't go to Toyota to 'work,' they go there to 'think.'" That idea is at the heart of lean production systems.

The beauty of lean is that the principles adapt readily to fit any farm, from large-scale livestock producers to small-scale flower farmers—and everything in between. "The first workers at Toyota were rice farmers or their descendants, and they brought a lean way of thinking onto the factory floor with them," Ben explains. "Rice farmers in 19th century Japan were very shrewd. They had a growing population and so redesigned their farming to feed that nation. They did this by identifying different types of waste and utilizing every square foot of land that they had."

Ben and Rachel encountered the concept of lean production through a long-time CSA customer, Steve Brenneman, who operated an aluminum trailer factory. He had put lean principles into use in his trailer production with great success. Like any farmer, Ben assumed there'd be too much variability in the farm processes for any single system to work. Lean was renowned for manufacturing. Realistically, how applicable could it be to farming?

At that point, to make a go of the farm, Ben and Rachel were investing 60 hours per week using conventional farming methods. They wanted to start a family, but the farm pace made them wonder how feasible it would be to juggle children and family expenses with maintaining—and growing—the farm.



Countries like Korea and Japan never had the option of large-scale farming, so small farm tools are prevalent there. The Paper Pot transplanter comes from Japan and is available through Japan Agri Trading, a global exporter of Japanese farming machinery. The Paper Pot system has reduced transplanting time for 264 seedlings from 45 minutes to 51 seconds. That is kaizen at work.



For farm layout, Ben and Rachel drew inspiration from old farmhouses in Germany—"like the kind my Mennonite grandmother would have been in, where they milked goats in the house," Ben says. This type of setup eliminates motion waste by connecting processing steps under one roof.

Because of his own success with lean, CSA customer Steve was persistent and kept suggesting that Ben consider lean principles. "The most compelling reason he gave was that our farm needed capacity, and that lean could deliver that by improving the process—without throwing more money at the business," Ben shares. "Eliminating waste to build capacity was the hook that did it for me."

Once Ben learned the principles of lean production, he set out to design a system that allowed the farm to produce a lot of food using just a few tools and simple processes. That's what he calls lean farming, and it's what his first book, so named, is all about. "Lean is all about strategic contraction," he explains. "As you eliminate waste, you get smaller. We started on 3 acres, and now we farm on 1/3 acre. We got rid of more than half our tools, and we work half the hours that we used to. Every year that we've contracted our business we made more profit. It's so surprising."

He explains the lean system as "basically a coin with two sides. One side is value. You want to precisely identify the value of your product to your customers. The other side of the coin is waste, or, in Japanese, "muda". Muda is any activity that doesn't directly add value to your product. It's what you want to systematically eliminate."

## Define Value First

For a flower farmer interested in adopting lean practices, Ben recommends starting with your customer. "Lean has a unique take on what value means, and there's only one person who can name value. That's your customer," he says. "It's not up to the seed companies, the people selling tools, or even you. Your customer is the key to defining value. It's about de-centering yourself and putting your customer in the middle of your farm."



For Ben, the toughest part of lean farming is resisting the impulse to get bigger. “We sell everything we produce, and I’m a people pleaser, so I want to grow more and do more. But I also don’t want to be working 80 hours a week and missing these golden years with our boys.”

It’s important to be as precise as you can arriving at tight definitions of value for your customers. “The more precise you can be, the longer you’ll be in business and the higher your margin of profit,” Ben adds. “Most new farmers skip over this to their detriment.”

Defining value starts with a conversation with your customers. Ben suggests asking three questions:

- 1) What do they want?
- 2) When do they want it?
- 3) How much?

To find out what his chef customers want, each winter Ben visits with the chefs of the restaurants he serves, and they review menus. The chef says he wants tomatoes. Ben drills down: “Heirlooms? A certain color? Or would a colorful mix of red, yellow green, and yellow help the restaurant stand out? What size tomatoes are ideal? What level of ripeness?” By asking these detailed questions, Ben learns what value is to that chef customer.

Delivery timing is specified, too. For the chef clients, delivery is usually between 3:00 and 5:00, so it’s really fresh for customers at supertime. As for how much, working in a local market means delivering small amounts on a regular basis—maybe 10 to 20 pounds of tomatoes two to three

times each week. Ultimately, all of this value detail pays off. “We charge twice as much for our tomatoes as other growers around here,” Ben says. “We have sticky tomatoes—a precise amount delivered at the right time.”

Ben has developed a value sheet that he fills in during these conversations—a simple chart where he can jot notes. Within a couple days of meeting with the chefs, he has a stack of value sheets he uses to build the business plan for the coming year. For farmers’ market clients, tracking what sells reveals value to those customers. Keeping records of sales is key. The farm also surveys CSA customers each year to determine likes, dislikes, and ways to improve.

The value sheets inform crop production schedules. “This is reverse order farming, or pull system marketing (as opposed to push system),” he says. “We collect orders at the start of the season and let customers pull product from the farm.”

## Eliminate Waste

Value is one side of the lean coin; eliminating waste is the other. In lean production systems, waste is referred to as muda. “The thing about waste is that it’s ubiquitous,” Ben says. “It constantly creeps in.”

Taiichi Ohno identified seven types of waste typical in Toyota factories, all of which are also common on farms: overproduction, waiting, transportation, overprocessing, inventory, motion, and defect. Ben tacked three additional types of waste onto the list that he sees as particularly common on farms: overburden, uneven work, unused talent.

In some ways the different types of waste overlap and intersect. The key is to work actively to identify waste—and then develop systems to remove it. Here are some insights and examples to help you understand what waste looks like and how you might address it.

**Overproduction:** Growing more flowers than you sell fits this category. Clay Bottom Farm uses a three-tier marketing approach to ensure all product sells. For instance, with different grades of tomatoes, tier one clients, restaurants, buy the nicest tomatoes. The seconds (cracked tomatoes) go to a cafeteria. The farm keeps an email list for any extras and takes direct orders for those.

**Waiting:** Workers standing around waiting to perform a task is obviously waste, but so are products that are ready for market but sitting around. Crops like flowers need to be conditioned, and that takes time, space, and mental energy, all of which incur costs.

**Transportation:** Double-check the efficiency of your delivery routes and vehicle use. Clay Bottom Farm has a hyper-local market. “We sell all we produce within 1.5 miles of the farm,” Ben says. “But we’re also careful to shorten the

distance of other supplies and materials that come onto the farm.” For instance, they have replaced trucked-in fertilizer (kelp, fish meal) with leaves collected from the local community that are turned into compost.

**Overprocessing:** This waste involves anything you do for your customers that they’re unwilling to pay for, such as elaborate packaging or a pricey website. Clay Bottom Farm revived their CSA when the pandemic shuttered their restaurant clients. The no-contact CSA featured produce that was harvested, hosed off, and delivered directly to customer coolers on porches. “There’s no plastic and no packaging,” Ben says.

**Inventory:** Minimize inventories of supplies and finished goods, keeping on hand only what’s absolutely necessary. (Read more about tips on managing supplies in the 5S section of the story.)

**Motion:** Reducing touches on items and maximizing the efficiency of farm layout are two aspects of controlling motion waste. When Clay Bottom Farm moved to a 7-acre parcel inside city limits, they designed the new farm with lean in mind. Ben and Rachel basically mashed all of their buildings into one, a farmhouse inspired by their Mennonite roots and Japanese Edo Period farmhouses. Greenhouses reduced from four to two. “Families used to live in the same building they did their farm processes in,” Ben explains. “We love it. We have a short commute to work and spend next to no time on building maintenance.”

**Defect:** In farming, defective products include unsellable crops, as well as ones that must be discounted because of poor quality. Managing this area of waste means mistake-proofing processes early in the crop cycle, such as maximizing germination or growing or buying plugs to ensure strong transplants that will quickly take off after planting.

**Overburden:** In Japanese, the word “muri” means impossible, unsustainable, or unreasonable. On a farm, muri occurs when workers or equipment are overstretched. Harvest time is, of course, a prime window for muri to occur. When a crop is ready to harvest, the push to get it all in can drive workers to burnout or injury and cause equipment breakdown. “With lean, the principle is that the work should get easier to do every season,” Ben explains. “It’s more about the direc-

tion you’re heading. If the work is getting even one percent harder to do every season, after 10 seasons it’s going to be 10 percent harder.”

Every winter Ben and Rachel decide on a muri project—something that would make the work easier the following year. “I think about when I complained the most about being overworked and figure out how to remove the bottleneck the next season,” he says. “One year it was a decision to get a golf cart to move tomato boxes. This year it was modifying a greens harvesting tool, adding extended handles so I can harvest standing up, instead of slightly bent over.” Each improvement makes the work easier and more efficient—and eliminates muri.

**Uneven work:** Having standardized, predictable work makes it possible for team members to work steadily and efficiently. In agriculture, crops ripen at different rates, so there is always some amount of unevenness in the process. Extending production seasons with crop choices or greenhouses or selling CSA subscriptions when the fall flower harvest season wraps up can help even out both production and cash flow

throughout the year. The Grower Profile on Star Valley Flowers (see page 12) highlights how crop selection can create demand in traditionally slow production seasons on a flower farm.

**Unused talent:** Lean emphasizes that great ideas can come from anyone working on the

farm. Often farm laborers who are dealing with production details day after day have a better grasp on ways to improve processes than the farmer. Establish systems to encourage, receive, and incorporate workers’ insights. According to lean, a good idea that goes unspoken is a form of waste. Clay Bottom Farm has two part-time workers, including an assistant farm manager who’s been with them four years. In summer, they hire college students. “One of the first things we do when new workers come is show them the list of 10 wastes and tell them if they see waste in any form, they should tell us,” Ben says. “Some of our best ideas have come from students.”

*Lean farming principles act like a fifth gear on your tractor, boosting production with less work. It’s a secret that not only makes you competitive in today’s market, but can transform your farm into a career that delivers life-work balance.*

## Always Strive to Get Better

Another principle of lean is “kaizen”, or continuous improvement. With the kaizen principle, you never arrive at a perfect system, but instead always look for ways to improve your systems. “Every year we’ve simplified our system,” Ben says. “Our goal is to find the simplest process for everything.”

As production space on the farm shrank, it became increasingly important to keep growing areas in production as continuously as possible. To eliminate the waste of waiting for an area to be ready for planting, Ben started using the fastest method possible: leaving plant roots and residues in place from crop to crop.

“Most produce growers aim for two crops in a growing area in one season. Transitioning from one crop to the next is vital. We use two-step bed flipping,” he explains. After a crop finishes, tall crops are mowed low to the ground and then smothered with a tarp to melt the crop remains. In summer, the tarp stays in place for two weeks; in other seasons, it’s longer. When the crop beneath has broken down, it’s an easy job to peel back the tarp, rake any debris if needed, add a bit of compost, if needed, and plant.

“We’re making compost in place with residues from the old crop,” Ben says. “The roots feed microbial life in the soil, and the top debris feeds life, too. We think of ourselves as an animal farmer as we feed and tend the soil microbes.”

Their old field management system involved plowing or tilling, cover crops, and seedbed prep, which took anywhere from three to six months. Now their soil strategy to start new plots is simple: spread 4 inches of compost directly on the soil surface, not tilling it in. “Any time you till deeper than 2 inches you’re only bringing weed seeds up to the surface,” Ben stresses. “Compost provides long-term fertility. Studies show that compost releases nutrients up to nine years after application. It also acts as a mulch that smothers weeds.”

Another benefit is that the compost creates excellent soil tilth. At Clay Bottom Farm, the soil is loose and deep. “The compost layer means we can set in transplants easily, which makes the work of planting easier. With that incredibly active biology in the soil, we have healthy crops,” he adds.

Every other season they add another half inch of compost on the surface of planting beds. Keeping soils between 50 and 60 percent moist provides the ideal environment for the biologics to thrive. “Frankly, I started using this process because it’s faster, and as a result I’ve reduced soil prep down to one or two steps,” Ben says. That’s kaizen in action.

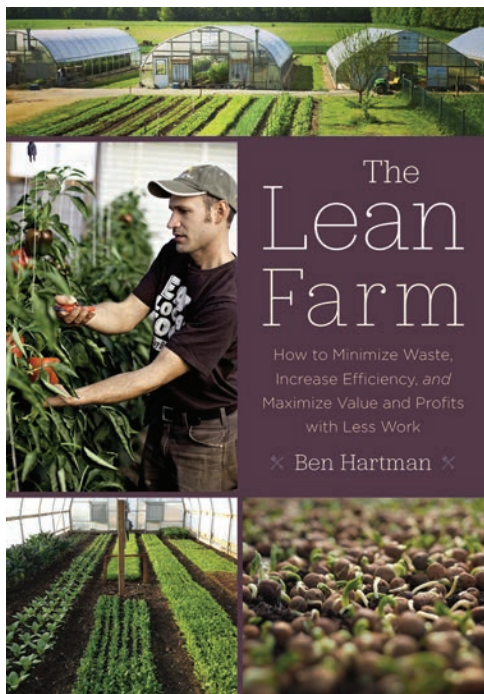
## Lean Has a Long Track Record

If Ben wasn’t a farmer, he’d likely be a teacher. An avid reader, he looks to history, manufacturing, and philosophy for insights and ideas he can put to use on the farm. He had his brother, a research librarian, go as far back in history as he could to find out how the Japanese grew their food. “He found a scroll from about 1,000 years ago that detailed a very simple food production system,” Ben shares.

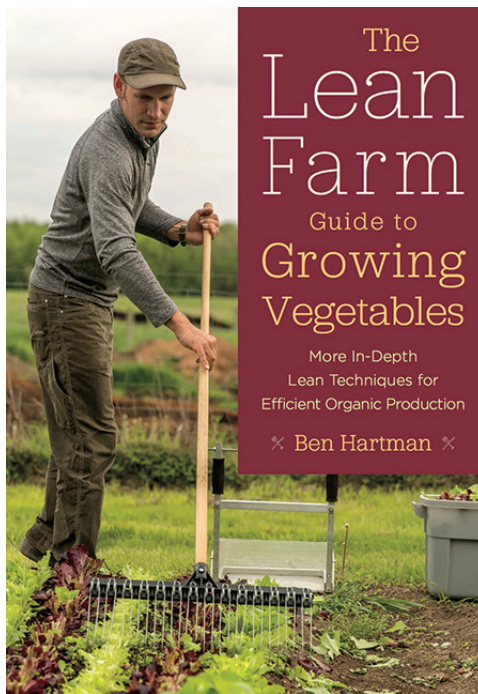
It made him realize that throughout human history people have been growing food and feeding the world using just a few tools—baskets, grubbing hoes, knives—and a few inputs, like manure or compost. “The Japanese waste-free thinking found a way to turn muda into something that could support food production. It’s very simple, and very inspirational,” he says. “So, I went about designing a system allowing us to produce a lot of food using just a few tools and simple processes. It turns out that it’s fun and way more profitable.”

There’s a quote that Ben likes to share with farmers who are considering lean principles. It’s from E.F. Schumacher, a German-British statistician and economist, who said, “Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.”

That’s a fair assessment of how farming lean works at Clay Bottom Farm. “We live and work at the intersection of nature and the human economy,” Ben says. “Let’s participate in a just way and in an efficient way in the human economy and respect nature while doing it.” Lean farming provides a framework to make that kind of life possible.



Ben’s first book, *The Lean Farm*, shares the principles of lean and how they have applied them as they raise their crops. It details Clay Bottom Farm’s journey to lean, including specific case studies that illustrate the principles with real-life examples.



Ben’s second book, *The Lean Farm Guide to Growing Vegetables*, is a detailed guide to how they farm using lean. It explains how they maximize land use, reduce defect waste with DIY germination chambers and save labor by selecting the right size equipment. It also shows their lean methods for eliminating weeds and pests.



## Streamline Your Farm with 5S

A foundational tenet to lean framing is organizing the production environment using what's known as 5S. It's a system comprising five practices that, when embraced and utilized, transform a farm so that it's adaptable and nimble, able to change readily with market conditions.

"When we were new farmers, the farm was often chaotic and a mess," Ben says. "We were unsure how to prioritize. With lean we have a cleaner, more organized farm, we're not working around clutter, and we're selling all we grow. It's been the key to letting us grow higher value crops."

No matter where you are in your farming journey, organizing your flower farm following lean's 5S method will change your business. The simple 5-step process identifies key actions to take to organize your farm's processes.

How often should you do 5S? Remember the principle of kaizen, continuous improvement. At first, you might do it once or twice a year. Over time, like Ben, you may practice short, high frequency 5S. "That means you do it on a daily basis," he says.

- 1 Sort** - Sorting is the first step in eliminating waste on the farm, starting with tools and other assets. The goal? Remove anything that isn't frequently needed. For every asset on your farm, Ben suggests asking, "Did it add value for my customer this past growing season?" If the answer is yes, keep the item. If you're unsure, move that asset to a place on the farm you've designated for questionable items. Review these items within a set time frame, and if they're not adding value, remove them from the farm. As Ben used this process, he reduced the number of field tools for the farm to seven. "It's a cultural impulse to accumulate, but we should aim to get rid of things at the same pace that we accumulate them."
- 2 Set in order** - Give everything on the farm a place, and create a system so a 10-year-old could find things and put them away. For instance, label the floor where a trash bin goes or provide outlines around tools. With visual cues like that, it's easy to see where things belong and when they're missing.
- 3 Shine** - Deep clean work areas and put together a system to maintain the cleanliness. Cleaning is important because it doesn't just create a nicer atmosphere for work, it also makes it easy to spot problems quickly. Consider adding more lighting and a fresh coat of paint. "We've reached the point now where we do 5S continually," Ben says. "For example, when we're done hosing 100 bunches of carrots, that's the point at which we clean the workspace, not later."
- 4 Standardize** - Standardize procedures and operations on the farm so that no matter who's doing them, they're done the same way, every time. Ben uses pictures posted on the wall to illustrate processes and also how a sorted, shined and set-in-order area should look. A picture is an easy way to communicate.
- 5 Sustain** - Once you have performed the first 4S's, establish audits to follow up and help you stay on track. One of the most common pitfalls for farmers embracing lean principles is losing momentum. "It's important to develop katas, or routines. Every Thursday morning, I tend to the sorting table where we put suspicious tools and sort them—keeping what adds value and eliminating those that don't," Ben says. "Katas keep you on track. They're the secret to making lean a reflex on your farm, integrated into all you do, rather than an extra thing you do."



## Growing Cut Flowers in Raised Beds

Shellie Watkins Ritzman  
My Garden Blooms



When I made the decision to pursue cut flower farming in 2018, I had to figure out how to make my half-acre home lot, surrounded by 100-year-old farms, work for that purpose. After taking Floret Farm’s comprehensive cut flower course, I was eager to get started in early 2019—mind you at the age of 60. I had already reduced my “backyard” growing space by building an outdoor living room years earlier, which left me with only one primary section of full sun to work with. And growing in rows was not going to be an option.

Raised beds would have to be the solution, not only for the look—this was going to be in my “backyard” after all—but also for the convenience and accessibility with regard to our not-so-young or flexible bodies (cursed arthritis). This investment was not going to be cheap, but then again there were traditional infrastructure investments I wouldn’t have either. Think irrigation drip line, landscape fabric, tillers, cover crop, etc.

Season one began with the purchase of (55) 3’x3’x18” metal raised beds which would become the primary annual variety cut flower section. I now had grids to grow in basically. We added hydrants for hand-watering, t-posts, found a great local source for bio soil, organic fertilizer, and purchased Hortonova netting. Needless to say, the netting was a huge failure after trying to wrangle it up and down the beds to suit the variety of flowers growing side by side. Then there was the awkward use of bending the wire support for row cover around the t-posts. Although we had a fantastic first season with regard to the flowers, it was extremely frustrating and I knew I had to find a better way.



In season two we added (16) 3'x3'x18" beds on the other half of the backyard partially under the canopy of a huge oak tree. I did not want to use t-posts so I decided to plant perennials along the partly sunny portion, and edible flowers under the canopy, which ended up loving the shade in our blistering hot summers. We also added (8) 2'x6'x18" metal beds and t-posts on the outside of our fence at the edge of the property which gets morning sun, perfect for dahlias. And an additional (8) 2'x4'x18" metal beds around two sides of our small Victorian glass greenhouse.

It was in this season that I realized I had to find a different method for supports. As I was pulling up the wire supports from the winter covering, it hit me. I could use these to create "grids" for each bed. I made a sketch of what I had envisioned and contacted a local welder to take a look at my ideas. He understood the goal and began transforming over (300) 76" wires into lower and upper grid supports for the cut flower section. The lower supports have 18" legs and a grid pattern on top giving me nine openings (based on the best use of the 76" wires). These are placed in the soil about halfway to give young plants support. I then had him build the same grids without legs that I could move up and down the t-posts and adjust with the growth of the plant. I decided to use small bungee cords for that purpose.

By season three, the winter weather had worn down the bungee cords and many broke. Now I had to find a way to hold the upper support grids to the t-posts and the only thing I could think of were magnets. That duh moment! I found magnets that have a carabiner attached which work perfectly. I can slide the magnets up and down to adjust for the plant growth from bed to bed. I even use the magnets to hold down the row cover in the winter.

Row cover, my goodness that's been an adventure. Trying to get row cover around so many t-posts in this grid of beds caused me to again think outside the box. The thinner row cover was ripping so badly I decided to purchase AG-70. I know, I know, this does not allow for much sunlight or water penetration, but I wanted something that would last and could be folded and stored easier. I measured each section, cut long slits that matched the location of the t-posts on each side, and marked with the bed numbers that they matched to. I can raise the covers along one side on warmer days using the magnets atop the t-posts. Incidentally, I have not experienced any reduction in plant health or growth due to using the thicker row cover.

Season four ran much smoother having finally reached that sweet spot for how to grow, support, and protect thousands of cut flowers in raised beds.



We then purchased the half-acre lot next door in early spring, added (36) 2'x6'x18" beds for perennials, and (18) 3'x3'x18" beds for peonies, along with 8 metal raised beds of rounded shapes around the new 14'x28' Workshop. This year, we are adding another 14 raised metals beds for the new lot, bringing our total on property to 175.

What I have come to appreciate about this unconventional method of cut flower growing is that weed pressure is practically non-existent, drainage is excellent, and beds are easy to turn over 3-4 times per season. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention our partnership with Tom Parks and planterboxdirect.com. They have been wonderful to work with and share ideas for product improvements. They kindly offer our 15% discount code MGB2023 for anyone wanting to add these American-made steel beds to their growing spaces. They offer 21 colors!

We have finally settled into what are our top three sales avenues: pre-paid bouquet subscriptions, edible flowers, and over 20 on-the-farm events we host each season. It's all been worth it to have members of our community come enjoy the spaces, see the work that goes into growing beautiful flowers, and hopefully walk away inspired to grow cut flowers in their own "back yard".

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*Shellie Watkins Ritzman is the owner of My Garden Blooms, Kernersville, North Carolina. Contact her at [info@mygardenblooms.net](mailto:info@mygardenblooms.net)*



## Dried Dahlias—Use More of your Blooms

Marcia Harrington  
Foster Road Farm, Elbridge, New York

If your farm is anything like mine, when the dahlia season is in full bloom it's hard to keep up with the bounty. Our sales can vary widely from week to week depending on the colors needed for weddings and events. One week it's all blush and pink, the next burgundy rules.

We try to do a clean sweep of all open blooms every time we harvest, but many times that's not feasible. But leaving them in the field means many stems will go past peak while we fill orders for the color *du jour*. Then too, we lose stems for minor bug bites and other blemishes that make stems unsaleable. Our market and subscription bouquets absorbed much of the abundance, but filling the cooler with stems that won't sell makes no sense.

It's always felt like such a waste heaping the lovelies on the compost pile. Surely there could be way to use them. Although we'd never seen dahlias on the lists of flowers suitable to drying, and we didn't have high hopes, we decided to give it a what-do-we-have-to-lose try.

Dahlia heads are dense and heavy and the stems can be slender. For our first experiments we used the typical bunch and hang technique. After a week, the blooms had shrunk considerably and the colors deepened. The bunched dahlias were somewhat deformed from pressing on one another and dried unevenly. Still, we had no issues with mold (which



Assorted dahlias labeled by variety for comparison.

we'd expected) because the temperatures and humidity were favorable for drying. But we knew that cooler days and our typical rainy fall weather would make it less likely that we'd continue our lucky streak.

Onward to plan B. We dusted off the wire racks that we use in winter to grow seedlings under lights. Dahlia stems were trimmed to about 12 inches and the blooms were dropped onto the racks heads up, stems down through the rack. Fans kept the air moving gently. Then we got busy with other things (like harvesting more dahlias).

When we returned to the rack-dried blooms, we started getting excited. The flowers were drying evenly and the stems were hardening strong. We'd placed the blooms so they were just touching, and as they dried, they shrank apart with no clumping or deforming. Over the next two weeks the drying was finished and we could assess the results by variety.

Fresh favorite 'Café au Lait' was mostly a dud, especially the more coffee-toned ones. The color washed out and overall had a dirty look. 'Diva' was also on the cutting block. But if you have an edgy style you may have more use for nearly black flowers than we do. And some golds, such as 'French Cancan' and 'Cornel Bronze', just turned brown. Like 'Roseanne' lisianthus—love it or hate it.



Dahlias dring on racks.

Here's a quick rundown of our takeaways:

- ◆ Arguably, the best results came from ball-shaped flowers. They dried beautifully with frilled petals and a round form.
- ◆ Large, dinnerplate blooms are typically informal and tended to look ragged when dried and they took a week longer to finish. But they have bigger scale and add volume, so there's a niche for them.
- ◆ Many blooms opened up as they dried, revealing their centers. This was probably because we primarily dried blooms that were a bit past peak. These were very pretty and we especially like the Renaissance look of red and gold in dried 'American Sunset'.
- ◆ Resist drying blooms that are well past peak or that have been sitting in water for more than a day. They are very likely to shatter when dried.
- ◆ Bright and multi-colors are terrific. Blooms with colored tips, stripes, or a different petal reverse color can look really great when dried.
- ◆ Informal blooms splayed and flattened, and anemones' outer petals stuck to the racks and were very fragile once dried. With limited drying space, they would not make the cut.
- ◆ Some blooms came off their stems but we dried them anyway. We successfully wired them, but this is an extra step that may make a difference in profitability depending on how you're using them. We stopped using popped heads except for exceptionally nice blooms.



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- ◆ We mostly used the dahlias in wreaths so the shorter stem length was not an issue, but the rack technique might be less efficient for long stems that restrict the number of available tiers.
- ◆ Little bug bites on the flowers became unnoticeable when the flowers were dried, so drying became a great way to use these otherwise gorgeous blooms.
- ◆ The blooms were prone to rehydrating if exposed to humidity. This is true for all drieds, but the heft of the dahlia blooms made them extra susceptible. Make sure they are fully dry before storing.

If you include dried botanicals in your offerings, consider adding dahlias to the mix. We found them very useful for arrangements and wreaths, as bunches, and the reds went into Christmas work where they were charming amongst the traditional greenery. Give dried dahlias a try—the compost pile won't mind!



Dahlia in an autumn wreath.

---

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*This research was funded in 2022 through the ASCFG Grower Grant Program.*

## Dahlia Crop Per Drop Evaluation at Full and Reduced Irrigation With and Without Mulch

Lindsey Waddoups, MS, CCRC

### Introduction

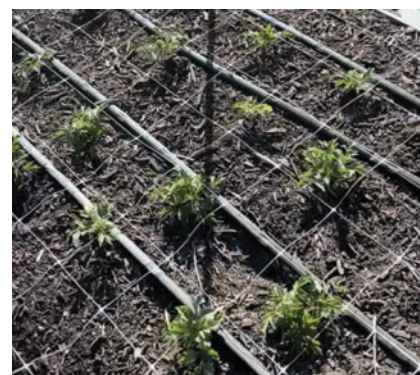
Agriculture irrigation consumes more water than any other human activity. As such, the relationship of water sustainability and crop production has been regularly studied over the past decade in regions of drought and developing countries. The common denominator in agriculture improvement is the crop per drop concept. This concept is a measure of the amount of crop produced per drop of water used. It is well documented that irrigating wisely can increase crop yields (1-4). This transitions over to floriculture.

Dahlias are an economically important crop to the floral industry. The delicate blooms are highly sought after for floral events in summer to fall. They are a specialty cut flower with a short vase life and blooms that frequently do not hold up to the rigors of shipping, and are therefore a strategic crop for local farms to target. Floral designers actively seek out local flower farms to provide a quality dahlia product (5). Flower farmers seek to meet this demand but the drought conditions throughout the Intermountain West and other areas of the country add challenges to production. Utah, the second driest state in the U.S., experienced a significant drought in 2021. The Utah Division of Water Resources actively campaigned and provided education, and in some cases restrictions, on watering. Most notably, agricultural water use was restricted by 80% in 2021 (6,7).

Dahlias that have adequate water are more vigorous with improved productivity, such as increased bloom size and tuber production. However, there are limited data on the amount of water dahlias should receive and how to optimize output. Guidelines published from well-known dahlia producer, Swan Island Dahlias, recommend deep watering 3-4 times per week once the dahlia plants have been established, further stating 60 minutes or longer with a soaker hose (8), but this does not specify how many inches of water are needed. The American Dahlia Association (9) recommends an inch of water per week after the dahlias reach a height of 10-12 inches. Most water recommendations include mulching the plant to

keep the roots cool, but do not take into account regional variations of temperature and humidity. Through the ASCFG's Research Foundation grants, Dr. Melanie Stock (Utah State University) recently conducted a study that suggests plant establishment may improve with the use of white plastic mulch (6% stand loss) vs. black plastic mulch (11% loss with shade and 17% without shade) (10). Conditions vary drastically between farms but research experience can provide baseline information and framework for farmers to help tailor their irrigation needs and conserve water.

The purpose of this research was to apply the crop per drop concept to dahlia production in Utah by utilizing current farm watering practices and comparing it to a reduction of irrigation by 20% (i.e. 80% of demand). White plastic mulch will also be studied as a cost-effective way to increase the crop per drop ratio.



Picture 1. Crop spacing and irrigation lines

### Procedures and Results

Dahlia tubers were planted the first week of May in a 4-ft wide bed with four rows, spaced 12 inches apart. The tubers' in-row spacing was staggered by 6 inches from the neighboring row to provide the maximum amount of space within the high-density planting (Picture 1). This planting is more dense than typically seen but has been successful in Utah with its extremely dry climate. Rates of emergence per group were compared. Within 4 weeks all tubers that would sprout emerged and there was no statistical difference.

Four drip lines, spaced evenly, were placed in each row. The emitter rates were 0.25 gallons per hour, emitters spaced 6 inches apart. Based on the questions for this research, 4 groups were defined.

- Group 1 100% irrigation, uncovered ground
- Group 2 100% irrigation, white plastic mulch
- Group 3 80% irrigation, uncovered ground
- Group 4 80% irrigation, white plastic mulch

For ease of discussion the percent irrigation will be referred to as full (100%) and reduced (80%) irrigation. The rates were based on the researchers' previous experience of successful irrigation for dahlias. Two varieties were planted for Groups 1 and 2, 'Sweet Nathalie' and 'Rycroft Jan'. For groups 3 and 4 only Sweet 'Nathalie' was used.

A discussion about growing conditions is appropriate to accompany the results. The growing zone is 7a and a high mountain desert. During July 2022 the rainfall was recorded as 0.12 inches with an average high temperature of 99.7. August and September were similar. Watering duration was set at 180 and 144 minutes per event for full and reduced irrigation duration respectively. The frequency was every 3 days in June, every 2 days in July, August, September, and back to every 3 days in October. The amount of water used was calculated to be 2.31 and 1.85 inches per event for full and reduced irrigation respectively.

Blooms were harvested starting mid-August but there was significant spider mite damage to the plants that affected bloom quality and plant vigor, especially in the full irrigation groups. Harvesting marketable stems began September 7 and continued through October 20. Marketable stems were a minimum of 14 inches with fully-formed, unblemished blooms. The average number of marketable stems for 'Sweet Nathalie' blooms harvested at full irrigation with white mulch was 0.75, and without mulch was 1.4 per plant. At reduced irrigation harvest the average marketable stem per plant was 3.2 with white mulch and without mulch 3.7. The presence of mulch had no statistically significant effect on the number of marketable stems for either of the irrigation groups. (Figure 1)

The second flower specific outcome is the average bloom size. At least 5 stems from every harvest were measured. The average bloom size of 'Sweet Nathalie' was 3.9 and 4.2 inches (mulch/no mulch, Figure 2) at full irrigation and 4.0 in for both mulch and no mulch at reduced irrigation (Figure 3). For 'Rycroft Jan' it was 2.6 in and 2.7 in at full irrigation. The bloom sizes were not statistically different between full and reduced irrigation but they were found to be larger between mulch and no mulch at full irrigation. There was no difference between mulch vs. no mulch at the reduced rate. (Figure 4)

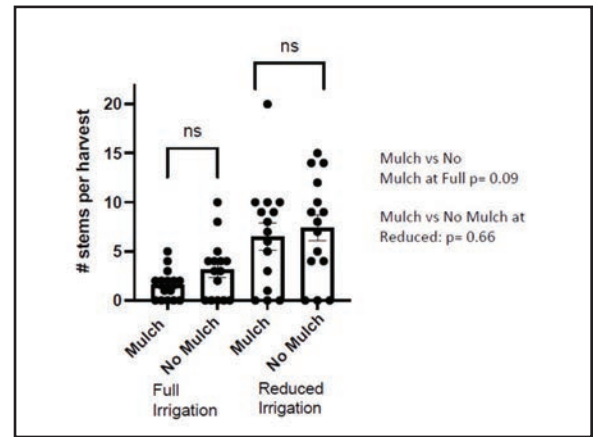


Figure 1. Comparison of harvest numbers of Sweet Nathalie Dahlia

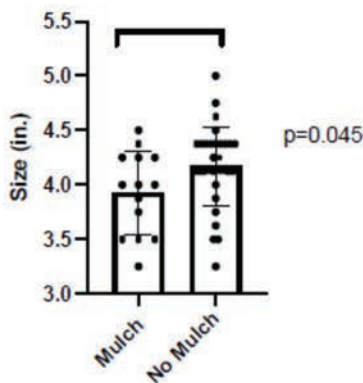


Figure 2. Bloom size comparison of mulch vs. no mulch of Sweet Nathalie Dahlia at full irrigation.

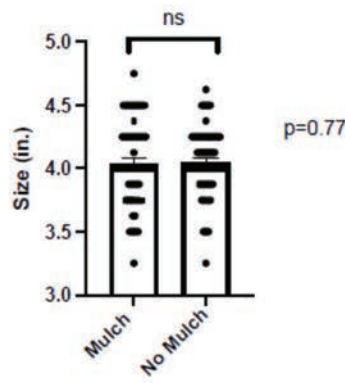


Figure 3. Bloom size comparison of mulch vs. no mulch of Sweet Nathalie Dahlia at reduced irrigation.

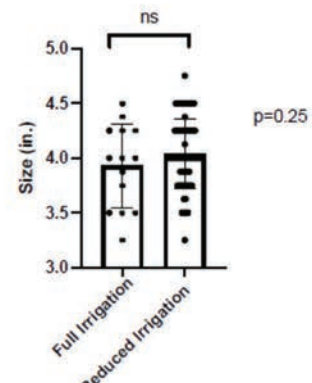
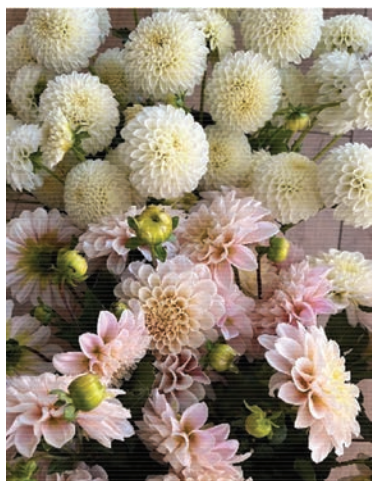


Figure 3. Bloom size comparison of Sweet Nathalie Dahlia at full and reduced irrigation with mulch.

The effect of mulch vs. no mulch is difficult to evaluate. The results suggest that bloom size is larger when plants are not in the mulch, yet the indicators of plant vigor—plant height and tuber weight—are better when planted in the white mulch. This could suggest that at higher irrigation rates the dahlia focuses on plant growth. However, while the value is statistically different the practical difference of the average size was 0.1 to 0.3 inches. With no clear distinctions in these results, coupled with the actual size difference it can be concluded that mulch or no mulch has no effect at the current irrigation rates.

Crop per drop is the total amount of inches of irrigation divided by the number of marketable stems produced. This calculation shows the radical effect spider mites had on the amount of water used to get a marketable stem—9.26 inches (full irrigation with mulch). Compared to crops that were not as affected by the spider mites, the average water usage for the reduced irrigation was 1.69 inches of water per stem. The average inches of water needed for the ‘Ryecroft Jan’ at full irrigation was 2.53 inches per stem (Table 1). For reference, 1.69 inches is approximately 9 gallons and 2.53 inches is approximately 14 gallons. It takes 33 gallons to grow the average apple (11).



Picture 2. Ryecroft Jan and Sweet Nathalie blooms

In conclusion, maintaining a healthy crop is essential to utilizing water efficiently, and the reduced irrigation rate can be used without a significant difference in number of marketable bloom or bloom size. There would be benefit in replicating this study and application rates to confirm the lack of significant difference in the absence of spider mites. In addition, including another group at a greater reduced rate would be beneficial. The presence of mulch increased the

initial work and didn’t produce results consistent enough to warrant the used of mulch in a field that does not have high weed pressure. This effect may be more visible in lower irrigation rates. Overall, it highlights the need to help small-scale farmers understand irrigation rates and continue to identify the water needs of specific crops.

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Sweet Nathalie Variety						Ryecroft Jan Variety		
Full Irrigation			Reduced Irrigation			Full Irrigation		
Mulch	No Mulch	Combined	Mulch	No Mulch	Combined	Mulch	No Mulch	Combined
9.26	4.73	6.26	1.81	1.6	1.69	2.2	3.37	2.53

Table 1. Amount of water used to create a single marketable dahlia stem.



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### Jennifer Marks

Trademarks Flower Farm  
hello@trademarksflowers.com

Selling at farmers' markets has become one of my favorite sales outlets. It's easy and stress-free for us because there is very little communication ahead of time with customers (like weddings or events), and I don't need to worry too much about exact flower type and color inventory (like selling to florists). I just bring whatever we have and it sells beautifully: Simple, low stress, and consistent sales!

Farmers' markets have also allowed our business lots of exposure so we can more effectively market other sales outlets. Many of our original farmers' market customers have turned into CSA customers or wedding clients. It's a great way to network with other entrepreneurs in your area, meet people in the community, and get the word out.

In general, there are a few things you can do to dramatically increase your appeal and your sales at regular farmers' markets. But before we dive into my tips for increasing your sales at farmers' markets, please understand that not all of them are created equally.

My general advice is to attend markets in major cities closest to you that have a long-standing history of volume attendances, have an existing dedicated customer base, and that are in or close to affluent neighborhoods.

Here are my top tips to increasing your income at your farmers' markets:

#### Be Consistent

Showing up every week and staying for the entire market will build trust and loyalty with your customers. They want to know that you'll always be there for them when they need flowers. You want to become a part of their weekly routine! People will expect to see your smiling face every week and will look forward to chatting with you or simply stuffing their noses into your blooms. Be the type of business they can depend on. Randomly missing markets will erode your customers' trust, and they will be less likely to buy from you.

#### Display Abundance

There are phrases often spoken in the organic vegetable world: "pile it high and watch it fly" or "pile it high and kiss it goodbye!" These sayings ring SO TRUE when it comes to selling any kind of product, especially flowers. Display your flowers to look as abundant as possible. Make a wall of flowers, with plenty of depth to give the illusion that you have more than you actually do. I put flowers on the ground, a couple feet off the ground on low benches, on tables, on crates on top of tables, and sometimes even hang them from the tent! This gives the illusion of abundance, which sparks attention and draws a crowd to your booth (crowds draw crowds!). Next time you are in a grocery store, observe how they cleverly display veggies and flowers using specialized tables and equipment to make it look as abundant as possible. They constantly restock to make displays look full; you should too.

As the market goes on and you sell more and more, be sure to constantly consolidate flowers so it looks just as abundant as when you started the market. We constantly tidy our booth to keep it looking fresh. Lastly, arrange flowers in blocks of color or at least experiment with different presentations. I've found that putting certain colors together will help the overall ambiance of the booth, and unusual color patterns can draw potential buyers in.

#### Look Professional

Presentation is important. Show up looking clean, professional, and friendly. Keep flowers out of the sun (a major challenge at some markets) in order to keep them fresh and prevent them from wilting. Keep your entire booth (and yourself) sparkling clean and inviting.



Use clear, informative signage. Many people feel uncomfortable asking how much something costs, so use signs with easy-to-read, obvious pricing. We often encourage sales by writing things like “lasts up to two weeks!” or “makes a great gift!” on signs.

**Be Attentive and Welcoming**

This may sound like a no-brainer, but I am always shocked by the number of vendors who sit behind their booth, heads down, scrolling on their phones. This gives the impression that they are uninterested, making them seem unapproachable and careless. I guarantee their sales suffer because of it.

Stand the whole time, and stay off your cell phone. There is rarely a dull moment at our markets, as we are constantly consolidating buckets of flowers and tidying up the display, while paying attention to everyone who walks past.

**Say Hello and Genuinely Connect with People**

I make it a point to smile and say hello to nearly every person who walks past our booth. This creates an inviting experience so people feel welcome and makes you easy to approach. I bet I make thousands of dollars in sales each year just by saying hello to someone! Often when I say hi to a passerby, they’ll notice the flowers and stop in their tracks. Many make an impulse buy on the spot. Some don’t—but they’ll remember you and will know where to find flowers the next time they need them. Be genuinely interested in people and their stories. I’ve made lots of great friends and life-long customers just by greeting people in a friendly manner, starting polite conversation, and getting to know them.

**Finally, Tell People About You!**

We communicate with customers (and potential customers) via our email list and social media. Every Friday we post on social media the flowers we are bringing, and I am always amazed how often people mention that they came to the market just because they saw our Instagram story about it. We also take advantage of the seasonal nature of our flowers: it creates natural scarcity and a sense of urgency to check it out. For example: “Peonies are only in season for a few weeks, folks! So come out to the market and grab some before the season is over.”

Try out these tips at your farmers’ market, pop-up markets, or in your farmstands, and let me know how they help you! They’ve helped me build a great reputation in our community and I earn a significant portion of my total revenue from this outlet every year.

Although not for everyone, farmers’ markets can be fun, easy, profitable, and a great way to get rid of excess flowers that don’t sell through other outlets. It’s also a great way to “get your name out there” if you are just starting out.

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**Dave Delbo**

Dave’s Flowers

davesflowers@aol.com

Many flower farmers in the Mid-Atlantic Region enjoyed a mild, snowless winter and bingeing on Netflix or watching flower farming videos on YouTube.(or was that just me?). However, several actually grow and sell flowers year-round.

Rebecca Kutzer-Rice of Moonshot Farm in East Windsor, New Jersey, has been selling flower bouquets at farmers’ markets most of the winter. She pushed the seasonal boundaries and had a small trial of Christmas flowers including amaryllis, ranunculus, and anemones last year. Even though it required a lot of extra work during the already hectic summer months, it paid off and she plans on growing way more stems for Christmas in 2023. January brought tulips and a new opportunity to sell at a farmers’ market in their previous hometown of New York City. For Valentine’s Day, she harvested thousands of tulips, ranunculus, freesia, and stock.

After spending several thousand dollars on propane to heat her high tunnels during the winter of 21-22, she invested in a geothermal heating system for her 34x96 foot tunnel. Unfortunately, she did have to miss a market in early February because of the extremely cold temperatures. By growing year-round, Rebecca has secured a spot at a busy farmers’ market in the





shop and also supplies two other local designers with flowers during the dreary days of winter. Originally, the greenhouses were heated by a large oil burner, but are now heated with natural gas and consist of energy curtains to maintain the heat overnight.

Sue Ellen has some simple advice for anyone who wants to grow year-round: “put up a greenhouse and put in heat.” Of course, there is more to it than that, including dealing with insects and disease. Thrips and powdery mildew are two issues Sue Ellen is always on the lookout for.

Rebecca, Bob, and Sue Ellen are each growing and selling flowers all year for three different reasons. Whether you do it to get into a farmers’ market in a large city, to keep employees receiving an income, or to supplement your own flower shop, growing specialty cut flowers during the cold winter months is possible. Now is the time to make those plans so you can make money during the winter months. But I still like my winters off to relax and recuperate, and watch YouTube.

largest city in the country that she probably would not have been able to by growing only in the summer.

Bob Wollam, of Wollam Gardens in Jeffersonton, Virginia, has been growing specialty cut flowers for 30 years. However, this was his first year selling year-round. Bob is one of the 60 vendors at, and one of the founders of, the year-round Dupont Farmers’ Market in Washington, D.C. during the peak of the summer.

Last fall, Bob planted precooled tulips in a 50-degree propane-heated greenhouse specifically to attend the market during the winter months so he could keep his employees earning an income. Along with the tulips, Bob also forced a large number of flowering branches like willows, quince, *Prunus mume* and cherry. Ranunculus, ornithogalum, Icelandic poppies, and succulents also filled the farmers’ market sales during the late winter months. He also extends his season in the fall by growing chrysanthemums, salvia, and marigolds in cold frames until a hard freeze, and by making wreaths for the Christmas season. Jeffersonton is located in northern Virginia in zone 7a and usually has low temperatures only in the teens. However, this past winter, the temperature dropped to 6 degrees.

In 1937, W. Clyde Hendricks started growing carnations and pom-pons and opened Hendricks’ Flowers in Lititz, Pennsylvania. Today, his granddaughter Sue Ellen continues the family business along with help from her parents, brother, and several employees. She continues to grow carnations by taking her own cuttings every year for the next year’s crop. Hendricks’ Flowers now consists of 6 large greenhouses that are filled during the winter with standard and mini callas, dahlias, freesia, sweet peas, dianthus, dusty miller, anemone, eucalyptus, lilies, poinsettias, gerbera, and tulips. She grows over 40% of the flowers that are used in their bustling flower

## SOUTHEAST .....

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



### **Nicolette Irving**

Flourish Flower Farm

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With the season of abundance upon us, I thought it may be useful to share some strategies that have worked for me to share our farm story through social media and to offer a gentle reminder to take time to capture the harvest by taking photos. Social media and photography are two areas that can be particularly daunting, particularly for new growers and folks who have been farming long enough to build their businesses without social media. Not that either social media or beautiful photos are necessary to operate a successful flower growing operation, but they certainly can be a useful tool.

While I am admittedly not an expert photographer and I do not have a degree in marketing, I have figured out some tips and tricks to take beautiful photos using mostly an iPhone, and I have never paid for advertising or done any marketing except to utilize free social media. Social media is an easy way to build community and to build your brand. You can find and connect with other growers, find new customers and create brand loyalty.

## Social Media Tips

Social media doesn't have to feel like an insurmountable obstacle to climb. If you keep it simple and change your mindset towards social media then it can become a fun way to connect with folks. Think of it as free advertising and a very convenient way to tell your story. Here are some tips for using it effectively.

- Don't try to do it all and post on every platform. It's better to utilize one or two platforms well than to spread yourself thin.
- Facebook and Instagram are still good platforms and lend themselves easily to still photos and videos. You can also automatically post straight from Instagram onto Facebook, so it requires making only one post. Pinterest is great, too, because it is so visual.
- Consistency is key! I aim to post stories daily and to post in my main feed 5-7 days per week during the peak flower season. Use stories (which are shared for only 24 hours unless you save them to a highlight) to share behind the scenes of the farm. Take more time with main feed posts to ensure they are beautiful and engaging since they have a permanent spot in your account (though you can always delete and edit things later). People often ask how I built a following on Instagram and this is the answer—consistency.
- Set up business accounts on Instagram and Facebook so that you can utilize many more features and track engagement; knowing how many people like, share, comment and save your posts is helpful to learn about what your followers enjoy seeing.
- Always have a purpose behind posting. Even if your message is something simple like “I hope these flowers brighten your day,” it's better than writing a caption that says you have nothing to say or leaving it blank; that shows a lack of creativity or enthusiasm on your part, which is not appealing to anyone.
- 80% of your posts should be to educate and entertain. Too many calls to action or repetitive sales posts will cause people to lose interest. Think about what you want to get out of your posts and always have a goal when you post. Here are some of my goals:
  - Storytelling: Sharing about the farm, farm life or my personal life. How personal you get is up to you.
  - Behind the scenes: Daily chores, farm challenges or education.
  - Brighten someone's day (this is my personal favorite!)
  - Call to action: Sign up for my CSA, visit me at market, sign up for this workshop, come shop at the farmstand, check out my value-added products, etc.



- Keep it positive. You can share lessons learned but no one wants to constantly listen to your problems—everyone has their own woes.

- View your role on social media as one of education and inspiration. Never rant or vent because followers won't have the full context of why you are ranting.

- Post interesting or pretty photos only. Images matter if you want to draw followers' interest.

- Hire a professional photographer once a year during the peak of the season. It is worth the investment to have beautiful photos of your flowers AND of you with your flowers. Photographers will often do a trade of photos for flowers. Professional, high-resolution photos are useful for social media, but also on a website and just in case you are interviewed or included in a publication.

- Stage your photos, plan ahead, and make posting a priority. Learn which spots on your farm or in your workshop have the best lighting. If you look at my Instagram feed, you'll see me holding handfuls of flowers with the exact same mountains in the background. That's because I take photos in the exact same spot in my field. I also pause harvesting every morning for



- Avoid glare or washout from the sun. You can use your body or a large object to create a shadow, which softens the glare.

- Try to get your subject to glow. Shoot photos with the evening sun behind a bouquet of flowers or have the morning sun shine directly on the flowers.

- Framing and focus matter. You can use the rule of thirds when taking photos, but having a handful of flowers in the middle of a photo works too. Just make sure your subject is in focus. Please do not post blurry photos!

2. Write an engaging, uplifting caption.

Remember, social media is free advertising! You don't have to pay to gain followers or make connections. Customers care about flowers and beauty. We lead interesting lives, especially to folks who work in an office, and so many people crave connection to nature and beauty. Through social media we can give them a glimpse into these things, and stay connected to customers in the process. People like to see pictures of you and your farm, processes, products, AND learn more about your story. Let people know the who, what, why, how of growing flowers. Most importantly: have fun with it!

## 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

### Thank You!

Ahead of the ASCFG spring Board meeting, I sent out an email to the North and Central Region members (now about 700 strong) asking for input and suggestions to share with the Board. I want to thank all the members who took time to respond. I received many positive comments about recent educational content and the work of our new Education Director, Rebecca Marrall which I was happy to pass along. Thank you and keep your comments coming!

The 2023 Conference "Working Together into the Future" is taking place in our Region on November 6-8. The agenda looks fantastic and the trade show and networking are not to

about 10 minutes to take photos of the flowers before they go into the cooler. I've found that morning works best for me since the flowers are right in front of me, but just figure out what works best for you and carve out some time to pause working and take photos. It doesn't matter what time of day you post on social media, just make sure you do it. I often post during lunchtime since I'm actually sitting down for a few minutes and have new photos to share from the morning harvest.

- Respond to comments as quickly and often as possible. This shows that you care and are engaged.

### Ingredients for a Great Social Media Post

Interesting and attractive subject matter. This is easy! You work with beautiful flowers.

1. Good lighting:
  - Adjust the lighting on your phone if needed
  - The time of day matters. Morning and evening light (golden hour) is best. Definitely avoid taking photos outside during the middle of the day when the light is harsh.



be missed. Register early for a spot on the Urban Buds tour; attendance is limited to 200. I hope to see many North and Central members in St. Louis in November!

### A Personal Tribute

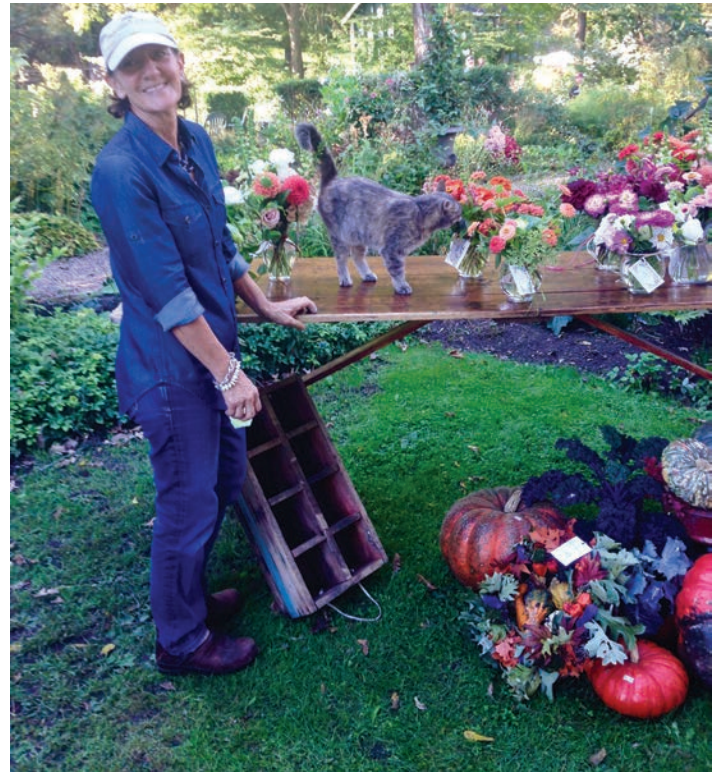
Most of us can think of one or more special individuals who have been influential to our success in farming and in life. Recently, our community lost someone who meant a lot to me and influenced my flower farming journey over the past 10 years. I want to write this report as a tribute to him.

Martin Stern owned a small plant nursery in the village of Afton, Minnesota, just east of the Twin Cities. Martin and his partner created Squire House Gardens over three decades and it became a destination for gardeners and plant lovers from all over the metropolitan area. Customers traveled to wander the beautiful English garden, shop for unique gifts, and select from a carefully curated assortment of plants. Squire House Gardens was not the place to get the big box varieties—Martin made sure to introduce his customers to unique plants that thrive in Minnesota’s climate. Probably the main draw for visitors was to seek out Martin and engage him in conversation about their garden issues and get recommendations about which plants to try.

When it came to garden design, Martin was unsurpassed. Martin studied garden design in England with world-renowned garden designer and writer John Brookes in 1987, and during the winter months, designed gardens for clients. When I decided to get into flower farming as a business in 2015, I told Martin about my idea of creating a cut flower farm on several acres of our property. I asked if he would work on a design for Arcola Trail Flower Farm. I always valued his opinions, his impeccable taste and design sense and was hoping he could transform our blank field into an attractive yet efficient space. While Martin didn’t consider himself an expert in cut flowers and knew little about commercial cut flower farming, he figured out a creative design which we have yet to fully execute. At the time I thought it was a lot of money to spend, but it has come back to me tenfold in the relationship it fostered with Martin.

In addition to the fabulous nursery and garden shop located in his 1876 Victorian home, Martin created a community of die-hard customers by hosting events at SHG throughout the year. Poetry readings, art shows, Valentine’s Day concerts, and my favorite intimate “salon” garden talks about garden topics and new varieties of plants he was bringing in for the upcoming season. He was a gracious host, adept presenter, and always made sure there was food which he prepared himself. I dare say Martin had sort of a cult following despite the fact that he could be moody, abrupt, and very opinionated. He was one-of-a-kind and the center of his business.

The brand and reputation Martin created for SHG was one of impeccable taste and quality. I was pretty intimidated to talk plants with Martin early on, but that changed over time. He



was paying attention to my commitment to cut flower farming and gave me several important opportunities to partner with SHG. To my surprise and delight, Martin invited me to sell flowers at the annual fall pottery show my first year growing. As my business grew, I added a flower subscription and Martin welcomed me to use SHG for a bouquet pick-up site. I was honored to have my bouquets on display in his shop and Martin’s loyal staff loved telling inquisitive customers about my flower farm. The association with SHG and my flower farm had a big impact on my success and branding.

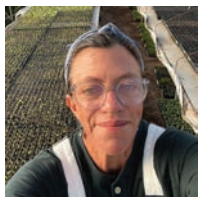
Martin and I both became caregivers in recent years. Martin had to endure the loss of his partner, Richard, in 2019 after a long illness, and after my husband’s stroke, Martin reached out to help. Once each week he checked to see if I needed any groceries, came for lunch and a walk, and visited with Brad so I could take a break. This was the warm and generous Martin.

His comforting words are still with me...when you lose someone, you still have everything they gave to you and taught you. I will be forever grateful to Martin for sharing his gardening knowledge, showing me by example what running a successful small business looks like, and how the opportunities you create for others can last a lifetime.

As I begin my ninth season of flower farming, I am sad my friend won’t be here, but am inspired by his example to create an environment where people come to get inspired, to learn, and to collaborate. To this end, I plan to open my farm to more gatherings, events, and workshops in hopes that I might be able to give others a little of what Martin gave to me. Keep going, keep growing.

## SOUTH AND CENTRAL

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



**Shanti Rade**  
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### What are you excited about this year?

It is finally spring and everywhere I go people are excited for the farming season to begin. All of us farmers are raring to go, having made our plans all winter. But customers, friends, and fans of the farm who haven't seen us in a while all want to know what's going on. They usually ask "Are you growing anything new this year?" And while there probably are a few new celosia varieties, a new lisi or two and a new-to-me tulip, for the most part—no, I am not growing much that is new in any given year. After a while you have sort of grown most of it. Some with great success, others with enough failures that you have kicked it to the curb. If anything, the more important question is "What have you cut from your crop list?" I love to cut things that aren't pulling their weight. But if I am not excited by new varieties, then what is getting me excited?

This year my enthusiasm is all about issues that dig deep into the sustainability and longevity of farming. I am going to share a few tidbits with you here; thanks in advance for humoring me.

First up: SOILS. I thought I knew a fair amount about soils. I have been farming for 20 years, I have a degree in Agroecology, I even took a few soil science classes in college. I studied a lot of old-school organic gardening methods, which all said "Keep adding organic matter, as much as you can, and everything will balance out with time." Well, 20 years later, having added lots of compost and manure and not much else to our soils every year, and getting two or three soil tests in that time span which I couldn't really interpret, had put me in a tough spot. My soils are pretty unbalanced and now I get to do the hard work of getting them back into shape.

The realization that all was not perfect started with a visit from a new Small Farm Specialist from our county Cooperative Extension office. He stopped by one day unannounced to introduce himself. In 20 years of farming, we have never had a visit from Extension unless it was us doing a farm tour for them, so right off the bat I was surprised and intrigued. Anyway, he stopped by, we hit it off, and I started telling him about some soil issues we were having in some areas of



Arizona Cooperative Extension agent Isaac Mpanga holds a sample of nitrogen-fixing root nodules.

our greenhouse. We took some soil samples and sent some diseased plants off to the pathology lab. I didn't realize all the resources we have at our disposal—most of them free—until he showed up. I have found that it all hinges on having the right agent who really wants to help.

Turns out our soils were extremely high in phosphorus and potassium, a natural phenomenon of our native soil, exacerbated by 20 years of liberal compost application. For now we have stopped using compost, have found an organic source of nitrogen, gypsum, and sulfur, and are focusing on cover cropping for organic matter.

The relationship with our Extension agent continued to develop. We did a cover crop trial in our high tunnel to work on the issues we had identified. He wrote up the findings for a journal. We then planted a one-acre field with a large diversity of cover crop combinations under various fertility treatments, replicated everything, and took samples. We held a field day for local farmers and interested parties to come see it. He next wrote an NRCS grant to continue this soil health study which was funded.



Sadly our amazing Extension agent has moved on to another job, but we are in year two of the soil health study and I am so grateful for the work we did together. I learned so much. Mainly I learned that I don't know enough about soils. And when something isn't clear to me, it's best to enlist an expert. I have since started working with Ellen Polishuk from

Plant to Profit as a farm consultant, mainly around soil health, and I can't recommend her highly enough. I highly suggest watching the recordings of her two talks at the Framingham conference last summer in the ASCFG members only section of the website. She's a gem! And will never get tired of learning more about soils, at least I don't.

Next up, PROFITABILITY. You know when someone asks in an online forum, "How much should I sell a bunch of [fill in the blank] for?" And someone inevitably answers, "Well, that depends on what it costs you to grow it." And while this is 100% accurate, the truth is most of us don't know how to calculate how much it costs us to grow any individual crop when we are growing a high diversity of crops. I am fortunate to be working with Lennie Larkin (of B-Side Farm and former ASCFG board member) on a Western SARE grant project analyzing cost of production and key financial metrics for flower farms. Cost of production (otherwise known as crop costing or enterprise budgeting) is really enlightening, but it is not an easy number to get at in farming, at least in my experience. Everything must be tracked, including labor, paid or your own. You must track every step of the process to get a cut flower from seeding (cost of the seed, soil, or plugs), transplanting, irrigation, weeding, harvesting, and cleaning up the field. Then track yields, postharvest handling, shrink, and sales. Track all the inputs from fertilizer, drip tape, tractor use, equipment replacement costs, pest control, row cover, netting, sleeves, and stickers. That's just a sample list. It's a lot.

I don't think I could ever come up with an accurate number on my own. But working with a group and a facilitator (one who nags you when you don't get all your data entered), and using a robust program is really working. We are each tracking three to four crops using an online tool called "Know Your Cost To Grow" developed at Oregon State University. The beauty of this program is once you get some time studies

done for activities you use across a host of different crops, you can apply them everywhere, so you don't have to track every activity or input for every crop if the activity is the same. We are rounding out year one and heading into year two of the study and I am just starting to see how it all comes together. It's going to be amazing to get all that data. And I can't wait to keep applying it to new crops.

The end goal is that cost of production information can help you with business decision-making and financial sustainability for the long haul. Over the next year I am sure you will hear more about the results from Lennie, and I hope I will also have a lot to share. Really, this is just a plug for embracing the numbers, making room for time tracking, and a reminder that you need to charge what your flowers are worth, so find out what they are worth.

And last but not least, let's talk about FARM TOURS. After two years of saying (out loud, at board meetings) that I would do it, I finally worked up the courage to host an ASCFG Farm Tour. So selfishly, I would love it if you would all come to my farm tour on September 7th. But if the stars don't align, I think it would be great if you could

join one of the other amazing ASCFG Farm Tours happening this year. There is likely one in your state or province or a neighboring one, or there is probably a farm tour near someone you are long overdue for visiting.

Farm tours are always my favorite part of the annual conference; it's an easy way to network and learn a whole bunch of great tips and tricks. On ours, we will focus on integrating a vegetable and flower operation (the pros and cons), employee management, working with equipment, and farming in the arid Southwest. I hope to see you there.

And if not, I really hope to see you at the conference in St. Louis and at the Urban Buds Farm tour. This is the first year I have been on the conference planning committee and it is so fun to put together the program, contact the speakers, and get to know the lineup before anyone else. But the cat is out of the bag now and it's time to register.



## WEST AND NORTHWEST

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



### Erin McMullen

Rain Drop Farm  
raindropfarm@peak.org

This last February was a busy month, despite the fact that there wasn't much farming happening. We spent the majority of the month prepping for the upcoming season, planting hoops with dahlias, cleaning up and mulching perennials, and transplanting, all in hopes that we could get ahead of the curve for a successful and less stressful season in 2023.

Amid all of the busy work, we also spent a fair amount of time connecting with our fellow farmers. While our farm is usually closed (because I just don't have the time and energy to welcome the public), we were able to host a few groups of farmers to visit and talk shop. I always dread those kinds of visits, and then ultimately enjoy them. It's nerve-racking to host farmers! I tend to second guess myself. Is my farm even worth touring? It's mostly mud in February—will people see the backbones and be able to envision how it will look in July? But inevitably we have a great time. We talk about all of the nerdy, farm things that “normal” people wouldn't find nearly as fascinating, and we can commiserate over the challenges, too.

In addition to visitors on the farm, we also helped facilitate a great session at the Oregon State Small Farms Conference. Celeste Monke, from Free Range Flowers in Bellingham, Washington spoke about the ins and outs of flower farming to a group of over 45 farmers from around the Northwest. The conference is generally geared towards vegetable, meat, and grain producers, but they have actively sought out flower farmers over the last 4 or 5 conferences and we've had some great speakers (including our very own Mimo Davis and Miranda Duschack!).

After the full day of conference at OSU we shifted gears to host a PNW Cut Flower Growers group meet-up. This is a group that was started in 2015-ish by Elizabeth Bryant and has continued to serve the flower farmers of the PNW and beyond. We welcomed 85 farmers to the 2023 meetup and hosted 8 learning sessions. We drew farmers from northern California to Vancouver B.C., from the Oregon coast to eastern Washington.

I surveyed all attendees after they signed up, and learned that this year the majority of farmers in attendance were in their first to third year of growing, and were most looking for 1) connection with other farmers and 2) help with sales channels.

We also had quite a few more experienced growers in attendance, both as speakers and learners, which made for a great mix of information and sharing. We also had the pleasure of having many industry reps join us, including Hillary Alger, Joy Longfellow and Heidi Peroni from Johnny's Selected Seeds; Molly Sadowsky and Heather Cook from Mayesh, Portland; as well as Brad Siebe of the Seattle Wholesale Growers Market.

Some of the highlights were a talk on dahlias viruses by Erin Simmons of Handpicked Harvest in Washington State, design sessions, a discussion of how to streamline work between a small farm office and field, and panels about working with partners and employees.

We welcomed Lennie Larkin from B-Side Farm to lead a design session on costing out wedding flowers, as well as Bethany Little from Charles Little and Co., who talked about growing, drying, processing, and using dried flowers. Their design sessions culminated in a hands-on session that was wildly successful, and incredibly messy! We were fortunate to have great sponsors who provided a huge array of flowers for our farmers to play with! Big thanks to Bethany, Lennie, and Beth Syphers, of Crowley House, for managing the chaos and sending everyone home with such beautiful creations.

Panels on marketing flowers were very well attended and I was surprised at how many people were curious about offering their flowers through wholesale channels. I had expected more interest in farmers' markets and direct to retail sales, and was caught off guard by the interest in how to facilitate relationships with wholesalers and designers. Having representatives there from Mayesh and the SWGMC allowed for an open and honest discussion about expectations and communication with wholesale outlets. For those of you who are interested in selling through these kinds of channels, it's worth exploring. The takeaway was to be consistent in communication and to have open discussion about what kinds of products they are needing and wanting.

At the end of the day, we wrapped up with a quick hour and a half of “speed dating with the experts” where each speaker from the day rotated through small table groups to help facilitate more intimate conversations about all things flower farming. I was so busy being a taskmaster and keeping things on time that I didn't get to actually participate, but I did get to overhear some amazing discussion and suspect that the info transfer was invaluable!

It was an amazing weekend, followed up by an ASCFG board meeting in Portland that took place in the middle of a true PNW blizzard, but that's a story for another day—one that I'm still recovering from!

Here's to making connections with your fellow farmers, continuing the quest for knowledge and having a great time doing it. Happy growing everyone!

## CANADA

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



### Sarah Kistner

Stone Meadow Gardens  
stonemeadowflowers@gmail.com

Mid spring may seem like a funny time to talk about honing our list of crops—after all, many of us are well into our spring harvest! But, as flower farmers, we’re always crop planning. I think of it like a wheel that’s constantly turning. There’s a good chance you’re already preparing to order bulbs for next year—am I right? So, as we jump into spring, I’ll encourage you to jump on the crop planning wheel with me! By putting yourself in the right mindset and being prepared for proper record keeping you can create a thoughtful and intentional approach to selecting what you grow.

I reached out to Canadian growers across the country to find out why and how their crop lists change and evolve over time. There were a few themes that emerged, so that’s what I want us to keep in the back of our minds as we dive into the season ahead. By being aware of what we should pay attention to, we can be prepared to keep better notes and records. As they say, what gets measured, gets managed!

The main factors cited for building a crop list were:

- Profitability
- Target market
- Environmental considerations
- Personal preferences

### Profitability

This should always be the top priority for our decision making. Most of the growers I chatted with mentioned dropping something off their list because it just wasn’t profitable for their farm. Keep in mind that there are many factors, such as weather, climate, and your local prices that will come into play regarding whether a flower is profitable for you to grow. But in general, there are a few basic things we need to know to determine if something is making us money or not. Essentially, we need to know how much it costs us to grow a particular crop. And this is where good record keeping comes into play. By tracking this key information, you can make informed decisions later.



The best system of record-keeping is the one you use! I often took photos when a flower first bloomed, and included the plant tag with the seeding date to document the actual time from seed to bloom at our farm.

To start, when you’re prepping beds, make note of how long it takes to till or broad-fork (or however you prepare beds), amend the soil with compost and fertilizer, set up irrigation, lay out landscape fabric (if you use that), plant, etc.

You can use that information later and apply it generally across the board to all annual crops you grow. But then you’ll need to track data that will differ depending on the crop. But don’t feel overwhelmed! Pick just a few crops to tackle each year. Start with your biggest sellers. For these crops track how many stems harvested per plant and how long it takes on average to cut a 10-stem bunch (or whatever unit you want to use). Also track the waste—in the field (plants you didn’t harvest), the packing shed (breakage or other damage), or cut stems you didn’t sell.

Decide now, when you have the mental space, which crops you’re going to do more in-depth tracking of. Take steps to make it easier for your future self—who will be very busy! Create a template in your journal or calendar or phone (whatever works best for you) where you can jot down all the data you’ll need so you can have a true picture of your actual crop costs. Don’t worry about creating the perfect system for this—the best system is the one you will use. Make it easy so it actually gets done!

At the end of the season you'll be ready to do some crop costing (or enterprise budgeting) that will really help you look at things in black and white. Go to the Education Portal on the ASCFG members-only site and watch Diane Szukovathy's presentation, "Creating and Successfully Implementing Enterprise Budgets", from the 2019 Denver conference to guide you through doing this.

**Know Your Market**

Across the board, this was a major factor that all the growers listed in deciding what to grow (or not!) What works in your market might not work in mine.

For example, I saw a post from another Canadian grower recently that took me by surprise. Chantelle Edwards at Petit Flower Farm in Norfolk County, Ontario had a list of the crops she wouldn't be growing this season. Towards the top of the list was something I couldn't imagine not growing, sunflowers. I reached out to find out more. She sells almost exclusively to florists, and that's shifting to event florists specifically. She realized that while a brick-and-mortar florist shop needs a full spectrum of blooms to create designs for all sorts of occasions, her customers were predominantly designing for weddings. They wanted whites and softer colors and sunflowers just didn't fit the bill. So, while they might be great for me, serving as the foundation of so many market bouquets or as straight bunches, they just don't make sense for her. I commend Chantelle for doing what we all need to do each and every season—asses our market and fine-tune our crop list accordingly!

Bailey Dueker of Boondock Flower Farm in Biggar, Saskatchewan is looking to gear her production more towards florists as well, so she's refining her color palette to better suit the needs of her customers. She's also planning to focus on some high-demand crops such as ranunculus, fancy tulips, dahlias, and lisianthus that newer growers in her area might not yet have the expertise or the upfront capital to invest in growing in large quantities.

Another way that knowing our market can help us refine our crop list is by paying attention to what colors our customers want and when they want them. For example, Brenda Visser of Flowers of the Field in Prescott, Ontario is cutting out 'Autumn Colours' rudbeckia because the colors aren't



It's important to know when your customers want particular colors. Autumn colors are more popular in the fall.

popular until early autumn when her rudbeckia has petered out for the season. And I heard a similar insight from Joanne Feddes of La Primavera Farm in Dundas, Ontario. She finds the autumn-toned and plum sunflowers aren't what her customers want in the middle of summer. She changed up her growing calendar and shifted those to grow only for fall harvests when they're in high demand.

Another aspect of learning your market is knowing whether you have the right clientele to support growing a higher-end bloom. Sophie Ducharme at Fleurs de Ferme in St Christine, Quebec reports that she'll be dropping Colibri poppies this year because she doesn't have enough high-end designers in her area that are willing to pay a premium for those specialized blooms. I know this can be a hard one

for many of us—the temptation is strong! But if your market won't support it, you have to cut it out.

Be sure you're keeping detailed sales records to help you make these types of decisions later. Make notes about what sells first or what's leftover at the end of the day. This will be valuable information later.

*Sometimes a flower is just not your cup of tea!  
From sticky to stinky there are plenty of  
reasons we just don't want to grow  
something—and that's ok.  
Chances are your customers will  
love all the other beautiful blooms  
you offer and will not miss that  
particular flower  
(I'm looking at you, Nicotiana).*

## Environmental Factors

This was another factor that weighs heavily for many growers when it comes to crop planning. From heat domes to hurricanes, bomb cyclones and atmospheric rivers, climate change is something we're all facing. But it's better to move ahead with our eyes wide open, instead of betting that last year's freak (fill in the blank) won't happen again. Many growers, like Brenda, cited dropping a crop—in her case field-grown dahlias—because of worries about drought. In a sandy soil it's challenging to keep them well watered and with rainfall becoming unpredictable she's made the tough call to drop them off her list. Also, many people reported that they plan to add more perennials as a strategy to deal with the changing climate as the plant's established root systems can help them be more resilient.

Regional climactic factors, such as humidity or heavy rains, also came up as reasons for putting something on the chopping block. For example, Sophie won't be growing ornamental basil anymore because it consistently falls prey to downy mildew.

Other environmental concerns that may affect our crop lists are pest issues. Joanne at La Primavera said she's shifted to generally growing fewer whites because the insect pressure is high and they're so prone to showing weather damage. However, she's not giving up on them all together! She's growing whites and blushes in a high tunnel where they're better protected and she can "babysit" them more easily since they're all located in one spot. Smart thinking!

## Personal

There's one more factor worth mentioning and that's personal preferences. We try out so many different blooms as our farms evolve and another theme I noticed was how much our tolerance level for finicky flowers diminishes over time. Most of the farmers I chatted with told me they were cutting out blooms that they found too fussy to pick such as bachelor's button or agrostemma. People felt they were just too time-consuming to harvest, and their value and/or demand isn't high enough in their market to justify keeping them around.

And sometimes a flower is just not your cup of tea! From sticky to stinky there are plenty of reasons we just don't want to grow something—and that's ok. Chances are your customers will love all the other beautiful blooms you offer and will not miss that particular flower (I'm looking at you, nicotiana).

As you go forward into this season, I encourage you to be a careful observer and to devote some time every week to making field notes and keeping the necessary records that will help you down the road. Empower yourself with the information to make informed, educated decisions about your crop plan. It's so easy to be swayed by emotion, a dreamy Instagram post, or your not-so-reliable memory instead of approaching these important decisions with the unbiased knowledge and data you gained through a season of careful observation and data collection.



Agrostemma is a whimsical and airy addition to designs, but ended up on the chopping block for many farmers because of the tedious nature of harvesting.



Nicotiana has been cut from many a crop list because it's just sooooo sticky to handle!

## Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

- Sarah Acconcia, Juniper Culinary Apothecary, Baltimore, MD  
 Chandravir Ahuja, Great Ring Farm, Sandy Hook, CT  
 Julie Akins, Glad To Know Ya Farm, Inc., Marion, NY  
 Terren Alford, Nicolie Flower House, Wake Forest, NC  
 Colleen Allard, Jenny's Edibles & Blooms, East Falmouth, MA  
 Erika Arldt, Gap Blooms, Buffalo Gap, TX  
 Akosua Asare, re.Planted Urban Farm, Deep River, ON  
 Louise Astier, Robintide Farms, Maple, ON  
 Barbara Babbitt, Homewood Flower Farm, Uniontown, OH  
 Julie Barton, Barton Farm, Scotland, CT  
 Casey Battles, Mae Spicers, Texarkana, AR  
 Kim Bayer, Slow Farm, Ann Arbor, MI  
 Danielle Bedard, Ripley's Gardens & Local Flowers, Slokan, BC  
 Christine Belokonny, Fields of Joy Flower Co., Vancouver, WA  
 Barbara Bennett, Richmond, VA  
 Colin Bennett, Echo Rock Flowers, Westerly, RI  
 Traci Benoit, Mad Horse Farms, Longville, LA  
 Leah Bischof, Honeydew Fields, St. Cloud, MN  
 Jodie Borchers, UtiliCom, Lancaster, OH  
 Dani Boss, Summer Skye Gardens, Spring, TX  
 Gwen Boulter, Rockford, MI  
 Lana Braun, Hummingbird Farm, Winlaw, BC  
 Mary Bricker, SweetRoot Farm, Hamilton, MT  
 Ben Brown, Allen's Acres, Lakeland, FL  
 Virginia Brown, Late Bloomer Flowers, San Luis Obispo, CA  
 Charla Burgess Kramer, Sow She Grows, Frankfort, MI  
 Joanne Burkholder, Nature Inspired Designs, Williamsburg, PA  
 Stephanie Burnett, Univ. of Maine Horticulture, Orono, ME  
 Deanna Byrne, Poppies & Petals Farm, Rohnert Park, CA  
 Katie Carothers, KCK Farms, Anthony, KS  
 Alison Casey, Sweet Virginia Blooms, Dayton, VA  
 Joshua Caswell, Good Nature Flowers, Tacoma, WA  
 Jeanette Chelmo, JC Farms, Kimball, SD  
 Tamara Christensen, Muddy Creek Family Farm, Monroe, OR  
 Yelena Churchill, Moon Rose Gardens, Grand Forks, BC  
 Jennifer Colantonio, Doylestown, PA  
 Kaitlyn Conklin, Morning Star Inspirations, Jeffersonville, NY  
 Karli Cook, Olivewood Flowers, Woodland, CA  
 Mary Cook, Sanford Cove, Walnut Cove, NC  
 Jenifer Craddick, Lovenwater Farm, Watford City, ND  
 Jim Cunningham, Cunningham Callaway Farms, Fulton, MO  
 Cynthia Damico, Design in Bloom, Hood, VA  
 Sarah Davie, Flora Fields, Enfield, NH  
 Rechelle Day, Freckled Bloom Flower Farm, Estacada, OR  
 Diana DeMarsico, Wild Meadow Farm, Jamaica, VT  
 Brittany Dempsey, Cottage Hill Farms, Mohnton, PA  
 Kimberly DeVries, Touch of Dutch Farm Market,  
 Richland Center, WI  
 Elba Dinardo, Lynchburg, VA  
 Monique Dozer, Red Oak Flower Farm, Elizabethtown, KY  
 Kristen Dresen, Wayward Fields, Verona, WI  
 Meagan Drinkard, Poppy Leigh Flower Farm, Livingston, TX  
 Élisabeth Dubé, Ferme Mouvance, Saint-Jean-Port-Joliq, QC  
 Wendi DuBois, Songbird Blooms, Grass Lake, MI  
 Heather Duval-Foote, Barefoote Blooms, Waterville, OH  
 Chantal Emmanuel, Lagrange Rouge Farm, Lagrangeville, NY  
 Elizabeth English, Flora Hill Growers, Muscatine, IA  
 Elizabeth Esh, Millwood Flowers, Willow Street, PA  
 Robin Farris, Denver Flower Company, Denver, CO  
 Amy Ferguson, Columbia, MO  
 Wendy Fleisher, Waynesville, OH  
 Diana Fleming, Queensdale Farm, Toronto, ON  
 Twyla Forbes, Forbes Farm, Deer Park, WA  
 Amelia Fortin, Columbus, OH  
 Carrie Foster, Faith Way Flowers, Norton, MA  
 Lauren Gardner, Freedom Flowers and Orchard, Monroe, VA  
 Laurie Gehrt, Morning Walk Farm, Excelsior Springs, MO  
 Barrie Genrich, Touch of the Tropics, Stanthorpe,  
 Queensland, Australia  
 Bart Gilmer, Falcon Ridge Farm, Toone, TN  
 Mary Jane and Kenneth Glisson Keller, Quick Magic Garden,  
 Carbondale, IL  
 Katie Goff, Wild Liberty Acres, Sweet Home, OR  
 Amanda Goodrich, Diamond, OH  
 Karie Gordon, Red Hog Flowers, Woodinville, WA  
 Miranda Gould, New Petal Flower Farm, Monroe, CT  
 Darragh Graham, Miel Mercantile, Longmont, CO  
 Kylie Gray-Eilers, Gray Girl Farms, Royal City, WA  
 Kate Grenert, Poppies & Petals Farm, Rohnert Park, CA  
 Julie Grim, Texoma Farms, Gordonville, TX  
 Jennifer Hadfield, Freshly Cut Stems, Dallas, TX  
 Taryn Haggerty, Wild Poppy Farm, Grafton, MA  
 Stephanie Haims, Lakehurst Farm, Manchester, ME  
 Lauren Harmon, Le Jardin Harmon, Cincinnati, OH  
 Ashlie Harper, Camille's Cut Flowers, Rome, GA  
 Julie Harrison, Julie The Garden Fairy, West Suffield, CT  
 Tiffany Hayden, Hayden House Gardens, Saint Clair Shores, MI  
 Amanda Hayes, Kamrose Garden, Jefferson City, TN  
 Mary Heath, Kendallville, IN  
 Lorrie Henry, Henry Berry and Dairy, Valliant, OK  
 Tanya Hess, Grey House Flowers, Vancouver, WA  
 Frank Hodge, Father Earth Organic Farm, Lafayette, CO  
 Caitlin Horgan, Flora Farm Design, Nassau, NY  
 Linda Hutchinson, The Ivy Cottage Country Flowers, Omeme, ON  
 Linnie Ireland, Michigan Plant Magic, Warren, MI  
 Sharon Ivy, Morton, MS  
 Ben Jenkins, Lake Orange Farm, Apex, NC  
 Jessica Johnson, Johnson Family Farm, Verndale, MN  
 Donna Johnson, Vernon, BC  
 Jennifer Jonak, Dragon Song Farm, Eugene, OR  
 Marcella Kammerer, Kammerer Heritage Farm, Mount Hope, ON  
 Kathryn Kangas, Kathy's Cut Flowers, Dafter, MI  
 Neva Keeley, Hindsight Homestead, Piney Flats, TN  
 Teresa Kemmer, Five Flowers Farm, Crossville, TN  
 Jen Kerhin, SB Expos & Events, Middle River, MD  
 Jennifer Kilber, Gem Bloom Flower Company, Aberdeen, SD



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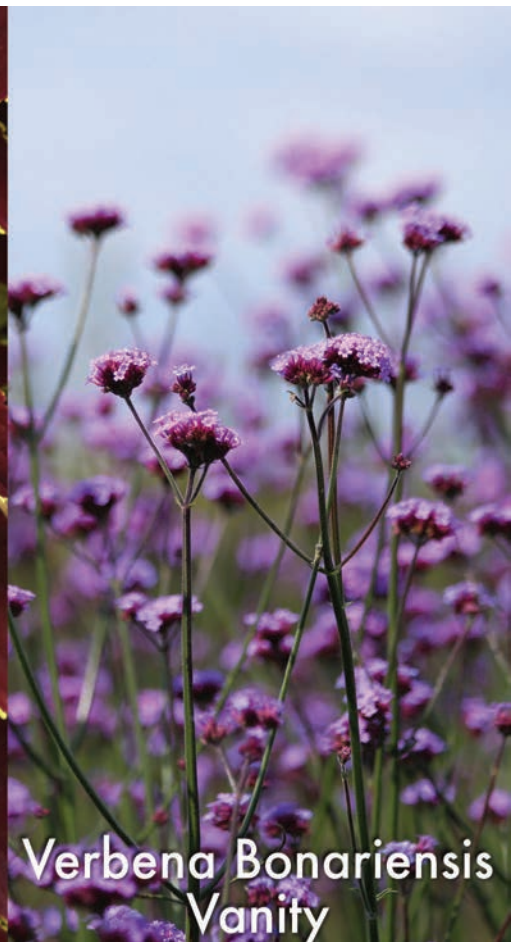
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Julie Kistenmacher, Anthologie Farm, Urbandale, IA  
Joan Klingensmith, River Folk Flowers, Union, MO  
Sherl Klopfenstein, Windy Hill Flower Farm, Kendallville, IN  
Katelyn Koenig, Highland Farm & Floral Co., Rexburg, ID  
Jessica Krohn, Petal and Thorn, Sioux City, IA  
Amanda Kyne, Eisler Farms, Butler, PA  
Jessica Langer, Jude Holler Farm, Burkesville, KY  
Victoria Legris, Mad Valley Flower Farm & Nursery, Dacre, ON  
Kellen Lignier, Kellen's Flower House, Cottage Grove, OR  
Betty Longworth, Countryside Gardens, Philadelphia, TN  
Teresa Loudon, A Bee's Dream, Seaman, OH  
Daniel Lulli, Merrimack, NH  
Laura Mabe, Hardin Branch Farm, Toey, AL  
Karen Mandell, Running Creek Farm, Cincinnati, OH  
Lynn Mara, Casting Crowns, New Era, MI  
Julie Martens Forney, Words that Bloom, Millersburg, PA  
Brooke Marvin, The Flower Café, Bloomington, IL  
Leslie Marzella, Heirloom Flower Farm, Calera, AL  
Aimee Mason, Wandering Roots Flower Farm, Churchton, MD  
Molly Mauzy, Brown Dog Blooms, Staunton, VA  
Shanyn McAfee, Red Barn Pharm, Excelsior Springs, MO  
Mary McCord, Gardening Sisters Flower Farm, Sikeston, MO  
Jessica McGougan, Stormy Woods, Elgin, SC  
Susan McKeone, Lily's Flower Stand, Harleysville, PA  
Kayla McShea, Yours, Florally, Hagerstown, MD  
Alison Meikle, Barton Farms, Mansfield, CT  
Anastasia Mejia, Saur Farming, Parkdale, OR  
Jessica Merrick, Shooting Star Farm, Gravel Switch, KY  
Alanna Messner-Scholl, Wavy Roo Florals, Harleysville, PA

Amy Methvin, Leoma, TN  
Deborah Miller, Fly Creek Flowers, Fly Creek, NY  
Jennifer Myer, Raven and Crow Farm, Carmel, IN  
Nicole Nelson, Stillwater, MN  
Megan O'Mullane, Garden Keeper, Anchorage, AK  
Samantha Oldrid, Fern & Feather Flower Co., Bellingham, MA  
Cheryl Olney, Litchfield, MI  
Taylor Olsen, Minneapolis, MN  
Jennifer Orkisz, The Peony Patch, Grand Blanc, MI  
Michael Osborn, Sunset Harvest Farm, Freeburg, IL  
Elisha Paratore, Lish's Flower Stand, Painesville, OH  
Leah Partridge, Etheridge Sage, Colbert, GA  
Renee Pepin, Branch & Thorn Flower Farm, Windsor, VT  
April Peterson, Pine Lake Petals, Sioux Falls, SD  
Kim Phelps, Dragonfly Hill Farm, Waverly, VA  
LaParis Phillips, Brooklyn Blooms, Brooklyn, NY  
Jerome Plante, Plante Deseve Ferme Urbaine, Stoke, QC  
Gloria Plourde, Butlercreek Studio, Brighton, ON  
Lacey Poff, Three Little Goats Farm, Smithsburg, MD  
Tom Pote, Gladstone, NJ  
Pascale Poussart, Skinny Trees Farm, Hopewell, NJ  
Megan Powell, Nourished Farms, Cape Girardeau, MO  
Lina Raciukaicis, Sol Gardens, Allston, MA  
Mary Rawson, Rawson's Farm, Stratham, NH  
Krystal Reeb, Reeb's Farm Market, Orient, OH  
Amy Reed, Sherwood Roots, Plain City, OH  
Alexis Rehbaum, Wild Goose Farm, Moncks Corner, SC  
Grace Reineke, Mill Creek Flower Farm, Dunlap, IA  
Dianne Reitan, Dianne's Dahlias, Colorado Springs, CO




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## Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members *continued*

Oliver Retzloff, Wild Nectar Farm, Longmont, CO  
 Gonzalo Garcia Reyes, Lomita Farm, Troutdale, OR  
 Nichole Roatch, Cistern Flower Farm, Flatonia, TX  
 Sherri Rodgers-Conti, Twin Silos Flower Farm, Yankton, SD  
 Benjamin Rousseau, Old Exit 17 Farm, Franklin, MA  
 Aubrey Sanjenko, Moss + Mirth Farm, Revelstoke, BC  
 Kristin Schaapveld, Schaapveld Sprouts, Muscatine, IA  
 Kristi Schuldt, Heartland Blooms-n-Berry Farm, Caledonia, MN  
 Sara Searl, Strawberry Moon Blooms, Kingsport, TN  
 Nicole Seavey, Blooms at Blueberry Ridge, Pittsfield, NH  
 Teryn Sedillo, Bitter Boy Farms, Fort Calhoun, NE  
 Sarah Segro, Shoving Leopard Farm, Stone Ridge, NY  
 Grace Seivert, Prairie Bison Blooms, Vivian, SD  
 Samantha Sheppard, The Blooming Backyard, Williamsburg, OH  
 Claire Sibley, The Paddock, Carnation, WA  
 Evelyn Siu, Brown Shoe Flower Farm, Chardon, OH  
 Jolanda Slagmolen, Tierra Flores, High River, AB  
 Cindy Smith, Hope Valley Farm, Knoxville, MD  
 Deb Smith, The Greensmith, Selingsgrove, PA  
 Sarah Smith, Gossamer Gardens Flower Farm, Smiths Falls, ON  
 Stacy Smith, Angels of the Prairie, Cambridge, MN  
 Wendy Sneed, DS Farms, McMinnville, TN  
 Becky Socia, Blue-Eyed Susan, Roscommon, MI  
 Janet Spain, Washington, DC  
 Erin Stamper, That Little Flower Farm, Hunt Valley, MD  
 David Steury, Fox Run Farm, Middletown, MD  
 Tey Stiteler, The Secret Spot, Lumberton, MS  
 Molly Streicher, Eudaemonia Florals, Chicago, IL  
 Heather Strong, Wildflower Bokays Flower Farm, Tremonton, UT  
 Jennifer Suder, Brajen's Flower Farm, Elwood, IN  
 Anne Sumner, Walla Walla Flower Farm, Milton-Freewater, OR  
 Kristina Swanson, Valley to Vase, Maryville, TN

Lisa Swanson, Zinnia Designs/The Root, Hingham, MA  
 Jennifer Tarter, Ceres, VA  
 Lisa Testa, Fiore Farm, Uxbridge, ON  
 Catherine Thibault, Saison des fleurs,  
 Saint-Édouard-de-Maskinongé, QC  
 Tina Tijan, Goose Feather Flowers, Underhill, VT  
 Chelsea Tippett, Little Thistle Flower Co., Marshall, VA  
 Sheri Tonioli-Gross, Red Barn Farm, New Florence, MO  
 Marian Tonks, Peace Hill Farm, Sundridge, ON  
 Tanya Topolewski, Washington, DC  
 Korina Trew, The Pajama Farm, Puyallup, WA  
 Christina Tromburg, Chickadee Thicket Cut Flower Farm,  
 Meridian, ID  
 Marguerite Tyler-McWilliams, Millie and Mads, Groton, MA  
 Amy Vangeytenbeek, Buds and Blooms Flower Farm, Dunnville, ON  
 Christa Vecchi, Cedarmere in the Blue Ridge, Arlington, VA  
 Jennifer Visser, Greener Pastures Farm, Waterville, NS  
 Hannah Volpi, FoxiFlora, Trumansburg, NY  
 RosaLee Walker, Cherry Creek Flower Farm, Collinsville, OK  
 Julia Wargo, Petals by Pedal, Vashon, WA  
 Tina Weaver, Petal & Caps, Fellsmere, FL  
 Annette Webb, Laurel Glen Farm and Flowers, Toccoa, GA  
 Holli Whitacre, Florish Flower Farm, Kellerton, IA  
 Roger Wilhoite, Gather and Blüme events floral, Maryville, TN  
 Jess Willey, Goose Feather Flowers, Fairfax, VT  
 Christine Williams, Little Swatara Creek Flowers, Lebanon, PA  
 Emily Williams, Stumpfield Farm, Temple, NH  
 Heather Witt, Laurentian Flowers, Pembroke, ON  
 Stephanie Wittry, Fayetteville, GA  
 Debbie Woodbury, Woodstad Farm, Benton City, WA  
 Mary Wright, MW Flower Farm, Wylie, TX  
 Meagan and Tom Zegarelli, Ocean Fog Farm, Eastport, NY  
 Laurie Ziliak, Daylight Land Management, Haubstadt, IN

# Thanks for the Good Word!

*You connected some of our new members to the ASCFG!*

Gretel and Steve Adams	Linda Doan	Grace Lam	Annie Sasseville
Hillary Alger	Dave Dowling	Allyson Lambert	Robert Schaedle
Chet Anderson	Diane Downy	Barbara Lamborne	Danille Schami
Heather Anderson	Michelle Elston	Lennie Larkin	Daniel Schavey
Allan Armitage	Ellen Frost	Jennie Love	Val Schirmer
Frank and Pamela Arnosky	Carl and Jan Galloni	Aisha Lurry	Maggie Sheehan
Jessie Babbitt	Julie Garity	Sherry Lynn	Alexis Sheffield
Maryjo Barga	Beverly Glass	Jeanie McKewan	Scott Shepherd
Erin Benzakein	Diane Glock-Cornman	Erin McMullen	Mary Turner
Phoebe Brubaker	Bailey Hale	Marina Michahelles	Vanessa Vaught
Joe Burns	Marnie Haloubek	Sarah Nixon	Molly Watson
Lynn Byczynski	Melanie Harrington	Henk Onings	Joanna Webb
Stephenie Chow	Janis Harris	Mandy and Steve O'Shea	Jessie Westover
Calvin Cook	Polly and Mike Hutchison	Molly Payne	Michelle Wheeler
Amy Crawford	Jen Irving	Shanti Rade	Lori Whitten
Mimo Davis	Niki Irving	Laura Beth Resnick	Lisa Ziegler
Melissa Deseve	Yeon Kim	Jamie Rohda	
Randall Dickinson	Rebecca Kutzer-Rice	Kim Santolla	

## Dave Dowling Scholarships Awarded for 2023

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



### **Jessica Brown, Michigan State University**

Jessica is currently a graduate student, pursuing a master's degree at MSU. She has a bachelor's degree in biomedical science from Western Michigan University. Her hands-on horticulture experience includes in-house research at Kalamazoo Specialty Plants, and as a geneticist assistant at Native Traits Corporation.

Working now with Dr. Roberto Lopez, she is investigating the influence of photoperiod on flower yield and quality. As she says "An understanding of photoperiod response is crucial for cut flower production, providing an opportunity to hasten flowering and improve flower quality." Her goal is to someday make an impact uncovering advancements toward the cultivation of more high-quality flowers.



### **Abigail Ulsaker, University of West Georgia**

An ecology and field biology major at the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, Abigail also has a "passion for beauty, and wholesome farming practices". Her studies at West Georgia will give her a better understanding soil and plant microecosystems for the implementation of farming practices using natural systems.

Abigail has worked four years at the Little Flower Garden in Douglasville, Georgia, where she has been a part of every step of flower production from seeding to florist deliveries. She plans to own and operate a small-scale cut flower farm using high tunnel growing, and produce dried flowers and floral wreaths.



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.



## Exciting Changes to the ASCFG Mentor Program: Part One of Two

Rebecca Marrall, ASCFG Education Director

The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers has long hosted a mentor program that connected established flower farmers with beginning or new farmers throughout North America. The goal of the program is to fast track younger or inexperienced growers through the learning phase of beginning flower farming to ensure more successful ventures and to create quality growers. The requirement for participation? Qualified beginning farmers must be ASCFG members to participate. And as with any program, this offering currently underwent a review by the Association's new Education Director for suggested revisions and/or additions.

### **Research: Results from an Environmental Scan**

Coming on board in 2022, I engaged in a review of other agricultural and floricultural organizations to determine common features of mentorship programs in North America. In my conversation with Sarah Sohn, formerly of Future Harvests and an expert on mentorship programs in agricultural settings, I found that there are three primary prospective audiences for a mentor program. And of course, each of these audiences have different educational needs to foster continual learning throughout their careers. They are:

**Ag-Curious:** Before farmers and growers start a floricultural operation, they are often curious about what's entailed and are seeking information about the field/industry. These prospective grow-

ers may not have access to land, crops, or growing and operational processes in place yet. The educational needs for the Ag-Curious crowd comprised a wide array of topics: How to start a business, how to grow, how to sell the product, and how to become more profitable over time, among many other topics. This audience would most often benefit from a Getting Started guide, an introductory course to farming, and other resources prior to working one-on-one with a mentor.

**Ag-Committed:** These early career farmers have access to land, crops, and some nascent processes in place to grow the crops. They often need support around refining their own growing processes, sales and business models, and operational details.

**Seasoned Growers:** These established farmers have their practices and crops dialed in, and most often need peer expert consultations for efficiency hacks, breaking into new markets, bouncing ideas off one another, and more.

Furthermore, my research showed several that there are different mentorship models. The one-to-one model is perhaps the common notion people think of when they think of mentorship: A single mentor (a senior farmer) matched with an early career farmer mentee (1-3 years) for a specified duration of time, during which the mentor shares expertise, moral support, and provides guidance for agricultural best practices.

In addition to the one-to-one mentorship model, there are more existing frameworks. The one-to-many model usually occurs when a single expert mentors a group of early career farmers, often around a specific topic (for example, writing a business plan, developing a sales strategy, growing a specific crop, etc.). It's also important to know that the expert in question need not be a farmer but instead could be a related expert. The format of the one-to-many mentorship model is quite diverse and can occur through accountability groups on social media, one-time workshops, limited duration classes, webinars, and more.

Two other forms of mentorship I found interesting were the consultations approach and internships. Consultations involve an expert who provides a one-time evaluation, either virtual or in person, for a farmer on a specific topic, crop, or process. Usually of a short duration, these partnerships are often focused on a request of narrow scope and significant expertise. Consultations can be suitable for either early career or seasoned growers, and while most people are aware of paid consultation opportunities offered by numerous floricultural and agricultural experts, one of the examples I discovered consisted of an exchange of unpaid consultations between two farmers who each had differing areas of expertise—a wonderful case of peer-to-peer learning.

Lastly, internships are for early career or prospective farmers seeking out an opportunity to participate in the industry, such as working on a farm or in a greenhouse, to learn new

skills and further refine their own goals for flower farming. Internships differ from one-on-one mentoring due to the fact the mentee in question is likely learning from several experts in the industry as opposed to a single expert. Furthermore, internships may have a structured program with specific learning activities and desired outcomes for those activities.

### **Forthcoming Changes to the ASCFG Mentor Program**

So why share the results of this environmental scan? Any educational program benefits from routine evaluation and adjustment, and the ASCFG Mentor Program is no different in this regard. The results of my research on mentor programs in North America have directly informed some upcoming changes to the Association's Mentor Program.

The goals and objectives of the program haven't changed. One of our primary goals with the Mentor Program is to foster the professional development of quality cut flower growers and that remains the same in the new iteration of the program. Our members collectively possess a vast knowledge base of flower farming. Passing along this expertise contributes to the success of beginning farmers and ensures that best practices in the cut flower community are shared widely for a well-informed industry.

A secondary, parallel goal to sharing knowledge is building community within the ASCFG's membership. All growers can benefit from a personal connection with each other. The mutual commitment for learning and networking inherent in a mentoring partnership extends for years beyond the mentor program, and strengthens bonds throughout the ASCFG community. As we move into the future, we hope to explore different methods for building community through innovative mentoring pilot programs so that more of our members can benefit from these learning opportunities.

Thank you for reading Part One of this article. The second half is forthcoming in the next issue. In the meantime, if you ever have a question or would like to share about your own experience(s), I'm happy to listen. You may reach me at [education@ascfg.org](mailto:education@ascfg.org). I look forward to hearing from you.

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# ASCFG 2023 Conference

## November 6 - 8, 2023

### Hyatt St. Louis at the Arch

### St. Louis, Missouri



## Monday, November 6

### Urban Buds City Grown Flowers Farm Tour

Urban Buds is a renowned flower farm in St. Louis, Missouri. Led by Mimo Davis and Miranda Duschack, co-owners, ASCFG members will have the opportunity to register for a farm tour, which will go over farming operations and how these practices are shaped by the urban environment.

Urban Buds has a rich agricultural history. The South St. Louis City farmstead is located seven miles south of the St. Louis Gateway Arch and dates to 1870. The Held family purchased the farm in 1905. For three generations, the Helds farmed the land, growing vegetables and flowers to sell in St. Louis. In 1925 they opened a retail florist shop, and by the 1950's were operating several glass greenhouses, one of which still stands. The property diminished over the years as pieces were sold off for development and the family eventually sold the farm in the mid 1990's. The property changed hands several times until Urban Buds purchased it in 2012 in order to revitalize the property and in a nod to its incredible history, to continue the farming tradition. The land totals about an acre, one glass greenhouse remains as does the former florist shop. The rehab on these distressed structures continues.



#### Morning Tour:

8:00 a.m. Check in at the Hyatt St. Louis at the Arch  
8:15 a.m. Board buses  
8:30 a.m. Buses depart *NO PERSONAL VEHICLES PERMITTED*  
9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Farm Tour  
11:00 – 11:30 a.m. Buses will return to hotel.

#### Afternoon Tour:

Noon Check in at the Hyatt St. Louis at the Arch  
12:15 p.m. Board buses  
12:30 p.m. Buses depart *NO PERSONAL VEHICLES PERMITTED*  
1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Farm Tour  
3:00 – 3:30 p.m. Buses will return to hotel.

## Conference

#### 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. Start your 2023 ASCFG Conference experience with the Trade Show and Welcome Reception!

After picking up your registration materials, this is the time to visit the Trade Show and meet cut flower industry vendors and suppliers. You can also participate in the Regional Rendezvous, which are specific locations in the hotel dedicated to connecting cut flower growers and farmers with other professionals in their ASCFG Regions. Lastly, don't miss the floral design demonstration by the renowned Julio Freitas of The Flower Hat in Bozeman, Montana. His floral arch demonstration will cover the design process, sourcing materials, and much more. Light refreshments and a cash bar will be available.

#### 6:00 p.m. Floral Design with Julio Freitas of The Flower Hat, Bozeman, Montana

The Flower Hat is a floral design studio and flower farm nestled in the beautiful mountains of Gallatin Valley in Bozeman, Montana. The Studio is headed by internationally published designer Julio Freitas, whose design style embraces the seasons to create a loose, natural aesthetic that has graced hundreds of events. He started his growing operations on 1,800 sq ft and quickly leased ¼ acre plot for a few years, where he was able to grow and harvest thousands of flowers by using high intensity techniques before moving on to purchase his own farm.

### 8:30 a.m. State of the Floriculture Industry: Current Status and Prospective Trends

#### Dr. Melinda Knuth, NCSU

In this session, Dr. Melinda Knuth, an Assistant Professor in Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University, will provide an overview of the current status of the cut flower industry within North America (and beyond) before forecasting future trends and considerations for cut flower farmers. Dr. Knuth has evaluated trade flows of horticulture products in the United States, assessed the supply chain in the cut flower industry, investigated profit margins in substituting species in floral arrangements, and estimated consumer acceptance of retail messaging. Her talk will give attendees a nuanced understanding of the cut flower market and inspire new ideas for sales and operating opportunities.

### 9:30 a.m. Value-added Products, Services, and Outreach

#### Adam and Jennifer O'Neal, Pepper Harrow Farm, Iowa

Adam and Jennifer O'Neal are the husband-and-wife farming duo of PepperHarrow Farm. Whether it's through hosting workshops or volunteering with local organizations, Adam and Jenn are dedicated to nurturing a community of gardeners who share their vision for a healthier, more sustainable world. They believe in the power of flowers to bring beauty, wellness and connection to people's lives. Their farm is more than just a business – it's a place of inspiration and connection to the natural world. This philosophy drives their desire to connect with people through strategic outreach and to provide innovative products and services at PepperHarrow. This presentation will provide an overview of the value-added products and services Adam and Jennifer have implemented, and will inspire attendees to consider new initiatives for their own cut flower operations.

### 11:00 a.m. New Flowers, New Sales: Engage your Customers with Fun New Cultivars!

#### Dr. John Dole, NCSU

The ASCFG National Cut Flower Trials are recognized as the only national cut flower evaluations in the United States. Growers in all zones test new annual, perennial, bulb, and woody cut flower varieties for hardiness, yield, stem length, and marketability. Breeders and suppliers rely on these Trials as an integral part of their cultivar development and evaluation process. Data are compiled by Dr. John Dole at North Carolina State University, where postharvest testing is also done. In this session, Dr. Dole will provide an overview of the results associated with the latest round of cut flower evaluations. Attendees can then determine which new cultivars may be appropriate for their own cut flower farming and growing operations.

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

### 1:30 p.m. Dried Florals and Botanicals in Design

#### Hannah Muller, Fully Belly Farm, California

Hannah Muller is a farmer florist from Full Belly Farm and creates unique and wild garden style designs for weddings and events. She also makes wreaths and textural installations with the flowers they dry in Full Belly Farm's Wreath Room and incorporates dried flowers into her other designs along with fresh flowers. Over the last decade, she has helped to pioneer the Field-To-Vase and Slow Flower movement in Northern California. In this presentation, Hannah will describe the creation and evolution of The Wreath Room, a popular dried floral wreath Instagram account, and share ideas with attendees on how to expand into dried florals on their own operations.

### 2:45 p.m. Creating Flower Collectives: Strategies for Success

#### Theresa Schumilas, Garden Party Flower Farm, Ontario

With a doctorate in economic geography and a decades-long career as an organic vegetable and flower farmer, Dr. Schumilas is an early innovator of the community supported agriculture model in Canada. In recent years, she has combined her applied knowledge and scholarly expertise to assist small-scale cut flower farms in collaborating in online marketplaces and collectives. Her presentation will cover proven strategies for developing successful cut flower collectives.

### 4:00 p.m. Resiliency in Farming: Disaster Recovery and Perseverance

#### Adam and Jennifer O'Neal, Pepper Harrow Farm, Iowa

In March 2022, Adam and Jennifer O'Neal of PepperHarrow experienced one of the worst nightmares a farmer can face: A natural disaster. A tornado ripped through the farm in Iowa, causing the O'Neals to seek shelter in their basement. Once the danger passed, they began the long recovery process. In this session, they will share an overview of what occurred and how they rebuilt after the tornado. While they will focus on their specific experience, they will also share resilience and disaster recovery strategies with attendees.

### 1:30 p.m. Mental Health, Self-Care, and Burnout Prevention for Farmers

#### Megz Reynolds, The Do More Agriculture Foundation, Saskatchewan

Megz Reynolds is the Executive Director of The Do More Agriculture Foundation in Saskatchewan, Canada, and has first hand experience in agriculture as a former grain farmer. Personally familiar with the unique challenges the industry faces, Megz has been part of creating change at a provincial, federal and global level, always with a focus on the mental health of producers and the industry as a whole. In her presentation, Megz will provide an overview of self-care and resilience strategies for farmers as well as resources for further support.

### 2:45 p.m. Evaluating Profitability in Cut Flower Farming

#### Lennie Larkin, B-Side Farm, Oregon

Equal parts flower farmers and educators, B-Side Farm and Floral Design is an Oregon flower farm and education hub started by Lennie Larkin. B-Side Flower Farm grows unique flowers and designs wild, artful bouquets and hosts floral workshops and farm dinners. Lennie also works with new farmers on their business skills and in this session, she will provide an overview of how to evaluate a cut flower operation for profitability. Attendees will leave with new ideas and strategies to apply to their own farms.

### 4:00 p.m. Using Native Species in Cut Flower Farming

#### Dee Hall, Mermaid City Flowers, Virginia

Dee Hall is a floriculturist and CFO (Chief Flower Officer) of Mermaid City Flowers in Norfolk, Virginia. An avid, life-long gardener, Dee prioritizes community building in her work and educating the public about the importance of locally grown flowers. In this session, she will discuss the rationale for using native species in cut flower farming and provide attendees with strategies for consumer education efforts and for using native species in floral design.

## 35th Anniversary Celebration Banquet

Join fellow conference attendees for a special celebratory banquet to mark the 35th anniversary of the ASCFG! Dinner and non-alcoholic beverages are included, and a cash bar will be available. And in the spirit of celebration, feel free to wear your formal overalls and best boots when saving a chair for an old friend or to sit with growers you're just getting to know.

### 8:30 a.m. Weathering the Storm of a Different Kind: People Quitting, Injuries and Other Labor Challenges

#### Ellen Polishuk, Plant to Profit, Maryland

In her trademark down-to-earth and engaging presentation style, Ellen will focus on the topic of labor resilience in this session. Labor management is a key skill for successful cut flower farmers, and even more necessary in difficult situations like injuries, resignations, or supporting struggling employees. Ellen will discuss important labor practices and procedures such as cross-training employees, developing systems, and drafting standard operating procedures, among other concepts. Attendees will leave with a wealth of ideas and strategies to implement on their own farms.

### 9:30 a.m. Cut Flower Farming over the Decades: A Retrospective

#### Joe Schmitt, Wisconsin

#### Janet Foss, J. Foss Garden Flowers, Washington

#### John LaSalle, LaSalle Florists, Massachusetts

To celebrate and mark the 35th anniversary of the formation of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, Joe Schmitt, Janet Foss, and John LaSalle will participate in a panel discussion about how the specialty cut flower industry has changed in the last three decades. This presentation will illuminate how the past has shaped the present – and the future.

### 11:00 a.m. Innovative Social Media Strategies for Cut Flower Farmers in Rural Areas

#### Julio Freitas, The Flower Hat, Montana

In 2023, the effective use of social media is quite simply a necessity for any business. It's a profoundly important method for brand awareness, customer outreach, community building, sales, and more. But how best to use these tools? Which ones are the best? In this session, Julio Freitas, founder of the renowned The Flower Hat flower farm and floral design studio, will discuss the social media strategies he uses within his own business. Attendees will leave with an appreciation for the importance of social media as a communication tool and with new ideas to consider applying to their own social media accounts and products.

### CONCURRENT SESSIONS

#### 1:30 p.m. Best Practices for Postharvest and Transport

#### Mike and Polly Hutchison, Robin Hollow Farm, Rhode Island

Mike and Polly Hutchison state that the key to all of their success is excellently grown flowers that provide customers with maximum value – aka POST HARVEST vase life! Customers stay with them not only for the types of flowers but because the flowers consistently last for them. The metric for success is that all of their flowers last at least one week. Dahlias are expected to last for them for at least five days. Mike and Polly will show you their secrets and tweaks to the excellent research put out by their very own cut flower researchers. They will also show attendees the storage and safe transport systems used to get the flowers out to the loyal customers of Robin Hollow Farm.

#### 2:45 p.m. ASCFG Research Foundation: Growing Ranunculus

#### Dr. Melanie Stock, Utah State University

Assistant Professor Dr. Melanie Stock leads the Utah State University Small Farms Lab and studies cut flower production and resource sustainability in the US Mountain West. In this session, Dr. Stock will provide an overview of her research on growing ranunculus in high desert environments. This session was made partially possible by the Association of the Specialty Cut Flower Growers Research Foundation, which funds original cut flower research and directly benefits ASCFG membership.

#### 4:00 p.m. Growing Cut Flowers for Cultural Holidays

#### Frank and Pamela Arnosky, Texas Specialty Cut Flowers

In this presentation, Frank and Pamela will focus on growing, harvesting, and selling marigolds for the Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) and Diwali holidays. Many people in the floral industry are unaware of the incredible demand for marigolds in both Latino and South Asian communities. In Mexico, Dia de los Muertos is as big a holiday (or bigger) than Mother's Day. And in India, there are over a dozen holidays that use large amounts of marigolds, not to mention births, weddings and funerals. They are also used in Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand, Vietnam and many other countries. With increasing populations in these communities within the United States and especially in Texas, the Arnoskys are experiencing huge increases in sales. In 2022, they sold over 30,000 bunches (300,000 stems!) of marigolds in the last two weeks of October alone. This talk will provide an overview of the best practices for growing marigolds, variety selection, day-length considerations, harvest and post-harvest handling and other issues, as well as a brief discussion of marketing and sales opportunities.

#### 1:30 p.m. Signage and Wayfinding in Floral Purchases

#### Melinda Knuth, NCSU

Dr. Melinda Knuth, an Assistant Professor in Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University, has evaluated trade flows of horticulture products in the United States, assessed the supply chain in the cut flower industry, investigated profit margins in substituting species in floral arrangements, and estimated consumer acceptance of retail messaging. In this session, her presentation will focus on how signage and retail messaging influences floral purchases by consumers. Attendees will leave with an appreciation for how font, color, signage positioning, and many other elements influence sales and operating opportunities.

#### 2:45 p.m. In Partnership with the American Floral Endowment: Management Strategies for Botrytis

#### Dr. Jim Faust, Clemson University, South Carolina

The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers is pleased to partner with the American Floral Endowment to present this session. Dr. Jim Faust focuses on overcoming the challenges in the postharvest longevity of cut flowers. Through the support of the American Floral Endowment, he is studying techniques to improve the control of botrytis on flower petal tissue with biorational products and to reduce rapid leaf necrosis following cut flower storage and shipping. This session will share his findings from his research and share important insights for pest management.

#### 4:00 p.m. Growing Dahlias

#### Drew Groezinger, Clara Joyce Flowers, Illinois

Drew Groezinger is the host of the podcast 'Between Me and Drew,' an educational podcast that is focused and centered around floriculture and the specialty industries that surround his daily life. Passionate about cut flower farming and education, Drew will focus on the specifics of growing dahlias during this session. These popular flowers have a perennial place in consumer hearts and this talk will provide an overview of the best practices for growing different cultivars, harvest and post-harvest handling, and other considerations.

Register at [www.ascfg.org/2023-conference-registration/](http://www.ascfg.org/2023-conference-registration/)



## Registration Information

### Conference at a Glance

November 6 – 8, 2023  
MONDAY

Welcome Reception, Trade Show,  
and Design Session with Julio Freitas.

TUESDAY

Speaker presentations, continental breakfast, lunch,  
and evening anniversary celebration banquet.

WEDNESDAY

Speaker presentations, continental breakfast,  
and lunch.

### Conference Registration Rates

MEMBER RATE: \$700      NON-MEMBER RATE: \$900

NOTE: FARM TOUR IS NOT INCLUDED AND REQUIRES  
SEPARATE REGISTRATION

Farm Tour Registration:

MEMBER RATE: \$150

200 maximum attendance and available for members only.

**Register at**

**[www.ascfg.org/2023-conference-registration/](http://www.ascfg.org/2023-conference-registration/)**

## Hotel Information

### Hyatt St. Louis at the Arch

315 Chestnut St, St. Louis, Missouri 63102

Please make your reservation as early as possible.

While the cut-off date for our room block is **October 16**, once our block has filled,  
the hotel is under no obligation to provide the following rates.

<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/STLRS/G-ASCF>

Enter Code **G-ASCF** to receive this rate – Singles and doubles: \$169

## Thank You, Sponsors!



**Learn about Sponsorship and Trade Show opportunities at**  
**[www.ascfg.org/2023-tradeshow-sponsor/](http://www.ascfg.org/2023-tradeshow-sponsor/)**



# Ask an Expert

The Ask an Expert webinar series features ASCFG member experts who share their ideas, insights, and lessons learned on a specific topic. Driven by experience, these webinars provide a robust overview of the topic before segueing into an interactive question and answer period for attendees.

Three wonderful presentations have taken place this year and the recordings can be found in the ASCFG Members Only Learning Portal. View the forthcoming sessions below; for more details, be sure to visit our website and Events Calendar. Zoom information will be emailed to members on the day of the event.

## April

### Breeding Unique Zinnias

Monday, April 10

8:00 p.m. EST

Presented by Tiffany Jones.

## May

### Cultivating Native Plants in Cut Flower Farming

Monday, May 15

8:00 p.m. EST

Presented by Matthew Dell.

## June

### Growing Superb Celosia: Strategies and Tips

Monday, June 12

8:00 p.m. EST

Presented by Laura Beth Resnick.

## July

### Floral Design Showcase

Monday, July 10

8:00 p.m. EST

Presenter information coming soon!

## August

### Floral Photography for Farmers

Monday, August 14

8:00 p.m. EST

Presented by Teri Klinger.

## September

### Growing Ranunculus

Monday, September 11

8:00 p.m. EST

Presented by Jenny Marks.

## October

### Branding and Logo Development

Monday, October 9

8:00 p.m. EST

Presented by Jan Trent.

## November

### Topic and speaker pending

Monday, November 13

8:00 p.m. EST

## December

### Building a Geothermal Greenhouse

Monday, December 11

8:00 p.m. EST

Presented by Rebecca Kutzer-Rice of Moonshot Farm.

## Thank you, sponsors!

Farmer & Bailey



# 2023 ASCFG Farm Tours

Register at [www.ascfg.org/2023-ascfg-farm-tours/](http://www.ascfg.org/2023-ascfg-farm-tours/)

**May 23, 2023**

**Farm Lot 59**

Host: Sasha Kanno  
2714 California Ave.  
Long Beach, California  
[www.farmlot59.org](http://www.farmlot59.org)  
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Lunch included  
\$100 *Limited to 100 attendees*



**May 31, 2023**

**CA & J Farm**

Host: Jean Howard  
5620 East River Road  
Foster, Virginia  
[www.cajfarm.com](http://www.cajfarm.com)  
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
\$75 *Limited to 50 attendees*



**July 21, 2023**

**Butterbee Farm**

Host: Laura Beth Resnick  
White Hall, Maryland  
[www.butterbeefarm.com](http://www.butterbeefarm.com)  
9:00 a.m. – Noon  
\$75 *Limited to 20 attendees*



**July 26, 2023**

**Floriculture Gauthier, Inc.**

Claude Gauthier  
8645 rue Notre-Dame Ouest  
Trois-Rivieres, Quebec  
[www.gauthierfj.qc.ca](http://www.gauthierfj.qc.ca)  
9:00 a.m. – Noon  
\$50 *Limited to 25 attendees*



**June 1, 2023**

**Leap Frog Flower Farm**

Host: Liz Faucher  
4919 Miller Road  
Earlsville, Virginia  
[www.leapfrogflowerfarm.com](http://www.leapfrogflowerfarm.com)  
9:00 a.m. – Noon  
\$50 *Limited to 25 attendees*



**August 8, 2023**

**Trademarks Flower Farm**

Jennifer Marks  
654 Larue Road  
Clifton Springs, New York  
[www.trademarksflowers.com](http://www.trademarksflowers.com)  
2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
\$75 *Limited to 100 attendees*



**June 8, 2023**

**Harmony Harvest Farm**

Jessica Hall  
201 Little Run Road  
Weyers Cave, Virginia  
[www.hhfshop.com](http://www.hhfshop.com)  
8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
\$150 *Limited to 75 attendees*



**August 15, 2023**

**Bloom Hill Farm**

Hosts Judd and Shannon Allen  
10475 Hoover Avenue NW  
Uniontown, OH 44685  
[www.bloomhillfarm.com](http://www.bloomhillfarm.com)  
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
\$75 *Limited to 75 attendees*



**June 13, 2023**

**Vashon Peony Co.**

Host: Tinuviel Lathrop  
Wax Orchard Road  
Vashon, Washington 98070  
[www.vashonpeonyco.com](http://www.vashonpeonyco.com)  
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
\$75 *Limited to 125 attendees*



**September 7, 2023**

**Whipstone Farm**

Host Shanti Rade  
21640 N. Juniper Ridge Road  
Paulden, Arizona 86334  
[www.whipstone.com](http://www.whipstone.com)  
2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
\$75 *Limited to 75 attendees*



**July 7, 2023**

**Behind the Scenes Breeder Field Day  
Brought to you by Takii and Sahin**

UGA Horticulture Research Farm  
1221 Hog Mountain Road  
Watkinsville, Georgia 30677  
8:30 a.m. – Noon  
\$75 *Limited to 30 attendees*



**Thank you farm tour sponsors!**

- Ball ColorLink
- Chrysal
- Gro 'n Sell
- Red Twig Farms
- Sahin
- Seven Springs Farm
- Takii Seed



# Request for Proposals

The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, Inc. (ASCFG) is seeking proposals for a freelance magazine editor for our quarterly publication. *The Cut Flower Quarterly* is the flagship publication of the ASCFG, and a vital element of an expanding collection of learning experiences such as webinars and online workshops, as well as in-person farm tours, and trade shows. It is dedicated to informing growers about the production, postharvest care, and marketing of cut flowers, as well as effective business management.

## Project Overview

The duties of the editor have traditionally been handled by the Executive Director. Now, those tasks are being removed from the Executive Director role to be outsourced to a qualified independent contractor.

## Project Goals

- ❖ Seamless transition of the editor tasks to maximize time efficiencies while maintaining the quality of the publication.
- ❖ Develop an outsourcing relationship to expand as the needs of the Association expand or change.
- ❖ Demonstrate sound financial decisions without sacrificing quality.

## Scope of Work

- ❖ Oversee all aspects of the magazine's production, from content development to print and digital publication and distribution.
- ❖ Create content topics based on member feedback, data, input from the ASCFG Education Director, and other industry insights.
- ❖ Gather content (text, photos, and graphics) from the ASCFG Board of Directors, ASCFG members, academic researchers, freelance writers, and industry sources. Content should be based on member feedback and data.

- 
- ❖ Create original content as needed.
  - ❖ Provide editorial direction to magazine contributors as needed.
  - ❖ Review submissions, and edit for clarity, spelling, and correct sentence structure, ensuring accuracy and conciseness.
  - ❖ Work with graphic designer on layout, photo, advertisement, and graphics placement; edit drafts as they are created, and approve final draft.
  - ❖ Manage the budget for each issue, ensuring that all costs are within allocated limits.
  - ❖ Negotiate with vendors and service providers to secure the best rates for the magazine.
  - ❖ Develop relationships with industry experts and thought leaders to contribute high-quality content.
  - ❖ Stay up to date on trends in the cut flower industry to ensure that the content is relevant and engaging.
  - ❖ With the Operations Director, manage the printing and distribution process for each issue.
  - ❖ Ensure that deadlines are met.
  - ❖ Promote the magazine through marketing and public relations efforts.
  - ❖ Analyze reader feedback to identify areas for improvement in future issues.
  - ❖ This position reports to the ASCFG Executive Director.

## **Submission Requirements**

Those interested in submitting a proposal should include a letter of interest, writing/editing samples, letters of recommendation, and fee structure. We would be most interested in your approach to the responsibilities of these tasks and knowing your thoughts on how to make this relationship successful.

**Submit these materials by May 1, 2023** to <https://www.ascfg.org/editor-application/>

**Questions?** Please contact the ASCFG at [mail@ascfg.org](mailto:mail@ascfg.org)

# The More Things Change

Judy M. Laushman



See the somewhat grainy black and white image on this page? Now flip to the front cover of this magazine. Both contain the words “The Cut Flower Quarterly”, and there the similarities end.

But do they? Let’s look inside the premiere issue of *Gatherings: The Cut Flower Quarterly*. On the first page, then-President Joe Seals thanked those hardy organizers who got the ASCFG ball rolling. He wrote, “The people who have put together this association certainly have made that sacrifice by giving well beyond the asked-for amount of time and resources.” In this magazine, current President Val Schirmer does the same thing, recognizing the Board of Directors for the work they put into the Board meeting in Portland, Oregon, as our Boards have done through the years.

Barbera Brooks, a San Francisco-based florist, recommended that growers looking for “the best, certainly most progressive florists is a simple matter of asking your wholesaler for those who buy the largest quantity of unusual flowers.” Laura Beth Resnick and Ellen Frost describe their mutually beneficial grower/florist relationship in “The Farmer and the Florist.”

The IPM Report from 1989 featured an article by Chris Rugen, then of ATTRA, which outlined the process of soil solarization as a means to control soilborne plant pathogens, weeds, and nematodes. This issue’s IPM Report illustrates that growers’ battles against plant pests continues, although growers are now facing a host of invasives at levels not previously imagined.

ASCFG co-founder Allan Armitage’s brief Trial Report on *Caryopteris* laid the groundwork as an entry for the 1993 publication of *Specialty Cut Flowers*, still considered by many to be the standard for cut flower production, and offered for sale by the ASCFG.

Our dear friend Ralph Cramer contributed the first of a three-part series on marketing, with his concept that literally

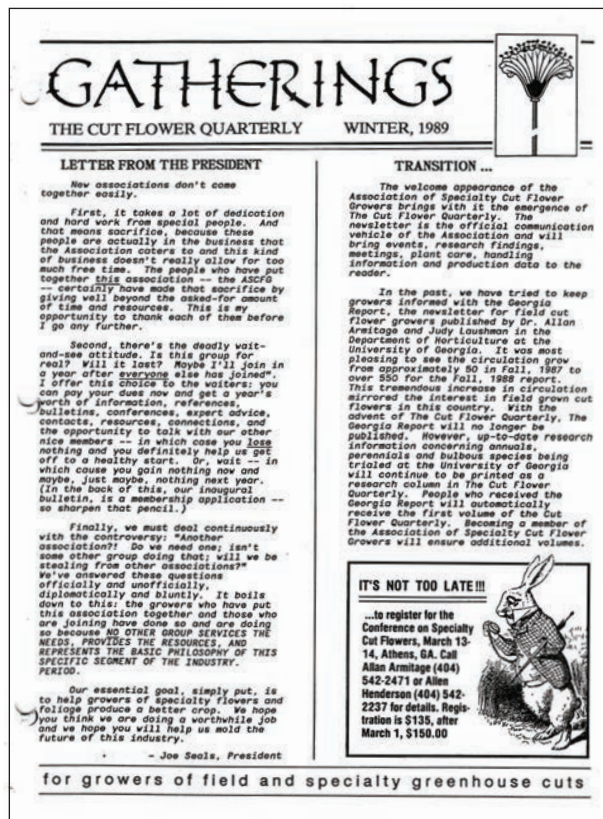
everything a grower does can be considered marketing, from maintaining excellent employee relations to keeping customers satisfied to finding potential customers. Virtually all these topics have been covered in the *Quarterly* for the last 35 years.

What is decidedly different, of course: a professional and beautiful layout created and maintained by Linda Twining. (This makes me wonder what happened to all those books of clip art I purchased in the late 80s.) Material is sent to me electronically, not delivered by the postal service in handwritten letters I would transcribe using a massive Zenith desktop computer, then save on 5-inch floppy disks for the printer. Speaking of printing, the original run was for about 200 copies, which I carefully mailed in manilla envelopes to our tiny but mighty membership. Now our average print is 3,200 and our printer has an in-house mailing service.

When the final proof is approved, Linda posts the pdfs online—no more waiting for the printing and mailing process to read the issue. Content contributors have varied through the years, but we’ve always been fortunate for the Regional Reports from Regional Directors. Adding Julie Martens Forney to the lineup has widened our offerings on a different scale.

My role of editor of the *Quarterly* has always been concurrent with that of ASCFG Executive Director. This will change with the hiring of the new Executive Director; the editor will become a separate role. We shared this announcement in an email on March 17, but it’s worth repeating here. It’s clear that the ASCFG membership contains a vast pool of untapped talent, including those who may have the professional

experience and credentials to take the reins—or keyboard—of this position, and continue the evolution of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*. If that’s you, or someone you know, please check out the RFP on page 60.





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CUT FLOWERS

**Our sole purpose is to help growers achieve success.**

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

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

We also leverage our global vendor network to deliver a complete supply solution for growers only in the USA and Canada.

**Snapdragon**  
Calima Pink

**NEW Lisianthus**  
Rosanne 2 Green

**PRODUCT FORMS OFFERED**



BAREROOT



BULBS



CUTTINGS



PLUG & LINERS



SEED



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**NEW Scabiosa**  
Focal Scoop® White Improved

**NEW Sunflower**  
Solano™  
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**TOP CROPS**



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DIANTHUS



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