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The Cut Flower

QUARTERLY

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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Cover photo courtesy of
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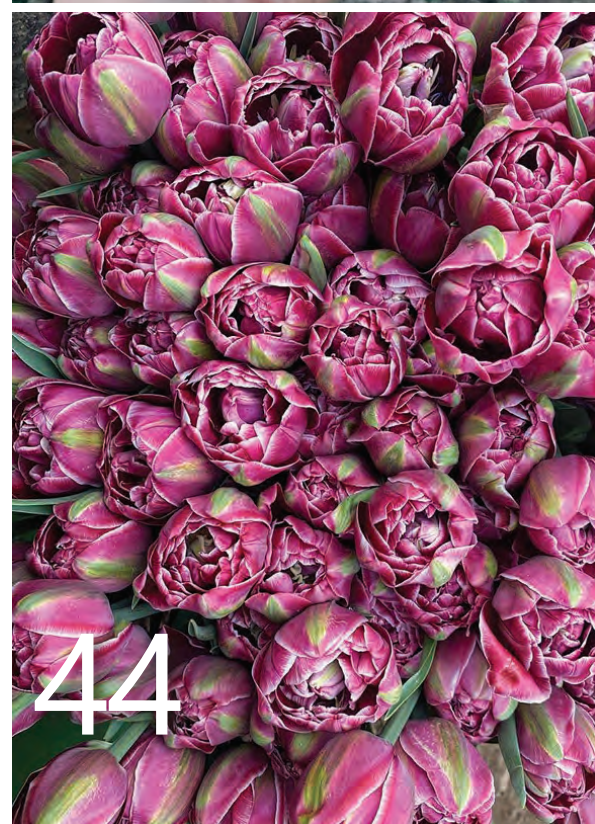
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Sometimes All You Have to Do Is Just Ask

Val Schirmer

For me, the idea really sank in this spring after I ordered Proven Winners® ‘Stand by Me’ bare-root bush clematis from Walters Gardens, and then received a shipment of Proven Winners pots the week before the clematis were shipping. Dang! I sure didn’t need all those pots; after all, I was planting the clematis to grow for cut stems, not to sell as plants.

That’s when I remembered a Short Cuts from early last year announcing that Spring Meadow Nursery—who’s the exclusive supplier for Proven Winners®/ColorChoice® Flowering Shrubs—was providing a container exemption to ASCFG members who purchased Proven Winners’ shrubs they intended to plant for cut flower/foliage production versus resell as potted plants.

What a great idea! It not only saves money, it also reduces plastic waste AND it all came about because Walter Perry, an ASCFG member in New Jersey, had asked his Regional Director Michelle Elston a question: could the ASCFG possibly help work out an arrangement with Spring Meadow Nursery where he wouldn’t have to buy the Proven Winners branded pots if he was just going to plant the shrubs to grow and sell their cut stems, and not sell them potted up?

Sometimes All You Have to Do Is Just Ask

Well, since Walters Gardens is the home for Proven Winners® Perennials, I reached out to their customer care team to ask if a container exemption similar to the one we have with Spring Meadow Nursery could be created for ASCFG members. And you know what? In less than two days it was done! Now ASCFG members who are cut flower growers can be exempted from the container purchase by letting their Walters Gardens sales rep know you’re planting the perennials for cut flower production only.

Hopefully, you saw the announcement in the Short Cuts emailed out on May 16. Thank you, Walters Gardens and Spring Meadow Nursery!

Well, this really got me thinking. What if I asked each of our 50 or so Supplier Members if they have a special discount/offer/service for our ASCFG members?

Between advertising in the *Quarterly* and on Short Cuts, sponsorships of Ask an Expert, the Supplier Showcase, and the Supplier Directory in Members Only, many of our suppliers are already doing a lot to support us and, to be fair, some can’t offer a special deal for us because their materials are sold to us through a broker, but it doesn’t hurt to ask.

My intention is to increase awareness among all of you about each of our suppliers, and also to ask you to be sure to intentionally support those who support us. By the way, there’s a list of the Supplier Members under Connections in the Members Only portal on the ASCFG website.



SUPPLIERS WITH SPECIAL DISCOUNTS/OFFERS/SERVICES FOR ASCFG MEMBERS

A.D.R. Bulbs, Inc. | adrbulbs.com

10% discount on all orders placed through August 1, 2023. **Discount code: ASCFG**

AmeriSeed | ameriseed.net

Buy more/get more seeds offer on the Hedge-Mary marigold line (Orange, Yellow and Gold). Hedge-Mary is perfect for garlands and as a cut flower.

Offer: purchase 1,000 seeds of any color, and receive 1,000 additional seeds of the same color, completely free of charge.

The promotion applies to all three colors available as long as our seed stock allows it. The maximum number of free seeds is 1,000 per color.

Example: Purchase 2,000 orange seeds, 1,000 gold seeds and 3,000 yellow seeds

And receive an extra 1,000 seeds of each color, resulting in a total of 3,000 orange seeds (including the additional 1,000 seeds), 2,000 gold seeds (including the additional 1,000 seeds) and 4,000 yellow seeds (including the additional 1,000 seeds)

No promotion code is needed.

Email sales@ameriseed.net to place your order or with questions.

Ball Seed and Ball ColorLink | ballseed.com/cutflowers

Same day shipping on in-stock seed orders placed by 5:00 pm CT.

Online ordering with WebTrack 24/7 for seed orders and items from dozens of plug and liner growers, including Ball Tagawa, Gro 'n Sell, Kube-Pak, Raker Roberta's, Walters Gardens, GET Group, Green Leaf Plants, and more. Many of these growers also ship to Canada.

Exclusive seller of Ednie Flower Bulb products, as well as cut flower plugs from Ball Tagawa.

Ships seed and plug orders to Canada.

Has a Canadian Dollar Price List for seed, as well as Canadian Dollar Price Lists for the plug and liner growers who ship to Canada.

Ivy Garth Seeds & Plants | ivygarth.com

20% off your next order by calling (440) 729-7690 or emailing sales@ivygarth.com

Mention you're an ASCFG Member to redeem!

Items marked with an X in the "Cut" column of the online catalog are suitable cut flower varieties.

Johnny's Selected Seeds | johnnyseeds.com

5% discount on all orders through June 30, 2024.

Discount code: 23-9166.

Offer cannot be applied to the purchase of gift certificates.

Offer does not apply to shipping charges and cannot be combined with any other offer.

Leo Berbee Bulb Company | berbeebus.com

10% off all new orders of \$200 or more (does not apply to orders already placed).

Discount code: ASCFG

Netherland Bulb Company | netherlandbulb.com

We offer a large selection of flower bulbs e.g. tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, and alliums. We offer over 250 tulip varieties with competitive pricing direct from Holland. We also offer pre-cooled bulbs (5C) in order to get early flowering (Jan-Feb).

In order to improve quality, we use a BBX machine, which is an x-ray machine which identifies tulips with fusarium which will be discarded.

We also have 10 experienced salespersons throughout the USA who can visit and guide ASCFG members with their flower bulb crops.

Onings Holland Flower Bulb | onings.com

15% discount on 300 Zelmira OT hybrid lily bulbs, size 14/16.

Special package for ASCFG members: 800 Italian ranunculus and/or anemone at a special rate of \$485, including shipping.

Email info@usa.onings.com and refer to the ASCFG special (ASCFG Zelmira and/or ranunculus discount)

Seven Springs Farm Supply | 7springsfarm.com

7% discount using code ASCFG7.

In-house crop advisement and custom blending. Seven Springs can work with ASCFG members to create custom blend fertilizers that meet a desired analysis, or create the blend of your choice using your preferred ingredients. Blends can be shipped in 1-ton super-sacks or 40-lb. bags.

Spring Meadow Nursery, Inc. | springmeadownursery.com

Container purchase exemption on Proven Winners branded pots for qualified ASCFG members.

When ordering Proven Winners®/ColorChoice® Flowering Shrubs, let your sales rep know if you are planting the shrubs into the ground for cut flower production, and will not be selling the plants.

Note: pot labels/tags must still be included in the purchase of shrubs because they contain required patent and trademark information.

Walters Gardens | waltersgardens.com

Container purchase exemption on Proven Winners branded pots for qualified ASCFG members.

When ordering Proven Winners® Perennials, let your sales rep know if you are planting the shrubs into the ground for cut flower production, and will not be selling the plants. Walters Gardens has a one-time exemption form that you must sign.

Note: pot labels/tags must still be included in the purchase of perennials because they contain required patent and trademark information.

William Dam Seeds Ltd. | damseeds.com

ASCFG members are welcome to visit our summer trials, just outside of Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

We are an ASCFG trial site, and grow new cut flower items that our seed suppliers are developing.

Feedback on the trials, or new varieties is welcome too!

Zabo Plant Inc. | zaboplant.nl

15% discount on 2024 Cutflower Calla Lily bulbs in full crate quantities, FOB Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Tuber size 20/22.

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Just mention you're an ASCFG member to your sales rep when you order to receive the discount.

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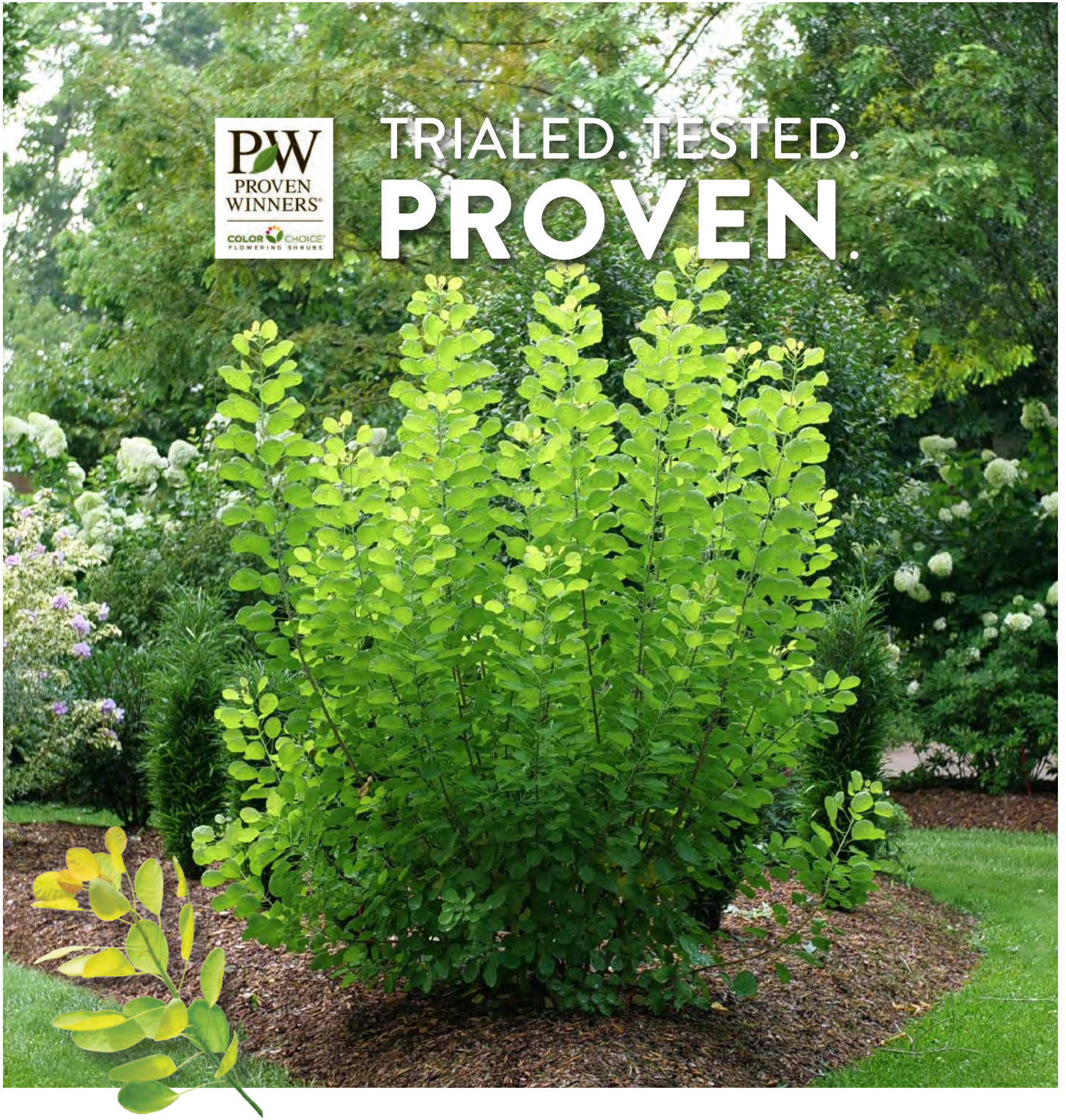
As I mentioned, please intentionally support the suppliers who support the ASCFG. We are so grateful for their support of our cut flower industry and the role they play in helping each of us become more profitable and successful. You can always find that list—and many, many more resources—in the Members Only portal.

Hope to see you at one of the Farm Tours this summer and fall!

*Val Schirmer is founder of Three Toads Farm,
Winchester, Kentucky.
Contact her at vschirmer3@gmail.com*



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Pop-up Plant Sales

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick



Laura Beth: We mostly sell wholesale to florists, but we have a few other sales outlets that diversify our offerings. One of those small but meaningful outlets is our plant sale. We engage with more customers if we bring the plants close to their homes, so that's what we do! Popping up in nearby cities with our plants is both fun and profitable.

Ellen: This spring, LB “popped up” at our shop for her plant sale. Pop-ups come in all different shapes and sizes. We have done tons of pop-ups over the years. They usually involve lugging flowers out to some other small business's space to sell my product to their customers. Sometimes these pop-ups are great and I am able to build our brand recognition and sell our flowers to customers that otherwise wouldn't have known us. But they can also be a complete waste of time.

Ellen and LB: We've made our fair share of mistakes along the way, and after some years we stick to strategies that work. We'll share some guiding principles here.



Laura Beth Resnick sells seedlings such as these celosias at some of her pop-ups.

When you are the host space:

- Be sure the person or business popping up at your place is a good fit. Butterbee coming to LoCoFlo is a perfect fit because our customers are interested in the same things. LoCoFlo has hosted businesses in the past that turned out to be a bad fit because their product either went against what we stood for or just was not something that would appeal to our customers. Do your research before you agree to have someone pop up at your space.
- Spend some time and energy marketing your guest's business prior to their pop-up. One of the great things about popping up in another business' space is access to their customers. The more you can promote the pop-up business beforehand, the more successful the event will be.
- Make your space feel welcoming and be ready when your guest appears. LoCoFlo has popped up in places where there are no tables, chairs, or even a corner to set up in. Be a good host and help your guests shine by providing them what they need to set up properly in the space.
- Agree beforehand if there is a charge for the pop-up business to use your space. If there is, collect the fee in advance so there is less likelihood the pop-up business will bow out at the last minute.

When you are the popper-upper:

- **Consider the context.** LoCoFlo popped up at a brunch restaurant once on Mother's Day morning. We thought it was a good fit because who doesn't like flowers on Mother's Day?! Wrong. Everyone had already bought their flowers, or the brunch was the gift. Whatever it was, no one was planning to buy flowers at brunch—and they didn't. It was a complete bust.
- **Be sure you have your own internet access if you are taking electronic payments.** LoCoFlo popped up once in a venue that had terrible connectivity. We

couldn't get the internet to work and we missed out on a ton of credit card sales because we couldn't use our swiper. Also, make your own plan to be connected to the internet. Don't count on your host to provide internet access for you.

- **Location is everything.** It's really tough to find a spot that both has great parking and foot traffic. For a one-off sale out in the world, we have to sacrifice parking for passersby if we want to make a good profit. Streets where people are likely to stroll with their babies and dogs are great.
- **Over-prepare.** At Butterbee, about a week before the pop-up, we mentally go through the steps of what the day will be like. As we go, we make lists of what we'll need. For example, on the pop-up day we'll have coffee and breakfast (note to get more peanut butter), load the van (note to grab some crates for loading, another note on what to bring including change for cash and the Square reader), drive to the city (note to bring snacks), unload and set up (note to bring folding tables and tablecloths), etc. Imagining how the day will go in detail helps us remember to bring everything and ensures that we don't have any major holes in the plan.
- **Over-remind.** People are forgetful, as we all know because we are people ourselves! You can't post about events enough, starting months before and increasing in frequency as the dates get closer. Inevitably someone will forget to come and ask when your next event is, despite all the reminders. LoCoFlo and Butterbee use Instagram as our main social media advertising, and we both have an e-newsletter.
- **Take all payment forms.** People will want to pay in the way most comfortable to them, and it's best to go with their flow! Update your payment app and play around with it a bit before each event so that you're comfortable using it. At this year's spring pop-up, Butterbee didn't take cash (meaning that we didn't bring change). We regretted it when several people wanted to pay with cash.
- **The more signage, the more sales.** Butterbee is not great at this one; we get lazy and don't want to deal with little



A smiling face makes a happy welcome to Ellen's pop-ups.

details. But we'd get more sales if we had signs that clearly said pricing, names, and even told our farm's story. Something for us to improve on!

- **Fun is contagious.** Doing a pop-up alone is not only logistically hard, it also looks a little sad to passersby. Take at least one person with you to run the pop-up, preferably someone you really enjoy being with. When passersby see you smiling and laughing, they feel more comfortable coming up and browsing.
- **Bring more than you can sell.** There's nothing more desolate than an empty table! We want to look bountiful from start to finish. Having a full table(s) of healthy plants or flowers makes a great impression on people who are new to us.

Pop-ups can be a great way to expand your audience and make some sales. Do your research ahead of time and find a good partner to ensure your pop-up is a success.

*Ellen Frost is owner of Local Color Flowers.
Contact her at ellen@locoflo.com*

*Laura Beth Resnick is owner of Butterbee Farm.
Contact her at butterbeefarm@gmail.com*

MEET OUR INSTRUCTORS:



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- ...easy to understand, accessible, and supportive! B.H.
- ...changed the way we think about our flower farm P.N.
- ...shared a lifetime of experience. C.C.

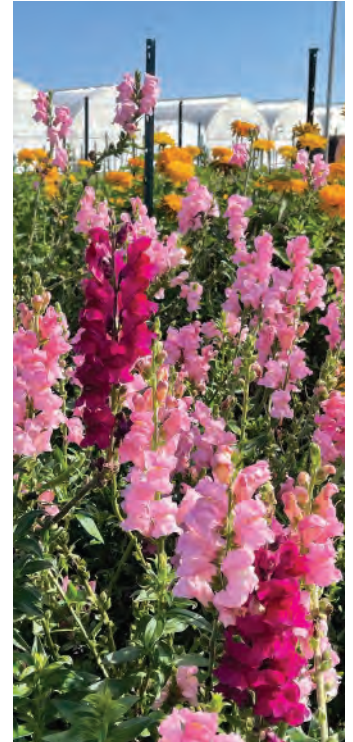




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New Online Guide Streamlines Access to ASCFG Member Resources

Rebecca Marrall



Note from the Editor: New to the Summer 2023 issue of The Cut Flower Quarterly, “Sowing the Seeds” will be a regular column from ASCFG Education Director Rebecca Marrall. If you wish to reach out to Rebecca with questions or ideas, please email her at education@ascfg.org

When joining the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers last year, I was impressed with the breadth and unique nature of the educational resources available to members in the ASCFG Members Only website (<https://ascfgmembers.org/>). This portal contains hours of online webinar and event recordings featuring expert specialty cut flower professionals; relevant handouts and guides; membership and vendor directories; and much more. Truly, it’s a treasure trove of information. As a former librarian who spent the prior decade organizing online and physical materials for patrons to access and use quickly, I recognized that ASCFG members likely had the best kind of problem—so much content but so little time to read through and watch everything. So how can a member best take advantage of all these wonderful tools in a timely fashion?

One solution to this excellent problem is to create a quick introduction to what’s available so members can spend their time absorbing the educational content rather than searching what the ASCFG offers. That’s why I’m crafting an orientation guide for new and existing ASCFG members. The purpose of this guide is twofold: To acquaint members with what’s in the ASCFG Members Only website, and to share how to find those resources quickly. After completing the guide, members will be able to locate and participate in the breadth of programs, events, and other activities offered by the ASCFG. They will discover how to connect with other members through the Membership

Directory or with suppliers through the Vendor Directory. Lastly, members will know how to request help from an ASCFG staff member should they need assistance.

Due to the volume of resources available in the online portal, the guide will be organized into five sections, as illustrated on the next page. Each section will have a brief introductory statement along with links that lead directly to the resource. Keep an eye out for tips on how best to use or access the content for an optimal learning experience.

The orientation guide will be completed in Summer 2023. Upon completion, the guide will undergo some user testing prior to publication for our members. This user testing will involve members going through each section of the guide in search of opportunities to enhance the content before completing a brief survey. Once that feedback has been shared with me, I will integrate the information into the guide by incorporating member-suggested improvements. The purpose of user testing is to ensure that the guide is as relevant and useful to our new and existing members as possible. If you’re interested in being an early tester and providing feedback on an early draft of the orientation guide, please email me at education@ascfg.org. I anticipate the time commitment will be no more than an hour.

Once the guide is published and available to all members, I plan to update as needed to include accurate and timely information. This resource will also be included in the welcome packets received by new members. It’s my hope that this guide will provide a quick introduction to the collective wealth of knowledge generated over the last thirty-five years by cut flower professionals, academics, suppliers, and more. By having prompt and easy access to online educational resources, you can continue your professional development whenever and wherever you wish to.



ASCFG MEMBERS ONLY ONLINE GUIDE COMING SOON!



ABOUT THE ASCFG AND YOUR BENEFITS

Meet your leadership team, understand all your membership benefits, learn about the ASCFG's mission, vision, and bylaws, and where to find books, tools, and other resources to grow your cut flower business.



EDUCATION

Providing education to growers is the ASCFG's primary focus. This section will guide you through the wealth of educational programs, videos, and articles available only to Association members.



EVENTS & PROGRAMS

Make the most of your opportunities to participate in the ASCFG's unique programs, and attend in-person and virtual offerings presented throughout the year.



THE CUT FLOWER QUARTERLY

Browse the extensive archives of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, the flagship publication of the ASCFG, where you'll find articles about production, marketing, research, and much more.



CONNECTIONS

Use the information here to make connections with fellow cut flower growers, farmer florists, suppliers, and researchers.

Look for helpful hints with this icon!



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A Micro Farm Blooms with Wildflower Abandon

Julie Martens Forney

Wyoming wedding florals bring a rural flower farm to life and lead a farmer back to her first love.



Growing flowers in Zone 4B means the season is short, but farming in the Rocky Mountain West ratchets up the intensity by coupling extremely snowy, wet winters with hot, desert-dry summers. “It’s like living in two different climates,” says Teresa Tibbets, founder of Dandelion Floral in Lander, Wyoming.

As a farmer florist, Teresa juggles the region’s seasonal extremes to raise a crop mix that provides the foundation for her wedding designs. “My business model is roughly 80 percent full-service weddings, 10 percent pick-up wedding orders and 10 percent workshops,” she says. A 700-square-foot studio space in downtown Lander provides the venue for design and community workshops.

Teresa started her business in 2015 with a mix of herbs and lettuce for the local farmers’ market. As the market season wound down, her offerings dwindled, too, so she cut the native branching sunflowers in her garden and added them to her stand. The flowers sold out three weeks in a row, and she discovered flower farming shortly after.

“I always say the flowers found me,” she says. “Every year, I grew more flowers and offered more services. The process happened slowly and organically.” By 2020 Teresa was growing flowers and designing full-time. Her passion for gardening made the transition to full-time growing easier, as did her knowledge of soils and ecology. “I worked 20 years as a biologist with a specialty in river and floodplain sys-

tems,” she shares. “Those studies and understanding the local environment have really helped me in my farming career.”

Building a Wedding Business

With a focus on designing for weddings, Teresa savors the progression of “designing from seed to centerpiece. That’s really rewarding,” she says. “I start seeds in February and March, and then see everything come together at events. I definitely love the process.”

Lander is 160 miles from Jackson Hole, a destination wedding center. Teresa got her foot in the door with the local wedding planners by sending a “few emails with some pictures and a little description of what I do. A few planners responded, ones whose values aligned with my ecofriendly wedding aesthetic, and now they’re my biggest champions,” she explains. “That was a really big learning curve for me. I didn’t have a lot of traction in the Jackson Hole wedding market until I connected with the planners.”

Making the jump to doing larger weddings and installations opened up opportunities for Teresa. “It meant that I could hire a team,” she says, which includes 4 part-time helpers in summer. This year Teresa is doing 12 full-service weddings, most of which are in Jackson Hole.

“Many of these weddings take place at private ranches, so we have specialized in going to remote loca-



Teresa raises tulips in crates to bypass the region’s sporadic spring weather. Dandelion Floral is located in Lander, Wyoming, which is part of the Yellowstone ecosystem. “We are remote and out of the way,” Teresa says. “There are more pronghorn antelope than people in the entire state of Wyoming.”



Teresa's wedding florals deliver more than just pretty flowers—they bring the wonder of Wyoming's natural beauty to life. Teresa's design assistant Abby shows off Dandelion Floral's popular wildflower wedding package filled with local flowers.

tions—usually a 2- to 3-hour drive. Because our flowers are so fresh, mostly coming from the farm, that gives them a lot of resilience against all the travel time.”

Last year Teresa invested in an insulated, 12-foot trailer; this year she's hoping to add a cooler to it. “We try to have 80 percent of everything done when we leave the studio, but for the ceremony installations that are so popular now, we just take buckets of flowers,” she says. “It's really like Tetris, and it's also stressful because we can't forget anything.”

She's developed a triple-check system that means three different people on the team go through everything that's loaded, literally touching every item to make sure it's present. “It's not enough to glance at the dahlia buckets—I want to touch each one. It might sound like overkill, but it works,” she says.

Wedding Design, Wyoming-Style

Wedding season runs from June to October, which coincides with the region's frost schedule: The last frost is usually the last week of May, and the first frost typically hits in the first week of October.

Teresa primarily uses crops she raises in her design work, although she does supplement with other American-grown

I always say the flowers found me. Every year, I grew more flowers and offered more services. The process happened slowly and organically.

-Teresa Tibbets

flowers, mostly for the bigger weddings. “It's nice to support other farms,” she says. “Sometimes I can coordinate with other growers in the Jackson Hole area and pick up blooms on the way to weddings. That's really helpful.”

She also responsibly forages, with permission, a lot of aspen and some wildflowers. “People really appreciate those little touches that are rooted in Wyoming,” she says. “My overall design style is loose and natural, growing out of a garden aesthetic. I'm inspired by nature's form and structure and embrace the whimsical and wild.” She likes to take cues from the Rocky Mountain environs,

which combines the blue-grays of sage and juniper with delicate golden grasses and shimmering yellow-green aspens.

Her focus on floral designs that celebrate the uniqueness of Wyoming reflect her own journey as a designer. “I was intimidated by entering the farming community and the floral design aspect, but I’ve found the community very welcoming,” she says. “I started out thinking that I had to design a certain way, but since then I’ve realized there are so many different ways you can approach floral design. You’re either going to find your ideal customer or you’re going to be trying to be something you’re not.”

Challenges Keep It Real

The majority of crops that help create Teresa’s signature Wyoming wedding aesthetic come from her micro farm: 1,200 square feet (including a 16 x 30 hoop house) in her backyard. “I grow all of our spring flowers at my home,” she says. This includes stock, ranunculus, anemones and snapdragons—all in the hoop house and beds. She grows these at home because Wyoming spring weather is so variable. “We can go from a snowstorm to 80 degrees in one day,” she explains.

Her focus on cool annuals comes from her knowledge of the local ecology. “We get a lot of our moisture in spring (which means June here, by the way), and I want to take advantage of that with early crops,” she says. Her home garden also offers perennials she can cut for designs, although climate limits these, too. “I’m so envious of growers who can start things in fall and get a crop in spring. I can’t get sweet peas or ranunculus to overwinter successfully.”

The main annual crops she raises come from another location. “In the past, I’ve had crops spread out at different local farms, which was a challenge. I was spending a lot of time driving,” Teresa shares. This year her annuals—sunflowers, zinnias, etc.—will be thriving on 1/8 of an acre at Central Wyoming College (CWC) in nearby Riverton. “They have an incubator farm there, and I was able to get a plot. It will be much more convenient to have everything in one place,” she says.

The Wyoming climate definitely impacts how crops grow, and Teresa has had to adapt to get enough stems for her wedding work. “We don’t get a lot of succession of things. For instance, with lisianthus, we barely get one flush.

I can push sunflowers to get two or three successions,” she says. “Dahlias are very marginal for us because we have such a short season.”

When summer arrives, the crop list shifts to western natives, things that thrive with heat and drought, including plants in the Asteraceae, such as echinacea, zinnia, and cosmos. Fall frost hits hard, usually slamming in with 25 degrees—“just about the time the chrysanthemums are really starting to grow,” Teresa says.

“We have so many variables with Mother Nature that it’s important to be able to control water and your space year after year. I want to grow with regenerative processes or to include habitat for pollinators,” she says. While Teresa can do that at home, without having her own farm, those aspirations are limited.

“My greatest challenge here is the price of real estate. I would love to have my own farm and my own space,” she says. During the pandemic, many people relocated to Wyoming, which has driven the price of land beyond Teresa’s reach. “A couple years ago I could hope to find my own farm space, but these days I’m outbid.”

A New Direction Beckons

Since Teresa is having a hard time getting land, she’s shifting her focus from weddings to teaching. Holding workshops at her studio space reminded her how much she loves educating others. “I enjoy that role, helping people get through a project,” she says. She did her first beginner’s cut flower garden class this spring, and it sold out quickly, so she plans to expand that offering.

“Our most popular workshops are the holiday wreath ones,” she says. “I really dislike making wreaths, but I can show others how to do it. At that time of year, people are really excited to share experiences with family and friends—and they spend more during the holidays. It’s nice to connect with that trend,” she says. For some attendees, the workshop has become a holiday tradition.



In-studio workshops typically accommodate 8 to 10 people. A customer favorite is the evergreen wreath workshop sandwiched between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The wreaths feature American-grown greens. Teresa would use locally harvested, but by that point in the year, snow makes reaching evergreen-rich areas next to impossible.



Left: Dandelion Floral's destination wedding clients typically tie the knot in Jackson Hole. The couples usually request a wildflower look, Teresa's specialty. Lately she's also seeing more color in wedding palettes, with only one white wedding this year. "Color means I can use more of what I grow." Photo by Foxtail Photography. Right: Teresa's son Pablo shows off his mom's current favorite flower: butterfly ranunculus, which bloom in mid-June in her Zone 4 garden. She raises these beauties in hoophouses in her backyard, where she can keep a close eye on them during late spring cold snaps.

Wine, snacks and holiday music keep spirits jolly during the event. "I hold the wreath workshops between Thanksgiving and December 5, so it's early in the holiday season. That lets me take advantage of all the spending people do at that point and frees us up well before Christmas," she says.

But workshops are just one part of Teresa's educational game plan. Last fall she taught horticultural science at CWC and realized she'd been missing that aspect of her life. "I really want to start helping farmer florists—those who don't have the science background to help them get through questions or research processes," she says. "I'd like to start providing educational content for folks who want to know more about the why behind what they do so they can gain a better understanding of farming processes."

"I take for granted a lot of the ecological processes that I know are happening and that I spend time fostering on my farm. When people understand the whys of decisions they need to make, that's really important," she shares. Teresa plans to step away from weddings next year to focus on developing educational content. She envisions having small workshops related to farming, ecology and regenerative processes.

"I don't know what the future will bring in terms of flowers, but I'll always be growing," she says. "If you're motivated to create beauty, you can go a long way in this industry. Curiosity and a sense of wonder will take you far. In farming, it's easy to get lost in the numbers and the pressure to produce. We have to remember why we're doing it and keep that passion alive."

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



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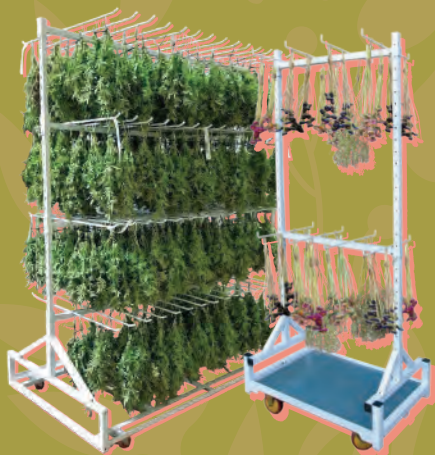
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Evaluating Vertical Opportunities

It's tough to know if a value-added activity fits your farm model. There's a chance it could boost profits, but it could also be your worst nightmare. Learn how four cut flower farmers build business with value-added options that fuel their passion for flower farming.

Julie Martens Forney

The options to diversify a flower farm are truly limitless. Fueled by your creativity, you can craft a farm model that wins customers through any number of vertical opportunities that aren't your run-of-the-mill activities. On-farm pursuits like glamping, goat yoga or fabric dyeing workshops are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. You can also add value to your flower-growing efforts through inventive sales avenues, such as edible flowers, plant cuttings or exclusive bouquet partnerships with other local vendors.

The challenge with vertical opportunities is that they can drain your time by delivering low return on investment and even send you on a detour from your original business model. So how do you evaluate if a value-add pursuit is potentially profitable or merely a distraction? To come up with an answer, we turned to four flower farmers who are pursuing a wide array of vertical options within their farm models.

Drew Groezinger runs Clara Joyce Flowers in Stockton, Illinois. Established in 2016, the farm operates on a three-pronged business approach: wholesale cuts; wedding and event work; and propagation and young plant sales. "When I started the business, when I heard the word 'value-added,' my mind immediately went to, 'We need to take the dried flowers we grow and turn

Opposite page: Another way to add value to your flower farm is to rent it for photo shoots. “We put a lot of work into making the property look gorgeous all the time,” Adam says. That pays off when one of the many magazines headquartered in the Des Moines metro area needs an al fresco photo studio.

them into a consumable item like a soap or craft,” Drew says. These days Clara Joyce’s value-added activities include robust plant sales featuring cuttings (both rooted and unrooted) and bulbs.

Stephanie Bull operates Indigo Iris Farm in Clover, South Carolina. With a background in corporate marketing, she approaches value-add activities from the mindset of “maximizing the potential of the product and our space. Flowers are a luxury item. It’s an emotional purchase. Customers come here for the flowers, yes, but it’s more about the experience they have here and the feelings created when they come here,” she says. “To me, value-add looks like workshops and on-farm events.”

At PepperHarrow Farm in Winterset, Iowa, Adam and Jenn O’Neal have been growing flowers for the last 12 years. They embrace on-farm experiences as vertical opportunities that increase profits. “To me, value-added simply means how can I add value to what I’m doing here? Is there an additional way to add value to the same thing I’m already doing? It goes beyond growing flowers,” Adam says.

In this venue, value added also encompasses marketing impact. “We start as a farm with value, and we add value with products and experiences—and the marketing aspect, which is intangible,” Jenn shares. “From a social media standpoint, when people come here, they take photos and share them with friends via social media and word of mouth, and this all ripples out and increases the value of what we’re doing.”

Developing a Value-Add Revenue Stream

Seeing other growers succeed with a vertical opportunity makes it easy to think the general idea may work for you, but success hinges on the farmer and the market. Christian Ingalls runs Daisy Dukes Flower Farm in Papaalooa, Hawaii, which is in its fifth year. The farm’s sales model includes wholesale to florists, weddings and events, on-farm workshops, and edible flowers. She suggests “not looking at other people and what they’re doing. Instead, start with what’s okay for you as a business and who you are. Value-added doesn’t have to take more product.

“Look at what ingredients you already have—maybe something you have a lot of. Do you have money, land or help? Also look at the skills that you bring to the table, and don’t forget to ask yourself what your limiting factors are.” Her bottom line is to remember why you started growing flowers and stick to that. “I am a farmer florist. I can’t lose sight of that. My focus now is on growing flowers and getting them out into the world while building brand loyalty.”

Just as Drew spotted a hole in the local horticulture job market and stepped up to fill it, he also noticed a missing piece in the plant market. He had sourced dahlia and chrysanthemum varieties and



Top: Local restaurants have developed menus around Christian Ingalls’ edible flowers. This year, her product has hit retail shelves through a locavore market in Hilo. Like all of her partners, the store owner reached out to her and they developed the flower cup product. “The cups sell out as soon as we drop them off, and we basically fill them with our waste—flowers we wouldn’t otherwise use,” she says.

Bottom: Christian Ingalls grows flowers on about an acre in Papaalooa, Hawaii. She has waiting lists year-round for her flowers, including standing orders for edible blooms. This year, in a value-add twist, one of her regular edible flower clients asked her to provide Mother’s Day bouquets for sale in their restaurant.

had been propagating them for his farm when he realized “there were only one or two producers growing these products on any sort of scale, and they would sell out immediately. That showed me there’s obviously interest, so we tried to navigate that,” he shares. “But how do I go from the mindset of a small specialty cut flower producer to being a specialty propagator?” That process involved figuring out how to leverage the varieties and build a more precise infrastructure so he could propagate more efficiently to meet the demand.

“I usually go into projects with low expectations if I don’t have any checkpoints to refer to,” he explains. “With the cutting business, I had no pre-existing clientele, so my mindset was, let’s try it and see what happens. If it works and financially makes sense, we do it again. If it works a second time, we’ll do it bigger the next year as we try to figure out where the threshold is.”

His overall goal is to develop an organic relationship with his customer base, a build-it-and-they-will-come mentality. “That process forces me not to make irrational decisions off of one year’s numbers. By the third year, I’m aware of what we’re capable of doing with our infrastructure and client base, and I can see if it’s a strong venture that can financially make it. That’s how we’ve moved through all the facets of the business.”

The O’Neals made sure that they had their growing experience well in hand before tackling vertical opportunities. “In the beginning, we were always afraid that we would run out of flowers, so we had to build that confidence first that we’d have a surplus,” Jenn explains. “Once we had a process that was sustainable and repeatable with growing flowers, we were ready to try other things,” Adam adds. “It took four years into our operation before we hit the place where we could manage value-add opportunities.” Today the farm is in its twelfth year.

Their key to success with value-adds was making do with what they had. “We had a barn on the property, so we revamped the inside. It was rustic, but made a good, inviting environment,” Jenn says. “And the flowers help—they’re so gorgeous.” Running the numbers is also part of the process.

When a customer at a Dahlia in Bloom al fresco dinner suggested adding a glamping tent to the farm, the O’Neals were intrigued—but Adam wanted an ROI analysis. “I figured that with the investment, we could pay it off in two years,” Jenn says. The couple stayed in the tent themselves before booking it. “That told us a lot,” Adam admits. “There wasn’t anything we didn’t like, but there were some things we did want, like coffee in the morning.” That’s why the tent, which is fully booked all season long, includes a nicely appointed camp kitchen.



For Drew Groezinger, the process of embracing vertical opportunities is methodical and intentional. When he was building the business, one goal was to be able to provide year-round employment and not just a seasonal job, something he longed for as a young person wanting to get into horticulture.

Stay Customer-Focused

At Indigo Iris Farm, Stephanie shifted her business focus to agritourism as she witnessed people’s responses to the farm setting. “Everything we do ties back to our mission to help people find peace, to spread joy, and to connect horticulture, education and the arts. I’m trying to build a business, but what gets me out of bed is not making money—because flower farming isn’t lucrative for a new grower like me at this point,” she says. She’s been flower farming for three years and does medical device marketing as a full-time gig.

“Helping people to connect with nature and helping people to grow personally, emotionally and spiritually is the baseline of the value-add at our farm,” she explains. “Really there is so much potential to grow a customer base when they feel connected to what you’re doing and believe in it. They become a part of your story, and it’s a huge emotional connection. Yes, agritourism creates an additional revenue stream, but for us it’s really about building a relationship with our customers.”

Donning her marketing hat, Stephanie also cites the importance of embracing a customer-centric mentality. “When you think about tackling value-add events or products for additional revenue streams, it has to relate back to your core business mission. If it doesn’t, it won’t resonate with your customers—and you’ll probably burn out.”

Christian agrees. “With value-adds, if it keeps you on your same path, then it’s good for you and your business. But if all of a sudden your path is getting skinny and more skinny, then that value-add will wear you out, and the momentum of your business will shift.”

She intentionally pivoted her business to include more wedding work because “it makes sense. Weddings give me the ability to design at times I can’t be in the field, and they don’t distract me from growing. Best of all, now I’m making \$5 from a snapdragon, instead of \$1 wholesale. With one wedding I can pay my team for months.”

She still sells edible flowers in bento boxes and has recently added flower cups, smaller containers with a lower price point. The edible products gobble what she calls “shorty stems, ones I wouldn’t use otherwise. But none of this is some crazy diverge for me. That’s the biggest thing. Last year for Christmas gifts I made flower sugar rimmers for drinks (dehydrated mint and calendula petals in sugar). I packaged them for my team. Now I could sell that—it’s a way to get my brand out there. But I’m not getting crazy with it and changing my business to revolve around this product.”

Find Inspiration for Value-Adds

PepperHarrow Farm’s list of value-adds includes everything from on-farm dinners to workshops. “Half of the things we come up with is because people engage with us to do them,” Jenn says. Her rule of thumb is that if three



Stephanie Bull runs Indigo Iris Farm, located about 30 minutes from the Charlotte, North Carolina, metro area. “Flowers are disarming. When visitors step out of their car and see the field of flowers, it opens a door for good. We’re putting joy into the world, and there’s a desperate need for it,” she says.

customers ask for the same thing, she’ll explore it further. Workshops started with requests from bridal parties who wanted to make bouquets on-site as a party. Jenn knew she could teach them floral design basics, which became the farm’s gateway into offering classes.

Workshops and events at PepperHarrow must pass the “good synergy with a flower farm” test. “We try to tie everything back to have some sort of botanical element. We market those activities as the ‘Botanical Maker’s Series,’ which includes botanical dyeing and making candles, perfume and soap,” Jenn says.

Even the Artisan Pizza & Stargazing event features botanical tie-ins. Adam’s passion for the perfect pizza dough tag-teams with an outdoor pizza oven to whip up personalized pizzas for attendees. Local ingredients, including farm-fresh flowers, top the pies. “It’s such a huge conversation starter when I grab a handful of marigold blossoms to put on pizza,” Jenn says. “At first people are awed, then they ask if it’s safe to eat.”

Another key to success with value-add events is recognizing when you have a unique niche. “We’re sitting on something pretty special: 2.5 acres of lavender. When it blooms, it’s like being transported to a field in Provence,” Adam says. Lavender-focused events include an al fresco lavender-themed dinner, lavender picnic, and a farm field day. “The lavender season is a short spurt. When the end of June arrives, we put our hustle on for a couple weeks,” Adam explains.

Christian echoes this idea of taking advantage of your special skills or settings. For her, teaching workshops is a perfect fit, considering she’s a full-time teacher. “Until we built the studio, I didn’t think about the fact that I could teach people—I have a degree in it,” she shares. “I did a



Left: “My goal with all we do here is to create an experience customers can’t get anywhere else, like the indigo dyeing,” Stephanie says. “I want people to leave feeling like they’ve gained something new. I filter ideas through the heart of what we’re doing here. It always has to relate back to what we’re about.” Right: Indigo Iris Farm offers private u-pick events to groups, including local Girl Scout troops. Stephanie includes an educational session for the scouts that helps them with their badge requirements.

seed-starting workshop, just posting it on Instagram, and it sold out instantly. So I did another.”

The studio workshops demand little to no cost investment on her part—supplies only. For the first seed-starting one, she charged \$50. Each participant not only took home their planted seeds kit, but also asked for a bouquet. “I did a quick field walk-through with them, cutting small, on-the-spot bouquets that I sold for \$25.”

She sees the farm itself as a huge vertical opportunity. “People want to come here and walk among thousands of blooms. That emotion of flowers—people can’t get enough. That’s a value-add that doesn’t require more product or effort on my part.”

Stephanie agrees. “If you have a pleasing atmosphere around your operation, it’s easy to capitalize on that. Our mission is to help people slow down and appreciate the beauty all around them. It’s an escape when they come here, and we try to leverage what we’ve created here as a whole. For our on-farm events, I try to come up with ideas that I think would be fun, because if you take a fun activity and put it in a magical place, it makes it even better.”

It’s also important to understand what motivates people and to offer something that appeals to different types of customers. In Stephanie’s case, that might mean a farm animal cuddling event for a young mom with preschool kids or Saturday morning goat yoga for a working woman looking to decompress from a work week.

One example of crossing arts and education with horticulture is an indigo dyeing workshop. It’s really popular

Another key to success with value-add events is recognizing when you have a unique niche. “We’re sitting on something pretty special: 2.5 acres of lavender. When it blooms, it’s like being transported to a field in Provence,” Adam O’Neal says.

among Stephanie’s customers, probably because “it’s incredibly unique and you can’t find it anywhere else. We grow our own Japanese indigo, and we have one attendee who wants to continue dyeing on their own, but wants to buy our indigo. That workshop yielded an unexpected recurring potential.”

How to Measure Success

For a value-add option like selling cuttings or bulbs, profitability provides a clear cut assessment of success. To an extent, profit margins are a tool to determine whether or not vertical opportunities meet the mark, but it goes beyond that. Jenn evaluates success for classes and on-farm events based on three criteria: demand, margin, and the fun factor.

For demand, she looks at current demand (did the event sell out? was there a wait list?), as well as future demand (can I expect demand to increase or decline?). “That’s a little trickier, because sometimes it takes new things a minute or two to catch on,” she says. The reverse can also be true. Sometimes a product or event is popular at first and then wanes in favor as it becomes familiar and reliable. To prevent things from becoming “too” available, the O’Neals might withhold an event or product for a time to stir interest (“our take on the psychology of marketing and consumer behavior,” Jenn says).

If the margin isn’t significant, the event goes on the chopping block. “Our time is incredibly precious. Is it worth our time to do a class if we make a \$200 margin? Sometimes the juice isn’t worth the squeeze,” Adam says.

On rare occasions the couple may willingly give away a little bit of margin as a trade-off for free marketing. “Sometimes when we have a new guest teacher come in, we’ll let them take the majority of profits because the event is making a nice marketing splash for us,” Jenn says. “We also always encourage participants to take photos and post them to social media to help spread the word about our business.” That’s where customer relationships and the emotional connection to the farm really pay off in building a brand.

The last measure of success is the fun—did customers



The market for Clara Joyce Flowers’ chrysanthemum cuttings includes home gardeners who might buy just one or two cuttings, flower farmers who want four to eight cuttings to build their own cutting stock and garden centers and upscale garden stores. All sales transactions take place online. “The super specialty varieties, trendy colors, and niche varieties sell out immediately,” Drew says.



Left: Adam and Jenn O’Neal grow flowers on 8 acres in Winterset, Iowa. They recently hosted a wedding proposal at the farm for a groom who wanted to pop the question surrounded by his girlfriend’s favorite flowers: daffodils. “When you’re able to hit someone at a life-changing moment like that, they become clients for life, or ‘PepperHarrow lifers,’ as I like to call them,” Jenn says. Right: It’s easy to see why a sunset farm tour would sell out in a setting like this. When PepperHarrow Farm rebuilt after the tornado, they added a flower cottage studio, which provides the perfect place for workshops. Newly planted lavender dots the field.

have fun? Did the O’Neals have fun? “If everyone comes and has a fantastic time, that’s a pretty good measure of success in itself,” Adam says. “We host weddings on the farm, but we don’t enjoy it as much as hosting fun events of our own. Hosting weddings is a ton of work for not as much revenue.”

Stephanie measures success for her on-farm events based on number of attendees and costs vs. profits. “As long as I’m making enough to make it worth my time and I’m having fun, it’s good,” she says. “The bar is really pretty low right now because I don’t have employees to pay, so my focus is on two things: increasing brand awareness and establishing customer relationships.”

Cultivate Business Relationships

Partnerships with other local businesses can help your farm’s value-adds to thrive. “The sweet spot is finding another business that’s in the same season of growth as we are. In that situation, we’re very like-minded, focused on increasing visibility and exposure,” Stephanie says. “Identifying an open and receptive partner creates a mutually beneficial relationship. It’s worth the effort to find those individuals.”

Christian sees partnerships as vital to creating value-add opportunities that increase brand awareness and help fuel customer loyalty. “If you can find those people whose business is hopping and popping, you’ll get that same following,” she says. But she doesn’t spend time searching for

partners. “They all come to me, because when you focus on your passion, you attract your tribe,” she says.

One of Christian’s latest partners is Coffee Girl Café in Hilo. “This is a girl who is amazing at creating demand. She built her business delivering \$12 cups of coffee that she made at home. Then she opened a store and reached out to me, telling me she wanted my bouquets because they matched her branding. Those bouquets sell out in less than an hour—there’s a line waiting now on delivery days. This is someone who closes her store each day because she runs out of coffee. And now she’s creating demand for my flowers. That’s a winning partnership.”

Drew relies on a key partnership to pull together his on-farm Garden Parties. He’s hosting 10 gatherings this year, up from four in 2022—8 dinners and 2 brunches. “I know that personally I don’t have the bandwidth to plan an event, sell tickets or order food. I find someone in my circle and work with them,” he says. “It’s important to realize that you don’t have to do it all to be the most profitable, especially projects where you have zero experience.”

The farm itself provides venue and entertainment for the events, which include a tour, u-pick and hands-on flower arranging, followed by a meal. “I get a lot of joy out of seeing people in my fields when they’re supposed to be here,” he says. “We used to do farm tours, but didn’t make enough money with that.” The collaborative dinners, on the other hand, perform well financially and are timed to celebrate the seasonal field crops, such as peonies, annuals and dahlias.

Other Value-Add Ideas



PepperHarrow Farm, Iowa

Lavender in Bloom Picnic—When an EF4 tornado ripped through PepperHarrow Farm in 2022, the devastation included their oldest lavender — 4 year-old crowns were broken. The couple replanted that half acre of lavender in strips with grass between, creating the perfect spots for picnic blankets and cozy tables for two. “It’s like they do in Italy, where people picnic among the lavender,” Adam says. It also provides a perfect pathway for guests to wander through the lavender fields during peak bloom.



Indigo Iris Farm, South Carolina

Goat Yoga—Stephanie partnered with a local flower farmer who breeds goats to host goat yoga on the farm. “I thought it would be a great way to attract people to come to our rural location. It has blown my mind how popular it is. It sells out every single time,” she says. “People just want to come and cuddle the baby goats.” Of course, after yoga class, attendees visit the farmstand, buy a bouquet, and spend money that brings additional revenue. “The demand is so high in our area that we can’t serve enough. I increased from one session last year to four this year. The fact is, people want to come enjoy the beautiful atmosphere of a flower farm.”



Daisy Dukes Flower Farm, Hawaii

Bloom Bar—Christian hosts bloom bars at the farm, which pair one complete cocktail or mocktail with a DIY flower bouquet arranged in mason jars tucked into a bouquet bag. “We have flowers down the center of a long table, and people grab what they want,” she says. “We play fun music and also have beer, edible flowers, and popcorn as a little snack. It’s a whole ‘nother vibe—it’s like a party.” The bloom bars have brought multigenerations of families to the farm and—in a surprise twist—tons of men with their wives or girlfriends. “Now those men are reaching out to me to buy their flowers. It’s brought an entirely different market to me.” She notes that you need to know your state laws before serving alcohol on your property.



Clara Joyce Flowers, Illinois

“Between Me and Drew” Podcast—Drew’s weekly podcast was birthed by way of necessity, as a component to meeting his customers’ needs. “I became tired of responding to customer DMs and emails asking me how to do things,” he says. For instance, dahlia podcasts include how to grow dahlias from cuttings, how to check tubers over winter and how to select varieties. “It’s a tool for me and the staff to have somewhere to send people to learn so we can have more time in our work day,” Drew says. “It’s also become a great training tool and resource for people on our team.” If someone is new to harvesting ranunculus, for instance, Drew tells them to listen to that episode. In winter, he travels and interviews flower growers to add other voices to his podcast schedule. Here he’s recording a podcast with Krynn Knepfel from Bloomchick Flower Company, located just east of Springfield, Tennessee.

As you consider value-adds, Stephanie Bull recommends not biting off more than you can chew and not comparing yourself to others. “Focus on what works for you personally, what’s best for you family and business and serves your customers well.”

Value-Add Advice You Can Use

If you’re considering workshops for your farm, stick with something you know yourself that you can teach others. That process has served PepperHarrow Farm well.

“It can be anything you know how to do—how to watercolor, for instance. Start small, slow and intentional by experimenting with your friends and family, ‘safe’ people who can give you good advice,” Jenn says. “Don’t be afraid to challenge yourself and step outside your comfort zone.” She didn’t know how to teach others to make perfume or candles, but she pared the process down and created a guide to teach people how to do those things last year.

When it comes to vertical opportunities, try doing things that yield the maximum amount of return for very little effort. “Most of our events are pretty low maintenance. We put on incredible events with as low input as possible from an operation standpoint,” Adam explains.

PepperHarrow Farm’s VIP Sunset Tour is a great example. Tickets sell for \$55, and attendees get a personalized 45-minute tour before being set free with a vase and snips. “We share farm stories as we go around, which establishes a personal relationship with us,” Adam says. “We also offer light refreshments—cookies and beverages. Customers leave with a good feeling and share with friends.” That good feeling ripples through social media, providing free marketing for the farm.

As you consider value-adds, Stephanie recommends not biting off more than you can chew and not com-

paring yourself to others. “Focus on what works for you personally, what’s best for you family and business and serves your customers well.” She also differentiates her business by going against the flow in her value-adds. For instance, in the holiday season, instead of offering a wreath-making workshop, she hosts a holiday centerpiece workshop that sells out.

Drew’s advice regarding vertical opportunities is twofold. First, for new farmers, don’t be taken in by the get-rich-quick concept showcased on Instagram. “It just doesn’t translate to reality,” he says. “You have to have so much more than just one thing—like dahlia tubers—to make a farm work.”

He also mentioned that dahlia tubers are “definitely no longer the ‘IT’ thing, like in 2014-15. Back then, there weren’t enough tubers on the market. Some growers may still sell out immediately, which is great, but we’re no longer moving the same volume that we were previously. If someone coming into the industry thinks they’re going to sell \$200,000 worth of tubers each winter to live on, it’s time to come up with a different plan.”

As he considers vertical opportunities for flower growers, he sees a huge need in the market for “real

life, college-level education for flower farmers. We need coaches on how to navigate the H2-A process or how to vet an accountant for a small diverse agricultural business. And we need people focused on developing unique packaging.

“The industry doesn’t need another Instagram influencer showing how to harvest tulips. Try to give the industry something new. There’s so much potential for someone new to come into the industry from a back-end perspective with something unique to sell to farmers. That door is wide open.”

Before embracing any vertical options, Christian suggests making sure you’re pricing correctly. “If you’re looking to value-adds to make money, revisit your pricing strategy. It’s so important to know all the pieces of your sales pie—all the niches your product fills—and how the prices come in to play.” She uses a simple structure to keep the math easy: one stem is \$1 wholesale, \$2 retail, \$3 to \$5 for wedding and events, and the edible flower bento boxes come in at 1/6 to 1/8 of a dollar.

The wealth of value-add opportunities is mind boggling, and the secret to navigating the sea of options is to keep your focus on what drives you and “lights you up,” Christian says. “Look at what makes sense from a financial standpoint, unless it fulfills you in another way.

“As the farm owner, you choose your own ending. There’s so much in the flower world that is unknown and unexplored. Everybody’s emotions change with flowers. It doesn’t matter who you are—man, woman, young, old—who doesn’t want flowers? Everyone does. Tap into that. Figure out what works for you and do it.”

Is Your Digital Work Protected?

Sarah Sampson

Just as the pre-Valentine's Day rush was kicking in, Jackie Levine discovered photographs of bouquets unique to her store, Central Square Florist, were being used by other florists.

A reverse image search on Google revealed about 10 different floral websites had posted the exact images from Central Square Florist's website. Some sites had multiple images, many from Central Square

Florist's most popular designs. Some even used the same name and descriptions. "English Garden," a design featuring large cymbidium orchids, hydrangeas and roses, and "Sweet Sea Breeze," arranged with delphiniums, hydrangeas and roses were two of the designs she found appropriated by others.

Levine felt violated. "We felt as if our hard work—designing the arrangement, photographing it, edit-

ing it, naming it, writing the product description—was stolen from behind our back," says Levine, vice president of the Cambridge, Massachusetts flower shop. "Which it was."

In the U.S., copyright protections extend to photographs, says David Wolfsohn, an intellectual property trial lawyer at Duane Morris LLP in Philadelphia. Copyright does not protect against the plagiarism of



Photo by Central Square Florist

names and descriptions of designs. That falls under trademark rights, which are significantly harder to acquire, Wolfsohn says.

Establishing Copyright

Technically, a creator does not have to do anything to establish copyright, Wolfsohn says. “If you take a picture that has some originality and aesthetic to it, you are now the author, and you own it,” he says.

Wolfsohn suggests asking these two questions to determine whether a photo is protected under copyright law:

Do you own the photograph? This includes having a written contract with the photographer that says the business owns the photographs.

Does the photograph have some originality? The lighting, arrangement, vase, positioning, and background are all elements that provide originality and creativity.

While it isn’t required that copyrights be registered with the U.S. Copyright Office, Wolfsohn says it’s a step worth taking because it enables the owner to establish damages by giving a minimum value of the stolen work. It also allows the owner to seek attorney fees.

“The goal is to make the infringer think it is in their best interest to take the images down,” he says.

Registering copyrights for photos might sound daunting, but the government has established fees for a group of work, such as 100 images, which could allow a floral shop to update their portfolio in batches as designs are changed with the seasons.

Seeking Removal

Levine didn’t consult a lawyer or take legal action after she became aware of the copyright infringements of her photographs. But she did defend her store’s work by emailing the offenders and ask-

ing that her images be removed while also asserting her copyright and ownership of the work. She also reported the abuse to the web hosting site for each of the websites where the images appeared.

Both strategies proved successful. In some instances, the store quickly removed the images. But in other instances, the web hosting company removed the images or took down the entire page, Levine says.

Those are the exactly the steps Wolfsohn recommends. If the images are registered with the copyright office, the owner can also include language that if the images aren’t removed immediately, they will sue and seek statutory damages, Wolfsohn says.

Educating Others

Levine plans to remain vigilant to protect her business’s images. Meanwhile, she hopes others in the industry will recognize how to tell the difference between protected images and those that they have license to use.

“In most cases, a lot of infringement is not necessarily intentional,” Wolfsohn says. “A lot of people copy things off the internet and have the misimpression that because they can access it for free that they don’t need permission to use it.”

Sarah Sampson is a contributing writer for Floral Management.

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“The goal is to make the infringer think it is in their best interest to take the images down,” says David Wolfsohn.

NORTHEAST

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



Jennifer Marks

Trademarks Flower Farm
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In northern climates we have notoriously short growing seasons, which makes farming tough for more than one reason. Not only do we face the challenge in earning a full-time salary in a short growing season, but we also contend with constantly varying weather and perhaps the biggest challenge of all: winter! However, these challenges can be reframed as opportunities with the right mindset, and now is the time to be planning for it.

Using our cool seasons to our advantage can pay off with the right tools and know-how. Cool-loving flowers can thrive in many northern climates if given a small amount of protection, which can lead to earlier sales, an extended season, and bigger payoffs. Here in zone 6, springtime flowers that bloomed earlier than July were a mystical dream for me when I first started growing flowers. It was a big learning curve but once we got the hang of it, our business skyrocketed with the boost of an extra few months of sales. We could not have achieved this without one key tool: unheated hoophouse structures.

The number one tool that has helped us achieve an extended growing season and early, big sales numbers is our unheated 30' x 96' hoophouses. We plant many cool-loving flowers starting in fall and throughout winter in our hoophouses that bloom April through June. These make up the bulk of our total sales each growing season, not to mention give us plenty of stems for a successful Mother's Day weekend each year. Planting during autumn and winter means we either seed cool annuals or place plug orders over the summer (I've often found it more profitable to buy in plugs to plant in the fall, as tending to our extra-hot greenhouse during summer doesn't usually pay off).

Starting in late September or early October, we plant the following in our unheated hoophouses: ranunculus, butterfly ranunculus, anemones, freesia, tulips, stock, Icelandic poppies, campanula, snapdragons, bupleurum, feverfew, and dianthus. These flowers will bloom April through June to complement our field-grown flowers. Many of us northern growers are experiencing a dip in demand over the summer months, so we use this to our advantage—these early hoophouse-grown flowers now make up the bulk of our annual flower sales.

Every year something major seems to happen that teaches us a lesson about growing in hoophouses. Throughout dealing



with our notoriously named “aphid apocalypse” and other issues with fungal diseases, we have learned the following keys to growing high quality, disease-free high tunnel flowers over the winter for early spring sales.

- Plant in the fall (through winter) for extra-long stems and big flowers.
- Use low tunnels with frost cloth in unheated hoophouses for extra protection, covering when temps dip below about freezing and uncover when temps rise above freezing (we like using spring hoops and 1 oz. frost cloth fabric).
- Use two layers of frost cloth during extra-cold temperatures for added protection.
- Ventilate, ventilate, ventilate! Get as much air flow as possible in your tunnels by using roll-up sides, exhaust fans, and HAF (horizontal airflow fans) as temperatures allow.
- Keep humidity levels low (done by venting your hoophouse properly).
- Preventatively spray for fungal diseases.
- Release beneficial insects in late winter to prevent pest populations such as aphids from exploding.
- Scout for pests regularly (at least one to two times a week).
- Water sparingly over the winter, once seedlings are established (we usually water once or twice a month, depending on environmental conditions).



MID-ATLANTIC

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



Dave Delbo

Dave's Flowers

davesflowerselys@aol.com

Okay folks, pop quiz time. The Mid-Atlantic Region consists of six states. If you need a reference, the states are listed above my picture. Which of those states have the most ASCFG members? Which state has the fewest? Read to the end of the article to find out the correct answers. But first let me briefly introduce you to a few of the newer members of the region.

Jenna Cowperthwait started Leepa Farm in New Gretna, New Jersey last year. She is growing on approximately one-quarter acre. Her market is a work in progress as last year she sold to a few florists and sold on consignment in a few shops but found out that is not a good way for her to sell. This season, she has a ten-member CSA and is doing several pop-up events. She joined the ASCFG last year because it came highly recommended in a few podcasts she listened to. She is so glad that she joined because of all the valuable resources available on the website and Facebook page. She loved watching all the videos from last year's conference. One big goal for Jenna in 2023 is to get more solid with growing. Other goals are to actually follow her succession planting calendar and focus on her business model. The biggest challenges she has are time, and balancing what she has to do.

Brittany Dempsey is in her first real season as a cut flower grower. Cottage Hill Farms was started as a trial last year and has grown to almost half an acre of raised beds to supply her retail CSA, a few florists, and a couple of pop-up events this summer. She joined the organization in early 2023 because of the "bulk of information and networking" and videos of past events. She scrolls through the Facebook page daily and reads the *The Cut Flower Quarterly* immediately after it arrives. She is hoping to attend this year's conference in St. Louis! Her goals for this year are "to pay for the trip to the conference and get more florists on board." Her biggest challenges are growing on a hillside, and erosion.

Cool Breeze Farm is located in East Amwell, New Jersey, and was started in 2022 by Marnie Stetson. She is growing on about one quarter of an acre and last year marketed her flowers through social media. She learned of the ASCFG while attending a workshop taught by Jennie Love. Marnie loves *The Cut Flower Quarterly* and the useful information it provides, "even the advertisements." She really likes the organization because

- Use drip irrigation, keep foliage as dry as possible.
- Keep everything well weeded. Stay on top of weeds by wire-weeding or cultivating weeds at thread stage to deter pest and disease issues.
- Build large (enough) hoophouses. The larger the structure, the better it will maintain temperature (and the warmer it will be!).
- Some cool-loving flowers such as butterfly ranunculus and freesia can't handle super cold temperatures, so we carefully plant them in the middle of the hoops where it is warmest, and add extra frost cloth protection (and have had great success!).
- Build sturdy structures to withstand wind and snow load in your area.

To summarize, using our cool northern season to our advantage by using tools such as unheated hoophouses can pay off big time in the form of early spring and Mother's Day sales. It takes some early, careful planning and a little extra work during the off season, but can be very rewarding. One added benefit for me personally is having some light farm work to do over the winter. Although at times I curse at having to drudge around in the cold, the work gives me a sense of purpose during those long, dark months and gives everyone something to look forward to in early spring.

of “all the access to free resources.” Her goal for the year she says “Is to figure out what my market is and how I can fit into it.” and she sees her biggest challenge as selling herself and getting out of her comfort zone.

In Forest Hills, Maryland, you will find a super-sized garden called Lavender and Posies. Stacie Surowiec is the owner of this less than an eighth of an acre garden. Although she has been growing for 20 years, the business began in 2020. Stacie focuses her market on designers and florists and does small events. She joined the ASCFG in 2020 after hearing about it on Instagram posts from Floret and Jennie Love. Stacie reads this magazine “religiously” and is on the Facebook page daily. According to Stacie, the best feature of the organization is the “community aspect.” Her goal for 2023 is to “double the profit without doing weddings,” and she sees the economy as her biggest challenge in reaching that goal.



Happy growers at the Leap Frog Flower Farm Tour

Brooke Allen started Violet Flower Farm in 2020. Located in Connellsville, Pennsylvania, Brooke joined the ASCFG just last year she says “To learn as much as I can.” She grows on approximately a quarter of an acre and markets her flowers through Facebook. And speaking of Facebook, she thinks the ASCFG member page is the best feature of the organization. Her goals for the year are to get her name out more and find more businesses to work with. Figuring out what is going to sell best and grow best, variety wise, is what she sees as her biggest challenge to overcome this year. Brooke reads the *Quarterly* “cover to cover” and is hoping to attend a more local conference in the near future.

Mermaid City Flowers is a small urban flower farm in Norfolk, Virginia. Owner Dee Hall grows on 6 city lots totaling close to an acre. She markets her blooms several ways, including subscriptions, events, weddings, workshops, and daily sales. Dee wanted access to news and information about the floral industry and knew the ASCFG was the premier cut

flower organization, so she joined in 2021. She spends a lot of time browsing the Facebook page and reading the *Quarterly*. Dee appreciates the combined knowledge of all the various growers who contribute to the organization and the fellowship. For 2023, she is “kind of shifting my (sales) model. I am trying to create a luxury model.” Dee’s biggest challenge is the summertime heat. Dee will also be a speaker at the conference in November in St. Louis.

Chris Sylvester is one of 12 members of the ASCFG from the small state of Delaware. Chris left a career as an engineer to flower farm full time in early 2022. He owns Spectrum Farms in Felton, Delaware, which began in 2021, growing on half an acre, and recently added a 100-foot high tunnel. He sells “flowers and flour” at the market as Chris also bakes breads and scones. In his previous employment as an engineer, he belonged to professional organizations, so he joined the ASCFG last year to “bounce ideas off other growers.” Chris uses the ASCFG website to directly communicate and connect with other growers in his state. He thinks the best feature of the ASCFG is “that there is information continuously being pushed and that there is an organization supporting what I am doing.” His goals for 2023 are to add new crops that will extend the growing season and continue to connect with other Delaware growers. His biggest challenge is to do more farm events for direct sales.

Liz Wegbreit of Green Springs Flower Farm is located in “the middle of nowhere, Virginia.” Actually, she is in Louisa, Virginia. Liz is focusing on perennials and is in her second year. She markets through the flower collective in central Virginia, consigns to a farm market, and is hoping to do small events this summer. She joined the ASCFG late in 2021 for the amount of information available, and because “we want to be professional, and we went on a few farm tours.” Her goals for the year are simple: “to grow, increase sales, and be profitable.” The physical aspect is her biggest challenge, which is why she is focusing on perennials.

Allie Lavigne runs a non-profit called One Community Museum in Norfolk, Virginia. One Community Museum is in its fifth year and is a half-acre of land spread over three urban lots. She is focusing on education, attending one farmers’ market and doing a few pop-ups. Allie’s biggest challenge is “scaling up without burning out, and getting everything done, and getting funding.” Her goal for the season is to scale up in a way that is efficient.

In 2019, Fenimore and Rutland was started in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Marly Surena-Llorens grows a mix of annual and perennial cut flowers and greenery on a small lot in downtown Allentown. She likes “the ability to meet other people who are growing as small as I am. The networking and resources (of the organization) are huge.” For 2023, her main goal is to “beef up my dahlia collection.”

I would like to apologize to the few people that responded to my email and offered to talk to me about their farm for this

article that I could not make contact with. I would sincerely like to thank the growers who did take time and chat with me about their farms—I very much enjoyed learning about the different farming models and business plans that everyone incorporates.

The correct answers to the pop quiz are Pennsylvania with the most members with 146, and West Virginia with the fewest with eleven, barely edging out Delaware who has twelve.



SOUTHEAST

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



Nicolette Irving
 Flourish Flower Farm
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Constant improvement and resilience are perennial themes when it comes to farming and I have found that farmers are more likely to discuss their mistakes and so-called “failures” than their successes. Spring weather is always extra fickle and dramatically affects the success (or failure) of our early crops here in the southeastern U.S.

With the end of May drawing near as I write, here are some of my lessons learned from the spring and winter months. I have been overwintering dahlia tubers for 4+ years now with almost no loss because our winters are usually fairly mild and our fields are situated on a large hill, giving us excellent

drainage. However, in late December 2022 we experienced an unprecedented deep freeze with temperatures hovering in the single digits for almost a week. Upon seeing the forecast, I scrambled to add a deep layer of straw mulch on my dahlias, spending more money than I would have liked on the straw. As soon as the ground began to warm in March, I pulled off the straw and took inventory of our tuber loss (and figured out what to do with 30+ bales worth of straw). Thankfully we lost only about 30% of our tubers, primarily towards the bottom of our rows where the land is flatter.

Sadly, we lost almost all of our fall-planted hardy annuals in the field, but at the same time that I was laying straw on the dahlias, I panic-ordered plugs to replace those crops just in case they were lost (which they were) and was able to replant everything in March. Our field crops will come in later this year, but at least we’ll have something instead of nothing. During the early spring months, I was worried that our ranunculus crop would be a bust—which is doubly scary because the corms are expensive and ranunculus is consistently one of our top revenue-generating crops. With 80-degree temperatures in February, I covered our high tunnel with shade cloth, kept the tunnel well ventilated, and hoped for the best. Thankfully the rest of the spring was milder and cooler, which led our ranunculus crop to its peak flush in the week leading up to Mother’s Day. We also grew our longest-stemmed sweet peas ever, which never happens in the South! Our peonies also began blooming in perfect timing for Mother’s Day, and our overwintered dahlias are already 6+ inches tall. My biggest takeaway is to be



plugs from Farmer Bailey on the available now offerings, which I've never done before. They may not have been my first choice for colors and I don't know much about the varieties, but at least I'll have something to sell!

Dennis Ott, Clayton Meadows Flower Farm in Clayton, North Carolina

Mistakes? Yes, I have had a few already. Most have been a matter of timing: the lilies for Thanksgiving opened too late; tulips in spring got hit by the heat and didn't grow elongated stems. We had 5 different tulip varieties, but not enough of each. Our daffodils did great, but still didn't have enough quantity. The two lessons that I've learned so far: 1. Timing. I can't easily control this one because timing depends on Mother Nature, but I'll try more to work with her now. 2. Buy more! Here is what I am worried about for the rest of the year: Sales. I hope to sell to florists with enough quantity. Debt. With 9 months of putting cash out for start-up costs, it's time to recoup. Weather. Last fall the hurricane toppled 50 feet of snapdragons that I was testing. Luckily, I did not have much else planted. A good lesson learned from this is that our hoophouse is secured and anchored well. Lastly what comes to mind is comparing my years as a florist to now farming: As a florist we usually were thinking 4 to 6 months (at most) in advance. Now as a flower farmer, I am having to think 12 months in advance.

prepared—have shade cloth ready to use, have a plan in place for mulching, and order the extra plugs or seeds, just in case.

In early May, I asked members in our Region to share what was on their minds, any mistakes or lessons learned, and what's new on their farms this year. I always learn from the little hacks that other farmers create and love hearing about the creative ways that our regional members are growing and honing their businesses. Here is what some folks had to say.

Sherry Kelly, Chatuge Springs Flower Farm in Hayesville, North Carolina

We're starting to host workshops this year and I am especially looking forward to offering workshops for children. I'd love to inspire a child to have a flower farm one day! My biggest challenge this year is groundhogs. I am considering planting extra for them to eat this year.

I'm concerned about the unpredictable weather patterns, but I think that everyone is.



Kristi Ruggles, Mountain Girl Provision Company in Greenup, Kentucky

I'm just thrilled with the flowers that have popped up this spring because I was experiencing burnout for the first time last fall. I've been stressed, unorganized, and procrastinated many times during my farming journey, but last fall I couldn't even look at the fields or the tunnel. I ordered lisianthus



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Sandra Tritt, Tapestry
Flower Farm in Oneida,
Tennessee

“Essentially this year is primarily designated for building and setting up the farm infrastructure—a large compost bin, barn upgrades, greenhouse construction, and farmstand construction. I’ve grown all my annual flowers from seed this year as opposed to last year when I ordered all my flowers as plugs. I’ve even had success germinating saved seeds from last year. I was unsure about my success at starting seeds, but in an effort to trim costs I’ve found this to be an amazing and exciting confidence builder! I invested in several woodies and peonies last fall and they all look fantastic. My very rural small community is reaching out and supporting me much more this year. I participated in an artisan craft fair last holiday season where I displayed and sold several of my everlasting dried arrangements, holiday ornaments, and bouquets. I’ve been invited to join four farmer’s markets, been juried into an artisan guild, eagerly embraced by a large wholesale flower buyer, and secured bouquet orders from a few local businesses. Several locals have inquired about agritourism and renting my farm for photography shoots, but I’m not feeling that to be a good fit for me at this point.

Rose Naff, Blue Sky Farm in Monticello, Florida

Am I the last farmer to learn the trick for keeping netting taut? Install stakes at the end of each row and voila! You have netting with no slackness in the middle. (See photo on page 48.)

Sunshine Jull, Aldergrove Flower Farm in
Roxboro, North Carolina

My main thought is that I should have invested in weed control over plants last fall. We’re pretty new, in that we just moved onto our current acreage almost exactly one year ago. At the old place my garden was mostly weed-free because I spent so many years pulling them, so there weren’t too many roots and seeds left. Most of my field time currently is spent pulling weeds, or else looking for young plants among the weeds. So that’s a lesson for other growers on new land—don’t consider just money and space and market demand for plants when you’re planting. Also consider your infrastructure and if you’ll need to put some resources into mulch or weed barrier. We did a little, but clearly not enough.



Valerie Schirmer, Three Toads Farm in Winchester,
Kentucky

I imagine lots of growers are feeling the same way but the amount of warmth (ok, it’s really HEAT) we’re having this spring is scary. We’re nearly a month ahead of this time last year. We were excited to trial indoor forced winter tulips after taking The Tulip Workshop and the 5c bulbs we got from Emily and Linda were awesome! We stuck with the peony-style double tulips and they were amazing. It was great having something to offer for Valentine’s Day and we’ve already ordered our 5c and unprepared bulbs for this winter. What I’m worried about for this year is what’s out of our control and in the hands of Mother Nature. There’s no telling what she has in store for us. I hope she will be kind!

Jodie McCord, Great Blue Farms and Garden in
Topton, North Carolina

We received the WNC AgOptions grant this year for a greenhouse project which is completed and running. I invested in bedding plants, herbs, and flowering baskets this year for several plant sales on and off the farm—hopefully it will go well. We’ve expanded the garden this year to include more flower varieties and more dahlias. I did lose a lot of fall-planted things (my first year of fall planting) with the holiday deep freeze, but what survived is doing great. Another thing we did this year is leave most all our dahlias in the ground using the mulch and tarp method. I was very concerned about the extreme lows we had this year, but so far everything is looking great. Ironically, I lost about 70% of the tubers that I dug to rot. We have several on-farm events this year—plant sales, Brunch & Blooms, Sip & Snip, and Holiday Wreath making. I’ve cut back tremendously on my wedding work mainly due to wholesale flower market issues. The brides I’m working with this year understand the majority of their flowers will be from the farm.

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

One of the things I love about being part of the ASCFG is their stated mission of educating the public about local flowers and increasing awareness. What the ASCFG does in that regard helps every single one of us as commercial cut flower growers.

Recently I had an opportunity to be a voice for local flowers. I was excited and surprised to receive a phone call in April from the anchor of our local NBC affiliate. She wanted to interview me for a story they were creating about local flowers and wanted to bring a photojournalist to the farm in a few days. Of course I said “yes”—never turn down a chance to talk about the local flower movement—but my inner voice was in a panic. The record-breaking winter snow was barely melted off the field, the beds were empty, there were no beautiful flowers to photograph, the garage/studio needed a major spring cleaning, and I needed a haircut!

They also planned to visit two other area farms. Molly Gaeckle of Northerly Flora is a seasoned grower who has both urban plots in Minneapolis and a large operation in Hudson, Wisconsin. Mother-daughter team Natalee Mednansky and Erica Thompson own One Wild Flower Farm in Amery, Wisconsin and started growing their own flowers for their wedding work three years ago during the pandemic. Both farms are ASCFG members and good representatives of the over 140 flower farms in these neighboring states.



Left: Mother and daughter duo growing wedding flowers in Amery Wisconsin Right: Molly Gaeckle of Northerly Flora



Top: A photojournalist from station KARE 11 in Minneapolis captures the scene. Right: Susan with KARE 11 news anchor, and chief meteorologist.

As I was preparing for their visit, I was scrambling to gather background information that might be helpful to the reporters who were creating the story. This was not a story about MY farm per se, but about the local flower movement in Minnesota and Wisconsin and across the country. This was an opportunity to talk about the benefits and beauty of local flowers, and what flower growers and the floral industry are doing to be more sustainable and eco-friendly. I wanted them to get the facts.

Of course, the first resource that came to mind is the ASCFG website where there is information accessible to the public, not just to members only. The localflowers.org link includes a video about the ASCFG, gives a concise summary of “Why Buy Local Flowers”, and lists over 1,790 flower growers in the directory for the public to access. For more in-depth information, I always recommend Amy Stewart’s eye-opening book about the flower industry, *Flower Confidential: The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful* (2007). The reporters I talked to were really surprised to learn that flowers have actually been bred to hold up for long-distance shipping, which has resulted in loss of natural fragrance and form, not to mention they are already one week old when purchased.

The five-minute story aired on TV on May 24th and I was impressed by the accuracy and passion with which they reported on the topic that is so near and dear to us. I hope you seek out opportunities to present at a school, community group, or the media to educate the public because there is still a lack of public awareness when it comes to buying flowers. Spreading the word helps all of us. Keep Going. Keep Growing.

WEST AND NORTHWEST

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



Erin McMullen

Rain Drop Farm
raindropfarm@peak.org

How are you doing? I mean, really, how are you feeling? How often do we take the time to stop and ask that? As farmers, we are used to going nonstop. There's always something to do. Something to order, plant, weed, pinch, harvest, process...not to mention trying to keep up on social media, cause that's what we're supposed to do, right? It starts to feel a bit overwhelming and this winter I took some time to really pull back and think about my why.

Why am I doing this? Is this really what I want to do? Sure, the beauty of the flowers is nice. The look of joy on people's faces never gets old. I like that part. What about the cold, windy days of sideways rain and hailstorms? What about the whole crop eaten by deer overnight? What about

the pump going out on a 90-degree day, right after we plant an acre of seedlings? Do I need that in my life? Is the management of these things really worth the payoff?

Don't worry, I'm not throwing in the towel. I'm using these examples to illustrate something that you already know—farming is hard. It never goes the way we map it out to go. There's always something to manage, or shift. There's always a pivot to be made. So, how do we manage to roll with it and keep ourselves upright, and sane? I don't have the answer. I have a few things that help me to stay afloat in the chaos, and I'm hoping that you'll share your tips and tricks too.

During our "down time" we spend a lot of time mapping things out. Where crops will go in the fields, what dahlias will get planted in what blocks, what combo of workers we will need for each shift, who we will have on the crew during the summer, when will trucks be running, who will drive those trucks. We do our best to mediate for anything that may pop up to derail our plans, but it still happens. But, having a framework really helps to see the bigger picture and allow us to shift things when we need to, because when we are running seven days a week, 15-hour days, we have to have that scaffolding to fall back on.

We also have to remember that we have a family, a life outside of the farm (though in the summer that's hard to man-

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the single hardest thing to accomplish in the summer), taking time out for exercise and yoga (I seriously would be a broken person if not for yoga). Find some easy, stress-free meals that you can either cook in a pinch at 9 p.m., or prep ahead of time and freeze! It doesn't have to be fancy, but it does need to be something! Get yourself a water bottle and set a goal to drink it every day. I have

an emotional support half-gallon that goes everywhere with me. We have water coolers, and our crew all watches out to ensure that everyone is hydrating.

Another big thing to take time for is your mental health. I was going to say during the summer months, but this is paramount all year round. Thinking about how you find a calm spot amidst chaos is hard work, but so necessary. For me, that looks like an audiobook in my ear to keep my brain focused during mundane tasks like washing buckets. Yoga and meditation to ground myself. Running in the forest whenever I can. For you it might look like a long bath, or target practice, or rock climbing. At the very least, find a spot on your farm that brings you peace. Go there when you need it. You don't have to have a soft couch and candles, for me it's just a matter of walking into the eucalyptus and losing myself in the gentle sway of the branches, but find someplace and let it soothe you.

In St. Louis, there will be a session on farmer mental health, and I am really excited about it. I think it's something that we all need, and we all need to acknowledge. I know that it feels stigmatizing and many of us were raised to not think or talk about mental health, but we all have brains that need to be taken care of, just like we have bodies that need to be taken care of.

This is all to say that the behind the scenes of running a successful business are probably pretty similar regardless of what business you are in, but farming is special in so many ways. The rewards of farming are great, but the toll it takes on us as humans can be great also. Making the time to get plans in place, to care for ourselves and our crews, can help to keep our ships afloat through the calm and the storms of this bonkers profession we've chosen.

Okay, I'll stop now. Take care of yourself! Drink some water! Maybe I'll see you in St. Louis!

age), friends and family that like to see us sometimes. So, we try to make time for a quick trip to the beach, or a hike as a family (though sometimes that's just taking everyone on the one mile walk from the home field to the main field, but at least we're together!), a family dinner or a concert in the park, maybe even a date night!

It's that winter down time that allows us these glimpses into a "normal" life. We often wonder how we would manage ourselves if we worked a M-F day job and had "weekends." Would we mow our lawn and watch football? It's hard to imagine, maybe? But I digress. Those winter planning sessions allow for an order to the world when it feels like things are pulling apart at the seams in the season. When we're being pulled in so many directions, we can look back and say "Oh, that's right, here's where we need to prep next, those dahlias are going in this hoop, we WILL need an extra staff during that weekend because Erin is gone".

So, that's one thing we can do to help keep ourselves together. Another, and this one is much harder during the summer, is taking time to remember that we have bodies that need to be taken care of. Hydrating and eating well (this is probably

CANADA

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



Sarah Kistner


Stone Meadow Gardens
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As my husband, Carl, and I begin to build our new farmstead (we recently did a cross-country relocation), we're considering incorporating more workshops or events into our farming plan. In the past, I usually felt too busy with the daily hustle to find the time to squeeze them in, but it was something that customers frequently asked for. When I finally decided to dip my toes in and try offering a few, I was surprised at how much I enjoyed them. People are sincerely happy to get the chance to experience the flowery world that we often take for granted.


Workshops, experiences, and events can run the gamut from simple to extravagant, so I thought it would be fun to talk with growers across Canada who offer different experiences and get their take on the pros and cons of adding workshops to their repertoire.

When I first considered offering workshops, a few feelings popped up right away. First, I don't think of myself as very outgoing. But I quickly realized you don't have to be an extrovert! You might be surprised at how comfortable you feel when sharing about something you love. Next came impostor syndrome. But again, my anxiety was relieved when I remembered this is my wheelhouse. If people want to join a workshop that I'm offering, it's very likely that I know more than them on the subject. So, embrace your expertise and dive in.

Let's start with a simple option. Opening your farm for simple guided walking tours can be an excellent way to generate some extra income and have an answer to that frequently asked question, "Can we come to see your farm?". Heather Henson at Boreal Blooms in Cold Lake, Alberta, hosts tours for the flower-curious in August when her fields are at their peak. Heather shares her experience: "The garden tour is an hour, and I charge \$40/person. These people mostly want to see and take pictures of the blooms. Not serious growers for the most part, but they want a nice morning with a girlfriend or their mom,



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Left: At Five Acres Flower Farm, Amanda holds evening bouquet workshops three nights a week during peak season. Middle: The greenhouse can be transformed into a perfect wreath workshop space in winter! Twinkling lights add ambiance, and the clear covering allows for lots of light to work. Right: Heather Henson offers a guided field tour for customers that are interested in how she grows flowers on her Zone 3 farm in Cold Lake, Alberta.

talking flowers. I don't take more than 10 people per session; otherwise, they start to wander and cause havoc. I've had a few plants crushed, but overall, people are considerate." These tours require almost no investment on your part and can be a great way to build customer relationships.

Ready to take the next step? Amanda from Five Acres Flower Farm in Abbotsford, British Columbia, hosts a wide range of options but really enjoys her regular Flower Night bouquet workshop. "The people who attend are just so lovely—so happy to be here, and it really is just a beautiful, peaceful experience in the flowers." She holds the bouquet workshops three nights per week in the peak of her summer season. The event takes place amid her flower field, which is surrounded by a hedge and strung with party lights, creating a magical, intimate feel. The event is casual, about two hours long and non-alcoholic drinks are provided. Guests tour the garden and then are guided on how to harvest flowers and make a beautiful arrangement. They're set loose (gasp!) to pick their flowers and design their own creation in a vase they get to take home. Amanda is there to offer assistance and support but doesn't give any formal design training. She charges a very reasonable fee of \$85, but because of the casual nature, she can accommodate 25 people per session.

But you don't have to do it alone! Janet at Country Cut Flowers in Newmarket, Ontario, offers many unique experiences, often in collaboration with others in her region. She says, "I love working with artists and experts in their areas. They bring a skill level to the farm that I can't achieve on my own." For her floral arranging workshops, Janet teams up with a local,

award-winning florist to offer a higher level of instruction. She explains, "It's a relaxed environment, but the design instruction is formal." Attendees learn to design a floral compote which they get to take home and are also provided with refreshments and snacks from a local bakery. These workshops cost about \$175 to cover the refreshments and the guest instructor.

I love all the fun and creative options that Janet offers her customers by teaming up with others. Throughout the summer, one can try workshops in botanical dyeing, nature printing, abstract floral art, floral mandalas, or evening yoga in the flower fields. All the events revolve around the beauty of flowers but may appeal to folks who are interested in something other than floral design.

If you're more experienced, you might want to consider creating workshops for aspiring growers. Many people are interested in learning about growing their own cut flowers or getting the inside scoop on what growing flowers for a living is like. You can take any approach, from a basic overview to a more in-depth instructional class.

Heather offers a Flower Farmer Tour at Boreal Blooms, where she says, "We go more in-depth about our practices. People are expected to take notes and photos; there are no handouts or booklets provided. We provide a custom [locally made] pottery vase and a selection of cuts from the field. A few people want serious help with designing, and most just want to have fun making something." These tours are \$160 and last about three hours.

Amanda's Flower School workshops range in price from \$275 for half-day workshops up to \$795 for a full-day experi-

ence and cater to those who want to dive deeper into the world of flower farming. She says, “They are way more in-depth than bouquet workshops. Whereas summer flower nights are a more social, peaceful experience, flower school is more intense—three-hour or day-long hands-on learning.”

Half-day intensives focus on all aspects of growing, caring for, and harvesting a particular flower, such as dahlias or peonies. She also offers a half- or full-day Flower Farming School aimed at aspiring small-scale flower farmers. These offer a comprehensive look at what’s involved, and she shares many details on how to start growing flowers. These workshops include hands-on instructions, informational booklets, and light refreshments or lunch.

When thinking about adding workshops or tours to your lineup, the initial investment is an important consideration. Basic tours require minimal input, mainly involving tidying up for a safe experience. On the other hand, workshops require more investment. You’ll need tables and chairs, buckets, clippers, vessels, etc. Plus, anything you’ll need for serving refreshments if that’s part of the program. And, of course, you’ll need somewhere to host your guests. But don’t think you can’t hold a workshop because you don’t have a beautiful barn! Amanda’s workshops are outdoors, and Heather holds hers at a nearby library garden. We held winter wreath workshops in our greenhouse, and some folks set up party tents. You just may need to get a little creative!

The other big investment is your time, especially when it comes to the more in-depth workshops where instructional expectations are higher. Amanda points out that the intensives “initially require more preparation, but only really for the first one. I make up a booklet for attendees and reuse it with tweaks from year to year.” But of course, all workshops require that you spend time preparing for guests—cleaning up, setting up the workspace, ordering food, etc., so you need to weigh that into the equation when deciding if this could be right for you.

After chatting with these growers, I was surprised at how few “cons” they came up with. The biggest issue is liability, over which Heather said she sometimes loses sleep! Amanda occasionally has people show up at her farm without having

booked an event, hoping they can just pop in. Janet mentioned the work in creating new events and reminded us not to discount the general grind of prep and cleanup.

But overall, growers were enthusiastic about workshops because it allows you to share something you’re passionate about with others. Workshops aren’t for everyone—I know some people cringe at the thought of people visiting their farm, or working with the public. But if you’re ready to consider it, here are a few key takeaways for success from my fellow growers and my own experience both teaching and attending workshops.

- Design workshops that align with your own strengths, interests, and personal style.
- Set clear expectations in your descriptions. What specifically are you offering? Will the instruction be casual or formal? Whom is it meant for?
- Be realistic. If the workshop promises in-depth instruction, how many people can you reasonably give your attention to?
- Help guests arrive prepared. Will you be outdoors? What should they bring to be comfortable?
- Have fun and be yourself! That’s what people are attracted to.

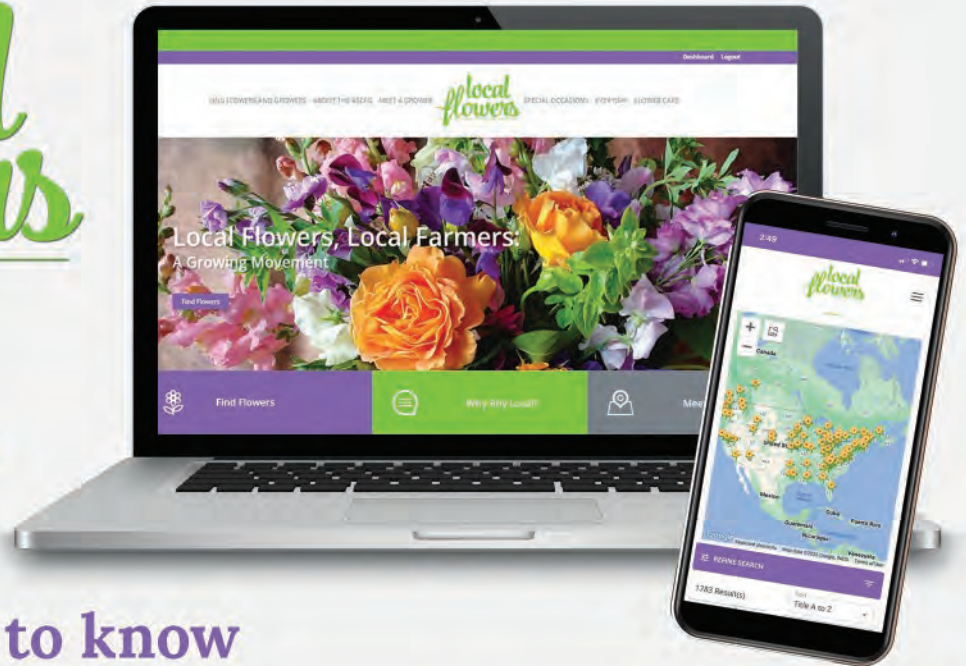
If you were considering adding workshops, I hope you’re feeling a little more empowered and inspired by the success of our fellow growers! It can be a great way to generate some extra income and build lasting connections with your customers.



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Fresh Cut Flower

Lisianthus ‘Voyage 2 Champagne’

The Voyage series offers huge, ruffled blooms of bluish golden pink. One zone 6 grower reported stems at least 24 inches long grown in a tunnel. The flowers are ideal for wedding bouquets. Comments from ASCFG members included, “This variety performed wonders in the field and in bouquets. The color was a joy to work with and folks adored them.” and “ ‘Voyage 2 Champagne’ is consistently amazing with its ruffled blossoms and superb stem length and strength. It looks wonderful in every setting with its romantic diversity of hue.”

This lisianthus provides a perfect color choice for later summer or early fall floral designs.

Woody Cut Flower

Hydrangea ‘Pinky Winky’

One of several excellent *Hydrangea paniculata* varieties, ‘Pinky Winky’ features two-tone flower heads with both white and pink florets, if harvested before all florets turn pink. Plants are adaptable, and durable from zones 3 to 8. Cut them back hard after harvest is complete to encourage long, non-branchy stems. Cut flower growers love the structure of these blooms, which provide gorgeous blooms, whether used fresh or dried.

Bulb Cut Flower

Double Tulip ‘Dream Touch’

Long, strong stems, and a unique, moody flower color combination make this a favorite of both growers and florists. The variety has a long postharvest life. Some tulips are challenging to design with, but the more rigid stems of ‘Dream Touch’ are perfect for bouquets. One ASCFG member noted, “Tulips are at the top of my list for cut flowers, and ‘Dream Touch’ is stunning.” Others remarked that the green striping on the purple petals creates a unique color combination. Bulbs are consistently productive.

Foliage Cut Flower

Eucalyptus Silver Dollar

Eucalyptus is in high demand as a specialty cut, and ‘Silver Dollar’ fits the bill with its extremely long stems that are easy to work with in bouquets and wedding designs. Customers rave about its unique silvery color. It’s more fragrant than most eucalyptus, making it the most popular to sell retail. Aromatherapy, anyone? This variety is known for overwintering in plastic tunnels in zone 6, making it easy to grow and extremely low-maintenance. It is also disease and pest-resistant, and can last as long as two weeks postharvest. One grower noted, “ ‘Silver Dollar’ did amazing on our Colorado farm, lasting through to Thanksgiving without any type of protection.”



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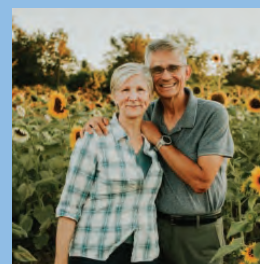
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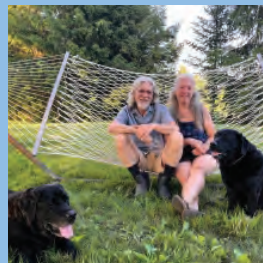
Clarisa Horton
Florescence Flower Farm
Arlington, VA



Sharon Hoskins
Brilliant Dahlia
Flower Farm
Rehoboth, MA



Sheri Hovey
Kentucky 1871 Flowers
Fuquay Varina, NC



**Barbara Lamborne and
Dennis Fuze**
Greenstone Fields
Purcellville, VA



**Gretchen Langston and
Gaylene Moldt**
Blooms
Laporte, CO



Lennie Larkin
B-Side Farm
Warren, OR



Madison Jones
Seal Point Farm
Lamoine, ME



Jessica Jue
Fern & Folly
Vienna, VA



Jennie Love
Love 'n Fresh Flowers
Philadelphia, PA



Margaret Muth Kirkby
Muth Farm Flowers
Williamstown, NJ



Vanessa Knock
In Bloom Specialty
Cut Flowers
Amherst, NS



Kim Lundeen
Timberline Flower Farm
Reno, NV



Karen McHatton
McHatton Family Farm
Garden Valley, CA



**Kelci McIntosh and
Cris DiOrto**
Island Time Farm
Shelter Island, NY



Courtney Mellblom
Farmermaid Flowers
Atascadero, CA

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Raindance Organic Farm
Whitmore Lake, MI



Elizabeth Patterson
Blue Dot Farm
Ross, CA



Shanti Rade
Whipstone Farm
Paulden, AZ



Susan Rockwood
Arcola Trail Flower Farm
Stillwater, MN



Fawn Rueckert
Sego Lily Flower Farm
South Jordan, UT



Paul Sansone
Sansone & Associates
Gales Creek, OR



Beverly Schaeffer
Schaeffer Flowers
Conestoga, PA



Daniel Schavey
Petal Pickers Flower Co.
Piedmont, SC



Val and Darrell Schirmer
Three Toads Farm
Winchester, KY



Karen Schmeckpeper
Ranchos De Taos, NM



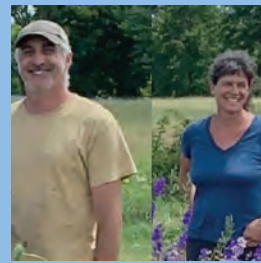
Gerard Smit
Smit Nursery
Abbotsford, BC



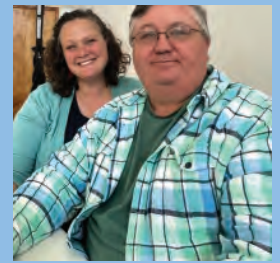
Brenda Smith
Smith and Smith Farms
Hines, OR



Cindy Smith
Hope Valley Farm
Knoxville, MD



Casey Steinberg and Missy Bahret
Old Friends Farm
Amherst, MA



Jill and Paul Stidham
Titus Creek Flower Farm
La Plata, MO



Amanda Taylor
HomeSown Flowers
Escalon, CA



Andrea and Reinhold Wappler
Birch Star Farm
Pownal, ME



Tara Watkins
Firmly Rooted Flowers
Frankfort, KY



Emily Watson
Fernabelle Acres
Milwaukee, WI



Ellen Weatherholt
Posegate Farms
Tulsa, OK



Robin Yeary
Sevier Blumen
Sevierville, TN



Lisa Ziegler
Gardener's Workshop
Farm
Newport News, VA

PHOTO UNAVAILABLE:

Lisa Baird
Scottsdale, AZ

Laurie Hodges
Green Meadows
Gardens
Valentine, NE

Alan John Mitchell
Flamelly Flowers Ltd.
Banbridge, Co. Down,
N. Ireland

Brenda Bradley
Old Stone Farm
West Newbury, MA

Linda Hutchinson
The Ivy Cottage Country
Flowers/Wildflower
Meadows
Omeme, ON

Mary Ellen Muth
Muth Farm Flowers
Williamstown, NJ

Karen P. Brannen
Bay City, TX

Anne Jensen
Anne E's Garden Fresh
Scottsdale, AZ

Arie Pannekoek
Meadowland Flowers
Chilliwack, BC

Fiona Buckley
Rathvinden
Bozeman, MT

Frances Kremer
Frances Kremer
Cutting Garden
Vickery, OH

Mark Koch Robert
Koch Industries Inc.
Bennett, CO

Joshua Caswell
Good Nature Flowers
Tacoma, WA

Robin Lawhon
R Squared Apiary
West End, NC

Belinda Smith
Briar Hill Farm
Pickens, SC

Amy Crawford
Heritage Farm Florals
Cotati, CA

Heather Letarte
White Gates Farm
Tamworth, NH

Shu and Debby Takikawa
The Garden of..
Los Olivos, CA

Cailinn Drouin
Stone House Flowers
Lawrence, KS

Ann Marie McCloe
Dirt Girl Gardens, LLC
Taylor, MI

Betsy Webster
Mt. Ulla Gardens
Mt. Ulla, NC

Ellen Edler
Edler Acres
Ontario, NY

Mary McCord
Gardening Sisters
Flower Farm
Sikeston, MO

Marie Wheatley
Mountain Blooms
Flower Farm
Tiger, GA

Renee Halsey
Renee's Flower Gardens
Norfolk, NE

Betsy Hitt
Peregrine Farm
Graham, NC

Caroline Van Lith
Longwoods Flower Farm
Bothwell, ON



Reasons to become an ASCFG Lifetime Member

- Enjoy uninterrupted membership benefits. No more renewal notices!
- Locks in your rate. Protects you from any future dues increase.
- Consistent membership and participation make the ASCFG stronger.
- Be a part of an association committed to research and the future.
- Stay informed regarding your association and the greater horticulture industry.

Grow with the ASCFG! No matter what level of experience, the ASCFG strives to be relevant to growers of all stages and is committed to this goal.

These Members Have Been with the ASCFG for Ten Years!



Elizabeth Barber
Libby Farm
Flora, MS



Cathy Bartolic
Perennial Petals
Stouffville, ON



Erin Benzakein
Floret
Mount Vernon, WA



Mike Brewster
Barn Swallow Farm
Grand Rapids, OH



Steven Brown, AIFD
City College of San Francisco
San Francisco, CA



Renee Clayton
Wild Scallions Farm
Timberlake, NC



Marjorie Dagnal
Goose Creek Gardens
Cowansville, PA



Douglas and Susan DeLeo
DeLeo Farms
Bangor, MI



Jennifer Elliott
Tiny Hearts Farm
Copake, NY



Teresa Engbretson and Katie Elliott
My Garden Over Floweth
Paterson, WA



Tara and Jonathan Fodor
Farmhouse Blooms by Fodor Tree Farm
Poland, OH



Madeline Frankel and Jay Pressman
Madeline Farm and Garden Flowers
Coatesville, PA



Brian and Aislinn Gandy
Woodland Flower Farm
Cedarville, NJ



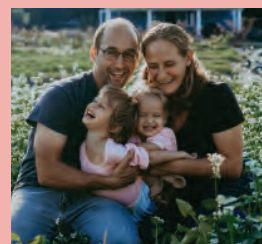
Jessica Hall
Harmony Harvest Farm
Weyers Cave, VA



Mandy Hornick
Blue Ridge Blooms
Leicester, NC



Grace Lam
Fivefork Farms
Upton, MA



Megan and Jonathan Leiss
Spring Forth Farm
Hurdle Mills, NC



David Martin and Martha White
Free Range Flowers
Gracey, KY



Mary McCabe
Glen Meadow Farm
Glenmoore, PA



Erin McMullen
Rain Drop Farms
Philomath, OR

PHOTO UNAVAILABLE:

Natalie Anderson
Bundles of Blessings Flower Farm, Calvert, TX

Doug Bletcher
Ivy Garth Seeds & Plants
Chesterland, OH

Emily Conable
Vernal Gardens
Perry, NY

Melissa Gibson
Wellstone Farm
Higganum, CT

Debora Hamlin
Enchanted Blooms
Oscoda, MI

Amy Hirschfeld
Soluna Garden Farm
Winchester, MA

Joyce Hoffman
Pinky's Flower Farm
Cumming, IA

Louise Reiling
Auburn Pointe Greenhouse
Chagrin Falls, OH



Deena Miller
Sweet Roots Farm
Grass Valley, CA



**Mandy and Steve
O'Shea**
3 Porch Farm
Comer, GA



Debbie Parsley
Sweet Bee Flowery
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Julie Raymond
Bittersweet Gardens
Kingston, MA



**Val and Darrell
Schirmer**
Three Toads Farm
Winchester, KY



Michelle Shackelford
Leelanau Specialty Cut
Flowers
Cedar, MI



Melissa Smith
Fraylick Farm
Travelers Rest, SC



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Eason Horticultural
Resources
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Exciting Changes to the ASCFG Mentor Program: Part Two 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.

Here is a quick overview of the changes occurring in the ASCFG Mentor Program.

Length of Mentorship: The ASCFG will transition from a two-year mentorship model to a one-year model. The shorter time and labor commitment may be an incentive to prospective Mentors to participate while the annual opportunity to apply may allow more prospective Mentees to benefit from the program.

Fee for Program Sustainability: In order to ensure that the Mentor Program is self-sustaining and that the ASCFG can provide competitive stipends for Mentors, confirmed Mentees will pay a small fee to support the program. We anticipate this fee to be around \$250.

Pilot Program—ASCFG *Launch*: The ASCFG piloted a short-term program in Winter 2023 to determine if a one-to-many mentorship model would be successful in meeting member needs. Please look forward to an update on these programs in a future issue of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*.

The desired outcome of these changes is to expand access to the Mentor Program by the ASCFG membership by adopting new program practices. I want as many members to benefit from knowledge sharing and community building as possible. Other changes to the ASCFG Mentor Program include program curriculum and support, such as the sample Suggested Topics outline given below.

While each Mentor and Mentee partnership will be unique to the involved individuals, here is a prospective curriculum for a one-year mentorship. Please note that Mentors and Mentees may mutually identify and agree to additional and/or different topics than listed below—and that's perfectly fine. Lastly, the Education Director, working with the advice of

the ASCFG Mentor Committee, hopes to organize the webinars, conference sessions, and reports in the Learning Portal in the Members Only section of the ASCFG website on these topics.

Benefits for Mentors

While the benefits for Mentees may be obvious, there is a compensation package for Mentors to demonstrate appreciation for their hard work throughout this process. These benefits include:

- One-year comped ASCFG membership.
- \$100 stipend for the year.
- Travel reimbursement up to \$300 after receipts are received (for on-farm site visits).

Program Timeline

All participants—Mentors and Mentees—will receive a program orientation at the start of the mentorship period by the Education Director, along with quarterly Zoom check-ins throughout the year. This way, both Mentors and Mentees will have access to the ASCFG for additional resources, advice, and limited funds for travel. See the overview of the Mentor and Mentee application process on page 32.

ASCFG *Launch*

In an attempt to widen the impact of the ASCFG Mentor Program, we initiated a pilot program in Winter 2023 called ASCFG *Launch*. This pilot, offered at a time during which farmers and growers usually have more bandwidth to focus on professional growth and continuing education, sought to connect members with an expert on a single topic. Our first offering was Crop Planning for Cut Flower Farmers, a four-week course taught by Jeanie McKewan with eleven students, and our second offering was Navigating the Grant Application Process, a three-week course taught by Miranda Duschack of Urban Buds. This pilot program is still in progress but please look for a summary and a status update about ASCFG *Launch* in a future issue of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*.

ASCFG Mentor Program Schedule

WINTER

(January, February, and March)

SUGGESTED TOPICS:

- Websites, e-commerce platforms, and online customer engagement tools.
- Business models, along with corresponding sales markets and strategies.
- Employee management, training, and retention.
- Seed starting. Review of succession planning.

SPRING

(April, May, and June)

SUGGESTED TOPICS:

- Soil preparation and planting techniques.
- Netting or staking.
- Hoophouses and low tunnels.
- Irrigation options.

SUMMER

(July, August, and September)

SUGGESTED TOPICS:

- Vendors and suppliers.
- Pest management and plant pathology.
- Postharvest handling and transportation.
- Farming tools and equipment for maximum efficiency.

FALL

(October, November, and December)

SUGGESTED TOPICS:

- Reflecting on the completed year.
- Plant schedules for forthcoming year.
- Seed, plug, and bulb order scheduling.
- Annuals, perennials, woodies, and unusual varieties.
- ASCFG educational offerings.

Next Steps?

When will these changes occur? Here is a brief timeline for these activities: We plan to issue a call for prospective Mentors to apply for the 2024 round in Summer 2023. Once we know how many Mentors we will have next year, we will then publish the application for prospective Mentees. After a review of applicants, we will announce the matches of the Mentors and Mentees in Fall 2023 and schedule the initial meetings to facilitate connections. Fi-

nally, the revamped program will start in January 2024 with the suggested curriculum and program structure.

I plan to seek routine feedback from participants and other ASCFG members to gather information that will refine the ASCFG Mentor Program. 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. I look forward to hearing from you.

Application and Acceptance

- ASCFG Education Director issues a call for Mentors and opens applications for Mentees.
- ASCFG Education Director matches Mentors with Mentees based on articulated goals for the mentorship, similar business models, and other factors.
- ASCFG Education Director notifies Mentors and Mentees of the matches, provides supporting documentation, and asks that Mentees complete the preliminary self-assessment and reflection activity.
- Initial funds are disbursed for travel arrangements.

Start of Mentorship

- Mentees share the results of the preliminary self-assessment and reflection activity with Mentors. This informs the initial discussion of what the Mentees hope to accomplish during the mentorship.
- Mentors and Mentees co-develop a learning plan for the duration of the mentorship.
- Mentors and Mentees determine and agree upon mode (phone, text, Zoom, and/or email) of communication and frequency.

During the Mentorship

- Mentors and Mentees will meet and communicate regularly to discuss and reflect upon articulated learning goals.
- Mentors and Mentees will arrange travel to each other's farms.
- Mentors and Mentees will participate in quarterly check-ins with the ASCFG Education Director to ensure that the program is meeting expectations.
- Program support questions should be directed to the ASCFG Education Director.

After the Mentorship

- Mentors and Mentees complete evaluation surveys about the program experience.
- Final reports to *The Cut Flower Quarterly* are submitted.
- Any remaining stipend funds are disbursed.



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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

Two tours of Urban Buds—one morning, one afternoon. Remember that attendance is limited to 100 for each session; don't wait to register! Return to the Hyatt for a welcome reception in the Trade Show at 4:00, followed by a floral design demonstration by Julio Freitas.



Tuesday, November 7

- 8:30 a.m.** State of the Floriculture Industry: Current Status and Prospective Trend | Melinda Knuth
- 9:30 a.m.** Value-added Products, Services, and Outreach | Adam and Jennifer O'Neal
- 11:00 a.m.** New Flowers, New Sales: Engage your Customers with Fun New Cultivars! | John Dole
- 1:30 p.m.** Dried Florals and Botanicals in Design | Hannah Muller
- 1:30 p.m.** Mental Health, Self-Care, and Burnout Prevention for Farmers | Megz Reynolds
- 2:45 p.m.** Creating Flower Collectives: Strategies for Success | Theresa Schumilas
- 2:45 p.m.** Evaluating Profitability in Cut Flower Farming | Lennie Larkin
- 4:00 p.m.** Resiliency in Farming: Disaster Recovery and Perseverance | Adam and Jennifer O'Neal
- 4:00 p.m.** Using Native Species in Cut Flower Farming | Dee Hall



Join us Tuesday evening in your formal overalls and dressy Birkenstocks for the ASCFG's 35th Anniversary Celebration!

Wednesday, November 8

- 8:30 a.m.** Weathering the Storm of a Different Kind: People Quitting, Injuries and Other Labor Challenges | Ellen Polishuk
- 8:30 a.m.** Cut Flower Farming Over the Decades: A Retrospective | Janet Foss, John LaSalle, Joe Schmitt
- 8:30 a.m.** Innovative Social Media Strategies for Cut Flower Farmers in Rural Areas | Julio Freitas
- 1:30 p.m.** Best Practices for Postharvest and Transport of Cut Flowers | Mike and Polly Hutchison
- 1:30 p.m.** ASCFG Research Foundation Grant Report: Growing Ranunculus | Melanie Stock
- 2:45 p.m.** Signage and Wayfinding in Floral Purchases | Melinda Knuth
- 2:45 p.m.** Growing Cut Flowers for Cultural Holidays | Frank and Pamela Arnosky
- 4:00 p.m.** Management Strategies for Botrytis | Jim Faust
- 4:00 p.m.** Growing Dahlias | Drew Groezinger



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

Farm Tour Registration*:
MEMBER RATE: \$150

**NOTE: Farm Tour is not included and requires separate registration. 200 maximum attendance and available for members only.*

Register at

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.

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ASCFG Members Today

Judy M. Laushman



As I've been winding down my career as the ASCFG Executive Director, some people have asked me what changes I've seen in the Association and its members. Every organization evolves through the years, and it's been a learning experience for me to be part of it.

When I compare what I saw in the early days of the ASCFG to what the organization and its members look like now, particularly as illustrated by stories in this issue of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, the differences are noteworthy. In the early 1990s, many of our members were based in California,

growers. At this writing, the ASCFG lists active members in all U.S. states, nine Canadian provinces, and eleven other countries. Cut flower farms are typically smaller, many are considered urban, and the range of floral material ASCFG members produce and sell is fairly astounding.

A noticeable difference is the methods our members now use to market their flowers, their businesses, and themselves. Farmers' markets became more popular in the mid 90s, and as cut flower growers made personal connections with cut flower buyers, those relationships often led to growers adding wedding and event design to their offerings. As with local food, consumers became more interested in the origins of the products they bought, and ASCFG members began opening their farm gates for small tours, sometimes including cut-your-own events or informal "how to grow cut flowers" workshops.

The recent increase in this diversification is well illustrated in this issue, particularly in Julie Marten's Forney excellent review of growers including value-added offerings. From PepperHarrow's Artisan Pizza and Stargazing events to Stephanie Bull's indigo-dyeing sessions, ASCFG members continue to explore ever-new options to not only sell flowers to, but to create community with, their customers. Everyone loves a story, and the stories of successful cut flower farms are irresistible.

Of course, as Stephanie points out, these additional activities may not be for every cut flower grower. "When you think about tackling value-add events or products for additional revenue streams, it has to relate

back to your core business mission. If it doesn't, it won't resonate with your customers—and you'll probably burn out."

Take some time this growing season to determine where you may be with these options: is it time to consider dipping your toe into the moving stream of workshops, tours, and events, or is it better for you to remain in familiar waters? As my wise friend John Friel once told me, "Trying something new, in the long run, is safer than staying put. A groove eventually becomes a rut."



A goat yoga class held at Indigo Iris Farm, located about 30 minutes from the Charlotte, North Carolina, metro area.

growing cut flowers and foliages on multiple acres. Several of these companies were family businesses, and their ASCFG members were usually older (or was I just younger?) men. Cut flower stems were generally sold to wholesalers, who sold to florists, who sold to customers. Farms were not usually open to the public; goat yoga was not even a twinkle in anyone's eye.

Our current membership is more diverse, generally younger (or am I just older?), and the majority are female



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