

Guidelines for ASCFG Mentors

Requirements

Be available by phone/text/email to the Mentee as needed; the means and frequency of communication should be mutually decided.

Visit the Mentee's farm at least once each of the two years.

Host the Mentee at your farm at least once during the two years.

Participate in regular virtual sessions with other Mentors and Mentees.

Complete an annual evaluation report about the program and the novice grower at the end of each growing season.

Recommendations

In an effort to facilitate your mentoring experience, consider these suggestions; use what might work and discard what might not.

Make the initial contact with your Mentee no later than January 15 of the first year of your mentorship to discuss communication parameters: do you prefer phone, text, or email? Are there days, or times of day you prefer not to be in contact? It is suggested that you communicate with each other at least twice a month, and schedule these dates and times early in the year.

If you have past seasons' records you're willing to share with your Mentee, such as planting schedules, crop schedules, purchases, etc., please pass along. If you don't want these shared further, let your Mentee know.

Keep a journal of interactions to help with your required yearly evaluation.

Participate together in periodic online meetings hosted by the ASCFG.

Review ASCFG events and plan to attend together.

Here are questions it would be helpful to ask your Mentee, giving the Mentee time to evaluate both his or her flower farming experiences, and the Mentorship Program. Mentees' responses might point the direction the mentorship should take.

Questions to ask Mentees

- How did you sell flowers this past year (farmers' markets, CSA, events, wholesale etc.)?
- In what areas were you most successful, and why do you think you were successful?

- In what areas were you least successful, and why do you think you were least successful?
- What area(s) of flower farming gave you the most enjoyment?
- What area(s) gave you the least enjoyment?
- What do you see as your primary strength?
- What do you see as your primary weakness?
- In what ways would you like me as a Mentor to help you, knowing that I may or may not be able to give you the help you need?
- What are several two-year goals for your farm?
- What are the elements of your infrastructure (tunnels, coolers, studios, etc.)?
- What are your goals for this two-year mentor program?
- What would you like to accomplish on your visit to my farm?
- Do you have goals for my visit to your farm?

Mentors may ask these questions again at the end of the first year to gauge progress, and add others such as:

- What was the most helpful from the first year of mentoring?
- Can you make suggestions to improve second year of mentoring?

After you have read your Mentee's responses, perhaps a discussion face to face on either a farm visit or phone call that allows easy two-way discussion can help you both lay groundwork for a successful mentorship, and give specific direction to areas that need to be addressed and that you feel comfortable addressing.

Suggested Discussion Topics

January – seed starting

February – planting scheduling

March – seed, plug, and bulb order scheduling

April – soil preparation and planting options

May – netting or staking

June – hoophouses and low tunnels

July – suppliers

August – web site and digital media review

September – markets

October – annuals, perennials, woodies

November – ASCFG member benefits review (Facebook, conference videos, etc.)

December - equipment