

FALL 2025

The Cut Flower QUARTERLY

A publication of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers

ARE WOODIES A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR OPERATION?

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FINDING YOUR "WHY"

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Growing Woodies and Finding Your “Why”

I USED TO TRY FOR THEMES IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS I WORKED FOR, and it was often an exercise in frustration. Our team would identify a theme, like “structures,” or “growing media,” or “labor,” and we would try to find growers to talk to about those issues. But often the growers we found weren’t available to talk on our tight deadline, or they weren’t having those issues, or they didn’t want to go on record talking about it. We were restricted for alternative options. So, I have a bit of dread when a theme is mentioned, although I have always liked the idea of it.

To my surprise and pleasure, while creating *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, several times a theme has bubbled up organically, without any planning. This issue is one of those times. I had the opportunity to attend the April Farm Tour at Wollam Gardens, and ASCFG Operations Director, Linda Twining, recommended that I interview Bob Wollam for an article, saying his story was really interesting. So I did, and it was. It also turns out that 40% of Bob’s business is with woody flowers and foliage, which meshed with the feature topic of woody plants that was planned with writer Julie Forney a year ago. A happy coincidence, for sure, and a subject that I hope provides information and insight you can all use if you have ever wondered about adding woodies to your farms.

Canada Regional Director Sarah Kistner writes about her “why,” and asked members of her region to share theirs. Farming is hard work, no matter if you’re growing flowers or soybeans, and I’m pretty sure all farmers have asked themselves this question more than once. I’m not a farmer, but my “why” for this job—and all past jobs—is, “writing is how I express myself and growing plants is who I am.” My scale of growing is far less than yours, because my livelihood isn’t dependent on what I grow. But I’ve been growing plants in some fashion since I was a little girl. If I’m ever in a nursing home, my window had better be facing south. Hopefully, Sarah’s column will help you revisit your “why,” and help you keep your vision during tough times.

Last but not least: This issue includes board nominations—people who want to do MORE work beyond their farms to contribute to the ASCFG’s educational and research mission. Read pages 68–71 to see why they want to be on the board, either for the first time or to repeat a term, and then be sure to vote when you receive your emailed ballot in October.

I wish you comfortable temperatures and a successful fall season.



Editor, *The Cut Flower Quarterly*
rasiktberg@gmail.com

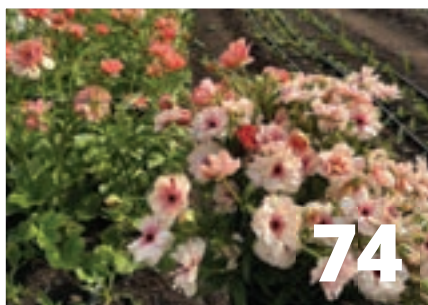




26



40



74



20

VOLUME 37, NUMBER 4, FALL 2025

Inside This Issue

6 Director's Report

8 The Farmer and the Florist

14 Sowing the Seeds

18 Good News

20 Grower Profile



Cover photo by Shanna Edwards, owner of The Ever Lea in Appleton, Wis. Dahlias pictured are: 'Robinhood', 'KA Rosie Jo', 'Genova', 'Hollyhill Melody', 'Henriette', 'Bloomquist Pinwheel', 'Rose Toscano', 'Strawberry 'n Cream', 'Clearview Debby', 'Ferncliff Inspiration', 'RNX Autumn Blaze', and 'Lavender Perfection'.

FEATURES

26 Is It Time to Add Shrubs to Your Crop Mix?

36 A Comparison of Greenhouse-Grown and Field-Grown Annual Cut Flowers

40 New Varieties

ASCFG NEWS

68 Meet Board Nominees

73 Cut Flowers of the Year

74 Regional Reports

95 Join the ASCFG Seed Trial Program

96 New Members

The
Cut Flower
QUARTERLY

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Introducing Marigold: Your 24/7 Growing Companion

BY STEVE CRONE

**I'M THRILLED TO SHARE
NEWS ABOUT A SIGNIFICANT
ADVANCEMENT IN MEMBER
SERVICES**

that will transform how you access the ASCFG's wealth of knowledge and expertise. We've recently launched Marigold, our new AI-powered assistant, designed specifically to support your flower farming journey around the clock.

For over three decades, the ASCFG has been the premier resource for specialty cut flower growers, building an extensive library of research, expert webinars, growing guides, and practical wisdom from our community of experienced farmers. While our educational content has never been more comprehensive, we recognized that finding the right information at the right moment—especially during those critical growing decisions that can't wait until Monday morning—remained a challenge for many members.

Marigold changes that dynamic entirely.

Named after one of the most reliable and versatile flowers in our industry, Marigold embodies the same dependable characteristics that make her namesake a favorite among growers. She's been trained on the ASCFG's complete knowledge base, from our foundational growing guides to the latest research reports, conference sessions, and member discussions. Whether you're troubleshooting a disease issue at midnight, planning your spring succession schedule, or looking for that specific detail from one of last year's regional conferences, Marigold is ready to help.



**Marigold is Capable of
Answering Nuanced Questions**

What makes Marigold particularly valuable is her understanding of the nuances of specialty cut flower production. She knows the specific requirements for successful dahlia storage and overwintering techniques. She understands that a Colorado grower's concerns about wind damage differ significantly from a Florida farmer's humidity challenges. Marigold can analyze the language and complexity of questions to provide appropriate responses, whether someone needs foundational guidance or advanced technical information.

During our extensive testing phase this spring, member volunteers put Marigold through her paces with real-world scenarios. In one case, a grower consulted Marigold during a late-night



Steve Crone
Executive Director

concern with ranunculus, receiving immediate guidance that helped save significant portions of the planting. Another tester used Marigold to quickly locate research on organic pest management strategies, discovering ASCFG resources they hadn't previously accessed despite years of growing.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with testers noting how Marigold doesn't just provide answers—she helps them discover resources they didn't know existed within our extensive knowledge base.

She's Up at Night When You Are

Marigold represents more than just technological advancement; she's a bridge between the ASCFG's institutional knowledge and your immediate needs. She'll help new growers navigate the sometimes overwhelming amount of information available, while enabling experienced farmers to quickly drill down to specific technical details. Most importantly, she ensures that the collective wisdom of our community is accessible exactly when you need it most.

You'll find Marigold integrated into the members-only section of our website, ready to assist with everything from variety selection and succession planting schedules to pest identification and post-harvest handling. She's designed to complement, not replace, the personal connections and mentorship relationships that make the ASCFG special.

As we continue to evolve as an organization, innovations like Marigold ensure that the ASCFG remains your most valuable resource for building a successful specialty cut flower operation. She represents our commitment to making the knowledge and support you need accessible whenever inspiration strikes or challenges arise.

I encourage you to explore Marigold's capabilities when you visit the member portal. Ask her about your winter planning, troubleshoot that persistent growing challenge, or simply discover resources you might have missed. Like her floral namesake, Marigold is hardy, dependable, and ready to support your success throughout every season of your growing journey.

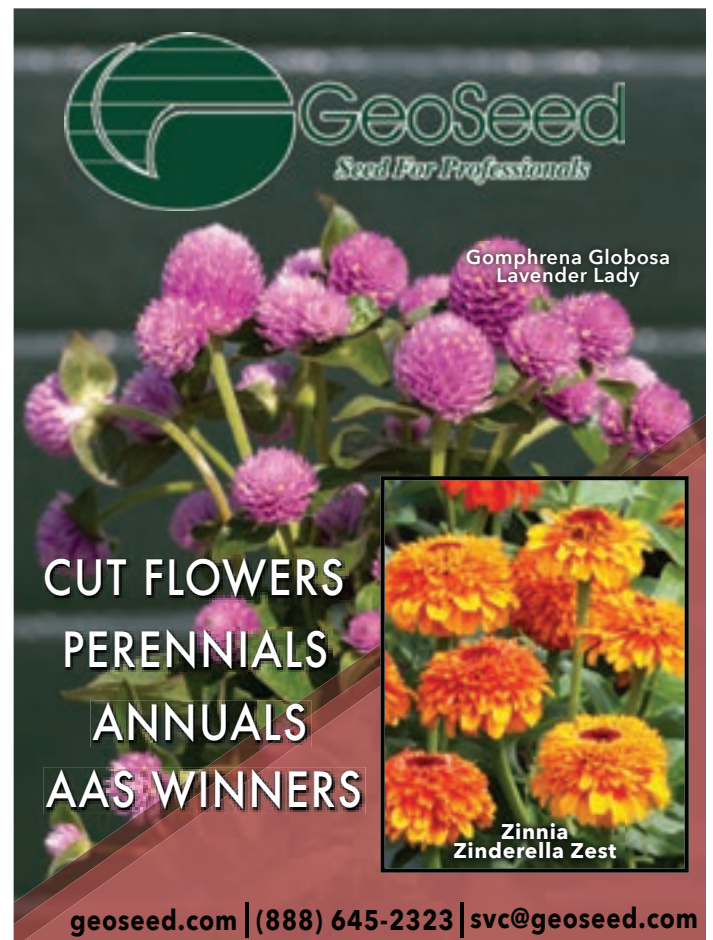
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Left: Ellen Frost (left) with fellow workshop instructors Niki Irving (middle) and Anna Stouffer. **Below:** Ellen and long-time ASCFG member Mimo Davis.



The Summer Slowdown

BY ELLEN FROST

FOR YEARS, I DREADED SUMMER. Every July, it felt like we were watching our business fail in slow motion. Perhaps you have felt this way in July.

As a florist who only uses locally grown flowers, I found myself pushing through Baltimore's sweltering heat, watching our revenue plummet. Our profit margins tanked because each week we were buying flowers for potential retail orders we couldn't sell. We were also paying staff to work in the shop on orders that never materialized. The city emptied—everyone fled to the shore. Weddings dried up because it was so hot. Regular customers disappeared, happy with their own backyard blooms. We tried everything—classes, events, promotions—but the numbers never justified the effort.

Eventually, we faced the facts. We sat down, looked at the data, and crunched the numbers.

In July 2022, we brought in \$24,000 in sales. After expenses—labor, product, delivery, utilities, and overhead—we netted a loss of \$906. That wasn't an outlier; it was our normal summer trend for several years. We lost money, and it was SO HOT!

After years of fighting the inevitable, we made a change: for the first time last year, we shut our shop down from mid-June to mid-August. No weddings. No Saturday shop hours. No pushing product that didn't want to move. It felt risky at first, but it ended up being one of the best decisions we made—for our bottom line, for our team, and for our health. As we told ourselves, we could stay home and make no money, or go to work and lose money.

While I closed the shop, no small business is really closed, even if it's closed. Over the summer, I work on other projects. I bank content for my Substack newsletter, "FlowerNerd." I record a ton of YouTube videos, which allows me to stick to my weekly publishing schedule even when it gets busy in the fall. I travelled for work. This summer, I taught classes at the Gardener's Workshop and at the ASCFG Floral Design Intensive. I also travel to visit my mom (Florida) and my dad (Buffalo). It's nearly impossible to get away for any extended time during the season to see them.

I realize now that we are a seasonal business. There are ebbs and flows to our work that are out of my control. And it's not just me (although sometimes it feels this way). Across regions and business sizes, growers and florists are seeing the summer slump hit hard from mid-June through August.

"Sales fall off the table as soon as July hits. Primarily in Ontario, flower sales drop significantly on July 1 and don't regain traction until late August/early September," says Karl Vahrmeyer Jr. of Green Park Nurseries in Ontario.

Laura Beth Resnick of Butterbee Farm in Maryland agrees. "Around mid-June, we always noticed a significant slowdown in sales. It's so hot in Maryland in the summer that people just don't want to get married outside. It picks up again in early September. This is our third summer break, and I'll never go back! It's wonderful to have more flexibility and time to flip the farm for fall. We work approximately 25 hours a week and have a couple of part-time staff members helping out. We can go away on vacation more easily and avoid working in the high heat of summer."

It's a pattern farmers and florists recognize. Agnes McKowen Collins of Forage Floral Design in Baton Rouge, La., sums it up plainly. "June through August is hot as Hades in the deep south, and people hide from the heat this time of year," she says. "There are fewer weddings—at least outdoor ones in the super-hot time of year—and our main florist customer takes the hottest months off. Farmers' markets are not as well attended. It makes the most sense to take off at that time. We mentally reset and also tarp and turn beds over for cool-season flowers."

Shifting the Workload: Work Less, Work Smarter

Taking a summer break doesn't necessarily mean shutting business down completely. All of the farmers and florists I spoke with who are "taking a break" are just adjusting how and when they work—focusing on maintenance, infrastructure projects, flipping beds, planting, planning, training staff, and online work rather than sales.

Vahrmeyer says their summer rhythm now looks completely different. "Shutting down in the summer for us means going to a 30-hour work week, with holidays thrown in there. Simply removing constant emails and hundreds of purchase orders being sent my way for six



Ellen Frost leads Floral Intensive participants through a design.

weeks is the best holiday ever! To simply be weeding, cutting grass, spraying, or cleaning up is like a holiday/farm shutdown for us. Growing is the most relaxing part of flower farming, and I always look forward to the six weeks to just simply grow without all the other back-end tasks that we have to do to run a successful business."

Others scale back without stopping sales entirely. Grace Lam from Fivefork Farms in Upton, Mass., says, "We aim to end our main selling season on June 30 and do bare minimal flowers (roselilies... bits and bobs) to keep consistency with our grocery accounts. We're still "working" but most are project-oriented, like grounds maintenance, building infrastructure, our once-a-year wash of all the buckets on the farm (many pallets' worth!). We start our selling season again in the third week of August when our customers are back in town and getting ready for school." Check out Lam's recorded talk at the 2022 ASCFG Continental Conference called "Fivefork Farms—The Evolution of a Cut Flower Farm," where she clearly lays

Questions to ask yourself today if you want to reduce your work next summer

- When does the summer slump really start for you? When does it end? Review your profit and loss statements carefully to understand when sales begin to decline and when they begin to increase again.
- Could your summer focus shift to limited or no sales, with more emphasis on maintenance and infrastructure?
- Could expanded spring or fall offerings give you the financial cushion to slow down?
- Can you adjust payroll with part-time work or by banking money during the spring and fall to cover payroll in the summer?
- Will being rested and reset for the fall help you be more profitable?

out the financial decision-making that she followed to reduce her work in the summer.

The Financial Tradeoff: Summer Sales vs. Sustainable Profit

All this taking a break in sales sounds great, but the unavoidable question is: Can your business afford to take a break? The more important question: Can it afford not to? For me, I was losing money in the summer and spending all year trying to make up for it.

Taking the summer off doesn't mean expenses disappear—payroll, taxes, rent, loans—they all keep coming. That's why many business owners emphasize planning ahead.

For me, I plan to generate enough income in June, July, and August through teaching, hosting my online community, and creating YouTube videos, which will enable me to cover the shop rent and expenses during the eight weeks we're closed. I also keep three months of rent in savings as a backup in case we need to dip into it. We usually don't have to.

Some farms build this buffer through stronger spring sales or expanded fall offerings. Others cut out low-profit summer crops altogether. Several growers lean on winter crops, wreath sales, or off-season products to balance annual income.

Kristen Muehlhauser of Raindance Farm Flowers in Whitmore Lake, Mich., says, "This is our first year with heated greenhouses, and having reliable income September through May is making the dream of taking off (at least from sales) July and August look more doable."

Val Schirmer of Three Toads Farm in Winchester, Ky., had a similar realization: "Spring, fall, and WINTER are our biggest sales/profit times! The first time we didn't sell during the summer, we actually made more PROFIT for the year because we didn't have the summer labor expenses."

Keeping Your Team Through a Summer Shift

For many small businesses, payroll is often the sticking point. Many growers can't afford to lose trained employees. That's why most farms don't stop completely in summer—they shift. Teams work fewer hours or switch to infrastructure projects.

At my own business, our team is comprised of part-time workers who all have young children. They are happy to have time off in the summer to spend time with their families, and are ready to return in the fall once their kids are back in school.

AJ Kocon of Little State Flower Company in Tiverton, R.I., says, "We deliberately adjust our crops in the summer to focus on roselylily in July. We keep the farm weeded while we wait for dahlia season—we work 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. or 5 a.m. to 1 p.m. and hit the beach in the afternoons. We don't stop completely because my employees expect to work and have to pay bills, etc., but I do adjust the demands of selling."

Elisa Lane, of Two Boots Farm in Hampstead, Md., emphasizes the struggle with payroll during the summer. "I encourage all our employees to take time off in the summer so they don't burn out. However, I pay PTO, so unfortunately, my expenses

remain the same during the summer even though there's less income. My goal is that we at least try to cover payroll with our income, even during the slowest times of the summer. Unfortunately, there are a few weeks when we don't even do that. The very worst week for sales at our market has always been the 4th of July weekend."

Why It's About More Than Money

For me, the decision to step back was financial—but it became personal. My quality of life in the summer has greatly improved. I can go to the pool, visit family, and just have a slower pace.

Farmers I spoke to echoed that sentiment. Many talked of burnout after the busy winter/spring seasons. Working less in the summer allowed them to come back for the fall busy season refreshed.

Schirmer reflects, "In 2023, the first year we didn't grow to sell in the summer, I went through separation anxiety because I wasn't tending all the rows of beautiful summer-time flowers. After that, we decided to bump up the flowers we grow in our landscape instead and then enjoy the hell out of them!"

Taking a summer break, if you can make it work, can bring more than profit. It can bring back joy, energy, and sustainability—in every sense of the word.

I thought the summer slowdown was a personal failing or a lack of hustle on my part for more than a decade. I now know it's a pattern across our industry, driven by climate, culture, and customer behavior. By acknowledging it, we can stop beating ourselves up (maybe that's just me) and make more sustainable businesses.

I don't miss those July panic months. If you've been fighting summer like I did, maybe next year will be your year to plan for a break.

If you're thinking about how to take a break, check out the great discussion on the ASCFG Members Only Facebook page. There are many more real-life scenarios than I could capture in this article. ■



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

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A Year in Review and What Comes Next

Celebrating Growth and Excellence
Despite Uncertain Times

BY REBECCA MARRALL

THIS PAST YEAR has been a stellar time of growth and transformation for the ASCFG and our members. From our online programs like “Ask an Expert” and “Flowers are Serious Business” to our impressive and robust roster of in-person events such as the Growers’ School (March 2025), the Equipment and Field Day (June 2025), the Floral Design Intensive (July 2025), and our farm tours, the ASCFG is very, very lucky to have a generous and giving community of experts who share their knowledge with fellow industry members. These events provided a rich mix of in-person learning, from hands-on farm visits and tool demos to deep design intensives and business-centric webinars, giving cut-flower growers a full year of education, inspiration, and networking. We’re thrilled to have served 968 members through these programs!

As this year draws to a close, I am growing increasingly excited about ASCFG’s Continental Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The expertise and experience of our speakers at this conference are unmatched in the industry, and they were carefully selected and vetted by the ASCFG Education Committee. In-person conferences offer valuable opportunities for cut flower farmers to connect, learn, and grow their businesses. Furthermore, the ASCFG Trade Show provides attendees with the opportunity to see new varieties and tools up close and to connect with vendors and suppliers personally. Farmers can share real-

world experiences, troubleshoot challenges, and build relationships that often lead to collaborations and new markets. The face-to-face interaction fosters a sense of community and support that’s hard to replicate online, making these events an important part of staying inspired and informed in the industry.

If you haven’t yet registered, it’s not too late. Visit the ASCFG website today or call our office at (440) 774-2887.

And don’t forget the free online ASCFG Supplier Showcase, “See Our Top Picks in 2026!,” which will occur on Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 8 and 9, 2025. This annual winter event is a popular highlight of our online programming, offering a unique opportunity for members to connect with vendors and suppliers in the cut flower industry.

As 2025 comes to a close, what lies ahead for the ASCFG community? The ASCFG Education Committee and the Board of Directors have been hard at work engaging in strategic planning, events, curriculum design, and more. Several exciting projects await our members across the next three-year period. These projects include technological upgrades and unique professional development opportunities. While some of the details may change due to new priorities or member feedback, here is a quick snapshot of what you can expect to see in the upcoming years.

This three-year rotation is designed to allow our members to plan ahead and make informed

“Several exciting projects await our members across the next three-year period. These projects include technological upgrades and unique professional development opportunities.”

decisions about where they wish to invest their professional development funds and time.

Wondering about the difference between our events? The ASCFG Continental Conference is an international event that showcases industry best practices and trends, and connects growers with a broad swathe of suppliers and vendors at our ASCFG Trade Show. The ASCFG Regional Conferences, first introduced in 2024, are regional events that feature educational lectures and workshops, and facilitate community networking. These events are typically followed by or preceded by a farm tour. And, of course, all farm tours are in-person tours of a single cut-flower farm. These events may last half a day or a full day and may include a guest lecture. In addition to these evergreen events, we will continue to design and offer specialty workshops, such as the Growers' School, Floral Design Intensives, and other unique workshops, at regular intervals.

In summary, we are finishing a fantastic year and have much more to come in 2026 and beyond. I wish you and your families a wonderful, restful holiday season, and I'll see you next year! ■



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

IN-PERSON AND ONLINE EVENTS AND PROGRAMS:

2026

- ASCFG Continental Conference in Albuquerque, N.M. (January 2025)
- Farm Tours (In-Person, various dates)
- “Ask an Expert” (Online, monthly)
- ASCFG Advanced Growers’ Intensive (Online, February–April 2026)
- “Research and the Flower Farmer” (February 2026)
- “Flowers are Serious Business” (Online, March 2026)
- 2026–27 ASCFG Mentor Program (Online, starts in October 2026)
- ASCFG Supplier Showcase (Online, December 2026)

2027

- Regional Conferences (In-person, various Dates)
- Ask an Expert (Online, monthly)
- ASCFG Advanced Growers’ Intensive (Online, February–April 2027)
- Flowers are Serious Business (Online, March 2027)
- 2027–28 ASCFG Mentor Program (Online, starts in October 2027)
- ASCFG Supplier Showcase (Online, December 2027)

2028

- Farm Tours (In-person, various dates)
- Workshops, TBD (In person, Spring/Summer 2028)
- “Ask an Expert” (Online, monthly)
- “Flowers are Serious Business” (Online, March 2028)
- ASCFG Advanced Growers’ Intensive (Online, February–April 2028)
- 2028–29 ASCFG Mentor Program (Online, starts in October 2028)
- ASCFG Supplier Showcase (Online, December 2028)

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JUDY LAUSHMAN RECEIVES John H. Walker Award

ASCFG IS THRILLED TO SHARE THAT JUDY LAUSHMAN, co-founder of the ASCFG and executive director for 35 years, has been honored with the 2025 John H. Walker Award from the Society of American Florists (SAF).

The award is named for SAF's longtime executive vice president, John H. Walker, and is designed to recognize the growing importance of association executives in the workings of SAF. Among the criteria for the award are contributions and achievements to the nominee's association, involvement in civic and community organizations, and creation and implementation of programs beneficial to SAF member organizations and individuals.

Judy meets all these criteria in spades. While her husband, Roger, was in his doctoral program at the University of Georgia, Judy worked with Dr. Allan Armitage, known for research in new ornamental crop development, especially annuals and perennials, in the UGA Trial Gardens.

Allan had also established important trials of field-grown cut flowers, at that time usually considered novelty flowers by U.S. buyers. It was in the cut flower research that the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, Inc. had its roots; it was officially established in 1988 with Allan named Executive Advisor, and Judy as Executive Director.

The ASCFG relocated to Oberlin, Ohio in 1989. Judy oversaw the creation of several membership services, ASCFG publications, national conferences, localflowers.org, Mentor Program, Research Foundation, national seed and perennial trials, and membership growth to nearly 3,000. She also served as founder and editor of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*.

Judy says, "When I learned that Will Carlson's Bedding Plants International at one point boasted 2,000 members, that became my objective for the ASCFG's membership. Reaching that goal in 2019, then surpassing it, was a cause for celebration. It had become clear that the ASCFG had established itself as an essential resource for commercial cut flower growers.

"Through my 35 years with the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, I was fortunate to have steady guidance from co-founder Dr. Allan Armitage; current Executive Advisor Dr. John Dole; longtime industry hero and friend Gay Smith; industry suppliers; and countless ASCFG executive board members and regional directors. ASCFG Managing Director Linda Twining provided invaluable support for me personally, and innovation for our members, since 2002.

"I'm grateful that the ASCFG has been recognized as the force it has become for producers of locally grown cut flowers, and know that it will continue to connect and inform its members."

Judy retired from the ASCFG in 2023 and is the manager of the Oberlin College biology department greenhouse. She spends her spare time in her vegetable and perennial gardens, and volunteers for organizations including the League of Women Voters, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, and the Second Harvest Food Bank.

Judy was born in Sioux City, Iowa, the seventh of eight siblings. She graduated from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree in horticulture. She and her husband Roger have two children, Dan and Katie. ■



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FROM CORPORATE MANAGER TO Grower Extraordinaire

After a globe-trotting career in the corporate world, Bob Wollam traded boardrooms for blooms—building a thriving flower farm rooted in family, creativity, and the enduring beauty of woody shrubs.

BY ROBIN SIKTBERG

WHOEVER BELIEVES IT'S TOO LATE TO CHANGE CAREERS IN MIDLIFE HAS NEVER MET A FLOWER FARMER.

More specifically, they have not met Bob Wollam. It's safe to say Wollam has lived two lives: the first as an oilman for Esso Far East, living in exotic locales such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Australia, and the second as owner of Wollam Gardens in the green rolling hills of Jeffersonton, Va., about an hour southwest Washington, D.C. While these two lifestyles look vastly different, the first made the second possible. And flowers have always been close to Wollam's heart.

"Although I grew up in Columbus, Ohio, I spent most summers at my grandparents' 500-acre dairy farm in upstate New York," Wollam says. "My grandmother had a beautiful English flower garden, and she often had me help her in the gardens—usually weeding. My paternal grandfather loved roses, and his backyard in Columbus was full of them, so I guess the genes came from both sides."

In his first life, traveling around Southeast Asia for Esso, Wollam took advantage of every opportunity to see flowers and agriculture. "I had quite the reputation," he says. "For instance, I flew to Borneo and someone picked me up at the airport in Kuching, Sarawak, and said, 'There's this place I think you should see, and he took me to an orchid farm.'"

In 1986, Esso's foreign operations worldwide consolidated, and Wollam was offered the choice between another job in New Jersey or a lump sum of money. "I took the money and ran—in large part because I wanted to work for myself," he says. "And I had always wanted to do something with flowers."



At age 46, with cash in hand, Wollam began his second life and set out to find a farm suitable for a flower business. He missed seeing the four seasons during his time in Asia and Houston, so he focused on the U.S. East Coast. He also didn't want to be too far from a major city. "I thought about Boston, but the season is so short. I didn't want to go further south than D.C., because I'm too much of a Yankee," Wollam says. "My criteria were: one and a half hours from downtown D.C., 10 acres, an old house, and a price of \$160,000 or less. My current farm checked all the boxes, except there was already an offer on it."

When an inspection of the house revealed a multitude of problems, the first buyer backed out. Wollam was undaunted and spent the first two years repairing plumbing, electrical, and heating systems to make the house livable. The kitchen area of the house was built in 1747 by the first German immigrants to move to the area, and an addition was added in 1819. Its beautiful, wide-planked pine floors were covered with shag carpet and linoleum. Once Wollam could move in, he started planting, concentrating on woody shrubs, something he is known for today. "I'm not exactly sure why I got started with them, but I got really interested in viburnums and hydrangeas and planted a lot of them," he says.

He likes woodies because they don't take a lot of maintenance, and many people don't grow them for flowers, which means he has a lot of product that other growers don't offer. "They're unusual," he says. "And mine are so old and mature—I produce huge amounts."



Facing page: Bob Wollam and a few of his gorgeous dahlias. *Photo courtesy of Bob Wollam.* **Above left:** ASCFG members toured Wollam Gardens in April 2025, led by Bob (front right). **Above right:** Wollam and his wife, Anne Montgomery, celebrated their wedding in 2015 on the farm and were the first couple to be married in the pavilion. *Photo courtesy of Bob Wollam.* All photos in this story by Robin Siktberg unless otherwise credited.

Wollam half-jokes he has the world's largest planting of *Viburnum macrocephalum*. "I thought I would be the King of *Viburnum macrocephalum*," he laughs. "They're gorgeous, but they are hard to sell because they are difficult to handle and because they are so big. Sometimes they have more than 25 blooms that are six inches in diameter on an eight-foot branch. You can't just cut them and put them in the cooler dry and then rehydrate, because they won't rehydrate; they have to be kept in water all the time. If you do that, though, you'll have a long vase life. And another good thing—the deer don't bother them."

Wollam estimates his crop mix as 40% woodies, 30% annuals, and 30% herbaceous perennials, including peonies. The woodies are planted in open rows all around the property. Some of them, like the viburnums, *Euonymus americanus* (strawberry bush), and 'Blue Ice' cypress (*Cupressus arizonica* var. *glabra* 'Blue Ice', tower overhead. "Hydrangea Alley" features double rows of *Hydrangea* 'Limelight', which bloom in midsummer and make a wonderful setting for photos and cocktail hours.

Daffodils and peonies are a regular feature on the farm for bouquets and pick-your-own. Wollam says they are perennials on his Zone 7a farm, so they don't need to be replanted each

FAVORITE WOLLAM WOODIES

If you are interested in adding (or adding more) woodies to your crop mix, try one or more that Bob Wollam grows. Most were purchased as small plants from Spring Meadow Nursery.

1. ***Abelia mosanensis*** (Fragrant Abelia) Flowers are extremely fragrant, and the upright stems have a long vase life.
2. ***Calycanthus floridus* 'Amethyst'** (Sweetshrub) Flowers are more upright and a darker red than the species. Grows fast, can even be cut, placed in water, and forced in the greenhouse in just three weeks.
3. ***Chaenomeles* spp.** (Flowering Quince) 'Nivalis' (pure white) and 'Toyo-Nishiki' (at right) (red, white, and pink flowers, sometimes all on the same flower!) are two favorites. Bob's advice: "If I were to start over, I would plant all thornless varieties."
4. ***Euonymus americana*** (American Strawberry Bush) Glossy, round leaves provide great filler for arrangements, especially in early spring when other foliage hasn't emerged.
5. ***Ilex verticillata*** (Winterberry) 'Winter Gold' and 'Winter Red' have orange or red berries, respectively. The idea is to sell the orange at Thanksgiving and the red at Christmas. Wollam says he doesn't follow the rule of one male holly for every five females. "*Ilex* 'Southern Gentleman' will pollinate at least 25 nearby bushes," he says.
6. ***Heptacodium miconioides*** Blooms white in August and then turns pink in September. It sells both ways.



Left: Even though it needed extensive repairs, the farmhouse was one of the reasons Wollam bought the farm. The older section dates to 1747 (the shorter white part at right), while the "new" addition was built in 1819. It is now an Airbnb.

Middle: A highlight of the farm is "Hydrangea Alley," long rows of *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight,' which provide a gorgeous backdrop for photos and a setting for cocktail hour at weddings. Photo courtesy of Bob Wollam

year. Dahlias are a big seller in the fall, and Wollam overwinters them by covering tubers with straw and plastic. "It keeps them dry and warm," he says. "But you can only do it for two years, because in the third year the plants become weak. Overwintering isn't a guarantee, and he usually ends up purchasing plugs and filling in gaps where tubers didn't survive, but the labor savings are worth it. Six high tunnels are used for crops that need protection, such as ranunculus, sweet peas, Icelandic poppies, and heirloom mums. Two 140-foot rows of eucalyptus—mostly 'Baby Blue'—produce enough for custom work and bouquets.

Pest Control Made Easier by Growing Enough for All

Many deer roam Wollam's farm, and controlling them has become simpler over the years, largely because Wollam has mostly given up. He used to put up fences and spray repellent, and even allowed selective hunting on the farm. But now, he says he has enough for whatever the deer take and his own needs. He does spray deer and rabbit repellent on tulips ("There's nothing the deer eat faster.") and the *Hydrangea macrophylla* ("If you have anything that blooms on second-year wood, you know the deer want it in the first year.") But while nothing he raises is truly deer proof, Wollam says deer don't like most of the things he grows.

Aphids are the biggest insect problem, and he occasionally sprays Monterey Garden Insect Spray (spinosad), as well as a selective herbicide for grass.



Above: The pavilion serves as the heart of the farm, and is the site of weddings and many types of events. ASCFG members gathered here during a farm tour this spring.

Labor, Revenue, Profit, and all the Non-Flower Things

Asked if there was a time when he realized he could really make a go of the flower farm, Wollam says, “I don’t think I was that successful. I had years and years when I didn’t turn a profit. I tried, but labor costs should have been closer to 30% of revenue. I always got stuck at about 50% and was never able to break that. I still struggle with it.”

In 2016, Wollam got so tired of not making money that he put the farm on the market. But he never received a reasonable offer and took it off the market after six months. “The main reason I did it was because even though I wasn’t making money, I thought, ‘What am I going to do if I don’t do this?’” During those years, I developed a moniker, ‘Beauty is the only real currency.’ It will be the title of my book.”

For 15 years, Wollam employed international interns through a connection with a French agricultural school until U.S. immigration rules made it too complicated. While he enjoyed the experience, saying it was great having students from France, Peru, Switzerland, and other countries, sometimes there were challenges. The interns—up to five at a time—lived in a rental house near the farm and in Wollam’s farmhouse. “Sometimes they didn’t get along,” he comments wryly. The farmhouse has been turned into an Airbnb, creating another income stream—one that Wollam says is fairly easy to maintain and brought in \$14,000 last year.

Currently, four part-time staff work on the farm, along with some temporary helpers for events and crunch times.

Wollam has multiple revenue streams, which helps if one or more go soft. Farmers’ markets make up about 25% of revenue; Wollam goes every Sunday to the DuPont Farmers’ Market in



7. *Hydrangea macrophylla* ‘Limelight’ (Big-leaf Hydrangea) Chartreuse-green flowers in spring, turning white in summer. Long-lasting in the vase, but it must be kept hydrated.

8. *Hydrangea paniculata* ‘Grandiflora’ (Pee Gee Hydrangea) Large shrub or small tree with huge white flower panicles that open in midsummer, turning pinkish. Long bloom season!

9. *Hydrangea quercifolia* (Oakleaf Hydrangea) Very popular with customers—and also with deer.

10. *Physocarpus opulifolius* ‘Diabolo’ (Ninebark) Purplish-green, dark leaves and dark-purple fruits create a good fall look.

11. *Viburnum macrocephalum* (Snowball Viburnum) Easy to grow, stunning white snowball flowers, long bloom time.

12. *Cupressus arizonica* var. *glauca* (Blue Ice Cypress) Evergreen shrub that looks prickly, but is quite soft. Excellent for holiday wreaths or by the stem at retail. Deer won’t touch it.

13. *Kerria japonica* (Japanese Kerria). Both single and double (*K. japonica* ‘Pleniflora’) have graceful, long stems and are tough and reliable.

14. *Pieris japonica* (Japanese Pieris). Slow-growing, deer don’t like them, lovely, unusual weeping flowers.



Top: *Viburnum macrocephalum* is one of Wollam's absolute favorites and is one of the first plants he grew.

Middle: Dahlias are put to bed for the winter under a layer of straw and plastic, a huge labor savings compared to digging and storing the tubers.

Bottom: While the farm has built a reputation for its selection of woodies, about 60% of the crop mix is annuals and herbaceous perennials. *Photo courtesy of Bob Wollam*

downtown D.C., and every other week to a market in Arlington, Va., both about one hour away. His roadside farmstand and cut-your-own business bring in about 20%, weddings and custom floral arrangements account for another 30%, and wholesale florists make up the remaining 25%.

Weddings and Events Bring People and Profit

The *pièce de résistance* of the farm is the 30-foot by 60-foot pavilion, built in 2015 and the site of more than 100 weddings, including Wollam's own. "My wife, Anne Montgomery, and I were the first wedding in the pavilion," he says. The pavilion is well-built at a cost of \$200,000 and has stood up well to severe weather. Has it paid for itself? "Probably," Wollam says. "It's safe to say we wouldn't have had as many weddings without it. Once people see the pavilion and the farm, it's pretty easy to sign them up."

The number of weddings per season peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic, in large part because the pavilion and farm offered a beautiful, outdoor option. During that time, there were 16 weddings each season, but that number dropped to just two or three in the last two years. "It's been frustrating," Wollam says. "Also, everyone who has a vineyard, a view, and can put up a tent is now a wedding venue. But we have a new marketing person now; she works out of Columbus and makes the contacts. Anne and I tour them around the farm. We are already doing better and will have a lot more next year than we have had the last couple of seasons." He cancelled advertising in *The Knot*/Wedding Wire, saying it cost almost \$800 per month and provided very few good prospects.

Couples can purchase one of several wedding packages, which vary mostly by the number of nights they will use the farmhouse. Packages include the pavilion, use of the farm, parking, and flowers. They need to hire their own caterer, obtain their own liquor license, and, if there are more than 25 guests, rent a "fancy" porta-potty. Flowers must be purchased through the farm; if they are not grown there, Wollam sources them from local farms or wholesalers. "For instance, I don't grow roses, and a lot of people want them," he says, adding, "We also do a big business in custom floral, which isn't just at our farm. We do weddings and parties for other people as well."

Wollam has a piece of advice for other farmers considering doing events: The more signage you have, the better.

Somewhat unusually for flower farms, Wollam Gardens is always open to the public, even if they aren't buying flowers. Visitors are free to cut flowers from anywhere on the farm, unless it is marked with a sign. Clippers, buckets, and instructions are provided at a work table. There's a price list for every type of flower, and it's all on the honor system, whether cash, Venmo, or IOU. "We have a lot of people coming now just to bring their dogs or family and just enjoy the farm. Some pick flowers and others just have a picnic—we have picnic tables everywhere," Wollam says.

This fall, Wollam is bringing back the farm's traditional dahlia festival. "They were a big hit when we did them, and we haven't had one since 2015," he says. He's working to fill in his beds of overwintered dahlias with new plants where overwintered ones didn't survive in order to have his two large

areas full by September 27. Wollam's favorite varieties are 'Café au Lait', 'Peaches and Cream', 'Ferncliff Illusion', and 'Karma Naomi'. The festival includes bouquets, live music, flower crowns, and wagon rides driven by Wollam himself, where he talks about everything he grows—and of course, dahlias.

There's always something going on at the farm. Wollam often partners with local artists, food trucks, musicians, and other plant lovers to offer everything from open mic nights, weekly yoga, plein air art sessions, midsummer celebrations, and gardening workshops, including forcing woody branches, dyeing with plants, flower pressing, and arranging flowers.

At age 85, Wollam has decided to slow down a bit. At the time of this writing, he is looking for a buyer for his farm. Ideally, the arrangement would allow him and his wife to live temporarily at the farm and have a hand in the business while educating a new owner. His sons and daughter have successful careers, and while they love the farm, they don't want to take it over. "I'm lucky I'm still healthy and I can keep my hands in the dirt," he says. "I want to keep doing this until I can't, but maybe I can work a little less. One of my goals is to travel more and see flower farms across the world."

That's strong advice he gives to everyone. "The best way to learn about flower farming is to go to other people's farms. Don't miss that opportunity. Go to other farms and steal all their best ideas! I've learned more from other people than from books. Even if I don't own my farm next year, I'm still going to the ASCFG's conference in Albuquerque."

Wollam credits the ASCFG for much of what he has learned. He attended his first conference in 1993, and he served as president from 2001 to 2004. "I learned so much from Frank Arnosky and Betsy Hitt in those early years, he says. And now they are lifelong friends. I tell everybody to join the ASCFG before they do anything else. If anyone wants to see my farm, they have to join the ASCFG first." ■



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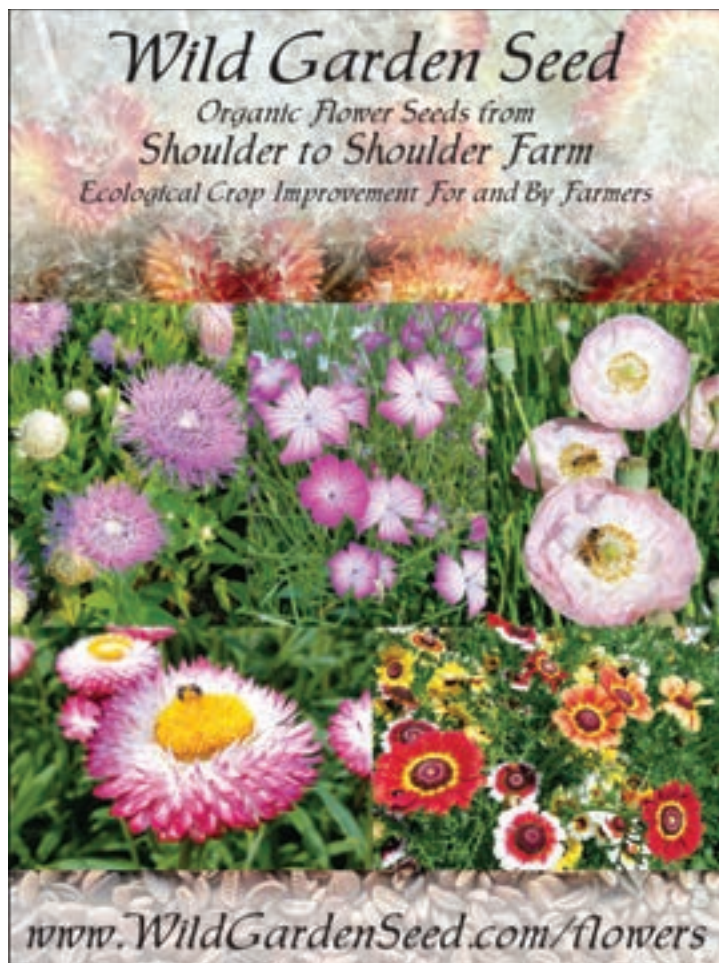
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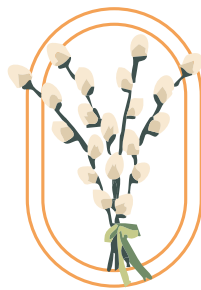
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Is It Time to Add Shrubs to Your Crop Mix?



Woody shrubs bring reliability, diversification, and potential market expansion to the flower farm. What should you consider before investing in shrubs for your farm? Learn tips worth knowing from two growers who have taken the plunge.

BY JULIE MARTENS FORNEY



"Incorporating woody plants into our crop plan, like these dogwoods, allows us to diversify both our product offerings and revenue streams, while maximizing space and seasonality," Ackerman says.

ADDING SHRUBS TO A FARM'S PRODUCT MIX IS AN ULTIMATE GOAL FOR MANY FLOWER GROWERS, but achieving that target demands too much—too much money and too much space. With the right planning and information, however, woody shrubs lose their holy grail qualities and become something not only achievable, but also manageable for farms of any size.

At Blue Sky Flower Farm in Lakeville, Minn., owner Rachael Ackerman has been flower farming for 11 years. She actually started her floral venture with woody crops—dogwoods and willows—planted in a small pasture owned by her dairy farmer in-laws. The whole family, including Jon, Rachael's husband, their three kids, and Rachael's grandparents, pitch in around the farm. "It's a full family effort, and I think that's a big part of what makes our work so special," she shares.

Her business model includes CSA-style bouquet shares, an on-site farmstand, and partnerships with retail shops, garden centers, nurseries, and landscape maintenance firms. The farm also

regularly donates to local organizations and "does whatever is needed to make sure more people get to experience the joy of local flowers," Ackerman says. "I truly love sharing flowers and knowledge with others."

Crop-wise, the farm's focus is on fresh-cut flowers in spring and summer, with seasonal material extending sales throughout the year. In early spring, the farm offers woody branches, such as pussy willows, forsythia, and snowball viburnum. Dogwoods, willows, and winterberries take the sales lead in fall and winter.

As a smaller grower, Ackerman tends to harvest thousands of stems in short windows of time, moving product quickly. "We grow on about five acres and typically cut to order or for immediate sale," she explains. This meets the farm's goal of keeping labor and space available for the next crop. "On a small farm, efficiency is key," she adds.

The script flips somewhat in Weyers Cave, Va., home to Harmony Harvest Farm. Jessica Hall, self-proclaimed Weeder-in-Chief, runs the farm along with her "super-close and connected family," which includes her sister, Stephanie Duncan, and mother, Chris Auville. "Our business model is to help folks discover beauty and have access to fresh local flowers no matter where they are," she says.

"We want everyone to have equal opportunity and equal access. We're out to eliminate fresh-flower deserts." To



Harmony Harvest Farm, located in Weyers Cave, Va., was established in 2013. (Left to right) Stephanie Duncan, Chris Auville, and Jessica Hall run the family flower farm. The primary farm model focuses on shipping fresh flowers nationwide overnight. **Right:** Ackerman finds that growing woodyies is far more strenuous than annuals and perennials, but worth the effort. “We grow what we love and what we think adds something unique to our overall offerings,” she says.

meet that goal, the farm ships flowers Monday through Thursday via overnight shipping. Monthly workshops, flower subscriptions, heirloom mum sales, and a virtual one-day Mum Summit help round out sales.

A dawn-to-dusk, self-serve pick-your-own program welcomes farm guests seven days a week in season. “We have 20 acres, and these customers have free rein to pick through the high tunnels, greenhouses, and fields,” Hall explains. “It works wonderfully for us.”

Woodyies came to Harmony Harvest eight years into the farm’s story. “I had always wanted woodyies and saw those plants as investments in the long-term future of the farm. But the cost barrier kept me from putting them in the ground the first few years,” Hall shares. “It’s such a catch-22 for flower farmers. It’s a cost to invest in those crops right out of the gate as a flower farm start-up, and then you have to wait for them to mature so you can start harvesting.”

Woodyies: Big Investment, Big Return

Woody cuts bring many benefits to a flower farm. For Ackerman, one draw was long-term productivity, which also scores big with Hall. “I like the stability of them,” she says. “In the product mix, they’re something I can rely on and count on without doing a lot of work. The work is on the front end—and then

you need patience. But after that, you have a long-lasting, highly productive crop.”

Ackerman agrees. “Woody crops are low-maintenance once established and offer production efficiency. They don’t require yearly planting, and many varieties tolerate variable weather conditions.” That’s a must in her Zone 4b location. Blue Sky Flower Farm also counts on woody crops to extend the farm’s sales season. “For us, woodyies provide reliable off-season harvests. Species like salix, cornus, viburnum, and forsythia supply early spring and late-fall material, which helps extend our market window beyond the typical cut flower season.”

In terms of design, you can “count on woody crops to add structural interest, texture, and color that complements herbaceous material,” Ackerman says. “We originally put ninebarks in for our florist customers, and now we’re using those in our bouquets, especially the oranges and rust. In spring, they’re so bright and vibrant, and as the season goes on, they deepen and darken. They provide beautiful balance to bouquets.”

Hall grows more annuals and perennials because “that’s what gives us the most color



and flash in our bouquets, while woodies bring the texture, greenery, and backbone.” She also leans on woodies to help fill in large-volume sales. “If you’re a farm that’s looking at doing larger quantities, woodies are less stressful to work with,” she says.

Are woodies more profitable? For Hall’s operation, the numbers for woodies, annuals, and perennials come out about even across the board, although woodies command a better price point. “Because you have so much time commitment with them and often less competition in the marketplace, you’re going to get what you’re asking for on items,” she adds. “That makes it a much easier crop to sell.”

An NRCS Funding Option for Woodies

Hall followed her own advice for the first few years of bringing woodies into production, putting in “a whole lot of a few things, versus putting in a few of a lot of things. It wasn’t like I had no money, but I didn’t have enough to afford high investment crops—the things I dreamed about when the Walters Gardens catalog came each year,” she says.

As her itch for woodies increased, Hall, a networking guru in her local agricultural community, discussed her plans with everyone she met. “We were in the middle of working with our Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) agent on a high tunnel, and I told him I wanted to put in woody shrubs but was trying to figure out how to cover the cost,” she recalls. He wondered what kind of woodies, and as the conversation unfolded, he said some might meet the requirements for a carbon sequestration program through the NRCS.

“They look for plants that have the highest value of pulling carbon out of the air and fixing it into soil,” Hall explains. Traditional farmers use these plantings along fencerows and riverbanks. “I learned that to qualify for the program, the plants have to be natives, and I have to take care of them. You don’t want them to die,” she says. “I asked my agent if I could harvest stems, and he said, ‘Sure, just don’t kill them.’”

NRCS doesn’t pay the full cost of plants, but gives a reimbursement for each plant. Hall worked with the NRCS forestry department to determine what plants would fit the program. “I basically circled what I wanted in the Walters Gardens catalog, they told me what



“In spring, ninebarks are so bright and vibrant, and as the season goes on, they deepen and darken. They provide beautiful balance to bouquets.”

—RACHAEL ACKERMAN

would fit the program, and my agent told me the reimbursement rates for each plant,” she explains.

The NRCS carbon sequestration program in Virginia has a nursery that offers free plants, but Hall admits she wanted “the bougie ones, so the rebate only paid for part of them. But that way, I got the exact varieties I wanted. There was a cost to me, but it was substantially less. I paid pennies on the plant, comparatively speaking.”

What natives fit the bill for carbon sequestration? Ninebark (*Physocarpus*), smokebush (*Cotinus*), lilac, forsythia, and snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), for starters. However, the best part of the program is that Hall receives an annual stipend check from NRCS to maintain her carbon sequestration plot. “My plants pay me!” she laughs. Over time, with the rebate checks, the plants will pay for themselves.

Hall shares some tips on working with your NRCS agent to help your flower farm. “A good agent can

Continue on p. 31

The Challenges of Growing Woodies

Woody cuts deliver big value, but of course, they're not without challenges. In no particular order, these two growers share their top challenges.



- **WEEDS:** When plants are small, you have to keep up with weeds. “You can’t just put young shrubs on the back end of your property and forget about them, or the weeds will overcome them—and you’ll lose them,” Hall warns.

For Ackerman, who runs an herbicide-free farm, weed control is fabric or maintenance: mowing and weed whipping. With closely spaced crops (ninebarks, winterberries), weed fabric is an option, but on acres of willows and dogwoods, where crops are spaced further apart, fabric isn’t practical, so weed whipping is the answer.

- **PESTS:** Deer, rabbits and insects pressure crops. Ackerman relies on a combination of a deer fence around the property, Rosie, the family’s Great Pyrenees, and a host of indoor-outdoor farm cats. “The cats are actually well-loved pets,” Rachael says. “The fence was a big investment, but we didn’t have any other solution. When the deer go in, they tend to eat entire rows at a time.”

In Minnesota winters, rabbits are a serious issue. “With heavy snowfalls, they burrow under the snow and girdle the pussywillows,” Ackerman says. That’s where the farm’s cadre of cats comes in, helping to control the bunny population.

Hall deals with deer, too, but birds are a current hot-button topic. “They get the berries on the ‘Blue Muffin’ viburnum, leaving me maybe three,” she says. “I can’t sell that viburnum in bloom because the flowers smell like cat urine. I grow it for the berries, but am thinking of using it for foliage.”

- **WEATHER:** Storm damage from wind and hail can pose a significant challenge for these long-term crops. “When hail hits curly willow, the stems produce cankers. It makes them unusable, so it’s a huge loss,” Ackerman shares. She recommends being prepared financially to face bigger losses if you invest heavily in woodies. “We’ve had many years of wonderful harvests with many diverse crops and two different locations, but one hail storm can wipe out a crop. At that point, you still have to harvest the stems (for compost basically), so you’re still investing your time and labor with no sales returns.”

Both pests and weather events can impact plant health over the long haul, unlike with annuals. “Woodies require more long-term management,” Ackerman says. “Recovery from damage can take multiple seasons. It’s a constant balance of prevention, maintenance, and timing.”

- **HARVEST TIMING:** Learning when to harvest stems is key to success. At Harmony Harvest Farm, part of Hall’s job is figuring out the proper harvest stage, especially with new crops. “Over time we’ve gotten a pretty good handle on what the appropriate stage of harvest is for most of the flowers we grow,” she says.

Ackerman sees mastering this step as critical for success. “Understanding the optimal stage of growth for harvest is so important. Many woody stems with tender new growth are prone to wilting if harvested too early, while others require earlier harvesting. That proper timing impacts postharvest quality, hydration, and vase life, and there’s often a narrow window to get it right,” she says. How does a grower master this? “It takes observation, trial, and experience to fine-tune the timing for each species,” she says. She recommends *Woody Cut Stems* by Lane Greer and John Dole as an excellent resource for learning when to harvest. (The ASCFG sells this book at a discount to members.)

- **HARVEST LABOR:** Harvesting woody stems is labor-intensive and strenuous. “It’s not just the cutting, but also grading by size and bundling accordingly, that takes considerable time and effort,” Ackerman says. “With current climate shifts, we’re seeing fewer hard frosts in fall, which delays leaf drop on many of our fall and winter woody cuts. We’ve had to hand-defoliate much of our product to make it market-ready, which adds another layer of labor to the process.”

On her small farm, Ackerman does most of the harvesting, so she has invested in tools to help ease the load: a golf cart and pneumatic pruners. “The pruners are a huge investment, but they’re a real lifesaver. They have significantly reduced hand strain and have honestly been a carpal tunnel savior during the heaviest harvest weeks.” Her supplier is a family-owned business, Amberg’s in Stanley, New York. “One time I was cutting ‘Cardinal’ dogwoods in the heat of fall harvest. The cord to the pneumatic pruner is red, and yes, I cut it. Amberg’s sent me one overnight. We get all of our Felco supplies from them.”



Left: Blue Sky Flower Farm is a family affair, with Rachael Ackerman, her husband, Jon, their three kids, and even Rachael's grandparents helping out on a daily basis. "Grandpa, Rhodes Tiedeman, turned 94 this year, and he still outworks all of us," Rachael shares.

Right: Ackerman shows one of her favorite woody shrubs: *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry) when it's covered in bright red berries. She's toying with other winterberry colors for future crops.

find conventional programs that are set up for grain and livestock producers that can be molded to fit innovative farmers, like fresh cut flower growers," she says. "They can find adaptive ways for existing programs to suit our needs and our scale. For example, we can do carbon sequestration or native wildlife habitats between high tunnels. It's a win-win for the farmer and the agent. It helps the agent diversify their portfolio against all the large commercial ag producers."

She suggests getting an NRCS agent to visit your farm and walk it with you, as you talk about your pressure points. "Help them to understand your goals and what direction you're trying to move. They can help mold things in the direction you're going. Build a team with an NRCS agent to help move your farm forward."

Tips for Adding Woodies to the Farm

Both of these flower farmers agree that investing in woody crops requires planning. Ackerman has added crops a little at a time, mainly due to the upfront investment and the preparatory work involved. She buys smaller bareroot crops wholesale from Bailey Nurseries, headquartered in Minnesota. For Proven Winners' protected varieties, she orders small wholesale pots from Spring Meadow Nursery in Michigan.

"Unlike annuals, woodies require more permanent infrastructure and careful planning—everything from soil prep, to irrigation, to long-term spacing," she shares. While she typically spaces annuals at six to nine inches, woodies are spaced anywhere from 18 to 36 inches. "Because each plant occupies a larger footprint, we need to be thoughtful and intentional about expanding. We continue to add to our woody section each year, but it's definitely a slower build compared to our floral field production."

When deciding where to place woody shrubs on the farm, remember that you're essentially planting hedgerows. "These plants are fun to put in. You get some instant gratification compared to little annual seedlings," Hall says. "I appreciate the fact that you get a hedge pretty quickly with the fast growers, like *cotinus* (smokebush). That growth allows you to place your woodies to create privacy areas within your own property. You can create outdoor rooms or shade. We've built some hedge walls to give shade to other plantings and to our people who are in the fields."

Remember to space plants so they can reach their mature size without crowding buildings or other plantings. "These aren't like annuals and perennials that we grow tightly together to stretch stems. Shrubs and trees need space," she adds. "Don't forget to leave room to mow around them."

It's also important to choose your planting space with neighbors in mind. Although in a wide-open space, Harmony Harvest Farm shares a driveway to access the commercial side of the business. Only recently did Hall realize how lucky she is to have good neighbors. "I have a very progressive neighbor who uses rotational farming with no spray and no till. You have to



“When adding woodies to the farm, you have to think about access to water for those first few years. Weeding is also important. It’s too big an investment to plant them and forget them.”

-JESSICA HALL

Harmony Harvest Farm spans more than 20 acres and offers daily pick-your-own in season, seven days a week, dawn to dusk. “It’s self-serve and works wonderfully for us,” Hall says. *Cotinus coggygia* (smokebush), above, is a popular woody choice for customers as is *Symphoricarpos albus* (snowberry), pictured at left.

be mindful of where on your property you’re putting woodies and aware of how the land around them is treated, as well,” she shares. “Spray drift is a real thing. Think about that as you choose where to place your woody plants.”

Crop Selection

The popular woodies at Harmony Harvest Farm include lilacs in spring. “It’s a very short window, but they’re always coveted,” Hall says. Hydrangeas are a top seller, abelia is a very popular late-season cut, and snowberry rings up sales as a berried woody plant.

Playing favorites among the woodies is like choosing a favorite child. “Each crop brings something different to the table, so it’s hard to name a favorite,” Ackerman says. But if she had to, she leans toward *Cotinus coggygia* (smokebush) when they are in bloom—the flowers look like smoky plumes, or *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry) when it’s covered in bright red berries. “All the others I love



for their timing and reliability, others for their texture or unique design potential,” she says.

How do these farmers decide what to grow? Ackerman evaluates potential new crops based on the market. Will it fit existing sales outlets? “You could be the most amazing grower in the whole world, but if you don’t have a sales outlet for what you’re growing, you won’t succeed. You need a sales outlet that’s outside what’s already in the market. Woodies aren’t a \$3 packet of zinnia seeds. The investment is huge.”

She also suggests asking yourself what kinds of things you wish you had access to. “Ask customers what they would like that they can’t get. Ask yourself if you have the time to wait for a crop to be ready. Woodies take time. Winterberry needs five years to reach its potential.”

When considering a crop, Ackerman often tries a small amount first to see how it would fit into her business model. “I’ve had a willow with really dark purple stems for probably 10 years. I take cuts off it, but it only fits a certain clientele. It’s not for everyone,” she shares. “It’s an example of something I can use, but the market may not be there to justify expanding the planting.”

While attending an ASCFG Conference years ago in New York, Ackerman saw smokebush in a landscape. She planted a handful, but what was beautiful on the East Coast had tattered leaves on her farm. “I’ll never have the leaf quality here to use it for foliage,” she says. “But we use all the smaller size stems in our CSA and garden center bouquets.”

Harmony Harvest Farm also uses smokebush quite a bit—in plume and, with their East Coast weather, in foliage. Hall notes, though, that one thing she’s learned about smokebush is that “people with peanut allergies can have a reaction to it. We have a disclaimer on our availability list. It’s my job to find out and share the crazy,” she laughs.

To determine what to grow on their farm, Hall says there’s a lot of discussion with her mother, who oversees the wholesale and florist accounts. “We discuss what’s trendy, what customers want and what they’re saying each year. We also lean heavily on the design table, looking for holes in our product lines. Are we struggling to achieve a look? Is it greenery, filler, or a certain time of year? How best can we fill that hole?”

She says the team considers woodies first because they can be “so very profitable. If you can wait for it to produce, the revenue impact is terrific.” She also shares that the development time on a woody crop gives the team a runway to get customers familiar with the crop. “It gives us time to get customers ready to buy and to get our sales funnel set up. With annuals, you have only one season to incorporate plants into your workflow. With woodies, you have a few years, so you can get people hungry for it.”

One issue Ackerman notes with new crops is that much of the breeding work is focused on developing smaller, more compact cultivars. “I’m going backwards to find old varieties, things that have fizzled out of the landscape market because they’re too big. We need those tall stems for our clients.”

Does she have her eye on anything in particular right now? “I’m always pushing the envelope, looking at landscape plants that might work as a cut flower. I bought a buttonbush on a whim, planted a few in a section of the field where we have onsies, twosies, partial rows—just random stuff to observe,” she shares. “We’ll try a handful of varieties of it, see how it grows, and how it might fit into our program. That’s the process.”

Has she ever had a potential crop that didn’t pan out? “Yes, pink snowberry. Other growers do very well with those. We put them in, but a pink berry late season isn’t popular with our sales outlets. They want orange berries.” Regional differences don’t just apply to growing, but to markets, too.

Last Thoughts on Woodies

For Blue Sky Farm, woody crops have become an integral part of how they extend their season and diversify their offerings, but Ackerman is quick to add that “they’ve also required a lot of patience, planning, and trial and error. Woodies aren’t a quick win, but for growers willing to invest the time and energy, they can add real value.



woody cuts for your farm



A typical spring bouquet from Blue Sky Flower Farm features a mix of woody stems and perennials. Lilacs, viburnum, and deep-maroon ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) complement early perennials.

“Every farm is different, so success really comes down to finding what works in your climate, with your infrastructure, and for your customer base. Woodies are a long game, but a rewarding one.”

At Harmony Harvest Farm, woodies fill an essential role, as well. For Hall, “there’s nothing better than growing a better world through growing fresh flowers. Woodies let us look at flowers through a different lens. We see a whole different world of cultivars that lets us expand our vocabulary of resources that are available to us. That expanded range lets us make more dollars, and that’s what it’s all about, right? If you haven’t added woodies, you’re a day late and a dollar short.” ■



Julie Martens Forney is an accomplished garden writer for national and regional publications. Contact her at julie@wordsthatbloom.com

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A Comparison of Greenhouse-Grown and Field-Grown Annual Cut Flowers

BY JACOB SCHWAB AND STEPHANIE BURNETT

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Research Overview

As locally grown cut flowers have increased in value and popularity, it may be of interest to explore alternatives to traditional field production. Currently, most production is in open fields or high tunnels. However, protected cultivation in greenhouses allows growers to extend the growing season and control the temperature, flowering time, and flower quality. Greenhouse production techniques, such as hydroponic production, are used extensively to grow food crops in greenhouses. However, little work has been done to explore the use of these systems for growing cut flowers in greenhouses. Hydroponic systems use space, nutrients, and water efficiently and may provide some advantages to cut flower growers.

Hydroponic Greenhouse vs. Field-Grown Cut Flowers

Our work, generously funded by the ASCFG, focused on the greenhouse production of annual cut flowers through two studies. First, we cultivated several species both at our outdoor farm, the Lyle E. Littlefield Gardens, and hydroponically in our greenhouses using soilless growing media. We grew *Zinnia* 'Queenly Lime with Blush', *Helianthus* 'ProCut Peach' sunflower, *Cosmos* 'Apricotta', and *xTriticosecale* 'Silver Tip Wheat' in both locations. We took advantage of extra room at our outdoor farm to grow additional species and cultivars: *Zinnia* 'Queenly Red Lime' and *Z.* 'Benary's Giant Lime'; *Helianthus* 'ProCut White Nite' and *H.* 'Sunfill Purple' sunflowers; *Cosmos* 'Double Click Cranberry' and *C.* 'Afternoon White'; *Amaranthus* 'Emerald Tassles', *A.* 'Red Spike', and *A.* 'Hot Biscuits'; *Setaria italica* 'Lime Light Spray' millet; *Senecio* 'Candicans', *S.* 'Silver

Dust', and *S.* 'New Look' dusty miller; *Triticum* 'Black Tip' and *T.* 'Silver Tip' wheat. We were able to compare these cultivars in the field to determine which were superior for production outdoors in the Northeastern U.S.

In the greenhouse, we compared three separate production techniques to get an idea of which approach would result in earlier flowering or higher-quality flowers. Plants were grown either hydroponically using the nutrient film technique (NFT), a system commonly used to cultivate culinary herbs. Alternatively, they were in containers and were either planted in Pro-Mix BK-55 or rockwool cubes; plants in containers were fertigated using drip irrigation.

Snapdragon and Stock Greenhouse Cultivar Comparison

In our second study, six varieties of snapdragons ('Costa Red', 'Costa Deep Velvet', Chantilly Mix, 'Madame Butterfly', 'Golden Rocket', and 'Potomac Lavender') and six cultivars of stock ('Katz White', 'Katz Rose', 'Quartet Pink Blush', 'Iron Rose Pink', 'Murakami Vintage Brown', and 'Cheerful Mid White') were grown on ebb-and-flow benches to compare popular field-grown cultivars to each other when grown in the greenhouse. Ebb-and-flow benches are time- and resource-efficient. It is possible to recycle water and fertilizer, and using these benches can also save time watering, since irrigation can be automated using a simple plug-in timer. Maine cut-flower growers report that snapdragons and stock are among the annual cut flowers they are most interested in seeing researched. They are grown at 558 (snapdragons) and 149 (stock) operations in the U.S. according to the USDA Census of Horticultural Specialty Crops.



Results Summary

Greenhouse vs. Field Grown Cut Flowers

Out of the species we grew in both greenhouses and in the field, zinnias flowered up to three weeks earlier, and sunflowers flowered one week earlier in the greenhouse than they did in the field. In the greenhouse, the earliest-flowering zinnias and sunflowers were grown in either hydroponic NFT systems or in containers with Pro-Mix BK55. Plants grown with rockwool cubes flowered later and generally did not produce as well as either NFT or containers with Pro-Mix, but the stems we harvested were long enough to be marketable. The cosmos flowered about the same time in both locations and across all of the production systems in the greenhouse.

In the greenhouse, the height and flower diameter of sunflowers and cosmos were the greatest when plants were grown in Pro-Mix and drip-irrigated. Zinnia flower quality (stem length and flower diameter) was comparable in both Pro-Mix and hydroponics. For all plants in the greenhouse, the lowest-quality flowers were harvested from plants grown in rockwool cubes and drip-irrigated.

Sunflowers from the ProCut series are generally considered to be single-stem or non-branching cultivars. However, in both the field and greenhouse hydroponic systems, 'Pro-Cut Peach' sunflowers had a large number of axillary stems. These stems were smaller than the primary stems, but were long enough to harvest and sell. By comparison, 'Pro-Cut White Nite' always produced a single stem.

When we compared sunflower cultivars grown in the field, 'ProCut White Nite' had longer stems than both 'ProCut Peach' and 'Sun-Fill Purple' and a wider flower diameter than 'ProCut Peach'. All three zinnia cultivars were comparable when grown in the field. For cosmos, 'Afternoon White' had shorter stems than 'Apricotta' or 'Double Click Cranberry', but otherwise, cosmos cultivars were similar.

Snapdragon and Stock Greenhouse Cultivar Comparison

In the greenhouse, individual snapdragon plants produced between four to seven stems per plant. 'Golden Rocket' and 'Costa Deep Velvet' produced the most stems, while 'Madame Butterfly' and 'Potomac Lavender' produced the fewest. All snapdragons bloomed over a two-week span of time. Both colors of 'Costa' snapdragons bloomed earliest, and between 53–55 days after they were planted. Chantilly Mix flowered next after 60 days; 'Madame Butterfly', 'Golden Rocket', and



Top: Sunflowers growing in nutrient film technique (NFT), a hydroponic technique in which a very shallow stream of water containing all the dissolved nutrients required for plant growth is re-circulated past the bare roots of plants in a watertight gully, also known as channels.

Bottom: Sunflowers growing in rockwool cubes.



The research setup where the different production systems were compared.

'Potomac Lavender' flowered last after 67–70 days. The timing of flowering is expected based on their grouping; early-flowering snapdragons, such as 'Costa' and 'Chantilly', are in Group 1 or 2 and tend to bloom earlier. 'Rocket' and 'Potomac' are in Group 3 or 4 and tend to flower later. For a longer snapdragon season, it is a good idea to grow a mix of early and late-flowering varieties. We did not grow snapdragons in the field and did not directly compare the flower timing of greenhouse- and field-grown snapdragons. However, previous work at Utah State reports that snapdragons in the field flower in two to three months, and timing depends on the group (Lewis et al., 2021). In the greenhouse, all of our plants flowered in two months, so it is likely that they would be earlier compared to field-planted snapdragons planted at the same time. The shortest stems were harvested from Chantilly Mix snapdragons and were 11 inches long; the longest stems were from 'Potomac Lavender' and were 26 inches long. The other four snapdragon cultivars had intermediate stem lengths, ranging from 17–21 inches long.

There were fewer differences between stock cultivars that we grew in the greenhouse. Each stock plant produced only one flower, regardless of cultivar, which is typical for stock, particularly columnar cultivars (Nobes et al., 2021). All stock cultivars flowered within a week of each other or between 42–49 days after planting. 'Quartet' and 'Katz White' were the earliest to flower; 'Cheerful' and 'Murakami Vintage' flowered last. The biggest difference between stock plants was in stem length. The shortest stems were from 'Quartet' (15 inches), followed by 'Murakami Vintage' (20 inches). 'Katz White', 'Iron', and 'Katz Rose' had intermediate flower lengths ranging from 21–24 inches. 'Cheerful' had the longest stem length (24 inches).

Applications for Cut Flower Growers

When selecting species to grow in the greenhouse, it is essential to choose high-value crops that benefit from the greenhouse environment. We found that zinnias and sunflowers flowered earlier and had higher-quality flowers in the greenhouse. Cosmos, on the other hand, performed well in both the field and greenhouse, and it wouldn't make sense to grow in a high-value space. Snapdragons flowered earlier than would be expected in field conditions. Greenhouses also provide protection from frost, field insects, and other problems, resulting in more reliably high-quality flowers.

For cut flower growers interested in growing in greenhouses, either growing in containers with a commercially available soilless mix, such as ProMix, or growing plants hydroponically would result in high-quality flowers that, in the case of some species, are available earlier compared to those grown in the field. There would be more financial investment in a hydroponic system. We don't recommend using rockwool cubes in the greenhouse.

This work provided important data to guide our next field-grown cut flower project, which will focus on exploring the timing of succession plantings for sunflowers, stock, and snapdragons. This work is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2025, and we aim to provide environmental cues to guide planting dates, ensuring sequential harvests.

We thank Madison Jones and Nora Emerson for their help with this work.

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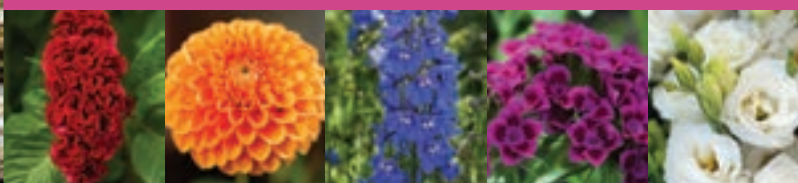
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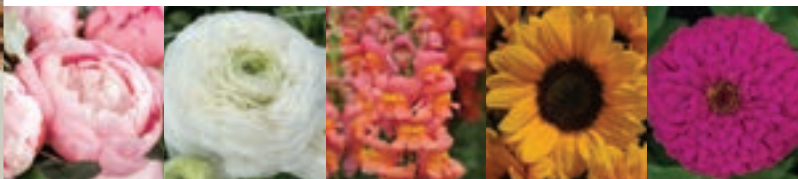
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***Tulipa* 'Bed of Roses' (Tulip)**

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***Tulipa* 'Orange VFG Marmalade' (Tulip)**

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***Eryngium* 'Blue Lagoon' (Sea Holly)**

'Blue Lagoon' is leagues ahead of most seed-grown strains of *Eryngium planum*. It is a highly productive variety, boasting tall, strong stems with a beautiful velvety blue/purple color. Blooming in July and August, this cultivar adds a welcome splash of blue to warm summer palettes.



***Gerbera* 'Standard Everglow' (Gerbera)**

We have offered some incredible cut flower Gerbera varieties over the years, and this new introduction is a fast favorite with its unique soft sunset hues that meet the pastel and earth tone trends. This color combination is a real standout.



***Phlox* 'Magical Pink Tenderness' (Garden Phlox)**

The new Magical series of *Phlox paniculata* offers an economical way to establish large plantings of perennial phlox. It is bred for mildew resistance, abundant production of tall, straight stems, and strong ability to re-bloom after cutting. They should be as fully hardy as other *Phlox paniculata* varieties.



***Alstroemeria* 'Florinca Lolea' (Peruvian Lily)**

'Florinca Lolea' will be a florist favorite with its white flowers with a subtle blush edge. The Florinca series is unique in that the flowers are arranged in delicate sprays with many small flowers instead of the usual crown of flowers seen with traditional alstroemeria. Lolea has very high productivity and extra tall, strong stems.



***Exochorda* 'Magical Springtime' (Pearlbush)**

If you don't have *Exochorda* (or pearlbush) in your woody shrub lineup, it's time! 'Magical Springtime' is a tidy shrub that stays a manageable size upon maturity. Long, straight stems are smothered in clusters of pure white flowers in spring with a second flowering in the summer. This variety blooms on new and old wood, making pruning and maintenance easy and foolproof.



***Spiraea* 'Magical Pink Innocence' (Spiraea)**

While *spiraea* is not new to most of you, this beautiful newer variety brings a modern twist with its conical sprays of soft pink flowers that add texture and airiness to arrangements. When picked in bud, the stems almost appear to be covered in pearls. This variety flowers in June and the bushes are highly productive with a large number of stems.



***Alstroemeria* 'Fashionista Pink' (Peruvian Lily)**

Professional cut flower *alstroemeria* have been hard to source for American growers until now. Breeders at HilverdaFlorist have unlocked some unique genetics that set these varieties apart from their traditionally imported counterparts. 'Fashionista Pink' offers enormous, multi-layered, salmon-pink flowers. This single-flower variety is something truly special and will take your assortment to the next level.



***Symphoricarpos albus* 'Magical Autumn Blush' (Snowberry)**

Snowberries are typically found in white, pink, and red, but 'Magical Autumn Blush' breaks the norm with its perfect blush palette. Plump white berries are dusted in a light pink, making this variety ideal for late summer and fall weddings. Pair with blush dahlias for a gorgeous display.



***Sorbaria* 'Cherry on Top' (False Spiraea)**

Sorbaria is a very hardy, strong-growing shrub in most U.S. zones. 'Cherry on Top' features beautiful autumnal colors in the new growth including a dynamic mix of bronze and cherry red, which eventually culminates in a plume of fluffy white flowers. Although the flowers can be used in arrangements, the textural seedpods that follow are the real treasure when used in summer and fall arrangements.



***Matthiola* 'Early Arrow White' (Stock)**

'Early Arrow White' is the first color in this new series. With very straight, strong stems, this highly uniform flower makes an excellent choice for cut flower programs. High double type, with 90% doubles without seedling selection. It also has less crop failure under hot conditions. Bred by Sakata.



***Delphinium* Eva Series (Larkspur)**

Larkspur Eva is a highly uniform series, excellent for cut flower production. Stems average 35 in. tall. Double flowers are available in five vibrant colors: Carmine Rose, Deep Blue, Lilac Lavender, Salmon Pink, and White. Bred by Evanthia.



***Antirrhinum* 'Potomac Plumblossom' (Snapdragon)**

'Potomac Plumblossom' shares all of the features that has made Potomac a top snapdragon series—now in a new, in-demand color! Plants produce tall, strong stems and long spikes with good flower quality. This Group 4 snapdragon series is best produced under long days, high light, and temperatures more than 60°F. Bred by PanAmerican Seed.



***Dahlia* Dezign Series (Dahlia)**

Brand New from InFlora Cut Flowers! Our Dahlia Dezign series has been bred and selected for extended vase life and to meet market demands for modern colors! Six introductions this year: 'Deco Blush White', 'Deco Hot Pink', 'Deco Lavender Purple', 'Deco Orange Swirl', 'Deco Pink Swirl', and 'Deco Wedding Pink'. Bred in partnership for InFlora Cut Flowers.



***Ranunculus* 'Aazur Deep Rose' (Persian Buttercup)**

The recently introduced Aazur series is the first hybrid-seed-raised ranunculus selected for professional cut flower production. Traditionally grown from corms, the Aazur series is available from seed and gives growers easier availability, reliability, lower disease risk and reduced input costs. Bred in partnership for InFlora Cut Flowers by Versem.



***Phlox* Magical Series (Garden Phlox)**

The Magical series was bred for cut flower production. With high tolerance to powdery mildew, these can be grown in a greenhouse or out in the open field. The six colors, 'FeelingZ', 'PassionZ', 'Pink EyeZ', 'Pink TendernesZ', 'Purple IllusionZ', and 'SnowdropZ', are timed together for easy harvest. Perennial. Bred by Danziger.



***Eustoma* 'Rosita 3 Lavender II' (Lisianthus)**

'Rosita 3 Lavender II' is a new color in the Rosita series—the standard in double-flowered lisianthus. With thick petals, top flowering, and strong stems, it is easy to transport the flowers without *Botrytis* problems. Enjoy the excellent vase life with these medium-sized, rose-shaped flowers, with more useable buds. Suitable for summer to fall flowering. Bred by Sakata.



***Rumex* 'Unicorn' (Dock)**

Add this new, unique green to your line up! Flexible, long stems with abundant inflorescence make 'Unicorn' quite versatile. Can be used in bouquets, table arrangements or on its own. Perennial and highly tolerant to rust. Bred by Danziger.

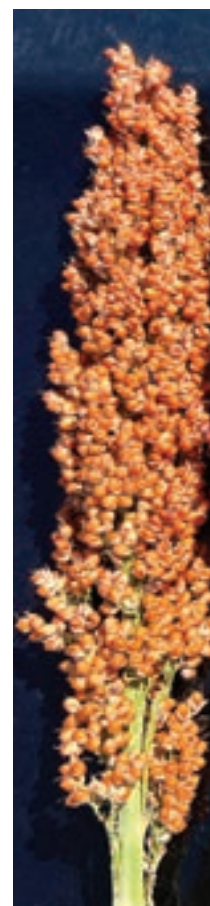


***Cirsium japonicum* 'Rose Beauty' (Plume Thistle)**

The thistle-like flowers and 20–36 in. stems of 'Rose Beauty' will add a pop of bright-rose color to any arrangement.

***Sorghum* 'Ornamental Prairie Pearls Orange' (Millet)**

Orange is the latest addition to the recently introduced Prairie Pearls series. Flower stems are about 36–40 in. tall, making it much more manageable than older varieties. Green seed heads form 70–80 days after sowing, turning orange 10 days later. Bred in partnership for InFlora Cut Flowers by Richardson Seed Company.



***Digitalis purpurea* BeeFoxy Series (F₁ Hybrid) (Foxglove)**

An amazing new digitalis series is now available through Jet-Seeds' breeding program. With a beautiful compact growth habit, healthy, uniform foliage, and striking, brightly-colored flowers, BeeFoxy has it all! We continue to strive to make your job a bit easier, and this new series checks the boxes. Our Jet-Seeds® technology produces super-clean seed with no pelleting or coating needed for easy machine sowing and fast germination. The new BeeFoxy series is more compact than popular series

like Camelot, Dottie, or Dalmation, and consists of six beautiful color forms that are easy to germinate and flower in the first year—no vernalization needed. Sow these in February for flowering plants in July! There is “bee” in the name for a reason; pollinators just love the speckled, bell-shaped thimbles that lure them to the nectar they seek. At a height of about 24 in., these BeeFoxy beauties are perfect as cut flowers—to fill a vase or make a bouquet. Blooms May-September in luscious colors like ‘Foxybee Pink’, ‘Foxybee Cream’, ‘Foxybee White’, ‘Foxybee Dark Red’, ‘Foxybee Apricot’, and ‘Foxybee Dark Pink’.



**‘Foxybee Apricot’ (F₁ Hybrid)
(Foxglove)**



**‘Foxybee Cream’ (F₁ Hybrid)
(Foxglove)**



**‘Foxybee Dark Pink’
(F₁ Hybrid) (Foxglove)**



**‘Foxybee Dark Red’
(F₁ Hybrid) (Foxglove)**



**‘Foxybee Pink’ (F₁ Hybrid)
(Foxglove)**



**‘Foxybee White’ (F₁ Hybrid)
(Foxglove)**



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This year, Kube-Pak has added a large selection of perennial plugs to our program. We are excited to expand our product line with more than 200 new items, including perennials produced from both seed and unrooted cuttings. Some of these perennials are also known in the cut flower world as “cool flowers.” Many of these varieties can be planted in fall or late winter with a minimally frost-protected growing space and will reward you with a bounty of blooms in May and June!

Not only are we adding more perennials to our program, but we are also adding a new tray size for select items—a 72-count tray—perfect for flower farmers who may not need large quantities.

Perennials take a long time to grow and often have tricky growing parameters like vernalization periods or require a heated greenhouse space to grow them during the winter.

Let Kube-Pak help be your one-stop shop for cut flower, perennial, bedding plant, vegetable plugs, and more! Contact us today for a cut flower catalog supplement listing more than 100 varieties.



***Celosia* 'Act Green'**
(Cockscomb)



***Daucus carota* 'Dara'**
(Queen Anne's Lace)



***Digitalis* 'Arctic Fox Lemon Cream'** (Foxglove)



***Digitalis* 'Arctic Fox Rose'**
(Foxglove)



***Papaver nudicaule* 'Champ Bubbles Pink'** (Icelandic Poppy)



***Antirrhinum* 'Potomac Plumblossom'** (Snapdragon)



Delphinium 'Pacific
Giants Summer
Skies' (Delphinium)



Delphinium 'Cannes
Picotee Blue'
(Larkspur)



Oxypetalum
'Heavenly Blue'
(Tweedia)



Zinnia Crestar Mix
(Zinnia)



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***Dahlia 'Life Style'***

A captivating anemone-flowered dahlia known for its striking two-tone blooms. It features a fluffy, golden-yellow center that often appears “dusted in gold,” surrounded by an outer skirt of vibrant-pink to lavender-pink petals. Height: 24–36 in. Bloom size: 4–4.5 in.

***Dahlia 'Wishes 'n Dreams'***

‘Wishes 'n Dreams’ features broad petals that transition from a soft to deep rosy pink, with a striking deep-red or magenta ring around a bright-yellow center. This vibrant display is beautifully set against dramatic, dark-bronze to purple foliage. Height: 24–32 in. Bloom size: 3–4 in.

***Dahlia 'Wizard of Lightning'***

‘Wizard of Lightning’ is a ball-type dahlia featuring soft, creamy-pink blooms that often have subtle hints of blush, with strong stems. Height: 32–59 in., Bloom size: 3–4 in.

***Dahlia 'Chat Noir'***

‘Chat Noir’ is a semi-cactus dahlia featuring dramatic, deep wine-red to almost-black blooms. It has received the Royal Horticultural Society’s Award of Garden Merit (AGM) for its excellent garden performance. Height: 3–4 ft. Bloom size: 5–8 in.

***Dahlia 'The Phantom'***

‘The Phantom’ is a striking anemone-flowered dahlia with a skirt of deep-pink petals that are often splashed with cherry or crimson, surrounding a unique central “pincushion” of tiny, elongated, florets that display a rich combination of plum and magenta. Height: 3–4 ft. Bloom size: 3–4 in.



***Achillea* ‘Dutch Delight’ (Yarrow)**

‘Dutch Delight’ is the epitome of pure-white elegance, boasting blooms that are notably larger than those of *Achillea millefolium*, and with a long flowering period that ensures vibrant blooms throughout the season. Its resilience, slow expansion, larger blooms, and timeless beauty make it an essential addition to your farm. Height: 2 ft. Bloom size: 2–4-in. clusters



***Gladiolus* ‘Violet King’**

‘Violet King’ is a large-flowering gladiolus variety cherished for its deep, rich, violet blooms. These impressive flowers are closely arranged on tall, sturdy spikes, creating a dramatic vertical accent in bouquets. Height: 4–5 ft. Bloom size: Individual florets are 4.5–5.5 in.



***Lilium* ‘Ludwina’ (Roselily)**

‘Ludwina’ is an exquisite double Oriental lily, prized for its elegant and festive appearance. It is pollenless, making it a great choice for cut flower arrangements as it won’t stain surfaces. Height: approx. 30–40 in. Bloom size: approx. 6–8 in.



***Lilium* ‘Twin Flame Twinkle’ (Asiatic Lily)**

‘Twin Flame Twinkle’ is a relatively easy-to-grow Asiatic lily hybrid with creamy blooms and distinctive deep-red freckles near the center of each flower. Height: 3–4 ft., Bloom Size: 4.5–5.5 in.



***Papaver orientale* ‘Rococo’ (Oriental Poppy)**

Skip the seeds, with patchy growth and long establishment times, and opt for Leo Berbee’s new bare-root Oriental poppy selections, including the beautiful ‘Rococo’. ‘Rococo’ features ruffled, dramatic, pinky-peach blooms with dark centers. Height: 36–40 in. Bloom size: 4–5 in.



NuFlowers LLC adds *Helianthus* 'ProCut Peach Lite' and 'ProCut Lemon Lite' for 2026, completing its five-variety Lite series. With their green centers, the Lite hybrids—by themselves or in mixed bouquets—offer a NEW, fresh, delicate look ideal for spring, Easter, weddings, or any occasion all year long.

The Lite hybrids typically flower in 48–55 days and are single stem. 'ProCut Peach Lite' and 'ProCut Lemon Lite' will be available starting in December at SunflowerSelections.com.



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Anemone 'Levante Bianco'
(Anemone)



Anemone coronaria 'Mistral
Pale' (Anemone)



Ranunculus 'Cloni Natura
Moderna Limoncello'
(Persian Buttercup)



Ranunculus 'Cloni Success Nebbia'
(Persian Buttercup)



Narcissus 'Lady Jane' (Daffodil)



Freesia 'Rosario' (Freesia)



Lathyrus 'Stella' (Sweet Pea)



Lilium 'Classic Butterfly'
(LA Hybrid Lily)



Ranunculus Elegance Dolce
Vita Mix (Persian Buttercup)



Tulipa 'Amaru' (Tulip)



***Delphinium* 'Candle Lavender Shades Improved' (Larkspur)**

The Candle series of delphinium expands with a fifth new color, Lavender Shades. The Candle series is ideal for winter production. Bred for short days in tunnels, greenhouses, and fields.



***Eustoma* 'Viviana Pink' (Lisianthus)**

Introducing Viviana, our new two-color lisianthus series, available in Blue and Pink. Viviana is perfect for bouquets, natural arrangements, and standalone vases. This pollen-free variety produces an abundance of stems and single flowers and is less susceptible to *Fusarium* and other diseases.



***Eustoma* 'Viviana Blue' (Lisianthus)**

Introducing Viviana, our new two-color lisianthus series, available in Blue and Pink. Viviana is perfect for bouquets, natural arrangements, and standalone vases. This pollen-free variety produces an abundance of stems and single flowers and is less susceptible to *Fusarium* and other diseases.



***Matthiola* 'Early Iron Cherry Blossom' (Stock)**

Introducing Stock Early Iron, an innovative series available in three stunning colors: Cherry Blossom, White Improved, and Marine II. Early Iron simplifies height control and matures 5–10 days earlier than the current Iron series, and features strong stems with tightly spaced florets.



***Matthiola* ‘Early Iron White Improved’
(Stock)**

Introducing Stock Early Iron, an innovative series available in three stunning colors: Cherry Blossom, White Improved, and Marine II. Early Iron simplifies height control, matures 5–10 days earlier than the current Iron series, and features strong stems with tightly spaced florets.



***Matthiola* ‘Early Iron Marine II’ (Stock)**

Introducing Stock Early Iron, an innovative series available in three stunning colors: Cherry Blossom, White Improved, and Marine II. Early Iron simplifies height control, matures 5–10 days earlier than the current Iron series, and features strong stems with tightly spaced florets.



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

NEW! Vincent’s Fresh DMR is high-performing with a more consistently uniform flower shape, offering downy mildew resistance (DMR), and slightly earlier timing than existing ‘Vincent’s Fresh’.



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

Introducing Tangy, the newest addition to Vincent’s acclaimed selections. With vibrant, deep-orange petals and a bold, dark eye, Tangy stands out in any setting. Like the rest of the series, its upward-facing blooms tilt at a graceful 45-degree angle on sturdy stems—delivering a striking, high-impact display.



***Syringa* 'Bloomerang Showmound' (Lilac)**

Yes, you read that right—this is Bloomerang Showmound lilac, not snowmound. The reason is that it's the tidiest little reblooming lilac, naturally growing as a neat mound just 1.5–3 ft. tall and 2–3 ft. wide. It's also the very first white lilac in the best-selling Bloomerang series. Dense clusters of pure-white flowers appear in late spring, then after a brief rest to put on new growth, reappear, and continue from mid-summer through fall. Zones 3–7.



***Hydrangea paniculata* 'Powerball' (Panicle Hydrangea)**

Win the hydrangea jackpot with 'Powerball', which combines the Zone 4 hardiness and rock-solid reliability of panicle hydrangeas with the irresistible round flower shape more typically associated with *H. macrophylla* for an irresistibly showy display. Very large inflorescences with florets that start out lime green, turn to creamy white, then age to an array of pink shades in late summer/early autumn. Zones 3–8.



***Hydrangea arborescens* 'Incrediball Storm Proof' (Smooth Hydrangea)**

As the name suggests, 'Incrediball Storm Proof' tackles the most common complaint people have with the genus. While other smooth hydrangeas flop, this incredibly stout and sturdy-stemmed beauty holds its blooms upright after heavy summer downpours. A robust, vigorous, heavy bloomer with a rounder, denser habit than other smooth hydrangeas. Zones 3–8.



***Diervilla* 'Kodiak Spiced' (Bush Honeysuckle)**

Better and bolder is the goal when developing new selections for the Proven Winners ColorChoice Kodiak series of North American native diervilla, and 'Kodiak Spiced' hits these two marks head-on. Foliage is a delectable blend of deep-orange shades. Tough, adaptable, hardy, and as easy to grow as it is to use in the landscape or garden. Zones 3–8.



***Diervilla* ‘Kodiak Jet Black’ (Bush Honeysuckle)**

You’ve never seen anything like this before! ‘Kodiak Jet Black’ is the world’s first black diervilla that maintains its jet-black color all season long. When planted next to bright-yellow summer flowers, it creates quite a contrast. With a foliage display this amazing, you’ll want to bring it inside, and you should because it works great as a foliage filler in cut flower arrangements! Zones 3–8.



***Calycanthus floridus* var. *purpureus* ‘Red Zeppelin’ (Sweetshrub)**

With its glossy burgundy-red foliage, ‘Red Zeppelin’ will rock your world! The color of the foliage lasts all season and is accompanied by lightly fragrant orange-red flowers in late spring and early summer. Not only is it adaptable and easy to grow in the landscape, but our many years of trialing indicate it’s also easy to grow in production. ‘Red Zeppelin’ tolerates shade; however, some sun is imperative for the most dramatic foliage color. Zones 4–9.



***Rosa* Reminiscent Series (Rose)**

Reminiscent roses represent a new day for rose lovers, combining the classic beauty and fragrance of old-fashioned roses with modern-day performance. ‘Reminiscent Yellow’ is a healthy, fully-petalled rose and is the result of years of evaluating dozens of yellow roses. Large, double flowers with classic form and fragrance, but with the health and vigor of a shrub rose. Zones 4–9.



***Viburnum carlesii* ‘Spice Cowboy’ (Koreanspice Viburnum)**

Whoa! Koreanspice viburnum is already known for fabulous flowers, but ‘Spice Cowboy’ outdoes them all, with giant snowball flowers of a truly remarkable size and the delicious spicy-sweet fragrance that makes it such a perennial favorite. Fabulous orange-red fall color substantially expands the season of interest. Zones 4–8.



***Helianthus* 'Sunfinity Yellow-Red Bicolor'**

Golden petals that transition to burgundy around the center make this sunflower perfect for fall bouquets. With up to 12 weeks of continuous flowering and branching, this variety is an excellent choice for Pick-Your-Own and photography sessions. Available as seed or plugs from your favorite supplier.



***Lavandula* 'Violeta Purple XL' (Spanish Lavender)**

The first-ever Spanish lavender from seed with repeat flowering. Vigorous plants with large, high-quality flowers rival vegetative varieties. 'Violeta Purple XL' is perfect for both fresh and dried arrangements. Available as seed or plugs from your favorite supplier.



***Lavandula* 'Scent Blue' (English Lavender)**

A first-year flowering English lavender with deep purple blooms, silvery-green foliage, and a heavenly scent. Rows of this lavender make an excellent backdrop for photography sessions. 'Scent Blue' is perfect for both fresh and dried arrangements. Available as seed or plugs from your favorite supplier.



***Helianthus* 'Sunfinity Double Yellow'**

Gorgeous double blooms that last. Flower size and stem thickness are ideal for creating mixed bouquets and ensuring easy handling. 'Sunfinity Double Yellow' has high resistance to powdery mildew and a vase life of 7-10 days. Available as unrooted cuttings or liners from your favorite supplier.



Nicotiana 'Whisper'

This productive heat lover bears long stems with hundreds of beautiful, fragrant pastel blooms. Interspecific vigor brings a high level of disease resistance. Available as seed or plugs from your favorite supplier.



Dahlia 'Miss Mandy'

Exquisite 3- to 4-in. diameter, peachy-pink, double blooms on strong stems. Try 'Miss Mandy' from cuttings or plugs next season.



Chrysanthemum 'Loki Red'

'Loki Red' features bold red petals with bright yellow tips, making it an excellent choice for fall or holiday arrangements. Its beautiful bicolored daisy spoon flowers are guaranteed to catch your attention. Available as unrooted cuttings or liners from your favorite supplier.



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Delphinium elatum
'Violets are Blue'

Flowers are a blend of deep violet, purple, and blue, centered around a crisp white bee. Strong stems are sturdy and easily bear the weight of the flowers. Staking is still recommended in areas with inclement weather, such as high winds. A Proven Winners® perennial.



Echinacea 'Double Dipped
Jamerry' (Coneflower)

Double Dipped echinaceas have large, fully double 4½-inch diameter flowers with wide, overlapping ray petals. Strong, well-branched stems support the large, numerous, heavy flowers with ease. Best performance comes in full sun and well-drained soils.



Heliopsis helianthoides 'Rays
for Days' (False Sunflower)

An incredibly dense, well-rounded selection perfect for brightening up the middle of the border. Large, fully double flowers are golden yellow. Tall stems and a zinnia-like appearance make them a perfect choice for cut flowers. Our most floriferous selection to date.



Heliopsis helianthoides 'Sundial'
(False Sunflower)

The gold flowers with their red eyes beautifully complement the dark olive-green foliage, creating a vibrant display. This native perennial is not only aesthetically pleasing but also boasts excellent mildew resistance and cold hardiness. Perfect for hot, dry areas due to its deep root system.



Rudbeckia 'Treasure Trove'
(Black-eyed Susan)

Large golden-yellow, star-shaped flowers completely cover the plant, with well-branched stems that prolong bloom. This vigorous selection abounds not only with flowers but foliage as well. Crucially, the leaves are highly resistant to *Septoria* leaf spot with no damage through six years of trials. A Proven Winners® perennial.



Schizachyrium scoparium
'Cinnamon Sticks' (Little Bluestem)

Watch this grass transform through the seasons, turning a deep cinnamon color just in time for autumn. 'Cinnamon Sticks' is one of our reddest selections to date, turning color early and showing off for a long time. For most of the year, this perennial grass will take after its common name with vivid blue stems.



Spigelia marilandica **'Orange Slices'**
(Indian Pink)

This woodland perennial grows from sun to shade and is long-lived once established. Filtered sun is recommended in southern regions. The Slices series of spigelia are self-cleaning, meaning old flowers fall to the ground rather than drying on the stem. 'Orange Slices' has orange-red flowers and is slightly shorter than 'Apple Slices'.



Thalictrum **'Cotton Ball'**
(Meadow Rue)

'Cotton Ball' creates a dense pillar of finely textured foliage and flowers. Dark stems add contrast to wispy sprays of white flowers. The tall stems and long-lasting flowers make this selection excellent as a cut flower. Not commonly bothered by browsing deer and rabbits.



Vernonia **'Prairie Princess'**
(Ironweed)

In late summer, clusters of rosy purple flowers will begin to cover the top half of the plant. Compared with the native species, 'Prairie Princess' is more compact, has a fuller habit, and sturdy stems that avoid opening up in heavy rains or under the weight of bloom. A Proven Winners® perennial.



Veronica **'Jedi Gem'**
(Speedwell)

'Jedi Gem' is a striking sport of 'Purple Leia' with light pink flowers that bring a touch of elegance to any garden. This perennial is taller than it is wide, featuring long-blooming flower spikes that are self-cleaning, as spent flowers fall to the ground. Dark-green foliage exhibits exceptional mildew resistance.



***Zantedeschia 'Durban'* (Calla)** is a striking variety, celebrated for its vibrant deep-purple hue that commands attention in any cut arrangement. This variety thrives in cut flower use, providing beauty and elegance to floral displays. Stems reach to 30–40 cm.



***Zantedeschia 'Escape'* (Calla)** is an alluring and dramatic flower with an intense, pitch-black hue that captures attention. Perfect for cut flower arrangements, it adds a touch of mystery and sophistication to any bouquet. With a stem length of 40–50 cm, it is ideal for striking floral displays.



***Zantedeschia 'White Mambo'* (Calla)** is the elegant white calla lily designed exclusively for cut flower arrangements. With its medium growth habit, this variety produces sturdy stems ranging from 30–50 cm, ensuring a refined presence in any bouquet. Blooms within 9–10 weeks.



***Zantedeschia 'Long Beach'* (Calla)** is a striking yellow variety that adds a touch of elegance and vibrancy to any floral arrangement. With a crop time of 10–11 weeks, this cut flower reaches a stem length of 40–50 cm and grows to a medium-tall height, making it ideal for stunning bouquets or as a standout in vases.



***Zantedeschia 'Fantasia'* (Calla)** is a dazzling hot-pink calla lily that brings bold color and elegance to any floral arrangement. Known for its vibrant petals and medium to large blooms, this variety is a favorite among professional growers and florists. Stems are 40–50 cm and it blooms in 9–10 weeks.



***Lilium* 'Belvedere' (LA Hybrid Lily)**

This LA type is very cool, because in full sun it will be white, but with some filtered shade or lower-light levels you will have a gorgeous champagne-colored flower. It is a well-balanced, symmetrical, and fully double flower form and does well in bulb production.



***Lilium* 'Escape' (LA Hybrid Lily)**

With its vibrant deep-red hue, 'Escape' adds drama and elegance to any floral display, making it an ideal choice for various occasions. Cultivated over 12–13 weeks.



***Lilium* 'Sempione'**

(OT Hybrid Lily) is exquisite, with tall stems and magnificent pearly-white blooms. Each flower boasts a big, fragrant presence, adding elegance to any floral arrangement. Cultivate 'Sempione' for 13–14 weeks to witness its stunning allure unfold. Perfect for creating eye-catching bouquets.



***Lilium* 'Qwic'
(OT Hybrid Lily)**

A gorgeous red/white edge OT hybrid that resembles the old 'Stargazer' look. But this improved version has stronger stems, longer-lasting flowers, and a nice fragrance with plenty of flower buds on a 14/16 size bulb.



***Lilium* 'Backhand'
(LA Hybrid Lily)**

This is a very nice orange double flower. This variety still must prove itself in the bulb production, but the blooms are nice and strong.

BOARD NOMINATIONS



CANADA REGIONAL NOMINEE

Bailey Duecker, Boondock Flower Farm
Biggar, Saskatchewan

Hi, I'm Bailey Duecker of Boondock Flower Farm, and I would love to be your Canadian representative in the ASCFG for the 2026-2028 term.

I've been growing cut flowers since 2020, and my farm is located north of Biggar, Saskatchewan. My primary crops are ranunculus, peonies, dahlia, lisianthus, and sunflowers. I sell my flowers directly to florists, through a bouquet subscription. I also do weddings and sell at the Farmers' Market.

I've been a member of the ASCFG since I started farming, and have attended several events, including the 2022 Continental Conference in Boston and the 2023 Smit Nursery Tour in Abbotsford, B.C. I'll be travelling soon to Longwoods Flower Farm in Ontario, and the ASCFG Continental Conference in Albuquerque, N.M.

Being part of the ASCFG has brought clarity to my business and a deeper connection with my fellow growers here in Canada, many of whom I was finally able to meet in person at the continental conference and on regional tours.

Thanks in part to the ASCFG, I have been able to create a profitable and sustainable business on my Zone 3 farm, which has a very short growing season. The flowers and my business have seen tremendous change in a few short years, and I see myself growing flowers for many years to come.

We have been fortunate to have Canadian representation from growers in British Columbia, Ontario, and the Maritimes, and I would love to be a Canadian advocate for the ASCFG with a prairie perspective. Canada is a huge country with talented growers across many different growing climates. Thank you for considering me for this role.



CANADA REGIONAL NOMINEE

Sarah Kistner, Stone Meadow Gardens
Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia

Hi friends, it's hard to believe that almost three years have passed since I was elected to represent Canada on the board of directors!

I first learned about the ASCFG in 2002 when the farmer I worked for joined the association and handed me our first copy of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*. We didn't call ourselves a "flower farm" then—in fact, I don't think we knew that was "a thing"—but learning that there was a professional organization dedicated to flower growers really opened my eyes to the possibilities. That fall, I attended my first ASCFG conference. My mind was blown, and I knew I'd found my people!

It's an honor to now be on the other side of that experience, and, for the past two years, work alongside a dedicated team of staff, colleagues, and friends on the Conference Committee, helping to plan and organize the very same event. Since joining the board, I have gained a new appreciation for how much effort goes into making the ASCFG the incredible organization that it is. I serve on the membership, marketing, and conference committees, but one of the highlights has been working with the excellent ASCFG staff to help organize a regional conference in Canada.

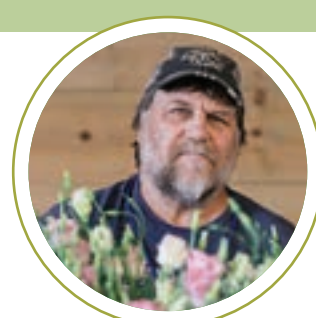
In the meantime, my husband, Carl, and I have been building our new farm in Nova Scotia from the ground up. After years of farming in B.C., we decided to shake things up and move across the country.

I'm genuinely excited about the next chapter for the ASCFG. We have so many exciting projects on the horizon, and it would be my honor to continue working with to bring these projects to life. If given the chance to serve another term, I will keep advocating for the Canadian membership and aim to host more tours and events in our (vast!) region.



MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL NOMINEE

Dee Hall Goodwin, Mermaid City Flowers
Norfolk, Virginia



MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL NOMINEE

Dave Delbo, Dave's Flowers
Catawissa, Pennsylvania

Hello, ASCFG family! I'm Dee Hall Goodwin, and I founded Mermaid City Flowers after searching for locally grown flowers for my own wedding and realizing there was no one in my area growing them. What started five years ago as a small personal venture has grown into an urban flower farm and design studio based in Norfolk, Virginia. I grow specialty cut flowers on borrowed plots, focusing on sustainable, foam-free floristry and native plants as part of my commitment to biodiversity. In addition to farming and design work, I speak nationally on topics ranging from farmer-florist business models to the role of native flowers in the studio.

As a grower, I've navigated the challenges of small-scale production in an urban environment—building soil, cultivating on nontraditional sites, and balancing farming with family life. I'm the founder of Black Flower Farmers, an international network of nearly 60 growers who support one another through education and advocacy, and of the Tidewater Flower Collective, a local group of approximately 25 growers focused on fellowship and resource sharing. I currently serve on the ASCFG Community Engagement and Outreach Committee and the President's Council for Inclusion and Diversity at Norfolk Botanical Garden. These experiences have deepened my belief in the power of community among flower farmers.

If elected, I'll bring my perspective as a farmer-florist and organizer, along with a commitment to supporting growers at all stages of their journey. I'm passionate about amplifying member voices, promoting accessible, sustainable practices, and helping shape ASCFG resources to meet the evolving needs of our industry.

Dave's Flowers began in 1981 when we (my brother and I) started selling gladiolus on a table along the state highway where we lived in the small town of Elysburg, Pa. In the forty-plus years since then, I have grown a wide selection of successful cut flower crops and experienced almost as many failures. Along with the roadside stand, I have sold at farmers' markets, to florists, and have even done a few weddings through the years. We grow on about four acres of land now, down slightly from our peak of five acres, along with our greenhouses and high tunnel. I joined the ASCFG in 2005 and have been a member ever since, participating in multiple years of the Seed Trials, attending many conferences and events, and mentoring several new growers through the ASCFG mentoring program.

It has been an honor serving on the board as the Mid-Atlantic Regional Director. During my first term, I was involved in planning the Continental Conference in St. Louis and the regional meeting at Moonshot Farm in New Jersey. I am currently involved in planning the next Continental Conference in January in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I also enjoyed traveling to several farms and meeting all the members at the events and conferences.

It would be a privilege to serve another term as regional director to continue my efforts in recruiting new members to the organization, planning successful conferences and events, and helping the ASCFG continue to grow into the future.

Nominee letters continue on the next page.

BOARD NOMINATIONS



NORTHEAST REGIONAL NOMINEE

Grace Lam, Fivefork Farms
Upton, Massachusetts

Hi all! My name is Grace Lam, one of the owners and operators of Fivefork Farms, located in Upton, Mass. I am honored to be considered as a candidate for your Northeast Regional Director.

I've been a proud member of the ASCFG for the last 12 years, and I wholeheartedly believe that Fivefork would not be where it is today without this unbelievable organization. Like many of you, I am a first-generation farmer and started my farm from scratch.

Year after year, I have witnessed firsthand the incredible work the ASCFG does in supporting its growers. I have met some of my best friends through the ASCFG, and this network has been invaluable to me as my farm has grown from a two-man show growing on half-an-acre to a full-year operation with more than a dozen year-round employees, eight acres in production, and more than 2,000 CSA members per year.

As your Northeast Regional Director, I believe I can contribute in the following ways: 1) use my financial expertise to teach business skills to drive farm profitability, 2) use 10-plus years of experience to advise growers on how to strengthen and/or scale their farm operations, and 3) advise growers across the country on risk mitigation strategies and techniques to help adapt and take the guess work out of farming in this ever-changing climate. Furthermore, I am committed to driving new initiatives and bringing creative ideas so the ASCFG can continue to provide knowledge, tools, and resources to help members, new and old, achieve both short-term goals and long-term success.

I am truly excited about the possibility of serving as Northeast Regional Director. Thank you all for your consideration!



NORTHEAST REGIONAL NOMINEE

Nikki Bartley, Cross Street Flower Farm
Norwell, Massachusetts

Hi flower friends! I'm Nikki Bartley, owner of Cross Street Flower Farm in Norwell, Mass.—just outside of Boston. I joined the ASCFG in 2015, the same year I started flower farming, and this organization has been instrumental in our farm's growth. From conferences to farm visits, the knowledge and connections I've gained through ASCFG have saved me years of trial and error and helped shape my business.

My farming journey began in 2010, when I chaired a nonprofit organic vegetable farm, learning to build both a farm and a community organization. In 2015, I planted my first flowers in my front yard and sold mason jar bouquets to neighbors. Today, Cross Street Flower Farm is a thriving seven-acre operation with more than 1,000 CSA members, a seasonal retail Barn Shop, and popular events like Pick Your Own Tulips. My background in international banking, combined with degrees from Wake Forest and Columbia, provides a solid foundation for running and scaling a modern farm business.

As Northeast Regional Director, I would bring hands-on farming experience, strong business skills, and a passion for collaboration. I'm committed to supporting new and established growers alike, advocating for our industry, and helping expand the reach of locally grown flowers. I'd be honored to serve and represent the vibrant ASCFG community in our region.



TREASURER NOMINEE

Michelle Elston, Roots Cut Flower Farm
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

I attended my first ASCFG conference in Worcester, Mass., in 1999, and have been growing flowers ever since. I can honestly say my farm would not exist without our amazing organization, its members and their generosity to our flower community. Roots now employs 15 people, produces 30,000 supermarket bouquets annually, and has a thriving local following. We specialize in hot annuals, and my passion is celosia. I also love systems, efficiencies and numbers. I do all the bookkeeping for both Roots and another family business, because I love this aspect of self-employment and numbers-based decision making.

I have had the honor of serving on the ASCFG board since 2020, when I replaced Lisa Mason Ziegler as the MidAtlantic Regional Director. I've since moved into the role of treasurer and sincerely love being a part of ASCFG's fiscal health. ASCFG has grown from two to four full-time employees, adding two new key positions to better serve you. We have also added an editor and graphic designer to produce our beautiful *Cut Flower Quarterly*, greatly expanded our educational offerings, and are working on many new programs to make ASCFG the best it can be. With this energetic expansion has come an expanded budget. I feel privileged to help steward your membership funds, and would be honored to continue in the role of treasurer for ASCFG.



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ANNOUNCING THE 2025 ASCFG

Cut Flowers of the Year Winners

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



Fresh Cut Flower

Zinnia 'Queenly Lemon Peach' (Zinnia)

This variety is new to the cut flower market. The blooms are in **unique, highly sought-after warm, peachy shades.**

The medium bloom size of the Queenly series is versatile and sturdy, and the long flowering season ensures a consistent supply. This standout variety builds on zinnias' reputation as one of the most widely grown and reliable cut flowers across North America. Zinnias consistently rank in ASCFG member's top annual crops for profitability and production.



Bulb Cut Flower

Lilium 'Roselily Angela' (Roselily)

'Angela' showcases elegant double, white blooms with a soft, subtle fragrance that's milder than traditional lilies. **The double petals create a rose-like appearance,** and the lack of pollen makes it cleaner to work with and more suitable for sensitive clients. Growers report excellent stem strength, impressive vase life of 10–14 days, and multiple blooms per stem. This variety combines the beloved lily form with innovative breeding that addresses common florist concerns, and many ASCFG members report it as a consistent "sell-out" at market.

Woody Cut Flower

Rosa 'Koko Loko' (Rose)

'Koko Loko' is a uniquely colored floribunda rose that transitions from a soft lavender-tan to a creamy coffee color as it ages. This chameleon-like quality makes it highly **sought after for bohemian and vintage-inspired arrangements.** Its

medium-sized blooms have excellent vase life when properly conditioned, and the plant produces abundant flushes throughout the growing season. Plants are cold hardy in Zones 5–9. Growers value its disease resistance and productivity in diverse climate zones.



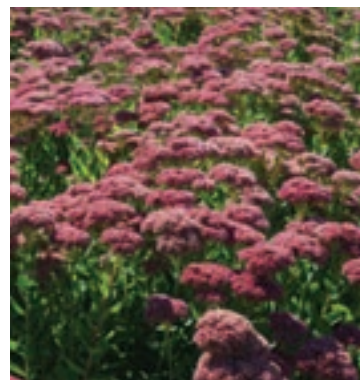
Foliage Cut Flower

Hylotelephium

'Autumn Joy' (syn.

Sedum 'Autumn Joy') (Stonecrop)

This versatile perennial offers harvest flexibility—cut green for summer sales, pink for early fall, or burgundy for autumn designs. Each stage is useful for cutting, providing different design possibilities from a single planting. **The succulent texture adds unique interest to arrangements,** and the sturdy stems require minimal conditioning. ASCFG members appreciate its drought tolerance, winter hardiness (Zones 3–9), and ability to produce reliable cuts year after year with minimal maintenance.





Sarah Kistner

Stone Meadow Gardens
stonemeadowflowers@gmail.com

CANADA

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

AS I WRITE THIS, IT'S LATE JULY - THE TIME WHEN I OFTEN FEEL OVERWHELM CREEPING IN.

It's late July. We have a heat warning for the upcoming week, and it hasn't rained for more than five minutes in over a month. I'm hot, sticky, and I'm already onto my second set of clothes for the day. But I just harvested a cooler full of gorgeous blooms, and I'm about to head to the barn to make bouquets for Saturday's farmers' market. It's the time of year that gives me all the feels: fulfillment in seeing my plans coming to life, excitement for a busy market, disappointment that I missed a succession of seeding sunflowers, frustration that the lisianthus are dying of Fusarium... you get the idea.

With so much to juggle, it can be easy to lose sight of the big picture. However, I've found it helpful to pause

and reflect on exactly why I chose to follow this path. It can be so very challenging and push me out of my comfort zone in many ways, yet it's also the only thing I can see myself doing. I've never taken the time to stop and put it in black and white, so I thought it might be an interesting exercise to do so now for my quarterly report. Maybe having it there to refer back to when I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed could be grounding.

They say you spend about a third of your life at work. Of course, that's at a traditional nine-to-five job. But I remember having a realization that if we spend another third sleeping and a big chunk of time just handling our daily routines, then this "working" thing better be something I truly enjoy. So, I decided to go to art school. However, as much as I loved working with my hands and expressing my creative side, it never felt like the right fit.

Then, one summer, I got an invitation to work on a farm, and that changed everything. I left university and dove in headfirst. We were growing crops like corn and watermelons, but the owner had a soft spot for flowers, so we began planting long rows of zinnias and sunflowers—whatever seeds we could buy in bulk at the local feed store. We brought bunches to the farmers' market, and to my surprise, people bought them. Wow. I was hooked.

That was twenty-five years ago. I finished school and took on other jobs along the way, but I always

knew that this beautiful pursuit of growing flowers was where I wanted to put my energy. Being outdoors, working with my hands, getting dirty, and still finding a way to share my love of art and color with the world just felt like the perfect fit.

But we all know that there's so much more to this job. So many things I didn't really want to learn or do, but over time, I've seen how facing those challenges and being forced out of my comfort zone has become part of what I love (and yes, still also what I sometimes dread!) about this work.

And over time, flowers became my preferred artistic medium. As I crafted beautiful creations and shared them with the world, my "why" started to become clear. It wasn't just about wanting to be outdoors and do work that felt meaningful. I also realized it was about more than the beauty of the flowers—it was about the joy they bring to those who give and receive them. It's about the connections made and nurtured all around. And clearly, I'm not the only one feeling this, because I asked some of my flower friends if they'd be willing to share their "why," and each of them used that very same powerful word. Connection.

Flower Farmers Share Their "Why"

Nancy Jordan grows flowers with her daughter, Katrina, at Ganden Gardens in Winchester, Ontario. Here's what she had to say when I



Left: Nancy Jordan, (right), with her daughter Katrina, came out of retirement to start flower farming.

Right: Jessica Carpio's "why" is the community she has built around the flowers.

asked about her "why": "I imagine that because of my more 'senior' age, my answer may be different than others much younger than I! I came out of retirement to flower farm; do I regret that? NOT AT ALL!"

"Growing up, there was a little song that has always stuck with me, 'The neck bone's connected to the back bone,' and on and on it went. That song speaks of connection, and this flower farming gig has created so many connections for me.

"I feel so fortunate to be connected to the soil here on our land each and every day. I am working on our farm with my daughter. What an amazing way to connect with your child! It's very physical work, which keeps me connected to my body; it has shown me that I need to exercise and lift heavy things to keep up and keep going.

"Although I had an education in horticulture, growing flowers from seeds was not something I had done before. Gardening is much different from farming, so I needed to learn and connect with people who could teach me. The connection to others has helped my mental health; always having someone to

listen to my struggles or questions, and me to theirs, has given me so much joy!

"The connections I have made through flower farming and the ASCFG have enriched my life; in times like we are living through now, this is what we all need—**connections!**"

Jessica Carpio from Bluewater Flower Farm in Selkirk, Ontario, also shared her "why": "My farm started by accident during the pandemic. What was meant to be a quarter-acre hobby turned into a two-acre field of dreams I didn't know I had. Gardening, learning, and a passion for botany and design are some of my "whys," but what mostly brings me to this work is the pursuit of joy and learning. There aren't a lot of jobs out there that require such careful observation of a living thing. This work asks us to surrender a lot of control and notice what the flowers need.

"There are parts of each and every season when I forget my "why", yet there always seem to be enough tiny miracles each year to remind me that this work keeps me connected. My biggest "why" is that sharing flowers, whether for profit

or out of kindness, fosters connection, and that is what really makes it all worthwhile. The community built around the flowers is worth every struggle and doubt along the way."

When asked about her "why", Emily Harman of Mapleton Acres in Arthur, Ontario, said, "When we bought the property in 2019, we didn't know exactly what it would become—but we knew it was meant to be shared.

"At the time, I was teaching teachers across Canada. I had the chance to meet so many incredible people, but I never felt like we had a specific community to grow with. I hoped this property could become that—a place to connect, to build something meaningful alongside others. I just didn't know what shape it would take. And then, flowers found us.

"This little farm—tucked behind acres of wetland—is now a place for people to slow down, reconnect, and just be present. Whether it's a Tuesday pick-me-up bouquet, flowers to honor a loved one, a chaotic but joy-filled pick-your-own visit with your toddler in tow, or a fresh bouquet in a lived-in kitchen that needs to be cleaned, yet again—we grow flowers for those moments.

"We grow flowers to create space for connection, joy, and rest—the kind of



Emily Harman
(with her
husband, Andy)
grows flowers
to create space
for connection
with family and
the community.

simple goodness our community can always use more of. The long hours, the hot days (especially this year), the hardest—and best—work I’ve ever done... it’s all for our community.”

I’ll sign off here, and we’ll end with what the lovely and articulate Marie Injeyan from Field Notes Flowers in Sunderland, Ontario, shared with us. I don’t think I could have come up with a better ending to this report.

“The very first business book I read urged me to define my Why. ‘Your Why,’ it explained, ‘is the core purpose and the driving force behind your decisions and actions. It’s the deep-down desire of your beating heart; a lighthouse in the turbulent seas of business ownership.’

“With your Why as your compass, you’ll steer clear and true. You’ll be rewarded with direction and clarity and cash a’flowing. But be warned; if your Why is ill-defined, your business will very likely suffer an unromantic death—rife with regrets, abashed on some far shore away from profit and respectability.’

“MY WHY,” I wrote boldly in a fresh new notebook. “Since I’m

both a philosophy major (and a Sagittarius), this question steered me directly into an existential whirlpool. Why? Why do I do anything? Who do I do it for? What is true self-determination? I just couldn’t settle on a “why” that felt right. So I figured I’d skip the homework, get back to it later.”

“I was recently asked about my Why, and realized I’ve been growing flowers for 10 years, running a professional cut flower farm for five of those, and have yet to clearly define it. Whenever the subject of my Why came up, I’d steer clear. Not because I don’t find the exercise valuable; I actually love that mainstream business advice includes a line of introspective Socratic questioning. I just couldn’t seem to nail mine down.

“I tried a lot of Whys on for size over the years: Because I love flowers. For my kids to live in the country. So I can help fight climate change.

“All true. But none of them felt quite right. Like pulling on a pair of so-so pants—they’re fine, they’ve earned a spot in your closet (or did, two pregnancies ago), but if you’re packing for a once-in-a-lifetime

trek with no room to spare? They don’t make the cut.

“So what’s your base layer? I asked myself. What fits snug against your skin and holds you together when the weather chills? I found my way to the answer slowly, by sifting through all the reasons until something rose to the surface that made everything else make sense.

“My Why is freedom. The ability to shape a life in alignment with my values—to choose how I spend my days, what I create, and how I show up in the world. In a world that demands conformity, growing flowers is how I stay free. Running Field Notes grants me the autonomy to define success on my own terms, so that even as my business goals change over time, the underlying measure of success stays constant.

“Running a business forces you to confront who you are and what you value. It shines a light on how you handle conflict, your tendencies under pressure, and how you respond to setbacks. When times inevitably get tough, your Why is what powers your bounce back.

“Even if it’s been tough to define—like mine was—I believe your Why is there, humming along in the background, quietly guiding your efforts. Giving it words can feel like trying to net a firefly, but finally pinning it down feels like relief. It’s the clarity you didn’t know you were craving.

“In a business built on seasons and setbacks, your Why is what keeps your hands in the soil and your heart in the work. It also grants permission to change the parts of your business that no longer serve you. And to me, that’s one of the greatest ways to get free. Because when the weather turns, the weeds creep in, and the orders slow down, it’s your Why that keeps you planting beauty anyway.” ■



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Left: Blushing Meadow: Agrass Parrot, Power Parrot (tulips only)

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MID-ATLANTIC

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



Chinese asters (*Callistephus chinensis*)
Photo: Dave Delbo



Calla lily Photo: Dave Delbo

Most growers who sell to florists grow the same usual varieties of flowers: sunflowers, zinnias, cosmos, gladiolus, dahlias, etc. In this column, I am going to list a few of the more “unusual” or less commonly grown flowers to sell to florists.

1. ASTERS: I’m talking about *Callistephus chinensis*, not the fall perennial aster. *Callistephus* can be very challenging to grow. If you can prevent aster yellows and *Fusarium*, asters are a great flower to sell to florists. The most common series is Matsumoto. Other larger aster series include Matador, Meteor, Optimo, and Opus. Local quality usually exceeds that which florists receive from their wholesaler. Succession planting is possible; however, stem length may be shorter on later plantings.

2. FREESIA: This is a flower that I believe was grown a lot more decades ago, and for some reason, it has declined in popularity. It’s a great spring flower that requires a greenhouse or tunnel to grow well, as it is frost-sensitive and prefers cool daytime temperatures. Corms are inexpensive to purchase and can be saved for years with just a little bit of effort. Freesia comes in single and double blooms and is noted for its sweet fragrance and bright colors. Aside from an occasional aphid, freesia is usually pest-free and easy to grow.

3. EREMURUS (*Eremurus robustus*): Also known as foxtail lilies, these flowers make a statement when you carry them into a flower shop. Because they grow at least three feet tall (some varieties are over five or six feet), this is not your everyday need in a floral shop. But when the occasion is right, florists will buy every stem you have. They come in shades of orange, yellow, white, and pale pink and resemble a bottle brush when in full bloom. The roots are expensive to purchase, and it can be difficult to locate a wholesale source.

4. EUCOMIS (*Eucomis comosa*): Also known as pineapple lily, eucomis is an extremely long-lasting cut flower with a vase life of a month or more. The flower is available in just a few colors, including white, pink, and violet. It is listed as hardy to Zone 7, but I have had them survive my Pennsylvania winters just fine with a little leaf mulch. Like eremurus, the bulbs are expensive to purchase, but the cost can be offset by years of production.

5. CALLA LILY (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*): Not actually a lily, this flower is grown from rhizomes that are usually pretreated to produce more blooms. If saving your own rhizomes, you would need to treat them with gibberellic acid after digging in the fall. Callas are popular in wedding bouquets and for boutonnières.

6. LIATRIS (*Liatris spicata*): Liatris is a staple in the floral industry. However, the white variety is not. 'Floristan White' is the name of the white liatris, which is rarely grown. Unlike most spikey flowers, liatris blooms from the top down. Grown from relatively inexpensive corms, liatris is easy to grow and has few disease or pest issues.

7. SAGUI GRASS: This grass, *Panicum sonorum*, was first recommended to me by the famous Joe Schmidt. It is comparable to explosion grass on steroids. Florists love the airy filler to use in bouquets.

8. ARTEMISIA ANNUA, also known as sweet Annie, is another sought-after filler. The fern-like foliage, with its lovely fragrance, is an easy sale to florists. A side benefit (or disadvantage, depending on your point of view) is that this plant usually self-seeds and will return the following year in the same spot.

9. FEVERFEW: Also confusingly called *Tanacetum parthenium*, or *Chrysanthemum parthenium*, and sometimes confused with chamomile, *Matricaria chamomilla*. Whatever it's called, this was extremely popular this year. I only grew the single daisy variety 'Campagne', but the doubles or semi-doubles would sell just as fast. This crop produces blooms in early summer from a February sowing, reblooms in the fall, and overwinters to bloom again next spring, giving you three times more flowers than most crops.

Those are nine crops that, if you don't already grow them, I would consider adding to your crop list. These are crops my florists look forward to every year, and even if you don't sell to florists, they will give your farmers' market stand a unique look and set you apart from other vendors. ■



Pineapple lily (*Eucomis comosa*) Photo: Dave Delbo

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Mind the Gap: Farming between the Known and Unknown

AS I WRITE THIS, WE ARE SLOGGING THROUGH THE LAST DAYS OF JULY. It's hot, we are tired, and everything seems to be struggling. At this point, I start to blame myself. Statements like "If I had known or done that it would have been..." seem to crop up and I start to feel like I'm failing at this farming thing. The truth is I'm just staring at the gaps. What I know today was just a gap in my knowledge back in May. Normally, I make the best decision I can with the information and resources I have at the moment. July Amanda can judge me all she wants, but where was she when we were fighting April hail trying to pull out tulips? So, I



The miraculous Matt Cook
literally jumping over farm gaps.

wanted to investigate some gaps from which I'm learning.

Knowledge vs. Skill Gap: It's a kind truth that I am a better farmer than I was 11 years ago. However, thanks to a lot of wonderful mentors and the knowledge I have acquired, I often know what to do before I know or have thought about HOW to do it. Being aware of this discrepancy has helped me ask better questions and better manage the number of new projects I can take on. I may know a little bit about something, but learning how to do something well just takes a lot of time and iteration.

Demand vs. Supply Gap: This one has been a doozie this year. We watch our numbers closely, but I have underestimated supply

and overestimated demand this year on some crops. Last year's darling seems to be this year's forgotten flower. The more I analyze this, the more I'm learning that trialing is the only way to continue to meet florists' needs. Spending time researching and innovating is essential to stay on top of this gap for us.

Dream Weather vs. Real Weather Gap: I seem to make plans like, "This year will be the one in which the weather will get its act together and do what I want when I want it." My dream-weather farm plan is AMAZING! Trouble is, when dream weather doesn't show up my plan is so aggressive that it will fail under the reality of real weather. So this year, I scaled back and we made more money in less time. It turns out that dream weather plan was costing me a lot of money.

Price vs. Profit Gap: Sometimes I get seduced by a flower that promises a high stem price. The trouble is that in the moment I don't account for the profit margin. Yes, I will have higher sales, but often this comes with higher risk and a lower profit margin, as I normally do not count the cost before the plug makes it into the shopping cart.

Labor vs. Skilled Labor Gap: Man, training other people to do things is hard. However, I believe that well-trained employees can level up a farm faster than just about anything else. This has changed how Matt and I talk about the future of the farm and address issues we are bumping into today. Do we need more people, or do we need better training? Good training always falls in the asset column, and the more we invest in it the better we become.

Truth is there are probably many other "farming gaps" I will learn before the end of the season and even more before the end of my career. Shaping them as gaps helps me understand a problem I've identified in a new way, and it helps me tie what I want to have happen with what to do next. In the heat of the summer, as I pull weeds and ponder where it all went wrong (it never all goes wrong, but the heat makes me feel like it has), I have a thought process that yields more than, "This sucks." I have a way to weigh ideas and challenge where I see issues. This change in mindset helps me pull at problems from both directions. ■

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Harvesting Knowledge: Why Education Is Your Most Profitable Crop

AUTUMN IS OFTEN A BUSY TIME ON THE FLOWER FARM,

and for many of us it means we are getting close to our winter “slow down”. When the dust finally settles and the last dahlia tuber is tucked away, many of us growers slip into “maintenance mode.” But I’ve learned to take advantage of it, and call this lull something else entirely: prime planting season—but for my brain. Each fall and winter, I trade my harvest snips for a highlighter and dive into workshops, books, courses, and conferences.

Every dollar and hour I’ve invested in learning has out-performed any new piece of equipment in sheer return on investment. The more I study,

**“EVERY DOLLAR AND HOUR I’VE
INVESTED IN LEARNING** has out-performed any new piece of equipment in sheer return on investment.”

the more I realize how much possibility (and profitability) I’ve been leaving on the table. There is so much opportunity to learn and grow, and I gain a lot of inspiration by learning from others. I attribute almost all of my farm’s success to investing in my own education.

Early in my business I gulped hard at a \$195 ASCFG membership fee. Today, I can trace a significant bump in annual sales directly to ideas pulled from this organization—pricing tweaks, crop mix adjustments, and learning how to grow a new crop that paid for the membership fee by Mother’s Day. Investing in self-education isn’t a line-item expense; it’s a yield-booster. Let’s do some quick math: If a \$200 conference helps you raise bouquet prices by just \$1 and you sell 800 bouquets a season, that’s an \$800 return—before you touch any other improvement.

No organization has fed my curiosity (or bottom line) like the ASCFG. Between regional conferences, the members-only Facebook hive mind, *The Cut Flower Quarterly* magazine, and in-person events, the association functions like an all-season greenhouse for ideas. The only problem is that we often are stuck behind our computers while learning. Yes, you can stream

webinars in pajama pants (and I highly recommend you do!), but shaking the hand of the farmers you learned from on those webinars? Game-changer!

Face-to-face connections turn casual contacts into lifelong friends, mentors, and collaborators. At the last ASCFG national conference, I swapped dahlia-growing tips and tricks with a few growers from several different states over lunch; the next season we were all making massive leaps towards more profitable dahlias! Then, two of us had dahlia disasters (including myself), leaving us with a major loss and no tubers to plant. Our newly-found friend group all jumped in to contribute and help replenish the lost tuber stock with extras. The situation would have been far more scary and isolating without flower friends. I cannot imagine enduring the challenges of flower farm business ownership without them! I also firmly believe those friendships would never have bloomed in a comment thread online.

I know it can be an investment to attend in-person events, but there’s truly nothing else like it. But if you can’t make it to gatherings like conferences or live regional events, I find it best to set some “learning parameters,” so you don’t get caught up in pure consumption mode.

As you get through the last big push of fall, ask yourself: What seeds of knowledge will I plant this winter?

You can join hundreds of other growers at an ASCFG event, revisit old issues of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, and give yourself permission to be a student again. The flowers (and the revenue) you'll harvest next season will thank you.

To get the most out of your membership and invest in your education, mark your calendar now for January 13–14, 2026, when growers will gather in Albuquerque, N.M., for the next ASCFG Continental Conference. You can expect two packed days of production deep dives, panels, supplier showcases, and—my favorite—hallway and over-coffee conversations that solve problems faster than any Google search.

Plus, make friends who appreciate color-coded dahlia planting plans, too. ■

If you're not sure what to include in your education, try this simple framework:

- 1. CONDUCT A "PROFIT AUDIT."** List your biggest headaches from the last season. Where margins lag, target learning.
- 2. SET A LEARNING BUDGET.** I earmark 3–5% of projected revenue for education—treated with the same respect as seed or compost.
- 3. MIX MODALITIES.** Balance one big-ticket event (like a continental conference) with lower-cost options: podcasts during deliveries, books, or re-watching past conference videos.
- 4. SCHEDULE IMPLEMENTATION DAYS.** Knowledge without action is just expensive entertainment. Block out time to apply what you've learned.



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Finding the right perennials for the right place

PERENNIALS ARE SO IMPORTANT TO OUR FARM.

They fill in production gaps, make us competitive and unique in the market, and add lots of low-labor stems once established. For many years now I've been "trialing" different perennials on our farm—meaning I've been making impulse purchases and throwing plants into random corners and gaps. This approach, while chaotic, did yield interesting insights—which plants thrived in the shady, somewhat boggy soils on the west side of our farm, which ones worked well in the rocky, compacted soils on the south side, and which ones worked nowhere. Now that I've gained these insights through my slapdash efforts, I've decided to be a bit more intentional about my perennial

plantings and treat them like the large investments they are. Here are a few things I've learned and some plans I'm making. I hope my mistakes can save you the trouble of making expensive investments in perennials and then having to even more expensively move them to better locations, or having them die entirely.

The Three Es: Echinops, Eryngium, Echinacea (and Yarrow)

We found that these plants, especially the echinacea, did not like the moist soils in the shade of our large poplar grove, but that they would likely thrive in the very sunny and well-draining south end of the field. So this fall, we are planting a full 100-ft bed of each, carefully preparing the soil by subsoiling to reduce compaction, adding rich dairy compost and slower-release feather meal, and then power-harrowing to create the beds. We'll put each of these in landscaping fabric (thanks, crazy weeds) with four lines of drip tape on our four-foot-wide bed tops this fall, and baby them so they establish well before winter. I have been dearly missing echinacea this year, and I'm looking forward to the 'Cantaloupe Supreme' variety, along with the white and native purple.

For whatever reason, we've not had good luck with yarrow on our farm. It wants to be in a drier soil, and the beds I've tried have simply not had enough drainage.



We're hopeful that the subsoiling will help with drainage, and we'll be careful about watering these too much.

Solidago and Veronica

Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.) has been a fantastic addition to our farm. We love how productive it is, and we love that it is adaptable to many soils, even our heavy wet clay at the back of the farm. We're putting in a full bed in the same manner as previously mentioned, though we may need to use our walk-behind tractor instead of the four-wheeled one since our beds are a bit too close to the trees back there. We purchased one of the Glory series, but they're all so similar I can't tell you if it was 'Sunny Glory' or 'Solar Glory.'



Above: Helen Skiba with an armfull of echinops.

We've also been very pleased with the performance of the Skyler series of veronica in this soil, so we're adding more!

Delphinium, Columbine, and Trollius

These beauties are part of what makes our farm unique: our ability to produce interesting and unusual varieties. These perennials thrive in the shade and wet soil, so we are taking out some plants that aren't doing well and adding full beds of each. I'm particularly excited about the trollius, which I adore every season when it pops up. We are planting gobs of sky-blue delphinium, which is all the florists want! And we got our hands on some beautiful 'Nora

Barlow' columbines, my absolute favorite spurless variety.

Lavender, *Anemone pulsatilla*, and *Hypericum*

When I started on this property, I thought it would be a great idea to plant lavender between my hoop houses, to "use up empty space." Well, it turns out that lavender does NOT appreciate all the hoop-house runoff, and resents wet feet. DUH. Many, many plants were killed before I could move them to a more suitable location, but now we'll have one big, beautiful bed of 'Phenomenal' lavender in our sandier and drier section of the farm, where it will be in the full sun and dry air that

it loves. Although our hypericum is doing well enough in the wetter soils, we'll also be moving it and adding more (we chose the 'Globo Coral' variety as a nice, all-purpose color). *Anemone pulsatilla* is a strange, beautiful little plant. We don't have a full bed of it, but it does love our climate. We grow it for its pinwheeling, bed-headed seed head. I love having something a little strange to set us apart.

Other perennials that have worked well for us include grasses like northern sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) and Korean feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis arundinacea*), as well as *Saccharum ravennae* or hardy pampas grass (An older name for it is *Erianthus ravennae*). Our region was originally a grassland, so it's not surprising that these plants thrive here, regardless of the soil type on the farm.

Geum, especially 'Totally Tangerine', was a smash hit from year one in our boggy soils! Others that do well there are baby's breath (from seed, the 'Snowflake' cultivar), lysimachia, and garden phlox, especially the tall and lovely white cultivar, 'David'. In the sandier soils, we find that mints such as mountain mint and apple mint, as well as other herbs like marjoram, oregano, and lemon balm, thrive.

Every farm is unique, and I'm sure yours has its own pockets of strange soils and places where certain perennials thrive, or die. Do your research when choosing perennials, find the best spot for them, prepare the soil well and with an eye to longevity, and they'll pay you back many times over! I'd love to hear your perennial strategies. Email me at helen@artemisflowerfarm.com or call/text 720-569-6341. ■



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SOUTHEAST

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

WHAT A JOY IT WAS TO WELCOME THE ASCFG'S FLORAL DESIGN INTENSIVE TO ASHEVILLE, N.C., on July 8–9!

Hosting this event in the Southeast felt especially meaningful—not only because the workshop sold out so quickly, but also because our Asheville community is still in the process of recovering from the impacts of Hurricane Helene during the fall of 2024. The fact that the ASCFG community voted in a poll on the Member's Only Facebook page to hold the event here was even more meaningful! Gathering together in person, surrounded by flowers and friends, felt like a much-needed moment of hope and creativity after so much loss and uncertainty.

The event took place at The Barn at Honeysuckle Hill, a peaceful spot nestled just outside the city, and conveniently located just five minutes from my farm (it was convenient

because we used my farm as a staging and preparation area for the event). Over two days, a mix of farmer-florists, studio designers, and flower lovers came together to dive into hands-on floral design, using primarily locally and U.S.-grown blooms. There was such a welcoming energy in the room—whether you were a beginner or had years of experience, everyone was learning together, sharing ideas, and supporting one another.

We kicked things off with hand-tied bouquets, taught by yours truly. I began by sharing about creating a cohesive color palette and how to use the six ingredient categories: focal, supporting focal, filler, line, greenery, and whimsy. I demonstrated my approach to creating lush, loose, and natural-looking bridal bouquets, beginning with a classic spiral technique. Then, I used line flowers to build out on both sides of the spiral to create a more organic, asymmetrical shape, versus keeping the bouquet perfectly round. The spiral technique is admittedly difficult to teach, especially to a

“Wowww, what an incredible two days at the Intensive. I got to learn from some of the most talented farmers and florists. Women I've looked up to and drooled over on Instagram for years... Forever grateful for this experience and all the new flower friends I met!”

-TABITHA, WORKSHOP ATTENDEE

group of 80+ people, but I was so happy to receive positive feedback about how the session helped attendees improve their design skills.

“Your bouquet session was incredible! After taking five other courses, yours was the one that finally made it click. I truly got it—and with confidence! You eliminated one of the most stressful parts of my wedding packages. What used to take hours (and so many redos) now feels joyful and natural. You've genuinely transformed this part of my business—thank you for your talent and generosity!”

~Kim, Workshop Attendee

After lunch, which was catered by the local chef and farmers of Montgomery Sky Farm, Ellen Frost from Local Color Flowers guided us through event-style centerpiece design, encouraging us to think about color, structure, and mechanics—foam-free, of course. She also shared her dedication to sourcing flowers from within a 100-mile radius and encouraged attendees to think about flowers in terms of color, shape, and the role they play in the design, rather than sourcing exact varieties that may



be featured in an inspiration photo. Ellen also shared a pricing guide with the attendees as a special bonus!

Day Two was all about installations with Anna Stouffer of Urban Petals. Her morning demo was stunning—watching her and her helpers build an intricate, large-scale piece using only chicken wire, water tubes, and mechanics that could hold up in real wedding scenarios was incredibly inspiring. Anna shared in-depth information about color theory, many different types of installation mechanics, hiring a team for large events, sourcing flowers, timelines for building large installations, and more. After that, attendees broke into small groups to practice building their own versions of floral installations. It was fun, collaborative, and such a great way to try new skills in a low-pressure setting!

Many of the flowers were sourced from regional growers, including many from right here in Western North Carolina. Seeing buckets overflowing with dahlias, hydrangea, lisianthus, rudbeckia, cosmos, zinnias, and

more was a reminder of just how much beauty we can grow in this part of the country—even in a challenging year. It was also a beautiful opportunity to connect with new sources and sponsors, reinforcing the importance of those relationships. We could not have done it without the generous support of our sponsors: The Floral Source, Syndicate Sales/43&Spruce, Sunny Meadows Flower Farm, and Florabundance.

Beyond the design work, the real heart of the event was in the connections—between attendees, with instructors, and within the broader ASCFG community. There was so much generosity, encouragement, and enthusiasm in every conversation. It's hard to describe just how good it felt to be together in a creative space, but I think everyone left feeling recharged, inspired, and ready to bring fresh ideas back to their own farms and studios.

Huge thanks to the ASCFG staff, volunteers, instructors, and flower growers who made this event possible. And to everyone who made the trip to Asheville—thank you. It meant the world to host you here! ■



Above left: Workshop participants select flowers for their designs.

Above top: Niki Irving and Anna Stouffer led workshops on creating a hand-tied bouquet and building a foam-free floral arbor.

Middle: Many of the flowers were sourced from regional growers—of course!

Bottom: Surrounded by flowers and new friends. *Photos: Danielle Defayette Photography*

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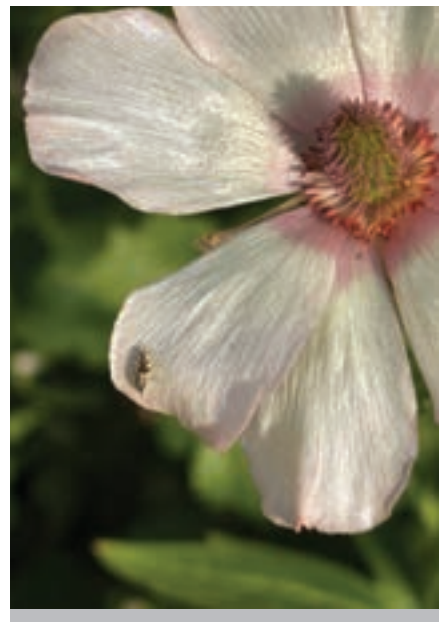
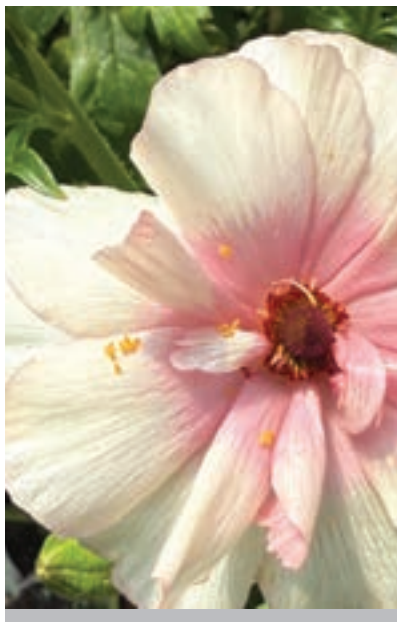




Sarah Head
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WEST AND NORTHWEST

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



Above Left: Larvae of *Aphidoletes aphidimyza*, one of the predators used on this year's butterfly ranunculus crop. **(Right)** Lacewing larvae, another predator used to battle aphids. Photos: Sarah Head

IPM Realities of Flower Farming

FALL HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY FAVORITE SEASON.

In the Pacific Northwest, it has a real feel to it. As the natural world shifts towards darkness, you can smell winter coming, and the rest and quiet it will bring. Winter may not be quite as relaxing as it was before I started winter growing, but there are real days off and so much more sleep. And winter is also about the conferences! The Small Farms Conference at Oregon State University and the Pacific Northwest Flower Growers Meetup, organized by Erin McMullen of Raindrop Farms, are two favorites—and, as y'all know, the ASCFG Continental Conference is in Albuquerque this winter! I am very excited to attend and also to present. I'll be talking about Integrated Pest Management (IPM), so I thought this

would be a great opportunity to give you a little backstory and preview of what I will be covering.

Diversity is king on most flower farms: Perennials, annuals, bulbs and corms, grown inside, outside, in the hot, cold, and everything in between. All the different families of plants we grow each season have specific requirements for growing, and are the targets of their own special pests. What these pests do to each particular variety and how the damage they create manifests is as varied as the crops. It can really make the head spin when you think about it! But because farmers are attentive, observant, and relentless, we become experts in the ways these pesky critters threaten to take us down every season.

In the Pacific Northwest, we have a pretty standard list of

critters. I picked up the word “critters” from Margaret Parks at Evergreen Growers Supply, and we'll adopt it for our purposes because many of our nemeses don't fall under the “insect” classification. On my farm, aphids, thrips, cucumber beetles, caterpillars, spider mites, fungus gnats, and slugs, plus a handful of others, come for the flowers every season. When I first started growing, I used a lot of neem and the occasional targeted use of organic pesticides like Pyganic and spinosad. It was okay, but I didn't like harming native insects, and it was tough to stay on top of the spraying. I was constantly putting out little fires (or waiting for them to happen), and some insects, like thrips, were like playing a game of whack-a-mole. And, in some cases, I was getting my butt kicked. When spider mites took down a crop of



Ranunculus clean and ready for harvest.

celosia and then we got our rear ends handed to us by aphids in a greenhouse (a story for another time), I was more than ready to find another way.

During that fateful aphid crisis of 2022, I started searching for help, quite literally, on the search bar of my computer. And, to my surprise, one of the larger beneficial insect suppliers and natural insecticides on the West Coast was a 10-minute drive from our house. I called Evergreen Grower's Supply, Margaret picked up, and we were off to the races. In the years since, I have nearly eliminated the use of pesticides, although

I'm definitely not opposed to using them if necessary, and our greenhouse program is largely managed with beneficials, except for a few key times during the season. Are our crops 100% pest-free and always pristine at harvest? Definitely not. Are the upfront costs higher? For sure. But the rewards of less work, more peace of mind, and an overall improved quality of product make it worth it. I'll get into specifics in Albuquerque, but I want to address a couple of common misconceptions about beneficials and IPM programs, and how they've played out on my farm.

It's too expensive!

This is a big one, because it really can be pricey, and, full disclosure, having a supplier so close to me cuts down on my costs considerably, because I save on shipping. But don't stop reading! The potential savings in time, plus the promise of pest-free crops, make the upfront cost well worth it. Take celosia in a high tunnel, for example. Let's say I have a potential earning of \$1,000 for that crop. I apply 2,000 *Galendromus occidentalis* mites (a predator of spider mites) at the time of planting. For \$50, that crop is now protected from spider mite invasion, and my pest pressure for the next season will also be reduced because they will naturalize in my high tunnel. It took me five minutes to apply the mites, and I only have to do it once. The money spent is well worth the security of a clean, harvestable crop.

That isn't to say it can't get expensive, especially if you are dealing with an established pest problem and not preventing one from occurring in the first place. Sometimes the costs become too high, and it makes more sense to spray; however, this is usually early in the season or a result of missed scouting. In cases like this, the decision-making process is a bit more complicated, and we'll get into the different considerations in Albuquerque.

It doesn't work!

This is a hard (mis)conception to tackle in this little article because it's a big one, and sometimes it really doesn't work. But not because the beneficials aren't doing what they are supposed to. Timing and temperature have a significant impact on the efficacy of beneficials, and if one factor is off, the success rate can decrease considerably. Take aphids in the overwintered



Top: *Steinernema feltiae*, a beneficial nematode used for control of fungus gnats and thrips. **Above:** *Galendromus occidentalis* application in the celosia crop.

greenhouse, for instance. Our pest pressure is so bad that we start seeing them in January. There are no active predators at this time, so we turn towards pesticides, specifically Botaniguard and Actinovate, sometimes even with a knockdown of Pyganic. However, when it warms up, lacewing larvae become our go-to predators. The application must be timed with the temperature rise, or we won't get good results.

The most essential component of successfully using beneficials is scouting and knowing when the bad

"To effectively use beneficials, mindset is everything. Create habitats for your critters, be vigilant in your scouting, and let the good guys do their work."

-SARAH HEAD

guys show up before they start creating problems. This last spring, I noticed a few aphids on my butterfly ranunculus while scouting, but I was hustling to prepare for a spring break trip with the kids and thought, "I'll just deal with it when I get back." Well, you know how that went. I returned to a much bigger problem, spending more money on predators than I had initially intended, and then had to wait for them to do their thing, putting off harvest and sales until the very edge of the harvest window. I had not taken my own advice. In the end, the critters did a better job than spray ever could have (those stems were clean!), and I sold every stem, but it took a whole lot of patience to get there.

Which brings me to the last piece I'd like to share with you. Beneficials and predators do not operate on the same timeline as we do, nor do they work in the same manner as a pesticide spray. They don't do the work overnight, and sometimes, as in the case of my butterfly ranunculus, it can take days. I kept a close eye on things to ensure it wasn't getting

worse, but I really had to step back and let them do their thing, knowing (hoping?) I'd have a harvestable crop in the end. As Margaret says, you can only eat so many hamburgers in a day, and it's the same for our critters—one lacewing can eat only so many aphids. So you really do have to be patient. You'll spray nematodes for fungus gnats, and they'll still be there in the morning. But the adult's life cycle will eventually come to an end, their larvae will be dead thanks to the nematodes, and a week later, no fungus gnats!

To effectively use beneficials, mindset is everything. Create habitats for your critters, be vigilant in your scouting, and let the good guys do their work.

We are just dipping a toe into the world of beneficials and IPM here—there are so many more aspects to consider! But I hope it got your mind thinking about your farm, your pests, and the battles you'll wage in the coming seasons. I am really looking forward to having a chance to talk bugs with y'all in Albuquerque! Until then, I hope you are heading into a time of a little less work and a lot more rest. ■

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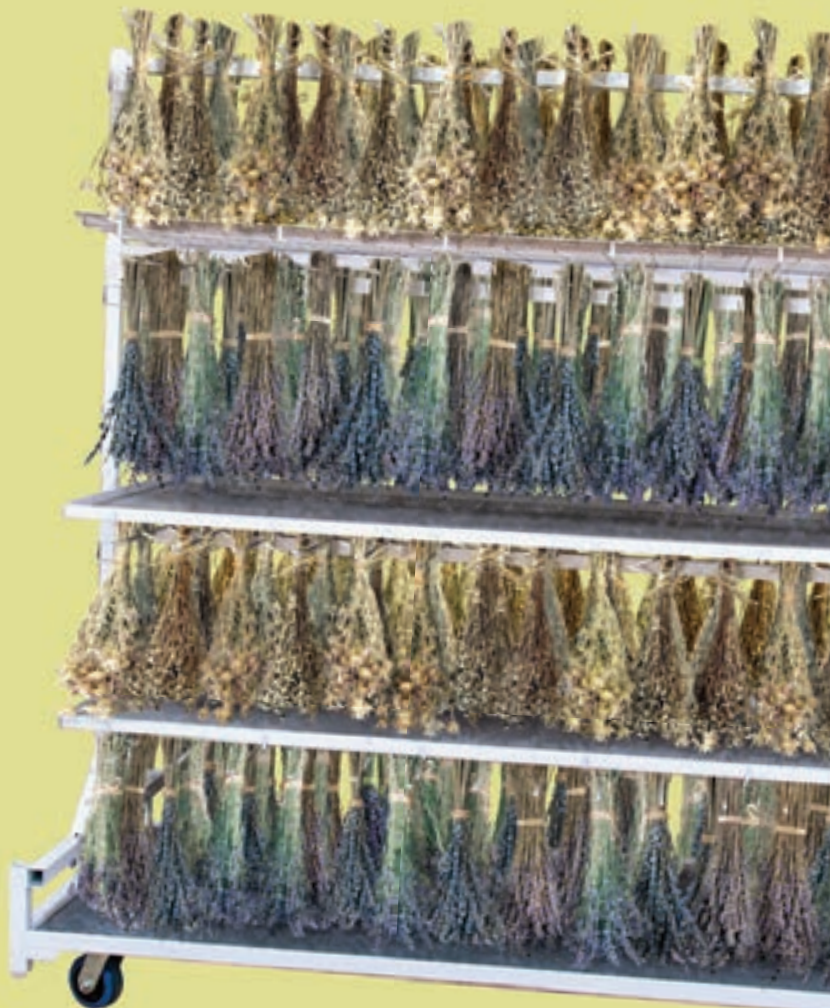
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Ulster Park, NY

Kristen Riley
To Have and To Grow
Westmoreland, NH

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Brandy's Flower Farm
Plattsburgh, NY

Sarah Berquist
Stockbridge Floral Design at
UMass Amherst
Amherst, MA

Hannah Welling
Mindful Folk Farm
New Gloucester, ME

Thaïs Caraganis
Blooms at Wild Crossings
Lebanon, CT

Gretchen Reynard
Gretchen's Garden
Scituate, MA

**Kathryn Kocab
Fletcher**
Cedar Edge Floral
Exeter, RI

Casey Hansen
St. Albans, VT

Laura Azevedo
Three Little Buds Farm
Newcastle, ME

SOUTH AND CENTRAL

Amanda Tisdale
Sandy Acre
Flower Farm
Azle, TX

Lari Barager
Red Oak, TX

Julia Walters
Enchanted Blooms, LLC
Helotes, TX

**Katie Cardenas-
Borrego**
Rancho Encino Floral
Rancho Viejo, TX

Royce Maxfield
Same Time Next Year
Jarrell, TX

Melissa Toman
Cave Creek
Flower Farm
Cave Creek, AZ

Hillary Cummins
Cave Creek
Flower Farm
Cave Creek, AZ

Rachel Kovacs
Local Bloom
Colorado Springs, CO

Michelle Johnson
The Urbane Garden
Buckeye, AZ

Ellie Lassiter
Age Old Agriculture
Cotter, AR

Donna Link
Link Flower Farm
Lexington, OK

Ashley Emola
Ball Seed
Bullard, TX

Hilary Stambaugh
Cactus Car Herb Farm
Wagoner, OK

LaShan Arceneaux
Saturday Bouquet
Tomball, TX

Krishna Sears
Lucky Buddy Blooms
Addison, TX

Brittany Huckabee
Posey Gardens
Tomball, TX

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Aishah Lurry
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL

Christy Joanethis
The Sugar Stems
Charlotte, NC

Steve Mancill
Carolina Wedgewood
Sumter, SC

Delacy Leverette
The Leaf and Bell
Flower Farm
Eatonton, GA

Beth Bellamy
Three Bee Blooms
Carnesville, GA

Samantha Crowe
The Little Flower Farm
Utica, KY

Laurie Pelletier
Greensboro, NC

Uletha Oglesby
Florals @ Jackson
Kannapolis, NC

Shanda Wicker
Little Wick Flower Farm
Jackson, TN

Devin Summarell
Blythe Flower Farm
Hendersonville, TN

Julie Leemkui
Homegrown Cut
Flowers
Hillsborough, NC

Kelly Walsh
Big Time Little Farm
Statesville, NC

Shirley Ross
Growing Green Roots
Powell, TN

Tabitha Boyd
Whimsical Blooms
Flower Farm
Hendersonville, NC

Dani Zwischenberger
Bellaire Blooms, LLC
Crestwood, KY

Katie Langston
Still Creek Farm, LLC
Selma, NC

Jessica Gonzales
Wild Root Acres Co.
Brentwood, TN

Lydia Hardee
Fox and Flora Farm
Waxhaw, NC

Wendy Aliff
Aliff Acres Farms, LLC
McDavid, FL

Carmen Helmly
Blooming Pastures
Flower Farm
Mullins, SC

Danielle Michael
Anthophile, LLC
Marshall, NC

Susan Bruss
Vail Hall Farm
Charleston, SC

Greg Key
Grow Hoss
Norman Park, GA

Rosalind Blocker
Generations In Bloom
Farm, LLC
Evans, GA

Evan Hiers
Grow Hoss
Norman Park, GA

Cameron Varnadore
Grow Hoss
Norman Park, GA

WEST AND NORTHWEST

Donna DeRousie
The Junction
Flower Co.
Seattle, WA

Jen Hackworth
Eda Creek Farm
Portland, OR

Jose Sanchez
Ball Seed
Placentia, CA

Carolyn Wilson
N.E.W. Construction,
LLC
Redmond, WA

Clara Hieshetter
San Diego, CA

Joyce Dibble
Quail Run Flower Farm
Wilton, CA

INTERNATIONAL

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Rosedale Creek Farm
Ngatimoti, Tasman,
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