

# Dried Flowers, Herbs, and Cover Crop Sold as Seasonal Decoration: Enterprise Analysis on A Small Diversified Farm



Cover crop, herbs, and flowers provide unique opportunities for small farm owners interested in diversification, increasing profit, and season extension. Each year small farms spend time cutting back flowers, herbs, or cover crop to improve health, stimulate production, or prepare ground for new crops. The freshly cut material is normally left in the field. This grant analyzed the profitability of enterprises that utilize the freshly cut material in decorative and edible value-added products.

## Crop: QIS White Statice (*Limonium sinuatum*)

QIS White Statice is a strong performer with tall stems and uniform flowers. It is used in fresh and dried bouquets, and in floral wreaths. Statice has a well-established market.

## Introduction:

QIS White Statice was grown with the hope of including it in a floral wreath. With the limited number of bed feet allotted for this project, there were not enough stems to make a wreath. Instead, the dried flowers were sold in bunches the profitability of a dried floral bouquet was analyzed.

## Marketing:

### Retail:

• Bunches were sold at three farmers markets in December. Dried flowers could also be sold at farm stands, community supported agriculture pick-up locations, craft fairs, or online.

### Added Value:

• Jute twine and burlap were wrapped around the base of the stems. Floral sleeves could also be purchased to increase value or marketability.

## Why buy dried flowers?

Customers purchase dried flowers for decoration, an occasion, a gift, or sentimental value. Unlike fresh bouquets, dried bouquets can retain their color for many months or years.

## Growing Practices:

- Seeds were planted in the greenhouse in March using a hand seeder in 128 cell trays.
- Statice was transplanted into black plastic after the last frost in 3 rows with 1' spacing between plants. Two lines of drip tape ran underneath the black plastic.
- Leaf mulch was applied in the aisles to suppress weeds.
- This crop was hand weeded three times at the base of the plants and in the aisles.
- Statice requires similar amounts of water as other cut flowers.

## Harvest:

*Tools: shears, rubber bands, crates, gloves (optional)*

- Harvest flowers in the morning on a dry day.
- Use shears to cut stems at desired length.
- Strip the stem of leaves.
- Bunch stems with rubber bands in the field and place in crate.

*\*Harvesting stems regularly is important to select flowers at their peak appearance.*



## Data:

QIS White Salvia	Bed Feet	Row Feet	# of Plants	# of Plants Died	Broken Stems	Marketable Stems
<i>Limonium sinuatum</i>	18	56	49	2	8	115

	Labor	Total Bunches	Total Sold	Price	Cost of Production	Profit	Net Profit
Dried Statice Bouquet	139.33	8	7	7	46.44	49	\$2.55

## Post-Harvest:

*Tools: twine or rope, shears*

- Slide twine through the rubber bands that are holding the bunched flowers together.
- Hang twine with flower bunches upside down in a dark, well ventilated space.
- Drying can take weeks depending on the amount of moisture in the air.

## Results:

QIS White Statice had excellent performance despite the poor growing conditions in New Jersey during the 2018 season. Stem length was a minimum of 11" and only two plants died. Additionally, the fresh stems are thick and do not break easily. Dried stems, however, will easily break and care should be taken while handling the flowers after they've dried.

## Conclusion:

QIS White Statice bunches are a profitable enterprise and could be grown solely for dried production or in conjunction with fresh flower bouquets. A 30-stem fresh bouquet sold for \$9 can earn \$0.30 per stem whereas a 15-stem dried bouquet sold for \$7 makes \$0.46 per stem. Dried floral bouquets are a refreshing addition to the market stand in January, February, and March when fresh bouquets are unavailable locally.

## Additional Resources:

Specialty Cut Flowers: The Production of Annuals, Perennials, Bulbs, and Woody Plants for Fresh and Dried Cut Flowers, Second Edition by Allan M. Armitage and Judy M. Laushman

Ultra-Niche Crop Series: Mixed Cut Flowers for Small Farms Fact Sheet FS1275, Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station  
<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1275/>

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers

*This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number FNE18-892.*

*The data was gathered at Chickadee Creek Farm in Pennington, NJ by Monica Drazba, a SARE Farmer Grant Award Recipient in 2018.*

*Photo Credit: Monica Drazba  
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