

## Summary of Cut Flowers Professional Development Study Tour to Utah

**Rob Holland**  
***Center for Profitable Agriculture***

A professional development study tour was conducted to Utah by Rob Holland, Celeste Scott and Alicia Rihn, all with UT Extension, from May 17 to May 21, 2022. The tour was planned and hosted by Dr. Melanie Scott, Assistant Professor and Urban and Small Farms Specialist in the Department of Plants, Soils and Climate with Utah State University. A copy of the travel itinerary is available in Appendix A.

The information learned and knowledge gained from the study tour will be used in the development of educational materials and outreach sessions and educational workshops for growers and Extension agents in Tennessee.

Here is a brief summary of the sessions, contacts and farms included in the study tour:

- 16 farm enterprise visits
  - 12 part-time
  - 4 full-time
- 22 Contacts made with growers
- 6 Contacts made with florists, wholesalers and industry partners
- 9 Contacts made with educators

Here is a brief summary of key facts and information obtained during the study tour:

- The number of cut flower farms in Utah increased from 47 in 2019 to 72 in 2020 and to 104 in 2021.
- Cut flower growers in Utah tend to be younger, female growers who are new to agriculture.
- A survey/study of the Utah cut flower industry in 2021 showed:
  - Most growers were in business less than 2 years
  - Most growers had at least two different marketing methods
  - Those in business for a longer period of time were more likely to supplement flower sales with events, weddings and/or educational experiences
  - Most growers had 1/8 or ¼ of an acre of productions
  - Average gross revenue per acre is \$64,000
  - Labor costs have gone up recently as much as 25%
  - Supplies cost up 6%

Here is a brief summary of the key take-away points from the study-tour:

- Many flower growers ‘start-out’ marketing at farmers markets and direct to retail customers.
- Most growers expanded their operations with wholesale sales and/or direct sales to florists or a local marketing co-op/collective.
- Most cut flower enterprises are considered “supplemental income” for the family

- Most cut flower enterprises are less than 1 acre, and more often ¼ or 1/8 of an acre.
- Utilization of small urban spaces for cut flower production can be accomplished with some creativity. E.g., Explore neighborhood leasing options or publicly available land to rent. Must be aware of HOA regulations given that close proximity to urban markets may result in conflicts between HOA rules and growing opportunities. Interestingly, theft was not an issue – may be because of farms being in the backyards or behind fences. But that may be something to consider depending upon one's area.
- Cut flower collectives are a very intriguing option. The one we visited in Utah consisted of 15 growers and 40 florists. The growers were not given the florists' names, but, if they were approached to sell directly to the florist(s), the grower would ask if they were a part of the collective and, if yes, redirect to purchase through the collective on Tuesdays. If no, they were allowed to sell to the florist. They charged florists \$50/year membership. Profits were split 70% to the grower, 30% to the collective. They have a software where growers upload what they have for the week (often the growers underestimate their offerings), florists pre-buy, and then the florists pick up from one of the two pick up locations (SLC and a suburb location). All materials are color coded to the growers (e.g., grower A is coded purple and the program labels, sleeves, buckets, etc. are all purple), but the florists are designated by number instead of name to discourage under cutting and to discourage growers from approaching them independently. They currently have a waiting list of ~20 florists wanting to join, but 40 florists are their capacity. Florists and growers are screened before joining.
- Ground coverings and irrigation were a must in Utah. More so to retain moisture due to water restrictions. Cloth / mulch suppressed weeds.
- Most operations were small scale (1/4 Acre – 2 Acres) and only had the family working for them. Larger growers did hire additional labor (packing/processing, weeding, planting, shipping/driving).
- Most operations had alternative income and did not rely solely upon the cut flower operation for discretionary income.
- Farm growth was primarily organic. They started small and gained knowledge about growing (often starting with vegetables/fruits) and then increased production as they gained experience. There seemed to be a common theme that many started selling to farmers markets and then more niche markets (e.g., florists, etc.). Some growers also had small vegetable plots, but they kept these slightly away from the cut flowers (potentially due to the veggies attracting pests?), and the vegetables were for their own home consumption. They did grow herbs for foliage in arrangements (e.g., sage).
- There is a lot of trial and error based on what to grow, what colors, when to grow, and what the market wants. A lot of their market is weddings, and creams / light pinks are very popular.
- Some plants are used creatively to make up for the low water and other climatic conditions (e.g., foliage plants seemed to be tough to grow in UT, instead they grow thornless raspberries, ninebark, sage, etc.)
- Poppies can be picked before they open and be stored in a cooler for several weeks. When the florist purchases them, s/he can crack the bud and the poppy then opens. Poppies need to be cauterized to retain moisture... if a florist cuts the stem for a different length, they need to re-cauterize.
- High tunnels / low tunnels (proper name?) are great season extenders because in UT they have a short growing season, and it gets too hot and burns the flowers / foliage. As such, they use a 30% or 50% shade cloth to protect the plants... 50% was deemed better by the growers we visited.

- Networking with the market is important to better understand their needs. Florists need standardized products, long stems, strong stems, etc. Growing flowers in the garden is not necessarily up to the standards required to meet florists' needs.
- Soil testing a site is a good indicator of what can grow there or if soil amendments / raised beds are a better option.

The following are various photographs from the study tour:











**Appendix A**

**A tour of cut flower farms in the Mountain West:  
Urban micro to diversified agronomic farms and everything in between**

Itinerary, Day 1

Rob Holland, Alicia Rihn, and Celeste Scott, University of Tennessee

Host: Melanie Stock, Cell: 414-828-7585

<b>Wednesday, 18 May 2022</b>			
<b>Arrival Time</b>	<b>Meeting Location</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Notes</b>
8:15 am	Holiday Inn Express SLC – Airport East	200 North 2100 West SLC, UT 84116	Welcome to Utah! Depart about 8:30 am
<i>Drive time: 1 hr</i>			
9:45 am	Shannon DeHart, Chateau Monette Flower Farm	6248 W 9600 S Payson, UT 84651	Farmer + Florist Markets: u-pick, farmer’s markets, CSAs, & weddings
<i>Drive time: 1 hr</i>			
11:30 am	Fawn Rueckert, Sego Lily Flower Farm & Vice President of UCFFA	9760 Chesapeake Dr. South Jordan, UT 84095	Suburban backyard farm Markets: farmer’s market, CSAs, & events
<i>Drive time: 20 min</i>			
12:30 pm	Katie Wagner USU Extension Assoc. Prof, Salt Lake County	Wheeler Historic Farm 6351 S 900 E Murray, UT 84121	<i>Lunch</i> <i>Bathroom Break</i> Utah’s urban ag: population density & innovative growers Dahlia trial/demonstration
<i>Drive time: 35 min</i>			
2:00 pm	Lindsey Waddoups, Three Sprouts Flower Farm	16 S Countryside Rd, Farmington, UT 84025	Suburban backyard farm Grant writing
<i>Drive time: approx. 5 min</i>			
2:35 pm	Jessie Westover, Hidden Creek Farm & Utah Premier Flower Collective	463 Old Fort Road Farmington, UT 84025	New this year: grower cooperative for wholesale
<i>Drive time: approx. 10 min</i>			
3:15 pm	Sheriden Hansen, USU Extension Assoc Prof, Davis County	USU Extension - Davis 920 S 50 W Kaysville, UT 84037	<i>Bathroom break</i> Utah’s urban microfarms – importance to legislation and family income.
<i>Drive time: 45 min</i>			
4:30 pm	Shelly Zollinger, Flourish Flower Market	1755 N Hwy 38, Brigham City, UT 84302	My go-to farmer for trial ideas Market: wholesale and events
<i>Drive time: 40 min to Logan, UT</i>			



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Itinerary, Day 2

Rob Holland, Alicia Rihn, and Celeste Scott, University of Tennessee

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<b>Thursday, 19 May 2022</b>			
<b>Arrival Time</b>	<b>Meeting Location</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Notes</b>
8:00 am	Holiday Inn Express	2235 N. Main Street Logan, Utah 84341	Depart for 1 <sup>st</sup> stop by 8:15 am
<i>Drive time: 30 min</i>			
8:45 am	Heather Griffiths, Wasatch Blooms & President of the UCFFA	245 E 9500 S Paradise, UT 84328	Moved to Cache Co. to expand after backyard microfarming in SLC. Advocate of local flowers. Market: wholesale, events, CSAs
<i>Drive time: 16 min</i>			
9:30 am	JayDee Gunnell Extension Prof, Cache County	3165 W 6670 S Wellsville, UT 84339	Trends in farming in Northern Utah, Cache Co trajectory, importance of high tunnels
<i>Drive time: 5 min (plus extra time to use bathroom at rest stop)</i>			
10:15 am	Lindy Bankhead, Paisley Flower Farm & Carrie Young, Owner of The Flower Shoppe	5605 South 3300 West Wellsville, Utah 84339	Alfalfa farm + cut flowers Market: wholesale, distribution Florist: importance of local cuts and growing demand
<i>Drive time: 15 min to downtown</i>			
11:30 am	Lunch	Options Burgers: Morty's Cajun: MayMoe's Greek: Romo's	Indian: Tandoori Oven Pizza: Jack's Pub: Beehive Grill
<i>Drive time: 32 min</i>			
1:00 pm	Arica Allen, Cold Creek Flower Farm	Approx Address: 12900 High Creek Rd, Cove, UT 84320	Early-season production with tunnels. Market: wholesale, subscriptions, pop-ups
<i>Drive time: 30 min</i>			
2:00 pm	USU Small Farms: Melanie Stock, Shannon Rauter, Eli Oliver USU Plant Pathology: Claudia Nischwitz Zach Schumm USU Applied Econ: Ruby Ward Local Non-profit: Brightening Blooms	1857 North 800 East, Logan, UT 84341	Utah Agricultural Experiment Station – Greenville Research Farm Cut Flower Research & Extension at USU, with local non-profit, Brightening Blooms.

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Itinerary, Day 3

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<b>Friday, 20 May 2022</b>			
<b>Arrival Time</b>	<b>Meeting Location</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Notes</b>
8:00 am	Crumb Brothers North	505 E 1400 N Logan, UT 84341	Breakfast together
<i>Drive time: 2 hrs</i>			
~11:30 am	Lorin and Ali Harrison, Florage Farms	365 N 150 W, Blackfoot, ID 83221	Expanded from diversified orchard in Paradise, UT, to 12 acre flower farm in Blackfoot, ID. Market: mainly wholesale, plus unique options from pop-up shops to in-store stands
<i>Drive time: 10 min to Blackfoot</i>			
12:30 pm	Lunch	Options	American: Teton House BBQ: Smokin' Gun Diner (+pie): Homestead Mexican: El Mirador
<i>Optional drive time: 20 min</i>			
	Optional stop	Traditional farms: Potato country & regional large-scale ag	
<i>Drive time: 2 hrs back to Logan. We made it!</i>			