

Division of Marketing  
Agricultural Development and Diversification (ADD) Program  
1990 Grant Final Report

Grant Number 05066

**Grant Title** Rural Floriculture Project

**Amount Awarded** \$26,422.00

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Avatar's  
World™

## Rural Development Program Grant March 1, 1990 – March 1, 1991 John S. Hurd Final Report

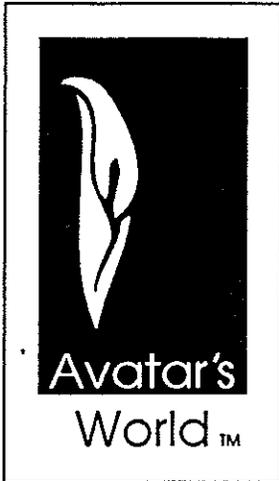
The major objective was to see if an existing farm could expand into the production of a floricultural crop while using existing capital and resources with a minor amount of new investment and be profitable while still maintaining the present farm operation.

In the last two years we have been able to do this. The first year of the grant we planted one acre of flowers and one acre of grains and now, the third growing season after receiving the grant, we will be planting four acres of grains and grasses plus three acres of flowers and herbs, all for the dried ornamental market.

This last fall we decided to drop 110 acres of crop land that we rented and put the resources which would have gone into raising a row crop into perennials. Within two years this crop of perennials should provide more profit than the 110 acres of row crops did with much less investment. One could, as a rule of thumb, figure it will take \$3,000 to \$4,500 to plant, harvest, and process one acre of flower production. There are some crops which could cost less and many which could cost much more. Yet, the potential rewards are greater. Most of the expense is for the hand labor it takes to harvest and process the crop into a marketable item. A grower has to have willing workers lined up long before it is time to harvest because many floral crops have a short window to be harvested and still produce a number one quality product. Quality is the first concern of the buyer. There is very seldom a market for a number two quality product. Producing the quality the market demands is usually where the first year grower has the most problems and the hardest time understanding why there is no market for inferior product, unlike the grain markets, where inferior product can still be sold but at a reduced price.

Marketing the product takes as much time and resources as growing the crop. The demand is out there yet there is no central marketing mechanism. It is a very nebulous process and comes with the time consuming task of making connections. Although, customers can be found close to home by attending local craft fairs and talking to the people who use dried flowers in their arrangements, most of the buyers are already buying from someone else and it takes time for them to consider a new grower as a reliable supplier. This is the major problem with approaching large buyers. They need to know that the grower can produce not only the quality they demand, but also the quantity they need. One of the key factors is whether or not the grower can deliver quality and quantity at the time the buyer needs it. Because this business is seasonal, delivering the product one week later than agreed on could mean the buyer will have to hold the product over until the next year meaning lost sales and profits.





There are now many associations potential growers can join to get information on growing specialty flowers. The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers has been a wealth of information for us. Being a member has led to difficult to find seed sources, some buyers, and the ability to meet other growers who have had some of the problems we have experienced and come up with a solution, along with moral support through those times when it didn't seem as if it were going to work out.

#### **Creation of jobs in the agriculture industry.**

Prior to getting into the floriculture industry, we would have to lay off our farm help during the winter months. Now we have three people working year 'round with an average of 75 to 80 labor hours per week during the winter months. During the growing and harvesting seasons we hire many local people to work in the fields with most work weeks averaging between 150 to 200 labor hours per week. All of these workers wages are paid from a revenue source that did not exist five years ago.

We have sold much more product than we grew. We purchased some of it from other growers in Wisconsin thus helping to create jobs in an indirect way. In 1991 65% of the product we purchased for resale was from out-of-state growers which could have been grown in the Wisconsin climate.

#### **Agricultural product market development and expansion.**

Approximately 75% of our sales are to customers outside of the state. We sell to a few dried flower wreath manufacturers in Wisconsin who also sell the majority of their product outside of the state. Potential markets can not only be found locally but nationwide. Wisconsin growers can compete on quality and service on a nationwide and international level.

#### **New capital investment and expansion in the agriculture industry.**

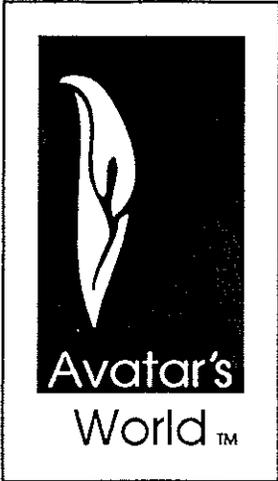
Actually we did not make many investments into new capital. We were able to use our existing sheds, tractors, and land. Many of the variable expenses such as seeds, plants, irrigation tubing, printing and hand tools were purchased from local sources.

We did purchase a Jacobson roto-till which is manufactured in Wisconsin and an old semi-trailer box from a local dealer to dry the flowers in.

#### **Improvement in the competitive position of Wisconsin's agricultural industry.**

Field production of flowers can increase the competitive position of Wisconsin agriculture industry. It has increased our cash flow through the winter and early summer months which has allowed us to keep a few of our key employees year 'round. Many of the crops are harvested during July and August which normally is a slower time of year for row crop production giving our workers the work hours they wanted.



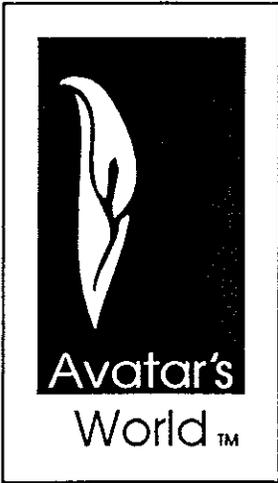


Also in August of 1991, the attempted Soviet coup sent grain prices substantially lower, near the lows for the marketing year. Flower prices were not affected; prices going lower because of the attempted coup were not even a consideration. August is the month when the demand for dried flowers traditionally starts to increase. Our customers kept on buying, giving us a revenue source not affected by the same market influences of our other traditional farm crops. We had a profit center to concentrate on while potential profits disappeared in the soybean and corn markets.

**Efficient use of farmland and other agricultural resources.**

We used many of the same resources that we already had in our farming operation. Our tobacco shed is now utilized during the early summer months for the drying of grains and grasses when it normally sits empty. Tractors and tillage equipment are also used. In addition to the seven acres previously mentioned, we have planted three acres of highly erodible land to native prairie grasses which should produce a marketable crop in two years, thus taking unproductive land and making it produce a profit.





## Resource List

Listed below are potential resources that will give information on all aspects of growing and marketing flowers:

### Associations and Newsletters

#### **Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers**

Judy Laushman, Executive Director  
155 Elm Street  
Oberlin, OH 44074  
(216) 774-2887

#### **The Business of Herbs**

RR 2, Box 246  
Shevlin, MN 56676-9535  
(218) 657-2478

#### **The Herbal Connection**

3343 Nolt Road  
Lancaster, PA 17601-1507  
(717) 898-3017

#### **The American Garden**

Dovetail Educational Services  
2803 Waunona Way  
Madison, WI 53713  
(608) 221-4894

### Books

#### *The Complete Book of Everlastings*

by Mark and Terry Silber  
ISBN 0-394-54677-6

#### *The Potential of Herbs as a Cash Crop*

by Richard Alan Miller  
ISBN 0-911311-10-6

#### *The Prairie Garden*

by J. Robert Smith with Beatrice S. Smith  
ISBN 0-299-08304-7

#### *Everlasting Flowers for Pleasure and Profit*

by Jeannette Verhelst  
ISBN 0-919845-99-1

#### *The Encyclopedia of Everlastings*

by Barbara Radcliffe Rogers  
ISBN 1-555-84133-3

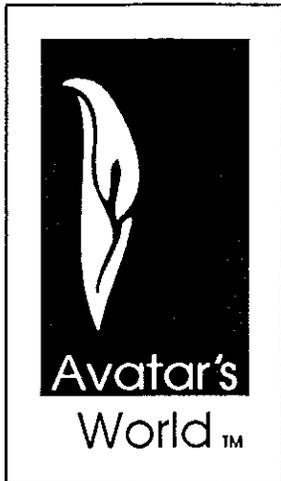
#### *Gardening By Mail, A Source Book (a directory of mail-order resources)*

by Barbara J. Barton  
ISBN 0-395-52280-3

#### *Dictionary of Plant Names*

by Allen J. Coombes  
ISBN 0-88192-023-1





## Seed Sources

Ted Holom

**The Express Seed Company**

1412 River Knoll Drive

Burlington, WI 53105

(414) 763-5241 FAX (414) 763-8542

**Germania Seed Co.**

5952 North Milwaukee Ave.

Chicago, IL 60646

(312) 631-6631 FAX (312) 631-4449

**Thompson & Morgan**

P.O. Box 1308

Jackson, NJ 08527

(908) 363-2225 FAX (908) 363-9356

**G.S. Grimes Seeds**

201 West Main Street

Smethport, PA 16749

(800) 241-7333

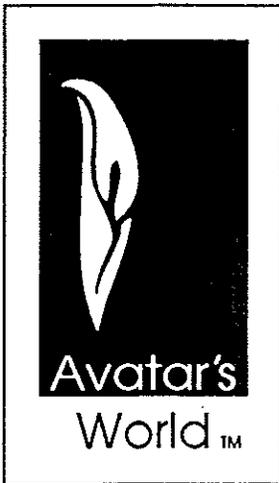
**Park Seeds**

Cokesbury Road

Greenwood, SC 29647-0001

(800) 845-3366





## New and Uncommon Drying Flowers from Seed

A selection of some of the newest cut flower cultivars now available, cultivars waiting to be discovered, and old-timers deserving more attention.

### Achillea x Debutante Strain

**Yarrow**

Hardy perennial; new seed strain of F<sub>2</sub> hybrids; 2 feet; 6-inch flower heads of ivory, cream, lemon, gold, and all shades of pink, rose, salmon, lilac, red, scarlet, magenta, coral, and orange; blooms first year if started early.

### Achillea x 'Moonwalker'

**Yarrow**

Hardy perennial; new hybrid seed strain— a smaller version of A. filipendulina types; 2 to 2-1/2 feet; soft yellow; useful both fresh and dried. Blooms first year when started early (late winter).

### Amaranthus cruentus 'Red Cathedral'

**Prince's Feather**

Half-hardy annual; 3 to 5 feet; large dense heads or rusty red; sow where plants are to flower; useful fresh or dried.

### Amaranthus hybridus 'Green Thumb'

**Dwarf Prince's Feather**

Half-hardy annual; 1 to 1-1/2 feet; dense green spikes ('Pigmy Torch' is its red counterpart); easy, adaptable; sow direct and densely to achieve stem length; fresh or dried.

### Anaphalis margaritacea 'New Snow'

**Pearly Everlasting**

Hardy perennial; 20 inches; powdery white foliage; crisp white flowers used fresh or dried; prefers poor, dry, acid soils; blooms first year from seed.

### Avena sterilis

**Animated Oats**

Hardy annual; 4 to 5 feet; 10-inch long open panicles of 2-inch spikelets with 3-inch beards sow direct (2 inches deep); harvest long before seeds mature; accepts dyes.

### Briza minor

**Little Quaking Grass**

Hardy annual; 12 inches; 1/5-inch drooping, heart-shaped seed heads; wonderful light, airy filler for small bouquets; accepts hot water dyes.

### Bromus lanceolatus

**Brome Grass**

Hardy annual; 24 inches; 1-inch spikelets with long, wispy filaments; sow directly in early spring; harvest early.

### Carlina acaulis simplex

**Silver Thistle**

Hardy perennial (to Zone 5); 20 inches; silvery-white flower heads, used fresh or dried; 5 to 6-month crop time; prefers poorish gravelly soils but grows in any well-drained alkaline soil.

### Carthamus Tinctorius 'Goldtuft'

**Golden Safflower**

Half-hardy annual; 4 feet+; golden orange; spineless; useful fresh or dried; other new cultivars are yellow-orange and ivory-cream.





Celosia cristata Chief Strain

**Cockscomb**

Tender annual; 40 inches; crested type; mixed or scarlet, bicolor, carmine with reddish stems, gold, red with bronze leaves, or rose.

Celosia Cristata Kurume Strain

**Cockscomb**

Tender annual; 3 to 4 feet; combs 8 inches across; mixed or bicolor, dark rose, gold, magenta, scarlet with bronze foliage, orange, orange-red, rose-pink, or scarlet with green leaves.

Celosia Cristata Sparkler Strain

**Feathered Celosia**

Tender annual; 30 to 34 inches; dense spear-shaped heads; mixed or carmine, cream, orange, red, or yellow.

Centaurea macrocephala

**Yellow Knapflower/Marco Polo**

Hardy perennial; numerous strong, thick stems 24 to 40 inches tall; bright golden yellow solitary heads (2-1/2 inches) surrounded by overlapping rusty-colored fringed bracts; buds, partly or fully-opened flowers, and mature bracts can be dried.

Consolida regalis Sunburst Strain

**Larkspur**

Hardy annual; re-selected Dutch strain with fully double flowers, upright growth, clearer colors (six separate colors).

Craspedia globosa

**Golden Drumsticks**

Half-hardy perennial treated as an annual; 24 inches; 1-inch spherical heads; rich golden yellow; use fresh or dried.

Cucurbita pepo "Munchkin" ('Jack-Be-Little')

**Baby Pumpkin**

Tender annual; each pumpkin 3 to 5 inches across, flattened top to bottom, rich orange, deeply scalloped.

Cucurbita pepo 'Baby Pam'

**Baby Pumpkin**

Tender annual; 100 days; uniform 5 inches x 5-1/2 inches round pumpkins with long, tightly-secured 'handles'; deep orange, edible flesh; 12 or more fruits per vine.

Cucurbita pepo ovifera 'Shenot Crown of Thorns'

**Gourd**

Tender annual; rounded fruits with a 'crown' of knobs on top; striped and multi-colored; prolific.

Echinacea purpurea 'Magnus'

**Purple Cone-Flower**

Hardy perennial; 3 to 4 feet; intense rosy purple, broad petals that hold out horizontally; large cone. The cultivars 'Bravado' and 'Ovation' are synonymous or identical.

Echinops ritro

**Globe Thistle**

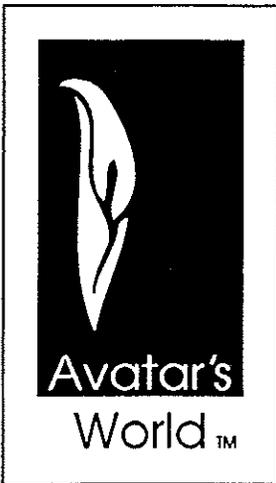
Hardy perennial; 4 feet by 2 feet; deep steel blue flower heads borne on gray stems; prefers light but moist soil; harvest just as the flower head begins to open at the top.

Eryngium alpinum

**Sea Holly/Eryngo**

Hardy perennial; 2-1/2 feet; stout blue stems each with several blue cones surrounded by prickly blue calyx-frills. Other species worth looking at: EE. bourgatii and planum. Harvest all when fully colored but before totally mature.





Fibigia clypeata **Paper Pumpkinseeds/Whispy Pillows**  
Hardy perennial (sometimes biennial); 16 inches; oblong, penny-sized seed pods for green or dried harvest.

Gomphrena globosa 'Strawberry Fields' **Globe Amaranth**  
Tender annual; 24 inches; globes of true strawberry red. Look for other, new color selections of Gomphrena including shades of peach, melon, lilac-rose, and orange.

Gypsophila elegans (annual) **Baby's-Breath**  
Hardy annual; 18 inches; sow direct and densely; only the small-flowered (colored: crimson, pale pink, and purple) types are suitable for drying.

Helichrysum bracteatum King Size **Strawflower**  
Half-hardy annual; 3 to 5 feet or more; new re-selected colors including 'Silvery Rose', 'Silvery White', 'Frosted Sulphur', 'New Golden', 'New Lemon', 'New Orange', 'New Red', 'New Rose', and mixed.

Helichrysum cassianum 'Rose Beauty' **Rose Strawflower**  
Half-hardy annual; 18 inches; pink suffused with rose, small single flowers in clusters; easy.

Helichrysum thianshanicum 'Golden Baby' **Silver Strawflower**  
Hardy perennial; 14 inches; small shiny yellow flowers in dense clusters; spreading mats of silvery-gray foliage; prefers sandy, acid soil.

Hordeum jubatum **Squirrel-Tail Barley**  
Hardy annual; 24 inches; 3-inch arching silvery barleylike heads with long hairs; pick early to avoid shattering.

Hordeum vulgare '6-row Bearded' **Barley**  
Hardy annual; 24 to 40 inches; sow seed direct, 1 to 2 inches deep; matures in 90 days or less; harvest well before the kernels mature.

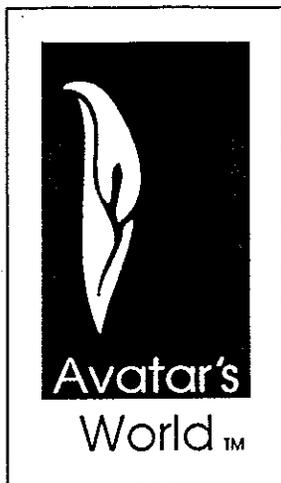
Hordeum vulgare '6-row Hooded' **Barley**  
Hardy annual; as above but the 'beards' are replaced by helmet-shaped projections.

Iris siberica **Siberian Iris**  
Hardy perennial; 36 to 48 inches; popular garden perennial that provides dark bronze seed pods on strong, almost-woody stems; select tall cultivars; prefers moist, rich soils but is adaptable.

Limonium bellidifolium 'Spangle' **Caspia**  
Tender to half-hardy short-lived perennial treated as tender annual started early; 3 feet; small bluish-lilac-pink-white flowers; fresh or dried; ('Filigran' and 'Flitter' are identical or synonymous cultivars.)

Limonium gmelinii ssp. hungaricus 'Perestrojka' **Hungarian Statice**  
Hardy perennial; 2 feet; pink to lilac-blue; used fresh or dried; prefers rich soil.





Limonium perezii 'Atlantis'

**Sea Foam Statice**

Half-hardy perennial treated as half-hardy annual; 2 to 3 feet; color ranges from light to dark lavender blue; ships very well.

Limonium sinuatum Sunburst Strain

(Annual) **Statice**

Large combs; available in mixed and five separate colors: the white is purest with no 'stoning' (good for dying), the yellow is large-flowered, heavy stemmed (with wings); the dark blue and rose are true colors without shades; vigorous.

Nigella orientalis 'Transformer'

**Yellow Love-in-a-Mist**

Half-hardy annual; 2 feet; unusual 'open' seed pods.

Panicum millaceum

**Indian Millet**

Hardy annual; 2 to 4 feet; pendulous, green to deep violet, many-branched flower fans, 1-foot long.

Phalaris canariensis

**Canary Grass**

Hardy annual; 2 to 4 feet; tight oval heads white tinged green; harvest before fully mature.

Rudbeckia amplexicaulis 'Black Head'

**Slender Coneflower**

Hardy annual; 24 inches; small, long-stemmed flowers with tall black cones, graceful petals; use dried cones.

Scabiosa stellata 'Ping Pong'

**Paper Drumsticks/Starflower**

Half-hardy annual; 18 inches; 2-inch bronxe, globular, papery seed heads; harvest when top third of head is mature (fully opened).

Secale cereale

**Fall Rye**

Hardy annual; to 5 feet; narrow, slightly curved, 6-inch spike; harvest before fully mature.

Setaria macrochaeta

**Weeping Bristle Grass**

Half-hardy annual; 4 feet; hanging tawny plumes; wide leaves; sow direct 1 inch deep; pick early to avoid shattering.

Triticum turgidum 'Wakooma'

**Black-Bearded Wheat/Durum Wheat**

Hardy annual (spring wheat); 3-foot stems; 'beards' range in color from reddish-brown to black.

Zea mays Baby Type

**Baby Corn**

Tender annual; 1-inch 'berries' with papery bracts, 2 to 5 per thick side stem; rusty red ('Red Berry' or 'Baby Corn Red'), yellow ('Yellow Berry' or 'Baby Corn Yellow'), and white ('Baby Corn White').

Zea mays 'Fiesta'

**Indian Corn**

Tender annual; typical indian corn in appearance but matures up to two weeks earlier than traditional cultivars.

