

USLGA

# Newsletter

October 2020  
Vol. 9 Issue 3

**USLGA NEEDS YOU!**  
Volunteer with our organization!



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#### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

USLGA is on Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram. Follow us!



#### **WEB**

[www.uslavender.org](http://www.uslavender.org)

Email USLGA at [info@uslavender.org](mailto:info@uslavender.org)  
Share your pictures, stories, comments and ideas.

#### **USLGA NEWSLETTER**

Past and current newsletters are accessible on [www.uslavender.org](http://www.uslavender.org)

#### **COVER IMAGE**

Sisters

Photographer: Phuong Agsaulio

Location: Wayward Winds Lavender

#### **WE WANT YOUR PHOTOS:**

Please submit your lavender and farm photos to be considered in future newsletters and USLGA's social media at: [pr@uslavender.org](mailto:pr@uslavender.org)

#### **MISSION OF USLGA**

To support and promote the United States lavender industry through research, education, networking and marketing.

#### **VISION OF USLGA**

As a collective voice for members, the United States Lavender Growers Association will advocate for, promote, and support and United States lavender industry. The USLGA will offer opportunities for members to participate in and benefit from networking, education and research. It will seek marketing opportunities to raise awareness of the lavender industry, connect buyers to sellers, and enhance member farms and businesses. The USLGA will support growers in producing a quality sustainable lavender crop and end products to satisfy U.S. demand and will be a partner in the global lavender community.



# Letter from the Editor

Thankfully the record-setting wildfires here in Oregon have been abated for the time being. At least five lavender farms were in evacuation zones. Having to evacuate helped me evaluate what is and isn't important. I always thought I would try to load a truck and trailer with as much as possible. It turns out I left without much. Thankfully our property was untouched. Many were not so lucky, including friends of mine. Hopefully, dear reader, you will never experience evacuation due to a natural disaster. Regardless, I do recommend thinking about what is truly important in your life.

In this issue, we have our usual submittal from President Mike Neustrom and some committee news. The PR Committee has provided survey results about U-pick. There is some great information though I disagree about not allowing dogs. Considering most people have dogs, I'm convinced we have significantly more attendance by allowing them. Our featured farm this month is Dutch Ridge Ranch in Colorado. A testament to the lengths some of us will go to satiate our need for lavender. - Marilyn



Wayward Winds farm dog Gabi with some visitors.  
Photo by Premi Vinayagam

## News from the Board



### From the President:

Most member farms are either already closed for the season or are finishing up their harvest and market activities. It has been a busy season even with the COVID-19 pressing in on our businesses because the farming doesn't stop. It is interesting visiting with many members that have seen their numbers improve over last or previous seasons, while many others struggle to find ways to deal with the environment in their particular locale. For those of you who have continued to do well, please share your successes on our Members Facebook page to help fellow members find a way forward. For those struggling, please also share what is going on for you. There may be just the right idea waiting for you in response.

The Membership Committee has a task force working on reevaluating the regional concept and how to change the regions to be more manageable and pertinent to our members. Some regions have extremely long distances to travel for regional events; others have issues pertaining to having growing conditions in common. It is a huge job they are undertaking and will take a while to hammer out. Stay tuned and watch for possible surveys designed to help answer those questions and be relevant to our members. If you are interested in helping out, please contact [membership@uslavender.org](mailto:membership@uslavender.org) for more information.

As the summer acquiesces to fall we shift to thinking of preparation of our fields for winter, finding new markets such as fairs, festivals and shows as the farmers' markets cease and any number of new activities to find outlets for our crops. I truly love to visit members' farms to see what they have chosen to do....or NOT do. Every one of the ninety plus farms I have visited have been different. I can safely say I've stolen ideas from most of them. As things slow down I encourage you to visit other member farms in your region, or further out if you are able to travel. fall or winter are good times usually to visit, but reach out to them first. Figure out beforehand if there are questions you are needing answers to so you will know if you have accomplished what benefit you were hoping for. Use your regional members as the resource it is intended to be and ask questions in your regional Facebook group. There is no sense in each of us having to reinvent the wheel. Pay it forward!

The Front Porch series is still being put together. It seems those members of the Education & Resource Committee working on that have been busy this summer, too. More information about the series will be forthcoming.

Finally, the Public Relations & Communications Committee is on fire and working with the Internet Committee to freshen up our website, make it more user friendly, and get rid of out-of-date content. To that end, the Internet Committee has hired a new Webmaster to help manage the website and bring new tools to the table for our organization. Stay tuned!

Mike Neustrom, USLGA President

### BOARD MEMBERS

President - Mike Neustrom  
Vice President - Jim Morford  
Patricia Uptain - Secretary  
Sarah Richards - Treasurer  
Mary Bergstrom  
Dennis Hamilton  
Marilyn Kosel  
Sherri Wood

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Advocacy - OPEN  
Education & Research -  
Martha Wilczynski  
Event - Sherri Wood  
Finance - Sarah Richards  
Internet - Mary Bergstrom  
Membership - Mary Hammer  
Newsletter - Marilyn Kosel  
Nominating - Mike Neustrom  
PR & Communications - Mary Althoff



# Survey Says - Lavender U-Pick Results

Jessica Mortvedt

We are pleased to introduce a new segment in our USLGA newsletter. It's called 'Survey Says.' We will ask you a few questions about a topic and then we'll compile all of the answers and give you valuable insight for your lavender farm! We recently put out a survey about u-pick lavender farms on our Facebook page. Here are the results.

Total Completed: 75 | Have a U-Pick Option: 59% | Don't have a U-Pick Option: 41%

## No U-Pick Option

Here are the top reasons farms don't have a u-pick option (they could select multiple reasons):

- 41% say they are just getting started.
- 29% are closed to the public.
- 29% say it has too many risks.
- 16% aren't sure how to best run a u-pick.
- 6.5% say it's not profitable enough.
- Other comments include that they are concerned about damage to the plants from letting the public pick their own, as well as their property is on a hill and they are concerned about it being a fall risk.

## Yes They Have a U-Pick Option

Here are the top reasons farms have a u-pick option (they could select multiple reasons):

- 82% say it's a good way to get people out to the farm so they buy products in their shop.
- 68% say they enjoy seeing people enjoy the lavender.
- 59% say it's easier than harvesting it themselves.
- 43% say it's very profitable.
- Other comments include that it's what people ask for and they want to provide a well rounded menu of experiences.

## How Profitable is U-Pick?

- 0-10% of income - 41%
- 10-25% of income - 39%
- 25-50% of income - 5%
- 50-75% of income - 12%
- Unsure - 3%

Our members provided some great tips to have a great u-pick season and protect your lavender.

1. Mark specific rows where they can pick or have only certain sections for u-pick.
2. Provide a picture of the plant showing where to cut. Remind them not to go into the woody area. Show them how to cut the lavender and watch them cut their first stem.
3. Give guests children scissors so they can't cut too far.
4. If you allow children to cut lavender, have them share a pair of scissors with an adult so it is more supervised. Some choose to not allow children to pick.
5. No animals except for service dogs.
6. Put out a 5 gallon cooler with lavender lemonade for customers during u-pick.
7. Consider having a festival with music, yoga, food trucks, craft projects classes.
8. Ideas on How to Charge:
  - a. Use a pasta measure to charge for bundles. \$5/\$10/\$15.
  - b. Use a mason jar retaining ring for sizing. Once they pick their bundle, they are given a rubber band at checkout.
  - c. Whatever you can hold between your thumb and middle finger is a bundle.
  - d. Give a basket and let them pick as much as they want to fill the basket. Some picked a lot, others only picked a little, so it all evened out.
  - e. Give a twist tie and allow them to put as much as they want in it as long as the twist tie can close.
  - f. Honor system - they leave scissors and baskets outside of the gift shop with a locked mailbox with a slot on the top.
  - g. Charge an entrance fee that includes a bundle of lavender for all guests.
  - h. Team up with a local photographer to offer u-pick and 1 digital professional photograph. Only 10 people per hour. \$15 per person (\$10 for farm, \$5 for photographer)
9. Wrap the bundles and tie with a ribbon.
10. After they are done, put scissors in bleach water or wipe with rubbing alcohol.

Thanks to all of our members who shared their advice on u-pick! It was great to see all of your ideas so we can all grow our business.



# Photography on the Farm

## Marilyn Kosel, Wayward Winds Lavender

*In this age where we take pictures quickly and frequently on our phones, we still love those special photos. Photos that commemorate life events and depict beauty. Lavender farms provide an appealing setting for professional photos. A setting both photographers and their clients appreciate and seek. And they are happy to pay for the privilege.*

*If you have not started accommodating paid professional photography appointments on your farm, there are several reasons you might consider it. The upkeep and maintenance required to keep your farm looking good for visitors is not easy or free. Some help with these costs is a plus. The photo-shoots often result in increased exposure for your farm. And it takes little effort in proportion to the return.*



Photo by Jenelle Lopez Photography



Photo by Marilyn Kosel



*Previously our (unwritten) policy was – take all the pictures you want, but please tag/like/share/etc. Believing this would increase goodwill and give our farm exposure. The reality was few people reciprocated and we weren't attracting professional photographers. It wasn't until a professional photographer visited the farm and asked about our photography fee that I considered having one. This particular photographer was adamant that we were missing an opportunity and that she and other professionals would gladly pay. Turns out she was right. Now that we charge a fee we receive much more exposure and the photographs being shared are of higher quality. Professional photographers post the photos on websites and social media and tag our farm consistently. And so do their clients. Photographers want to help promote your farm because it helps them promote their business as well.*

*There are several options for charging. We have a flat fee per appointment. The photographer and their client can stay as long as they like, shoot anywhere on the farm they choose, and are welcome to use the furniture and props we have located around the field. Most stay 1-1.5 hrs. Photographers are welcome to schedule multiple appointments/clients the same day. Each client equals one appointment. In a quick survey of other farm policies, I found various ways of defining an appointment. Some are charged per hour, per a set number of hrs, or a higher fee for the first hour and less for subsequent hours. For our most frequent photographers, we are considering a "season pass".*

*There are several considerations when determining your fee. Proximity to a population center (customers) can mean increased demand and potentially higher fees. How much you need or want to cover costs to provide this service should be considered. How attractive your fields and backdrops are and what props you provide can make a big difference in how desirable your farm will be for a photoshoot. Desirability is the goal. We charge a flat \$40, but many customers voluntarily pay more or leave a tip. I found fees on the web ranging from \$25 - \$400 for an exclusive all-day reservation. Most farms fell in the \$40 - \$75 range.*

*(continued)*



After hrs appointments are the most requested. Most in the evening and some in the morning when the light is the most beautiful. Setting up appointment scheduling on your website makes it simple. You can have them pay in advance or when they arrive at the farm. We like to keep it simple with online scheduling in advance. After scheduling they are sent instructions. We then have a self-check-in station at the farm. People are provided with the farm cell number and told to call or text if they need anything.

The physical presence of myself or an employee is not required. If I am around I usually hang out in the farm store in case they want to purchase products. If I have other things to do this system still works well as "self serve".

There can be a few challenges when dealing with photographers. The more professional the photographer the fewer challenges we seem to have. Some claim not to be pro even though they seem to be. And some may show up without an appointment or try to negotiate about the fee. We simply inform them that to be fair everyone that shoots after hours is required to pay the fee. Professional photographers understand and even expect it. We have seen some wear and tear on our props over time. Prop repair and replacement are well covered by the fees collected. There also are some photographers who show up during open hours to take photos who seem professional. Often they are amateur or semi-pro. If in doubt I simply ask them. If they are doing a professional shoot I tactfully mention how to sign up on the website, the fee, and that we can take payment at the farm store. We do allow the general public to take all the photos they want.

It may take a year or two to see the results but they will come. Three years in we now accommodate an average of 5 photographers an evening, seven days a week for about 6 weeks. We spread the word through photography-related social media pages, and with signs around the farm. By far the best advertisement is the photographers and their clients. Photographers network about locations and post their pictures. Clients who dream of photos in a lavender field tell their photographers about us. They post and share their photos and then three more people want photos in the lavender.

My primary motivation for starting a lavender farm over 20 years ago was to create something beautiful and share it with others. The addition of professional photoshoots meets that goal. And the photos are amazing. Many photographers agree to let us use photos for our own promotional use. If you're considering this as a revenue stream or a method of promotion for your farm I highly recommend it.



These bathtubs provide a popular photo op for couples and kids - of all ages.  
Photo by Marilyn Kosel



Photo by Think Good Things Photography



Photo by Natasha Victoria

Some USLGA member farms with photography policies on their websites. Some great examples.

Deep Creek Lavender Farm, MD  
Hill Country Lavender, TX  
Indigo Lavender Farms, MI  
Nettle Creek Lavender Farm, IL  
Red Oak Lavender, GA  
Sweethaven Lavender, VA

## Some of our favorite props.

White wicker furniture -

Easy to find, inexpensive, and last several seasons.

Assortment of colorful baskets.

Upholstered furniture -

We look for free sofas and chairs with fun color or style. Last 1-2 seasons.

Farm equipment -

tractors, old trucks, and other farmy things.

Children's furniture is a must have.



# INTRODUCING: Lesha and Tim Van Binsbergen Dutch Ridge Ranch Livermore, CO

by Lisa Anthony, USLGA PR Committee

## "Lavender, Honey, and Happiness" at Dutch Ridge Farm

Nestled between Denver and the Wyoming state line is where you will find Dutch Ridge Ranch. Well off the beaten path, Lesha and Tim Van Binsbergen have envisioned and are building their lavender dream.

In 2008, after visiting a lavender festival in Sequim, WA, Lesha fell in love with all the possibilities of lavender. "Everybody wants Sequim," Lesha shared with a smile in her voice. "We thought we could just throw some lavender in the ground and it would grow."

In 2016, the couple planted 27 different cultivars of lavender and were not living on-site at the Ranch. "Whatever could go wrong has gone wrong." Lesha described how they were eager to get started and how five seasons later they are still struggling to grow lavender. Trials such as only being able to farm part-time to grasshopper invasions have had significant impacts on their journey. "We're not giving up! I feel more renewed now. We're finally at a place where it's going to start working," Lesha reflected.

Most of those first plants are the best producers and were critical in making plans for the future. Cultivars such as Super, Betty's Blue, Miss Katherine, Folgate and Royal Velvet have found a forever home at Dutch Ridge Ranch. The location, Zone 5A, is hot, dry, and receives less than 15 inches of rain a year during a growing season.

Today, the Van Binsbergens have finished building their home on the Ranch, have narrowed down cultivars for future expansion, and have an online selection of hand-crafted products. The future may hold some small scale events and classes, and a few Valais black-nosed sheep (look 'em up!). "The dream is not dead! We still have much to learn!"



L. ang. "Betty's Blue"

These cultivars have  
found a forever home  
at Dutch Ridge Ranch

Super  
Betty's Blue  
Miss Katherine  
Folgate  
Royal Velvet



L. ang. "Folgate"



L. ang. "Royal Velvet"



L. x int. "Super"



L. ang. "Miss Katherine"

Cultivar photos by Marilyn Kosel



Did you know? Pruning lavender immediately after harvest can save time and money. And result in healthier plants. You likely already have the workforce on hand to do the work. It gives the plants recovery time before winter comes. And you won't risk pruning off your flowering stems if you happen to prune too late in the spring. Prune once while you have help and leave them alone until next harvest.

## What have USLGA Committees been up to? Here is a summary of recent activities:

**Advocacy Committee:** Currently inactive. Are you interested? Contact us at [advocacy@uslavender.org](mailto:advocacy@uslavender.org).

**Event Committee:** Chair Sherri Wood and her team have reconvened to restart planning for the now 2022 US Lavender Conference. They are looking into some virtual options and developing goals. If interested in this committee watch for announcements on the USLGA facebook page.

**Education & Research Committee:** Held a Town Hall zoom call to discuss varieties of lavender. They are developing educational materials about varieties, growing conditions, and characteristics.

**Finance Committee:** Finance Chair, Sarah Richards, will be working on the budget over the next month. The committee is also developing an official auditing process for USLGA.

**Internet Committee:** Is working with the PR Committee on new and beneficial changes to the website. The result will be more useful and user friendly for members and the public.

**Membership Committee:** A New Member Orientation webinar is in the works. Some re-working of regions is being considered, and focused work on increasing member engagement is underway.

**Newsletter Committee:** The PR Committee is assisting by executing and submitting a "Survey Says" for each issue. As well as a Member Spotlight / Feature Farm. The newsletter will be produced bi-monthly. The goal being to produce a relevant and informative document for our members.

**Nominating Committee:** This committee is active around election time or when vacancies need to be filled. There has been no activity recently.

**Help make USLGA better. Please consider joining a committee.  
Most committees are short members, or have no members at all.**