



# The Mayflower

A publication of the Massachusetts Flower Growers' Association

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### The Mayflower Newsletter

Only current active and allied trade MFGA members can subscribe to this newsletter by email as soon as it becomes available. Members may view and download the newsletter online as a pdf or print a hard copy for themselves or to provide multiple copies for employees.

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## Updates from our Legislative Advocate –Jason Wentworth

As we approach the midpoints of the summer and what I hope has been a productive and successful year, it's a good time to look back at some of the actions our Association has taken on Beacon Hill, and what we can hope to expect for the foreseeable future. As my mentor Henry Gillet would say to me, "it's not done until it's signed by the guy in the corner office...and it even then it might not be done!"

Attempts to predict the unpredictable in politics are always imperfect, so my philosophy (and one Henry clearly subscribed to) is try to remove as many variables as possible. After the dust settles, you're generally left with the most plausible courses of action. It's in that spirit of not only trying to read the tea leaves but influence how they are read that members of the Massachusetts Flower Growers' Association visited the State House in early spring, joining a host of agricultural stakeholders to celebrate Massachusetts Agriculture Day (or Ag Day as it is known). MFGA President Jeff Doherty, Government Affairs Committee Chair Ed Bemis and I split duty during the long day to visit key Legislative Leaders, including House Speaker Robert DeLeo, Senate President Karen Spilka, Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture Committee Senate Chair Anne Gobi, Senate Ways and Means Committee Chair Michael Rodrigues, Senate

Minority Leader Bruce Tarr, House Minority Leader Brad Jones, and State Representative Brad Hill. We were also fortunate enough to meet with staff from House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michelwitz's and Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture House Chair Smitty Pignatelli's offices. MFGA Secretary-Treasurer served as the linchpin of our outreach and advocacy, helping to organize and meet and greet the panoply of visitors entering the Great Hall.

One of the key requests that our members made is to support the institutions that support our industry. Whether that is a government agency like the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) or UMass Extension, Massachusetts agriculture and horticulture needs the strength, knowledge, and support that our Commonwealth can provide. In return, we continue to employ thousands, add to the tax base, and beautify the world around us. Not a bad trade-off. Additionally, we understand that commercial agriculture is just one in the galaxy of competing interests at the State House. While we would always love for lawmakers to side with agricultural interests, it's impractical to expect that. At a minimum, we DO want to be a part of any conversation that may impact our industry and the members and their employees who rely on a thriving agricultural sector. We want to be heard, and allowed to contribute the wealth of knowledge our members have accrued, from the new growers to the multi-generational masters. Put simply, when the fate of agriculture is being discussed or decided, agriculture needs to be at the table.

That concept sounds elementary, but it's been tested recently; while it may not impact every member, concerns about the Commonwealth's hemp program have been raised less about specifics but more generally about how an agricultural commodity is treated by regulatory agencies. The specific issue regard cannabidiol aka CBD, an extract derived from cannabis (including hemp, as defined by statute) that has been the primary driving factor for interest in growing hemp statewide. While the previously mentioned statute (the so-called 2017 "marijuana omnibus bill") clarified that "adult use" and "medical marijuana" would be regulated by a new oversight body, the Cannabis Control Commission, and largely out of reach for many Massachusetts agriculturalists and horticulturalist, hemp was to be a commodity that, while it would still be regulated by MDAR, would not be subject to the same restrictions as its more potent cousins. It's growing and processing would be, subject to MDAR permitting, accepted activity. Fast forward to spring of 2019 and, just as the Legislature reaffirms that growing hemp is agriculture by allowing for hemp on land under an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) or under the ag tax classification per Chapter 61A, MDAR and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) issue new policy guidelines that effectively kill any opportunity for hemp farmers to benefit from the CBD market. Citing potential conflicts

with the Food and Drug Administration's new policies on CBD, the new Massachusetts unfortunately puts Massachusetts growers at a disadvantage and does not address the fact that the CBD market, via other states' production, is already here. As a counterpart said, "that ship sailed a long time ago." Again, this may not be an issue directly impacting you as a member, but it's worth considering what might happen with a different, less-supportive administration and a different issue that hits closer to home. We should be wary of efforts to limit agriculture, especially after the Legislature spoke on the issue. Ed Bemis represented MFGA at a recent meeting between agricultural stakeholders and MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux and staff, and it's clear that continued advocacy is crucial and a legislative fix may be needed.


On a more pressing matter, both the House and Senate voted today (July 22) to pass the Fiscal Year 2020 budget as agreed upon by the Conference Committee (comprised of leaders from both parties and both chambers). In addition to the usual appropriations funding cities and towns, and state agencies,

additional funding (\$100K for MDAR) was set aside for a "scientific review of the potential impacts of neonicotinoid insecticides on pollinators", with results of the review submitted to the Pesticide Board Subcommittee. At that point, the subcommittee will utilize the MDAR review as part of their own individual review "to determine whether current uses of neonicotinoid insecticides pose unreasonable adverse effects to the environment as well as pollinators." Additionally, public hearings are mandated prior to completion of the Subcommittee's individual review, and MDAR is required to submit the results of both MDAR and the Subcommittee's reviews to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural

Resources, and Agriculture by December 31, 2019.

Many of the MFGA members I've spoken with have mixed feelings on the product review process, not because they doubt the honesty or transparency of the process, but because they are concerned that the final result will not placate the activists pushing the issue, and those activists may push for a ballot petition to ban the product. MFGA, since I began working with them, has been consistent in their support of a partial restriction on neonics, allowing for agricultural and other licensed and regulated uses in accordance with the product's label and essentially removing the product from the average consumer. What was clear to me is that, while many members have voluntarily shifted away from neonics, this remains a tool that many growers need in their toolboxes. My job is to try to anticipate and help navigate around policy problems that may hurt our members' businesses. That's why I have shared those concerns. However, we are hopeful that the end result will be viewed as a positive one by industry and consumer alike. As we approach the deadline, I will make sure you're aware of the public hearings as they are scheduled.

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While the Budget's Conference Committee has been working to hammer out their differences, ENRA has been reporting bills out favorably, like the agricultural disaster relief bill. Filed by Senator Anne Gobi, this bill would create an expendable trust fund that could be used, at the MDAR Commissioner's discretion, to "assist farmers in the Commonwealth who have suffered agricultural losses, financial losses, or property damage caused by an event of *force majeure*." In the last five years alone, I've either witnessed firsthand or heard about many such incidents that have been devastating to farms across Massachusetts, whether its fire, greenhouse collapse, silo collapse, flooding, hail damage, etc. In a perfect world, insurance companies would cover all or at least most of the costs of rebuilding and resetting. Of course, that's not the case, and the idea was to create a mechanism to provide critical assistance to agricultural operations in need at their lowest moment. It's a method used in some other states and, while there is no initial funding source identified, the toughest part of this journey is convincing the Legislature to cede appropriation authority. Henry and I had many a conversation about the challenge of passing trust fund language, but this one is a worthwhile endeavor.

Finally, after a recent Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling decided that employees at a Franklin County farm are entitled to be paid overtime because the work they performed at the farm was not the same as farming, agricultural stakeholders have been trying to make sense of this ruling is going to be applied and interpreted by the state Department of Labor and the Attorney General's office. While the issue started with a vegetable grower, the implications to all of Massachusetts agriculture are far-reaching, and I have been working with my counterparts in other agricultural stakeholder groups and sympathetic legislators to figure out next steps. At least in the short term, there is a plan to meet with representatives from the Attorney General's office to gain greater clarification on education, enforcement, etc. As I gain information on this issue, I will continue to report this to the Board and to the members. In closing, as usual, with a government that sometimes seems to operate under the axiom "hurry up and wait," we seem to be approaching what normally is a period of downtime but happens to be rather busy. I'll be enjoying every minute of it so you don't have to! ❁

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## 2019 MFGA Summer Meeting—for Greenhouse Growers and Garden Retailers

Cavicchio Greenhouses Inc., 110 Codjer Lane, Sudbury, Massachusetts  
Tuesday August 13, 2019 8:30 am–1:00pm (Lunch included)

Come join us for our **MFGA Summer Trial Garden Tour and Educational Program** at Cavicchio Greenhouses. We will have a morning program that will include a pest update from UMass Plant Diagnostic Lab, a demonstration and discussion about using dipping incoming plant material to reduce pest population, and profitable new seed products to grow from PanAmerican Seed. Plus—see first hand how the new 2020 flower products perform in Cavicchio's great trial gardens.

**1.5 Pesticide Recertification Credits available.**

**7:00-9:00 am—Open House: J.P. Bartlett, 578 Boston Post Road, Route 20, Sudbury** Stop by this wholesale geranium propagator and grower to see their operation and their **new greenhouse addition**. They are just five minutes away from Cavicchio's—a *must* stop.

**Allied Trade Exhibit Tables**—Come and visit with your greenhouse plant and supply vendors. Pick up the new 2020 catalogs.

**8:30-9:00 AM Registration—At the trial garden area**

**9:00-9:45 AM—Pest Update from UMass Plant Diagnostic Lab. Dr. Angela Madeiras, Extension Educator and Diagnostician, UMass Plant Diagnostic Lab** Angie will discuss plant diseases and other greenhouse crops health issues observed in the UMass Extension Plant Diagnostic Lab this season, including seedborne diseases, *Botrytis*, broad mites, phytotoxicity, and problems associated with cool, cloudy weather.

**9:45-10:30 AM—Utilizing Plant Material Dips to Keep Plant Populations in Check. Anna Chapman, Technical Services Manager, BioWorks** "Start Clean—Stay Cleaner! Anna will discuss and demonstrate the techniques of using dipping incoming plant material to reduce or eliminate insect and mite hitchhikers. She will cover the products to use and not to use, rates, tips and PPE."

**10:45-11:30 AM—New and Exciting Products from PanAmerican Seed to add to your sales, Dr. Sonali Padhye, Technical Service Manager, PanAmerican Seed** Sonali will introduce and review some key new PanAmerican Seed products for 2020. This includes the new and exciting Beacon *walleriana* impatiens series. This highly downy mildew resistant series was just introduced. Other products include: Zesty Zinnias, Kabloom *calibrachoa*, new begonias, perennials and others. She will review their culture and how you can use these products to increase sales and profit.

**11:30 AM-12:30 PM—2020 Annual Trials: Kerri Stafford, Cavicchio Greenhouses** We will tour the annual trial gardens at Cavicchio Greenhouses and see the new introductions for next year from many companies. This will give you a good look at the new varieties and how they perform. Plant vendors will also provide comments on these new introductions.

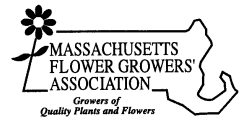
**12:30 PM Lunch—provided with registration**

For more information contact Bob Luczai, MFGA—781-275-4811 or Geoffrey Njue—617-243-1932 UMass Extension Greenhouse Crops and Floriculture Program.

ag.umass.edu/greenhouse-floriculture  
or massflowergrowers.com



**MFGA Summer Meeting: Tuesday, August 13, 2019**  
**Registration Form—Pre-registration by August 9, 2019**



All Names \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Firm \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Registration includes AM coffee and lunch!

Make check payable to and return to:  
Massachusetts Flower Growers' Association, 8 Gould Road, Bedford MA 01730.

First registration @ \$45.00	= \$
Additional registrations x \$40.00/person	= \$
Registrations at door x \$50.00/person	= \$
Total registration	= \$
Allied Trade Table Show: 1 – 6' table x \$50/table	= \$
Payment method	=
<b>Total</b>	<b>= \$</b>

Fax the form to MFGA at 781-275-8668 or email to [massflowergrowers@gmail.com](mailto:massflowergrowers@gmail.com).

For more information call MFGA office at 781-275-4811, Bob Luczai at 508-935-8264 or email [massflowergrowers@gmail.com](mailto:massflowergrowers@gmail.com), or Geoffrey Njue at 617-243-1932 or email [gnjue@umass.edu](mailto:gnjue@umass.edu).

**Credit card:**

We accept (indicate):    Visa    American Express    MasterCard    Discover

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date (MM/YY): \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Billing address zip code: \_\_\_\_\_ CVC code: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Registration at the door (day of the meeting) is available but lunch may not be guaranteed. We will try to accommodate as many people as possible.