



Regional Report 2022/23

- **Southeast Regional Update 4th of November 2023**

To date we have 196 members in the Southeast.

Regional Meetings

This year we have enjoyed numerous meetups throughout the region. This Autumn we had a meet up at Featherstone in Hampshire and Blooming Green in Kent. We also met at Ivydean Farm in the Cotswolds in May and at Floribunda Rose in Surry in April. All meetings had very good turn out. Various topics were covered at each including floristry, pricing, growing for florists, diversification and plot set ups. To the finish the year localised wreath meet ups are being organised throughout the region for those who would like one last get together before the end of the year.

Shows

Hampton Court

What a triumph! The region did a wonderful job coming together to make our tent at Hampton Court a huge success. Flowers came from all over the region and numerous members gave up their time to help set up and volunteer inside the tent throughout the week. The feedback from members has been largely positive. Most members would like more notice about the event so they can make time in their calendars to participate. Better communication with the region on the event is also needed. Many members who were not able to participate this year would be very interested in participating in the future.

National Dahlia Show

Held in September this show was brilliantly led by Rachel Collis. Rachel came up with the stand design and organised set up, tear down, and all the volunteers on site. The FFtF stand was very popular with lots of postcards given out and the public directed to our website.

Future Shows

Hampton Court was great for our exposure and should definitely be on our calendar for 2023. The National Dahlia Show should also be considered again as very good turnout and the NDS is very keen for us to participate. We have also been approached by the Windsor Flower Show to have a stand. The event takes place in early June and is 1 day only.

Misc

On the back of Hampton Court we have been asked to decorate the Savoy for the Garden Media Guild Awards. The stage will be decorated with a long meadow arrangement and the drinks area will have a large moon gate installation. We also will make 25 button holes, using the FFtF green ribbon.

- **North West Report May - November**

Meetings

April 25th - Informal meeting at Soil & Fleurs (Sofie Paton-Smith), morning visit & chat. 18 people, all southern

June 14th – Big Flower Fling at Dutton Hall. Practical day of hands-on foam-free floristry guided by Sarah Statham (Simply by Arrangement), Becky Hindley (Erda Botanicals); with Andrea Gilpin (@wild-meadow) to record the day and take headshots. *24 plus tutors. Inc couple from Yorkshire & Wales.*

July 12th – visit to Bluebell Cottage Garden & nursery, Cheshire. 26 people

October 3rd & 4th - meetings in N of the region (at Beetham Nurseries, 5 members) and S of the region (at member Grown & Made's farm attended by 20 members) to catch up, share ideas and look ahead to plans for 2023.

November 14th – Christmas meal planned for whole region, Preston.

Events

Manchester Flower Show June 2-5th – A team of members co-ordinated by Andrea Julyan (The Nectar Bar), set up an eye-catching display on the theme 'Seedling to Bouquet' in Manchester Town Centre on May bank holiday. It was a great success, with excellent engagement with the public visiting from across the NW, plenty to talk to them about, and great SM coverage from the team. Sponsorship from Co-op. All those involved are keen to do it again, maybe extend the reach, but Andrea doesn't want to lead it.

RHS Tatton July 20-24th July - No official FFTF presence, though several members involved individually, inc Sarah Hinchliffe who decorated the RHS letters.

Informal group buys

Anemones - (organised by Andrea Julyan), and **Chrysanthus** (organised by Angela Coulton) though sadly think we will have to rethink these with new passporting & plant sale regs

Blue spruce bulk buy for Christmas wreaths.

- **East Midlands May - Nov 2022**

16th May: Local meet up at Kitchen Garden Flowers, Matlock, Derbyshire hosted by Vanessa Swetman (12 members attended).

7th June: Visit to Elonor Tivey 'The Peony Farmer' in North West Leicestershire for a tour of her extensive peony field. Elonor has since joined FFTF (10 members attended).

22 & 23rd June: Lincolnshire Show. A team of approx 6 members headed up by Linda Clark put on a great display both inside & outside the 'Lincolnshire Life' marquee.

5th/6th/7th August: Flower Farmers' Big Weekend. Approx. 10 members opened up their plots as part of the Big Weekend. I went to Pulvertoft Flowers in Lincolnshire on Sunday 7th to help with Fiona Paxton's event which was very well attended.

20th September: Regional meet up at Flower & Farmer in Northamptonshire. We enjoyed a tour of Mille & Jo's extensive and very productive farm (12 members attended).

23rd/24th/25th September: Strawberry Hill House Flower Festival. Laurence Hopkins of Happy Roots Farm was one of the FFTF competition winners who designed & installed a window arrangement in the gallery of the house.

1st November: Regional Zoom meeting to review the year, request feedback and plan for 2023 (20 participants).

10th November: We will be meeting at The Old Willow Works in Beckingham, Nottinghamshire to coppice willow.

- **Yorks & N East regional feedback for May-Nov 2022**

Events: September 2022 regional member all day event, to meet, socialise, floral workshop. £523 surplus from the fee's donated to DEC by Gill Hodgson Feedback received from 4 members from a direct mailshot all enjoyed the event and would attend more. Feedback received on the fb page from 6 members either by posting their pics from the day or by making a full post and comment. No comments made from members about types of events/meetings for members or shows they would attend. A further £415 was raised through a raffle to help send member Julie Macfarlane to Kenya on a charity cycle ride for the Women v Cancer.

There is a whatsapp group set up by another member for their particular area in Yorkshire.

With regards to shows: there is a lull in support to enter shows this year, for many grower/florists this year has been too busy with pandemic postponements to be able to commit to supporting ffff with shows/events. Many members work either full time or part time alongside their businesses and cannot commit or unable to spare the time for many reasons.

I have asked for suggestions on where to have a presence to reach a new audience such as flower festivals etc but no suggestions come from members. As yet there is nothing in the pipeline, our usual shows would have been the Great Yorkshire Show and Harrogate Autumn Show (neither are foam free and very much allow the use of the stuff and huge amounts of import flowers for displays by well known celeb florists too) which are entered every year, there is no major RHS show in the region so there is a feeling of being left out of compared to other regions and the kudos and attention an RHS show brings.

I have been approached by Hexham Abbey to work with them for a flower festival in 2024 with ffff, I have been working with the flower team there going foam free and the aim for the festival in 2024 will be foam free and locally grown flowers only. Whilst membership is greater and growing in the Yorks regions there has been a drop in membership in the Northumberland area, thus due to the huge distance between the areas there is reluctance to travel either way by members, the time and cost of fuel now makes it an easy decision to make to not attend or commit to attending proposed meetings/events, members asking for zoom sessions then not attending those – the last one was for a post Mother's Day zoom session with only 4 or 5 members logged on despite more than 20 saying they would attend, out of those who did log on 3 didn't actually do any flowers for mother's day and just wanted to see what the meeting was about, and 1 had a complete sell out.

Feedback received so far for the conference is that it is too far for many members to travel and certainly to get there and back in a day is too much and also too expensive once accommodation added, there are members asking is there going to be any of the conference online? The regional facebook group is quiet and doesn't generate much activity with members preferring to post on the national page instead, posts are seen by many, liked by few and commented on by a handful!

- **Scotland regional feedback for May-Nov 2022**

New Recruits

We appear to have had 15-member sign ups between May and November. Welcome letters have been sent to those who have had no history of FFTF membership.

Newsletters

Two newsletters have been sent out. Several requests for items for the newsletter have been sent out with limited response.

Get Together

October 3rd we held a get together for members of FFTF Scotland. We had 26 sign ups though 21 attended. The event was organized by myself, Christy from Tomnaha Flowers and Debbie Scott from East Lothian Flowers. Jenny Bell Harman from Studio Seapink gave a demonstration on bouquet making and small bowl arrangements. Then members all created their own arrangements using flowers they had brought with them. Kristy De Garis captured the action during the day. At lunch time Debbie gave an update on FFTF and the Flower Hub which is proposed for growers in Scotland. In the afternoon participants enjoyed sharing knowledge by creating an arch, dahlia swoosh, meadow and cloud.

We also asked participants to complete a questionnaire to gauge interest for future events. It appeared there was a desire for future get togethers preferably in person.

Future

Debbie, Christy and I have discussed creating a plan for next year (2023). Possibly 2, in person events, one of which may be a weekend event.

I continue to ask for snippets of news for our newsletter however little feedback generally is received. I propose to ask for a paragraph about a member each month. The hope is to introduce members to each other and start a bit more involvement from members to the group.

- **West Midlands regional feedback for May-Nov 2022**

Membership numbers at year end	98
Number of meetings held	3
Any other initiatives	Eco Church Flowers & Photography workshop

Show(s)

Show name	Malvern Spring Flower Festival
FFTF organiser name(s)	Meg Edmonds
Any medals awarded	

Any additional information

The show was a great success and members seem keen to repeat this in 2023. A subcommittee is in the process of being formed.

Meetings

Month	Venue/host	Focus if applicable	No. of attendees
1 st April	Meadow Cut Flowers	Malvern Show input Farm tour, plant swap	12
23 rd & 24 th May	Local cluster meetings Worcester – Kats Cut Flowers & Warwickshire – National Herb Centre		6 4
11 th July	Bonterre Blooms	Cancelled – lack of attendees	
12 th Sept	Hope & Glory Flower Company – Tysoe	Eco Church Floristry workshop & meeting	14
3 rd Nov	Gentle Blooms – Leamington Spa	Strawberry Hill Flower Festival input	8

Any additional information

The Eco Church Floristry & Photography workshop went down very well with members. Hosted by Jacqui and myself in Tysoe Church. Each member (12 in total) paid £35 to cover costs, any excess was donated to the church. The day included refreshments and lunch. A professional photography was on hand to take pictures which the attendees got to use in

their portfolios. The church was decorated using eco mechanics, attendees working in teams of 2-4.

The Eco Floristry Installation & Photography workshop planned for May will follow the same format.

Plans for 2023

Jan/Feb – regional meet at The Ledbury Flower Farmer - TBC

Monday 24th April - Regional meeting by kind invitation of Barney & Victoria of Stokesay Flowers – Shropshire

11th – 14th May – Malvern Spring Festival

Monday 22nd May - Eco Floral Installation & Photography workshop at Kat's Cut Flowers near Malvern

Monday 12th June - farm tour Green & Gorgeous - Wallingford

Monday 10th July - Regional meeting - Bonterre Blooms - Worcester

Monday 25th September- Regional meeting - Tammy Hall Wild Bunch - Shropshire

December – Christmas social TBC

Any other comments

Jacqueline Franklin stood down as joint coordinator in Sept 22. I'd like to thank her for all her hard work and guidance through my first year.

Members seem keen to have a FFTF stand at Malvern in May 23. Following a request from Liz Anderson I have discussed the idea of also having a presence at Gardeners World live in June. To date I have not been met with any interest. At the last regional meeting held last week, everyone in attendance agreed the audience at GWL was perhaps not the best for members. After a discussion it was decided to look for a more fitting event we have not attended before, such as a wedding focused exhibition. Carole (Tuckshop Flowers) agreed to make some enquiries.