Southside Blooms is a farm-to-vase florist that creates unique, fashion-forward floral arrangements while maintaining an uncompromising dedication to the environment and local community. Southside Blooms converts vacant lots on Chicago’s South Side into solar-powered flower farms. This is a project of Chicago Eco House - a nonprofit with the mission of using sustainability to alleviate inner-city poverty. Founded in Englewood in 2014 by Quilen Blackwell, Chicago Eco House began as an effort to spur bottom-up economic development.

Today, Southside Blooms has farms in multiple neighborhoods throughout Chicago; offers K-8 after-school programming; and hosts a workforce development program for young adults, ages 16 to 24. These farms also serve as community spaces for hosting local events. To learn more visit chicagoecohouse.org and southsideblooms.com

More than Just Flowers
Explore how Southside Blooms turns vacant lots on the South Side of Chicago into farms that bring employment, beautiful natural areas, and hope to local community members.

Southside Blooms: A story through a Field Guide
This field guide tells the story of Southside Blooms, focusing on the organization’s four pillars - Economic development, Sustainability, Education, and Community building - and the beautiful plants that are central to its mission. Think of this guide as a way to tour Chicago Eco House/Southside Blooms’ farms - whether you are there in person, or exploring their model remotely.
Southside Blooms brings economic benefits to its community, employing local youth and creating a sustainable green business model that is good for plants and people. The following flowers are included in many bouquets for their subtle beauty, alluring texture, and incredible vase life.

1. **Anise Hyssop**  
*Agastache foeniculum*  
LAMIACEAE  
The plant’s leaves and flowers have a strong licorice aroma and can be used in teas or as flavoring.

2. **Blue Vervain**  
*Verbena hastata*  
VERBENACEAE  
The candelabra-like formation of the purple blue flowers provides the plants with a unique appearance.

3. **Golden Alexanders**  
*Zizia aurea*  
APIACEAE  
Plants in the carrot family like this one are host plants to the swallowtail butterfly, making them a vital food source for the caterpillars.

4. **Gray Headed Cone Flower**  
*Ratibida pinnata*  
ASTERACEAE  
The seeds have pleasant but strong fragrance and are a treat for many birds including goldfinches.

5. **New England Aster**  
*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*  
ASTERACEAE  
This aster species has a beautiful contrast of purple petals and yellow center which attracts pollinators including the monarch butterfly.

6. **Rattlesnake master**  
*Eryngium yuccafofolium*  
APIACEAE  
The scientific name of this plant (*E. yuccafofolium*), meaning “like yucca leaves,” reveals a lot about its structure.

7. **Sand coreopsis**  
*Coreopsis lanceolata*  
ASTERACEAE  
An early blooming yellow flower that brightens any garden.

8. **Showy goldenrod**  
*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*  
ASTERACEAE  
Goldenrods, including this species, are a vital source of food for many pollinators during the fall months.
Southside Blooms is the first off-grid commercial flower farm that prioritizes renewable energy and rainwater irrigation, while never using pesticides, herbicides or synthetic fertilizers. Also, Southside Blooms uses native plants like the ones below to promote a more sustainable city for people and nature.

9. Big Bluestem
   Andropogon gerardii
   POACEAE
   State grass of Illinois, also called 'turkey foot' due to the characteristic shape of its seedhead.

10. Blazing Star
    Liatris spicata
    APIACEAE
    This prairie plant is probably more widely cultivated in gardens than seen in wild places.

11. Common Ironweed
    Vernonia fasciculata
    ASTERACEAE
    Vibrant purple flowers attract many pollinators - this is the smaller of the ironweed species, its cousin tall ironweed can grow 8 ft tall.

12. Indian Grass
    Sorghastrum nutans
    POACEAE
    One of the dominant grass species of the Midwestern Prairies.

13. Joe Pye Weed
    Eutrochium maculatum
    ASTERACEAE
    This late summer bloomer can be easily identified by more than 2 leaves growing in a "whorl" around the stem. Many pollinators' favorite.

14. Prairie dock
    Silphium terebinthinaceum
    ASTERACEAE
    The taproot of prairie dock can reach 12 feet into the ground!

15. Rosinweed
    Silphium integrifolium
    ASTERACEAE
    A tall plant that resembles the sunflower, but blooms before sunflowers do.

16. Switch Grass
    Panicum virgatum
    POACEAE
    This grass remains upright and standing in winter and provides a great home for birds during the cold months.
Southside Blooms brings young people onto its flower farms for educational after school programming and employs teens in green jobs growing and selling flowers. Ecological knowledge can help folks identify and grow plants like these that support pollinators and provide fresh produce.

### Education

#### 17. Butterfly Milkweed
**Asclepias tuberosa**
**APOCYNACEAE**

This milkweed likes dry sandy soils and lots of sun. Like other milkweeds, it is vital food for the monarch butterfly caterpillars.

#### 18. Cherry Tomatoes
**Solanum lycopersicum var. cerasiforme**
**Solanaceae**

Although they are often called "vegetables", tomatoes are fruit. Botanically speaking, they are classified as fruit.

#### 19. Common Milkweed
**Asclepias syriaca**
**APOCYNACEAE**

The most common milkweed, often preferred by the monarch butterfly. Can easily spread in the garden.

#### 20. Grapes
**Vitis sp.**
**VITACEAE**

The grapes we eat are derived from wild grape varieties.

#### 21. Kale
**Brassica oleracea var. sabellica**
**BRASSICACEAE**

Kale, cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli are all varieties of the same plant!

#### 22. Strawberries
**Fragaria × ananassa**
**ROSACEAE**

Strawberries are botanically speaking, not really berries.

#### 23. Swiss Chard
**Beta vulgaris**
**AMARANTHACEAE**

Swiss chard does not originate in Switzerland and is a descendant of wild beet.

#### 24. Whorled Milkweed
**Asclepias verticillata**
**APOCYNACEAE**

One of the most delicate milkweeds, with small leaves and white flowers.
Southside Blooms: Flowers That Empower
Quilen Blackwell¹,², Iza Redlinski³, and Ellen Woodward³
¹Southside Bloom, ²Chicago Eco House, and ³Field Museum

Community Building
Southside Blooms was formed in 2017 when neighbors worked together to secure two vacant lots in Englewood for their first flower farm. The community helps to create these green spaces and reaps the well-being and beautification benefits brought from the following plants.

25. **Foxglove Beardtongue**
   *Penstemon digitalis*
   **PLANTAGINACEAE**
   Blooms for a long time with large white flowers that might have a tint of violet. Bees get nectar by wiggling inside of the flower.

26. **Goldenrod firework**
   *Solidago rugosa*
   **ASTERACEAE**
   Cultivar of a native goldenrod, meaning it was bred for specific characteristics which sometimes occur naturally.

27. **Prairie Smoke**
   *Geum triflorum*
   **ROSACEAE**
   This plant gets its name from fuzzy parts that appear when the plant is in full bloom and resemble smoke.

28. **Purple Coneflower**
   *Echinacea purpurea*
   **ASTERACEAE**
   This lovely plant also has many traditional medicinal uses.

29. **Purple Prairie Clover**
   *Dalea purpurea*
   **FABACEAE**
   In the bean family, the purple prairie clover is a nitrogen fixer, meaning it fertilizes the soil.

30. **Rose Milkweed**
    *Asclepias incarnata*
    **APOCYNACEAE**
    Sometimes called swamp milkweed, this plant prefers moisture and full sun but will grow in dry and partly sun conditions too.

31. **Side Oats Grama**
    *Bouteloua curtipendula*
    **POACEAE**
    This species is found throughout most areas in central North America and all the way down to Argentina!

32. **Smooth Blue Aster**
    *Symphyotrichum laeve*
    **ASTERACEAE**
    Attractive and versatile plant that can survive in many garden conditions and thrives even in compacted urban soil.