

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES of OREGON

Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership

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Farmer Profile: Lucky Flower Farm

By Kate Sheridan

Tucked behind the Keizer Station and Volcanoes Baseball Stadium, Lucky Flower Farm is easily by-passed while driving Interstate 5 between Salem and Portland. On a chilly, windy day in September, several of us from Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and First Presbyterian Church in downtown Portland were able to visit the farm and see what lay beyond the view of the highway.

Lucky Flower Farm is approximately three acres in size and one of several Hmong Family Farms located on property between the Valley Flower Farm stand and Keizer Equestrian Center. Our tour guide for the afternoon was Tou, accompanied by his mother and two cousins. When Tou met us outside the Valley Flower Farm stand, he was on his way back from a farmer's market in Keizer. In addition to the farm table each Sunday in the summer at First Presbyterian Church in Portland, Tou and his family also sell produce and flowers at farmer's markets in the Salem area.



Lucky Flower Farm is home to a diverse array of flowers, fruits, and vegetables. Of the three acres, about half an acre is devoted to flowers for bouquets some of which have culinary and medicinal uses. In addition to the land in Keizer, the Hers also have an acre of land in Woodburn solely for growing flowers. The abundance of flowers contribute to the low incidence of harmful pests, as beneficial insects are attracted to the many flowers. One of the main problem pests at Lucky Flower Farm are gophers.

Lucky Flower Farm grows a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Our first stop on the tour was the rows of raspberries, where four different varieties were growing, including Evergreen, which was still producing berries in late September. Lucky Flower Farm provides ingredients for savory dishes and Hmong cuisine as well, including sugar snap peas, snow peas, tomatillos, Asian cucumbers and tiny light yellow hot peppers. There are also fields of sweet Asian pumpkins, beans from Laos, mustard greens and bok choy, all of which do well in the Willamette Valley's cool, moist climate.

Tou has lived in Oregon for four years, living previously in Merced, CA and before that Laos, but has been farming since he was young. He prefers farming and looking after his younger brother to finding another type of job. He receives the most help on the farm from his mother, and occasionally, his sisters (who can be found assisting him with sales at the First Presbyterian farm table). His father also helps him with the overall upkeep of the farm, including removing invasive Himalayan blackberries along the canal that borders the southern end of the farm.



Once we had made our way full circle around the farm, we returned to the beginning and got a closer look at the chicken coop. The Her Family raises chickens for eating. The cost of chicken feed makes them too expensive to sell at market, but they are an important food in Hmong culture.

The farm tour was certainly a sensory experience, as we were able to try foods both familiar and foreign. We tasted sugar cane, an enormous Asian cucumber that had to be whittled down to popsicle size for eating, and a sweet, juicy, yellow watermelon – the overabundance makes it a popular treat for people and chickens alike. The Hers were very generous with both their time and harvest, and we left with bulging bags of flowers, melon, cucumbers, peppers, and bok choy.