

# AGRICULTURE

## ASIAN AMERICAN ROOTS GROW DEEP IN MISSOURI

Missouri has a rich agricultural heritage that has grown deeper and more diverse in recent years. A visit to the Webb City Farmers Market illustrates that diversity. Long beans, yu choy, lemon grass and other Laotian food staples lie intermixed among tomatoes, okra and cucumbers. Hmong market gardeners have found success in Southwest Missouri in the last 20 years. Many were drawn here from other states by the mild climate, rich lands, and a desire to reconnect with their agrarian roots. Mentoring through programs provided by the Webb City Farmers Market and Lincoln University Extension have helped the Hmong and their neighbors increase yield and profitability.



These roots are no less deep in the state's urban areas, where interest in locally produced foods have increased urban gardening. Urban farming initiatives, such as Cultivate KC's New Roots for Refugees, help people become independent farmers through training in farming and marketing. Graduates of the four-year program, many from Burma (Myanmar) and Bhutan, support local food systems at farmers markets and through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares. Like the Hmong in Southwest Missouri, these farmers bring a mix of homeland traditions and American favorites to market. Bitter melon and chin baung, a leafy green, share garden space with tomatoes and carrots.