

Mhonpaj's Garden



Mhonpaj has been farming since her childhood. When her parents arrived in the United States farming was all they knew so they immediately looked for a farming opportunity, becoming pickle farmers and selling their product to a local company. Farming was a family event and everyone pitched in to help. Soon the family also started a small garden farm, growing many traditional Hmong foods for family consumption plus a little extra for area Farmers Markets.

Mhonpaj believes farming makes you appreciate things. Farming is a form of meditation and a great stress reliever. It is also a time for the entire family to pitch in and work on a project together. But farming isn't without challenges, the biggest of which include insects and weather. In Laos, insects weren't nearly as much of a problem. Mhonpaj's parents have told her that because there was such abundant food for insects in Laos, they didn't need to attack newly planted crops. Weather has also been a challenge, especially when it comes to adapting to the ever-changing climate in the Midwest.

Mhonpaj has been connected with Minnesota Food Association for several years. When she learned about the opportunity to begin production farming this year she thought it would be perfect for her and her family. Mhonpaj is excited about this growing season, and depends upon MFA's Southeast Asian Coordinator to find resources and answer questions. Together they have already worked to resolve a number of issues related to drip irrigation setup, product liability insurance, budgeting information, and more.

This year Mhonpaj is selling product through Big River Foods. Her farm, Mhonpaj's Garden, is 1.5 acres on which she is growing grape tomatoes, slicer tomatoes, heirloom tomatoes, and green peppers. You can also find her produce at Market Fest in White Bear Lake on Thursday evenings.

In the future Mhonpaj hopes to expand Mhonpaj's Garden include creating a recipe book for traditional Hmong Foods and teaching how organic food promotes a healthy lifestyle.