

COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION
SERVICE



When you
support
Extension,
refugee families
are provided
the resources to
grow food and
earn an income.



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EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE *Changing Lives*



Burmese refugees harvest bitter gourds, a vegetable indigenous to their culture.

Kentucky Farm Start Program Provided Resources for Refugees in Jefferson County

Jefferson County Extension Agents and Extension Specialist worked with community partners to provide garden space for refugee families to grow their own produce and start a business selling fruits and vegetables.



Ky Farm Start is an intensive education program targeting beginning farmers, individuals who have ten years or less farming experience. The program provides a basic foundation of production, marketing, management, and networking, which are necessary for beginning farmers to succeed in today's dynamic agriculture environment.

Starting in 2012, Ky Farm Start and **Jefferson County Extension** partnered with Catholic Charities to serve the refugee community through urban gardening. Funding from a USDA grant allowed for two part-time "community agriculture workers" to be hired and trained. One was from Bhutan and the other from Somalia. In 2013, eighty-six urban farmers were assisted through the Ky Farm Start program at two urban garden locations.

County agents continue to provide on-site horticulture advice and trainings. Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) certification and other trainings make it possible for the gardeners to sell their produce.

Gardeners reported greater success in their second year. By applying the information learned by Extension, one gardener reported not having problems with bugs. Another gardener reported increasing his yield and earnings (\$500 in 2012 to \$1200 in 2013). Families report feeling healthy when they eat fresh produce. Many have learned how to preserve the produce for year round access to healthy foods.

The refugee gardeners have introduced the community to produce that is indigenous to their culture such as mustard greens, Thai eggplant, bitter melon, pigweed (Amaranth) and varieties of peppers, tomatoes, corn (not sweet), roselle, lamb quarters and cowpeas. These vegetables tend to withstand dry conditions.

A husband and wife, both over the age of 60 who suffer from diabetes, reported that the garden serves as their medicine. They are unable to work, but the exercise from gardening, social interaction with other gardeners and access to fresh produce has improved their physical and mental health. Their income from selling some of their vegetables provides bus fare for other shopping needs.



Thai eggplants are popular in cooked vegetable dishes served with rice and bread.

Gardeners report feeling healthier from access to food, being physically active and from developing social relationships while working in the garden.



A gardener uses 5 gallon bucket to haul compost to her garden.