



Day stallers can help

Text and Photos By MARIE ARY

Come inside the Main and North Arcades for seasonal hospitality of day stall farmers and craftspeople such as Bao Thao, a Highland Mountain Hmong farmer, and craftspeople Deena Manis and Talbot Uehlinger, Long Life Candles.

The Market's 98-year-old tradition of "meet the producer" means direct sales to customers by 287 farmers and craftspeople. They daily bring their freshest and best, including seasonal floral bouquets, fresh vegetables and holiday wreaths like farmers Thai and Bao Thao, Woodinville, and 100 percent beeswax candle sculptures of Deena Manis and Talbot Uehlinger, Olympia.

In 1991 Bao Thao helped initiate the Market's signature two-city-block-long floral display.

"I was the first Hmong person to sell fresh flowers at the Market," said Thao. "The first time I sold flowers here, I was so shy. That was in 1991, a long time ago."

She credits her love of flowers to their bright colors. She said they remind her of traditional Hmong clothing.

"In my country of Laos we didn't buy clothes, we sew all our clothes ourselves," said Thao. "The traditional Hmong colors are black, white, blue, red and orange. That's why we love flowers, because they are colorful."

Thao described the care sewn into each garment.

"For each garment, we first match then measure each color, cut each color separately, then sew pieces together by hand with tiny stitches," she said. "Fine needlework is part of the Hmong culture."

Now she applies the same thoughtful skill at her day stall to create each seasonal bouquet, garland and wreath offered for sale to Market customers.

"In November, we have fresh dahlias and

chrysanthemums, then we sell only dried floral bouquets, because it is too cold for flowers to grow," Thao said. "That's when I begin to sell our dried lavender wreaths and mixed, dried flower wreaths which are wrapped by hand, very strong, to last for a long time."

Her husband Thai grows everything they sell at the Market on their 30-acre Woodinville farm.

"November through December, Thai will have lots of fresh vegetables like beans, kale, leeks, yellow onions, pumpkins and Swiss chard to sell here."

Responding to holiday demand for fresh green garlands and wreaths, the Thaos planted evergreen trees on the farm.

"We planted our own evergreen trees and the first five years we could only trim a little, just to shape the trees," she said. "Now, I can trim the whole tree everywhere to make wreaths and garlands."

Customers have asked if she will sell live Christmas trees.

"If I sell a tree for \$30, I had to wait several years while it grew and, then, once it is cut and sold, I have nothing to sell next year," Thao said. "I can make more money from tree trimmings made into wreaths than selling the whole tree one time."

"We offer customers table decorations, too, of fresh evergreens."

Another specialty wreath is dried eucalyptus.

"We have one eucalyptus tree on the farm which only my husband cuts because it is very tall," she said. "People told me 'if you don't want it, call the zoo and they will come get it for the animals there.' I said 'no, I will sell it.' Customers really like our eucalyptus wreaths because they are very fragrant."

The Thaos' five children range from 16 to 26 years old.

"My daughter Lua, now 26 years old, is the

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