



SHUN-FAT NURSERY

SIZE:

22 acres

YEARS IN BUSINESS:

~20

PRODUCTS:

Snow pea tips, bok choy, Chinese mustard, celtuce, edible chrysanthemums

MARKETS:

Restaurants, wholesale

COUNTY:

Santa Clara

Jenny Li's family has been growing vegetables in Santa Clara County for more than 20 years. They are one of roughly 80 Asian-American-owned farming operations that grow Asian vegetables and herbs here, part of a farming tradition that stretches back to the early 20th century.

The Li family specializes in snow pea tips, a high-value, specialty crop. This production system involves multiple plantings over the year, interspersed with rotations of bok choy, Chinese mustard, and other Asian leafy vegetable crops. Their primary sales are to wholesalers and restaurants in the South Bay, East Bay, and San Francisco. These marketing channels strike a balance between the smaller volume, higher price sales to restaurants and larger volume, lower price sales to wholesalers. Focusing on these specialty Asian crops, the Li's farm business has expanded steadily over the years, and the size of the land they farm has grown from 5 acres initially to a peak of 26 acres.

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~JENNY LI

On-site farm worker housing is a high priority for the Lis and other Chinese farmers. Much of the cultivation and harvesting of Asian vegetables is done by hand by a population of farm workers who often do not drive. Yet, like most other Chinese farmers, the Li family leases their land and short-term leases often make it difficult to justify the financial investment in farm infrastructure, such as irrigation systems, greenhouse structures, and farmworker housing, unless it can be easily moved to another site when the lease is up. Language can also be a barrier to accessing external resources and other sources of farm support.

The Chinese community in the Bay Area has been an important source of support for the Li family and other Chinese farmers. Community connections have helped farmers find land to lease and have helped them to build relationships with consumers. As Jenny explains, “locals prefer locally grown products. That’s really helped us flourish.” The Bay Area Chrysanthemum Growers Association (BACGA), which was founded in 1956, has also been an asset for Chinese farmers. The BACGA runs a buyers cooperative, where the Lis and other Asian farmers with language barriers can purchase fertilizers, seed, greenhouse plastic, pesticides, and other supplies. It has also been an advocate on agricultural issues for the Chinese farmers.



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