

Selling Customers on Healthy Produce

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Success through diversity

Goodson said the market draws its customers from a 50-mile radius—west to Tyler and north to Daingerfield. She netted this bit of market intelligence from the names she collected through some weekly drawings the group has held.

Anticipating more this coming season, she said the market counts 22 growers who come to the sale over the course of the season. "Some of our growers sell over a very short season. For example, one family just sells Noonday onions."

Within that statement is the secret to the success of the Historic Longview Farmers Market. "Lynette is very careful about who she allows to come and sell at the market. She allows only those growers who add to the variety of what the market offers to its customers," Bjork explained.

If all the market's growers sell the same commodities, customer numbers would dwindle, and the growers would soon follow, said Tanksley. "I have seen it happen again and again. A farmer has to sell steady or he will go somewhere else where he can."

Bjork said Goodson admitted her stall to the Longview market because she sold greens and no one else did.

Goodson will also welcome people who sell nonvegetable farm products, like grass-fed and organic beef. Other farmers sell goat milk and goat milk products, such as candles and soaps, at the market.

What Goodson will not admit to the market are resellers, people who buy produce from wholesalers and resell it at farm markets. Longview market customers like to talk to the people who grow the



Yellow squash and zucchini from Tanksley Farm at the Historic Longview Farmers Market.

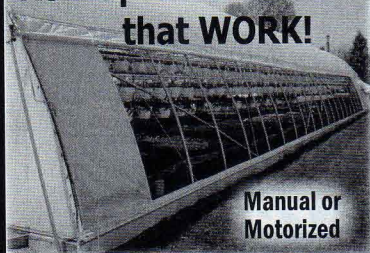
produce they are buying, something they can't do with resellers.

On a good weekend, when the weather is warm, the market is visited by up to 850 customers. When

the weather is cold, the number slips to 250.

Goodson has her eye on a year-round market to match the year-round growing season. "All we need is a citrus grower," Goodson concluded. ●

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