The United States is now home to a great many racial and ethnic groups from all over the world as reflected in its motto *e pluribus unum*—from many, one. The native inhabitants, in fact, descended from Asians who crossed the Bering Straits from Siberia 20,000 to 50,000 years ago. These populations independently developed a number of cultures that filled the Americas and developed agricultural and hunting economies from the indigenous native fauna and flora. In the Age of Exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries, the European encounter with what they perceived as a new world had a profound and explosive impact on North America and South America with tragic consequences for the native inhabitants. Spanish conquistadors and Portuguese adventurers in Central America and South America supplemented and merged with the native population while English and northern Europeans who migrated to North America essentially replaced the native populations. In addition, there was a major influx of black Africans who were brutally imported against their will as slaves to provide labor for the sugar plantations of South America and the Caribbean and the cotton plantations in North America. Major migration continued to be Europeans up to the 20th century. Migration from Asia was negligible until the mid-1800s, when the demand for labor resulted in importation of indentured servants from Indian in the Caribbean, labor from China for the burgeoning railroads, and farm labor from Japan for the plantations and farms of Brazil, Hawaii, and California.

In the United States, Asians represented only a miniscule part of the population as late as 1860, with the census counting only 35,000 Chinese and no Japanese. By 1900, the Asian population grew to only 104,000. However, in 1990, the Asian population had reached 7.4 million (3.1% of the population), of which 70% were immigrants and children who arrived after 1970. In 2000, Asians totaled 11.2 million (4.1% of the population), with significant populations from India, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia in addition to China and Japan. Asians now represent the fastest growing minority population in the United States, increasing in numbers and diversity. The number of Asian ethnic groups recognized in the U.S. census has grown from four in 1970 (Chinese, Indian, Korean, Japanese) to thirteen in 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993).

The recent introduction of Asian populations in the last half of the 20th century has affected U.S. culture in profound ways. Many of the new citizens have been highly educated and talented, and the sciences and the arts have been especially enriched. The world of business has also been improved by Asian entrepreneurs and the strong family bonds that encourage the American virtues of thrift, hard work, and self-improvement. The impact of Asian populations have also been felt in popular culture, not the least of which has been on Asian foods, cuisine, diets, and medicines. Although China Towns and Chinese restaurants had been a part of urban life in large American cities for at least a century, there has recently been an explosion of a wide diversity of Asian restaurants and Asian foods that has transformed what had been narrow Eurocentric choices in cuisine. Part of this change was due to the tremendous increase in dining away from home as women en-

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tered the workforce. The amount of money Americans allocate for food away from home is growing steadily. Expenditures on food away from home increased 5.7% between 1997 and 1998, while consumer expenditures on food at home decreased 3.6% (Restaurants USA, 2000a). About half of adults eat out on a typical day. Where once the only well known Asian dish was chop suey or chow mein, dishes actually unknown in China, Americans have become enamored with Asian methods of food preparation such as stir fry and such Asian delicacies as tofu, wasabi, bok choi, sushi, and curry. The demand for Asian cuisine has grown to such an extent that the Chinese cuisine has joined the mainstream and is no longer considered ethnic (Restaurants USA, 2000b). Where once vegetarianism was considered exotic and strange, this diet choice is becoming increasingly mainstream (Restaurants USA, 1999). Where herbal medicine was once considered pure quackery, herbal supplements have now become a multibillion-dollar business.

Current Asian influence in the American diet varies in different U.S. states depending on their populations of Asian American. United States eating patterns now reflect greater use of soybean products, fish, vegetables, and rice, with decreased intakes of red meat, eggs, and fats. Asian methods of food preparation such as stir-frying and steaming have also increased. The factors responsible for this Asian effect on American diet include 1) influence of Asian migration; 2) health benefits of Asian diets based on a comparison of mortality rates due to heart disease and cancers between Asians and non-Asians; 3) increased numbers and diversity of Asian restaurants; 4) globalization and travel combined with an increasing interest of Americans in ethnic foods; and 5) availability and diversification of produce in supermarkets used to attract customers. To quantify the changes in the U.S. diet and develop appropriate food composition information for handling Asian foods and recipes, food databases are now being expanded to include Asian foods for accurate surveys and nutritional assessments.

The purpose of this workshop is to explore the impact of the influx of Asian Americans on horticulture, dietary patterns, food choices, and health in the United States. Our interest here is to 1) explore new opportunities for new Asian crops produced in the United States to service the burgeoning demand in Asian restaurants and food stores and mainline supermarkets as well as to provide new crops for export; 2) determine if Asian vegetables, culinary herbs, and medicines have a place in the increasing health conscious U.S. markets; and 3) consider if Asian diets could be a healthful alternative for Americans. Four papers are presented. The first paper by Jules Janick introduces the important Asian crops that already are a traditional part of food crops in North America, with an emphasis on the continental United States and Canada. The second paper by Usha R. Palaniswamy discusses the nutritional impact of some Asian food crops found increasingly in Asian food stores as well as mainstream supermarkets, with special attention to culinary herbs, medicinals, and vegetables. The third paper by K.M. Palaniswamy and Usha R. Palaniswamy introduces production strategies for successful production of tropical vegetables in the United States. The last paper by Carol A. Miles and D. Gayle Allman presents strategies for promoting and marketing Asian crops and products.

Literature cited