

### Innovations in Urban & Inside Growing

| Annie White

>> Published Date: 1/25/2012



The urban farming craze may have started as a social movement, but it's evolving into a business model. Consumer demand for locally grown and year-round produce combined with widespread concern about the sustainability of traditional farm practices are inspiring growth in the related fields of greenhouse vegetable production, controlled environment agriculture and urban agriculture. It's also what's inspired Ball Publishing's latest e-newsletter Inside Grower.



In the past decade of focus on urban agriculture, the industry has grown significantly.

than doubled in the U.S. Worldwide, there are more than 1 million acres of vegetables being grown in greenhouses. "Greenhouse vegetable production will continue to grow in the USA and worldwide," predicts Gary W. Hickman, an international consultant in greenhouse vegetable production, who has more than 25 years of research and extension experience at the University of California—Davis. "It will continue to grow simply because it requires less land and water than field-grown vegetables per pound produced."

One benefit of greenhouse vegetable production is the ability to grow food at or near the point of consumption. Atop a former bowling alley in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York, the first commercial urban rooftop greenhouse in the U.S. began harvesting greens in May 2011. Gotham Greens aims to put farm fresh vegetables on the plates of New Yorkers within 24 hours of harvesting.

Advances in hydroponic technology and artificial lighting are accommodating "farming" in the most unusual of places. In urban Atlanta, PodPonics is successfully growing hydroponic lettuce and specialty greens in old rust-colored and graffitied shipping containers. Inconspicuously running their business in a vacant lot between a car wash and a halfway house, PodPonics revamps the recycled shipping containers into high-tech modular controlled-environment "Grow Pods."

The growing demand for year-round produce—tomatoes in particular—is supporting new super-sized and high-tech greenhouse facilities. Village Farms, which operates more than 232 acres of greenhouse vegetable production in the U.S. and Canada, is just one company that continues to expand. They recently added a new 30-acre greenhouse facility in Monahans, Texas, to their lineup.

With the growth of interest, investment and technology in the production of vegetables in controlled environments, Inside Grower is dedicated to keeping you informed and educated. The twice-monthly e-newsletter provides news, technology, new cultural methods, research, business updates, pertinent legal/political updates and other topics of interest to anyone who grows or is interested in growing edible crops in a controlled environment. Subscribe to Inside Grower for free at [www.ballpublishing.com/insidegrower](http://www.ballpublishing.com/insidegrower). **GT**