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# Green City Growers to plant first winter crop in Cleveland greenhouse (gallery)



(http://connect.cleveland.com/user/dsnook/index.html) By Debbi Snook, The Plain Dealer

(http://connect.cleveland.com/user/dsnook/posts.html)

on December 12, 2012 at 5:00 PM, updated December 12, 2012 at 8:04 PM

Print (http://blog.cleveland.com/taste\_impact/print.html?entry=/2012/12

/green\_city\_growers\_to\_plant\_fi.html)

Starting next month, you could have some Cleveland winter lettuce with that sandwich.

That's when **Green City Growers** (<http://evergreencooperatives.com/business/green-city-growers/>)

Cooperative, a worker-owned business, expects to harvest its first crops from one of the largest urban greenhouses in the country, a 3 1/4-acre hydroponic operation off East 55th Street in the city's Central neighborhood.

**Mary Donnell**

**Award Winning Care at Southwest General Hospital!**

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Green City Growers to plant first winter crop in large Cleveland greenhouse  
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Lynn Ischay, *The Plain Dealer*  
(<http://connect.cleveland.com/staff/lischay/photos.html>)

Head planter Graham Tucker, left, works with new employee Constance Suggs at the Evergreen Initiative Green City Growers Cooperative greenhouse on Diamond Avenue in Cleveland. They are planting the first flats of lettuce seeds at the worker-owned cooperative. The greenhouse will produce three million heads of lettuce to be sold, retail and wholesale, locally. They will employ 42 local production workers. (Lynn Ischay/*The Plain Dealer*)

Green City Growers Cooperative gets lettuce started ([http://photos.cleveland.com/4501/gallery/green\\_city\\_growers\\_cooperative\\_gets\\_lettuce\\_started/index.html](http://photos.cleveland.com/4501/gallery/green_city_growers_cooperative_gets_lettuce_started/index.html)) gallery (7 photos)



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(<http://evergreencooperatives.com/business/green-city-growers/about/>), chief executive officer of **Green City** (<http://www.green-city-growers.com/>), said she's had interest from potential customers, including **Heinen's** (<http://www.heinens.com/>) supermarkets and distributors who supply restaurants and food service operations in Northeast Ohio. Customers will be able to choose from green leaf, butterhead and red lettuces, and a variety of tender herbs.

"We'll be competitively priced," she said of goods normally shipped in from California and Arizona.

Terry Romp, produce buyer for Heinen's, said he's been advising the startup and is eager to see -- and taste -- the end product.

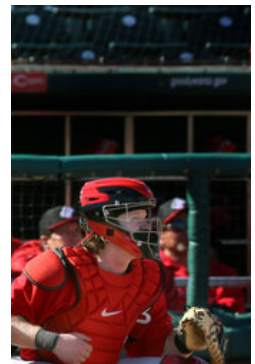
"We told them that if it's good, and it's competitively priced, we'll buy it," he said. "It makes sense to buy food closer to home. It costs us \$7,000 just to run a truck one way from California."

The Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals and Case Western Reserve University have also expressed an interest in buying from the new company, said Steven Standley, chief administrative officer for UH and chairman of the board of **Evergreen Cooperative**

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The nonprofit group oversees the greenhouse, along with two other recently formed, for-profit companies, Evergreen Cooperative Laundry and Evergreen Energy Solutions.

Both of those businesses have met founding goals to employ a total of about 40 people who are given a living wage and health insurance, he said. Both are also showing growth, he added, and may still reach the other goal of profit-sharing with their workers.

Evergreen was inspired by cooperative companies established in Spain in the 1950s, during a time of political upheaval. Many of them still exist and are flourishing, Standley said.

Evergreen hired Donnell, who was instrumental in starting the hydroponic greenhouse program for the Ohio State University Extension service and who has a background in commercial fresh vegetable processing. She hired Graham Tucker as head grower. He worked at Green Circle Growers, a commercial flower greenhouse in Oberlin.

Donnell calls her company a \$17 million economic-development project, using federal new markets tax credits, support from University Circle institutions, the Cleveland Foundation and \$450,000 loan from the city to build the structure and hire many of its workers from the neighborhood.

Mack Squire, 53, will be part of the initial work force of 25 showing up Monday to plant the first crop. Unemployed since July, Squire said his employer, an industrial stamping plant, lost a contract to a company in China.

While he hopes the company can be successful enough to share profits with workers, as designed, he said he is happy to have health coverage and a starting salary somewhere around \$10 an hour.

"I live simply," he said.

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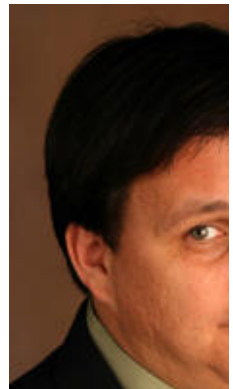
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**onfire4** (http://connect.cleveland.com/user/onfire4/index.html)

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As long as there is basically a ton of subsidies it will work. If all the subsidies dry up I doubt a greenhouse that small can stay viable.

Like (http://cleveland.com/)

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x.ht



**Debbi Snook, The Plain Dealer** (<http://connect.cleveland.com/user/dsnook/index.html>)

Yes, it costs a lot to truck food from California, but greenhouse principals told me other economic reasons that this model can work today: That natural gas is cheaper; that the hydroponic method only uses enough water to grow plants (and probably the amount that evaporates), and other energy efficient tools.

If you want to see a bigger example, said Heinen's Terry Romp, check into the tomato and cuke business in Leamington, Ontario, Canada, which services most of the East Coast of the U.S.

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**Laura McShane** ([http://connect.cleveland.com/user/laura\\_mcshane\\_1/index.html](http://connect.cleveland.com/user/laura_mcshane_1/index.html))

Will the PD write a story on the hydroponic operation that was supposed to happen in the old YMCA building on West 25th near the zoo?? What's up with that project--

[http://www.rezthreadscleveland.com/Rez\\_Threads\\_Cleveland/Welcome.html](http://www.rezthreadscleveland.com/Rez_Threads_Cleveland/Welcome.html)

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**tracydc** (<http://connect.cleveland.com/user/tracydc/index.html>)

I've also heard that the energy crisis was a big problem for them as they had trouble affording the heat for the greenhouses. Never greenhouses are built to be much more energy efficient.

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**deb** (http://connect.cleveland.com/user/maplady7/index.html)  
Congratulations and good luck! Love to see stories like this.



**deb** (http://connect.cleveland.com/user/maplady7/index.html)

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**Yes Man** (http://connect.cleveland.com/user/nineteen72/index.html)

I love urban growers. When does the high pressure sodium crop come in?

(http://cleveland.com/)

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**littlejo7** (http://connect.cleveland.com/user/littlejo7/index.html)

Bravo! Here's to more environmentally friendly projects!

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**DividedNationII** (http://connect.cleveland.com/user/DividedNation2/index.html)

I guess everyone forgets about all of the Greenhouses which used to be off of Schaff Rd in Brooklyn Hts or the Cleveland Greenhouse near E55th... greenhouses are nothing new... one must ask, why did all those go bankrupt and close???



**.com** 2 Months Ago ([http://cleveland.com/taste/index.ssf/2012/12/green\\_city\\_growers\\_to\\_plant\\_fi.html/post/2012-12-12/1355359183-568-41.html](http://cleveland.com/taste/index.ssf/2012/12/green_city_growers_to_plant_fi.html/post/2012-12-12/1355359183-568-41.html))

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**Laura McShane** ([http://connect.cleveland.com/user/laura\\_mcshane\\_1/index.html](http://connect.cleveland.com/user/laura_mcshane_1/index.html))

Old Brooklyn Greenhouse on West 11th is only family-run operation left in City of Cleveland and it has not been easy for them. City of Cleveland Summer Sprout contract used to help them out. I wish success for this enterprise, but as the original poster points out--back to the future. It would make more sense to rebuild a new local greenhouse operation where it made sense in the first place--Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Heights.

 (<http://cleveland.com/>)

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**Laura McShane** ([http://connect.cleveland.com/user/laura\\_mcshane\\_1/index.html](http://connect.cleveland.com/user/laura_mcshane_1/index.html))

But thar's money to be made....right?...and cheap land in the inner city...

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**westernreservegrower** (<http://connect.cleveland.com/user/westernreserve/index.html>)

Most all family greenhouses of old were retired because there was nobody to carry on the business. It was hard hard work with no guarantee; still is. But it can truly be a viable business if the honest efforts are matched with skilled growers and conservative management. Best wishes Green City.

 (<http://cleveland.com/>)

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**dbra** (<http://connect.cleveland.com/user/dbra/index.html>)

Congratulations!  
You are our future. Well done!

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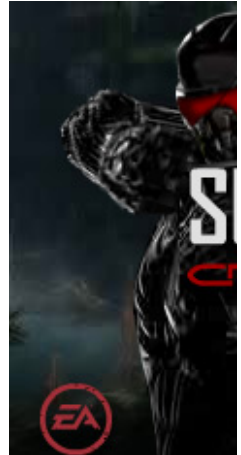
**throughthickandthin** (<http://connect.cleveland.com/user/throughthickandthin/index.html>)

Fresh produce is a good thing.  
I hope Green City Growers have a good crop.

(<http://cleveland.com/>)

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([http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2013/02/cleveland\\_apparel\\_company\\_wahc.ht](http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2013/02/cleveland_apparel_company_wahc.ht))  
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