

Frederick business rakes in the greens

Local restaurants
garnish dishes with
Grow Anywhere's
aeroponic goods

By Kimberly Pursel
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Larry Forrest has never kept a house plant alive, but he operates a large commercial aeroponic plant system.

At his Frederick-based business Grow Anywhere, Forrest grows more than 12 types of crops at a time. These 2-inch tall plants are grown aeroponically — without dirt — to sell as garnishes to local restaurants.

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Grow Anywhere harvester Gale Stout, left, and owner Larry Forrest produce edible greens for restaurants at their Frederick business. Below: Stout displays radish plants grown by Frederick-based Grow Anywhere.

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Times-Call

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Grow Anywhere, at 3762 Puritan Way in Frederick, grows the indoor plants suspended in air on soft meshing. The growing area is 1,800 square feet inside a 3,000-square-foot industrial warehouse. The plants are kept watered every 20 minutes with a nutrient filled sprinkler system, and they grow in 70-degree temperatures under full-spectrum lights.

"It takes up to two weeks from the time the seed is planted until the plant is harvested," Forrest said. Scissors are used to cut the small plants during harvest.

Grow Anywhere started in 2005 when the Longmont optometrist decided to try something new. Richard Stoner, president of AgriHouse Inc. in Berthoud, told Forrest about aeroponic plant crop systems and persuaded Forrest to start one.

"This is a very expensive product to start," Forrest said. "Rick was the brains behind this."

Stoner sold Forrest the equipment and license to use AgriHouse products.

"We sold him the products, but he implemented the technology," Stoner said.

Grow Anywhere's first year of business was a learning process.

"It was a trial and error to see what would work," said Gail Stout,



Forrest's sister and one of Grow Anywhere's four employees.

"I was changing our process every week before we got it down," the Dacono resident said.

Mark Haberer, a former chef, is the the operations manager of Grow Anywhere.

To keep crops tasting fresh, Grow Anywhere uses no pesticides or preservatives, Forrest said.

"Our crops are only sold locally," Forrest said.

To appeal to speciality restaurants, Grow Anywhere also sells micro-mixes of its plant crops to create specific flavors for dishes. The base for these mixes contains mustard greens, lettuce, bianca rica endive, onions, celery radish and carrot cuttings.

To create a Mediterranean mix, the base is added to beet for color and basil and fennel for flavor. The Atlantic mix adds dill and broccoli. The Asian mix, which adds shiso and shungiku, goes well with fish dishes, Forrest said. Other speciality mixes include a basil mix, a Latin mix, a color and spice mix,



and a spring onion mix.

Boulder and Denver restaurants are the biggest buyers of these garnishments. Restaurants purchasing the plants include Bloom, Jax Fish House, Sushi Tora, Bacaro and the Blue Sky Grill at Coors Field.

The colorful garnishes not only

make a dinner plate more aesthetically pleasing but also taste good, Forrest said.

The micro plants range from sweet to spicy in flavor.

"I don't ever garnish my plate; I eat it," said Stout, who harvests the plants. "I think they are missing the

boat when they don't eat them."

"Garnishments are used to enhance color, texture and taste to any dish," Forrest said. "A restaurant may put a few onion sprouts on top of a soup to add some flavor."

Grow Anywhere ships more than 100 two-ounce clamshell containers of garnishments twice a week to local restaurants. Recently, Shamrock Foods signed with Grow Anywhere as a distributor of the micro-plants.

"They are already selling these products but are now going to be coming to us to purchase and sell them," Forrest said. Shamrock Foods delivers to high-end restaurants throughout Colorado, according to Stoner. With Shamrock aboard, Grow Anywhere will add 100 four-ounce containers a week to their weekly order total of 200 two-ounce garnishment containers.

For more information on Grow Anywhere or its aeroponic plants, visit www.growanywhere.com.

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plants grown by
Frederick-based
Grow
Anywhere.

Lewis Geyer/
Times-Call