



We Grow Microgreens
Hyde Park, MA
Lisa Evans and Tim Smith
2017 Training Participants
2018 Business Advising Clients

Farm History

In 2015, school teachers Lisa Evans and Tim Smith decided to leave the classroom and turn their passion for gardening into an urban farming business. We Grow Microgreens began in a backyard greenhouse in Roslindale, where Lisa and Tim grew amaranth, sunflowers, radish, kale, broccoli and other vegetable and herb microgreens.

In 2017, Lisa and Tim attended Deepening Roots, Growing Success, a business development program for urban farmers and food entrepreneurs developed and presented by The Carrot Project in collaboration with 19 area organizations. Since this introduction, The Carrot Project has supported Lisa and Tim in a number of ways: connecting them to a variety of business development programs, helping them set up and learn to manage a financial tracking system, and introducing them to diverse sources of capital to fund their project.

Tim and Lisa recently acquired 35,000 square feet of land from the City of Boston—a deal that took them four and half years to complete. The property is a previously overgrown and trash-filled plot of land nestled behind homes in the quiet community of Hyde Park, Boston’s southernmost neighborhood. The farm will include a 4,000-square-foot greenhouse, raised beds, two hoop houses, and a walking path open to the public and was designed by landscape architect Wes Wirth. Moving to this space will ultimately allow Lisa and Tim to grow 10 times as much product, diversify their offerings, and operate more efficiently.

Overview of Outcomes

The financial skills that the couple gained while collaborating with The Carrot Project’s business advisors has been invaluable to them as they work tirelessly to achieve their goal of purchasing city land. Lisa says, “We have used the financial projections that we assembled

Farm Snapshot

Owners Lisa Evans and Tim Smith have been growing and selling microgreens, the edible seedlings of vegetables and herbs, in a greenhouse in their backyard in Roslindale, Massachusetts, since 2015. They sell to retailers, restaurants, and farmers markets and have a small microgreen CSA.

Entrepreneur’s Philosophy

“Network as much as possible and keep in contact with all the people you connect with because you are not going to be able to have the answers to all the challenges you are going to be presented with.”

Innovation

Lisa and Tim recently purchased land from the City of Boston in Hyde Park, the first sale of city land to a commercial urban farm since the creation of Article 89, the City’s new urban farming regulations, in December 2013.

with The Carrot Project team on every grant application we submitted to fund the new farm.” The grants they have received include:

- A Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) Urban Agriculture Grant to construct the new greenhouse.
- An MDAR grant for greenhouse energy efficiency projects, which include installing Solicitud solar panels and an insulated foundation.
- A Community Preservation Act grant to build a landscaped path adjacent to the farm, as well as a patio in front of the farm stand.

“Through working with The Carrot Project,” Lisa says, “we learned to think like business-owners.” This education, Lisa says, was instrumental in helping them make the leap from aspiring urban farmers to commercially viable business owners.

Growing Pains and Paving the Way

While they have had many successes, for Tim and Lisa, the challenges keep coming. In spring of 2019, while excavating the Hyde Park site, they learned new information about the soil composition that will significantly alter the greenhouse design. Unexpected surprises like have been constant throughout the process of purchasing and developing this property, and they have to manage them while simultaneously running a business.

“Being an entrepreneur is an exercise in patience,” Lisa says. “Tim is a highly focused, determined person. I am a very goal oriented, resourceful person with many different skill sets. We were able to complement each other very well.” As Lisa and Tim navigate the twists and turns of entrepreneurship, they value not only professional advice but also moral support.

“(This process) has required an enormous amount of self-motivation,” Lisa says, “I really appreciated The Carrot Project team—Julia Shanks, Brian Zweig, Valerie Viale, and Diane Sokal. It gave me people to bounce ideas off of and support.”

The couple’s resilience in the face of numerous challenges with the city won’t just benefit their business. We Grow Microgreens was the first commercial urban farm in Boston to apply for land from the city, so city officials working on the sale had to adjust their understanding of acceptable urban land use. While the process may have been slow for Tim and Lisa, they have opened doors for future commercial urban farmers in Boston.

On the Horizon

As proven by their tenacity, Tim and Lisa are committed to building a profitable small urban microgreen and edible flower farm. For now, they are focused on managing the installation of

the new farm while at the same time making sure the business doesn't fall to the wayside. When the site has been installed, they won't just be growing microgreens! Lisa and Tim also plan to offer tomatoes, lettuces, and other macro-produce and to cultivate new customers as their capacity increases. Finally, as educators, they continue to be committed to including youth in their urban microgreen dreams, whether through work or education opportunities. With more space to welcome guests and a path open to the public, they can count on more curious gardeners coming their way!