



#FridaysOnTheFarm: Growing Urban – A Lower West Side Story

From the kitchen table to the boardroom table, USDA brings people together across the nation for: healthier food, natural resources and people; a stronger agricultural industry; and economic growth, jobs and innovation.

Each Friday, meet those farmers, producers and landowners through our [#FridaysOnTheFarm](#) stories. Visit local farms, ranches, forests and resource areas where USDA customers and partners *do right and feed everyone*.

This Friday, meet Carrie Nader and Alexander Wadsworth, owners of [Westside Tilth Farm](#) in Buffalo, New York.

This urban farm is situated on about three-fourths of an acre spanning a few lots on the corner of a block in the Lower West Side region of the city. Nader and Wadsworth are committed to providing the community with a variety of organically grown produce.

A Perfect Blend

Prior to their partnership, Nader had been working the land since 2014. When she was growing up, she loved helping her grandfather tend his large garden. When she moved to the Lower West Side region she bought several city lots at reduced prices to start her urban farm.

Wadsworth started working for the operation in 2016, lending his knowledge of horticulture techniques, which helped improve the productivity of the farm. Previously, he attended culinary school, which inspired him to learn more about how the food he was cooking was grown. In this pursuit, he learned about [World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms \(WWOOF\)](#) and travelled to Maine to work on farms. After returning to Buffalo, Wadsworth learned about Nader's operation and began working with her.

In 2016, the partners focused on improving the infrastructure of the farm, which is completely fenced in and utilizes solar power. Nader and Wadsworth worked with the [Erie County Soil and Water Conservation Service District](#) and local [USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#) to get financial assistance for a [high tunnel](#). High tunnels protect plants from severe weather and allow farmers to extend their growing seasons-earlier in the spring and later into the fall.

Westside Tilth Farm is now growing over 400 tomato plants in the high tunnel with hopes of producing more than 200 pounds of tomatoes a week.

Better Beds

Another infrastructure improvement they have made is to increase their number of growing beds. They have planted 120 beds this year, with a wide variety of vegetables, greens, herbs and alliums. The beds are placed on a geotextile barrier, which allows water to flow through, but not soil. Concerned with possible contaminants in the city soil, they brought in more than 600 yards of soil and compost to place on top of the geotextile barrier.

Improvements with Microloans

To further enhance their operation, Nader and Wadsworth applied for a [microloan](#) from [USDA Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#). This low-interest loan allowed them to build a wash station for produce, install more beds, purchase four small portable high tunnels and place a mushroom grow house, their newest venture.

"None of this would have been possible without the loan from Farm Service Agency," Nader said. "The wash area alone cuts our work time down significantly."

The wash area includes a drained concrete pad, a 150-gallon bubble washer and a retro-fitted washing machine to spin the greens dry, with a shade cloth overhead. From here their greens go to a walk-in cooler to maintain the freshness of their veggies.

Produce from Westside Tilth Farm is sold three ways – to local restaurants, through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and a farmer's market they hold two days a week on the farm.

The markets are on Tuesday and Friday evenings, and this year, they will also be making and selling pizza at the Friday market.

"I really enjoy letting our consumers in the gates to see the farm and how we grow the food they're buying," Wadsworth said. "We're trying to make Friday a very social event, we want a line out the door to get in and buy vegetables."

In the future they'd like to add more social events, such as farm dinners or farm tours.

"It's a lot of work," Wadsworth said. "You have to put everything into the farm to make it successful. It's a sacrifice, but it's worth it. We love what we do."



More Information

USDA offers a variety of risk management, disaster, loan and conservation programs to help America's agricultural producers weather ups and downs in the market and natural disasters as well as invest in improvements to their operations.

For more information about USDA programs, contact your [local USDA service center](#) or visit farmers.gov.

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