



## New York City's Intervale Green Rooftop Urban Farm Cultivates More Than Food

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When thinking of the Bronx, the northernmost of New York City's five boroughs, one might think first of Yankee Stadium, the Bronx Zoo, or the [New York Botanical Garden](#). But what about farming?

Up above one of the neighborhood's residential buildings, a [rooftop urban farm](#) produced over 1000 lbs. of produce last season.





[Intervale Green Rooftop Farm](#) serves the largest multifamily, affordable housing development in the nation. The building consists of 128 affordable apartments, 39 of which were set-aside specifically for families transitioning out of New York City's homeless shelter system.





Sponsored by [Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation](#) (WHEDco), the farm offers the building's residents an opportunity to learn how to plant and harvest produce, build community bonds, and move towards a healthier, more self-sustainable lifestyle.





The folks at WHEDco have worked for nearly 20 years to transform the Bronx into “a more beautiful, equitable and economically vibrant place to live and raise a family.”



The rooftop farm began with about 550 4-inch containers full of soil but with limited potential. In 2010, the roof was redesigned for farming, and although the farm wasn't completed until halfway through summer, resident farmers managed to harvest over 135 pounds of produce.





*Resident Benito Quezada with some seeds for the farm. Photo: Richard Harbus, NY Daily News.*

In addition to feeding residents and the community, Intervale's [green roof](#) also help collect and reduce storm water runoff and improve air quality in a neighborhood which has the second highest asthma rate in the Bronx.



Residents like the Mandervilles, above, are a beautiful example of what a positive and important experience urban farming can be for a family. Vivian came to New York City as a carpenter renovating high-end apartments, but her roots stemmed from the Georgia farm of her childhood. She wanted her children to experience growing and eating fresh vegetables and fruits just as she had throughout her youth.





### **Cultivating Community**

The Manderville's now grow tomatoes, cucumbers, jalapeños, basil, carrots, green beans, lemon thyme, parsley, okra, and strawberries—all in a 56 square foot plot. As a family, they enjoy bonding with their community by sharing the surplus of their harvest, particularly at a nearby home for the elderly.





#### **A Sound Idea**

On the horizon for WHEDco's is a [hydroponic](#) roof garden and open green space, part of a development of 270 affordable apartments, including apartments set-aside for elder musicians. The [Bronx Music Heritage Center](#) will serve as a community performance space and archive.

If projects like Intervale Farm inform the future of our urban corridors, we can look forward to greener, more vibrant communities where before there were food deserts.



