



The Seattle Times Company

NWjobs | NWautos | NWhomes | NWsource | Free Classifieds | seattletimes.com

The Seattle Times
Winner of Eight Pulitzer Prizes

Pacific Northwest

46°F

☒ Our network sites ☐ seattletimes.com | [Advanced](#)

Home Local Nation/World Business/Tech Sports Entertainment Living Travel Opinion Shopping Jobs Autos Homes Rentals Classifieds Buy ads
Quick links: [Traffic](#) | [Movies](#) | [Restaurants](#) | [Today's events](#) | [Video](#) | [Photos](#) | [Interactives](#) | [Blogs](#) | [Forums](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Your profile](#) | [Commenter Log in](#) | [Contact us](#)

Originally published November 15, 2009 at 12:17 AM | Page modified November 15, 2009 at 11:21 AM

[Comments \(0\)](#) [E-mail article](#) [Print](#) [Share](#)

Plant Life

At Seattle's Bastille, the garden goodies are on the roof

Bastille in Seattle's Ballard neighborhood offers lettuces and other fresh menu items grown right on the restaurant's roof.

By Valerie Easton

FROM ALL THE fuss over Bastille restaurant's new rooftop vegetable plots, you'd think that gardening on top of a building is a brand new concept. All over the world, people in urban areas take advantage of the sun-drenched space up top to grow food and flowers. Apirarists are even keeping bees on the rooftop of the Opera House and the Eiffel Park Hotel in Paris. But here in Seattle we're just getting used to urban density, and owners James Weimann and Demming MacLise are out front putting a commercial rooftop to work growing fresh herbs and lettuces for their restaurant.

"We wanted to pioneer this idea," says Weimann. The weight calculations were a shock, however, and the lovely old Ballard building needed extensive retrofitting to support a 2,500-square-foot working garden. "You could park a tank up there now," jokes MacLise. "We'll break even in about 20 years."

The owners' vision is an ambitious one: They hope to list "Rooftop Salad" on their menu every day of the year. Chef Shannon Galusha looks forward to snipping greens for sandwiches and salads, as well as herbs for savory dishes and made-to-order sorbets and glacées. Plans include growing garlic, peppers and tomatoes.

Enter Colin McCrate of Seattle Urban Farm Company, hired to come up with a scheme for growing a year-round garden on a windy, glaring hot roof. These less-than-hospitable conditions won't daunt the basil and lavender, but tender greens suffer, even bolt, in such intense sun and heat.

McCrate designed clever, boxlike raised beds, each with its own little roof that can be easily raised and lowered. In the heat of summer, the lids are outfitted with shade cloth and overhead spray to create an encouragingly cool environment for arugula and lettuces. In winter, McCrate plans to fit lids with glass for a greenhouse effect and thread the soil with heating coils to push the greens to keep producing.

The herbs, being more resilient, aren't housed in quite such classy digs. Chervil, dill, fennel, tarragon and basil grow in round plastic wading pools made for little kids to splash in. McCrate simply poked holes in the bottom of the pools to make inexpensive, lightweight, slightly raised beds. He started planting last summer in the midst of Seattle's heat wave in the hopes of having produce available for the restaurant's opening; unfortunately the city was pretty much sold out of wading pools as Seattleites tried to beat the heat. But it appears McCrate's been able to add to the restaurant's collection of rooftop pools, which now sprout a wide variety of herbs to spice up Bastille's French bistro menu.

In both boxes and pools, McCrate uses local Cedar Grove brand potting soil. He mixes in plenty of organic fertilizer because he expects these beds to produce greens year-round. He seeds directly into the soil and never thins out the crop. The result is a thick crop of multicolored baby greens that are harvested, then immediately replanted.

Before Bastille opened, McCrate met with the owners and the chef for taste tests up on the roof. They tried out six varieties of arugula and ended up selecting 'Astro' and 'Surrey.' "These two taste best and grow quickly from seed to harvest," explains McCrate. Four kinds of lettuce made the cut. 'Flashy Trout Back' and 'Deer Tongue' are both green; 'Red Oak' and 'Lola Rosa' are the red varieties in Bastille's Rooftop Salad.



enlarge STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES
Colin McCrate of Seattle Urban Farm Company checks on a fresh crop of lettuces planted in a raised bed on top of Ballard's Bastille restaurant. The lids are fitted with shade cloth to prevent the lettuces and arugula from bolting in the rooftop's unobstructed sunlight. In winter, glass lids will help protect against the cold.

Video

[More videos](#)

ADVERTISING

AP Video

[Entertainment](#) | [Top Video](#) | [World](#) | [Offbeat Video](#) | [Sci-Tech](#)

[Marketplace](#)

There's still plenty of experimenting going on as the menu changes seasonally and McCrate learns what grows most luxuriantly and consistently in such exposed conditions.

There's even a washing station on the roof to speed up moving the fresh greens from dirt to table. "The people in the kitchen can come up a set of stairs and be in their garden," says chef Galusha with satisfaction. "We can harvest at 4 o'clock and have it on the table at 5 o'clock."

Maybe rooftop vegetable gardens are a marker of a city's urban maturity; if so, Bastille is leading the way, high in the sky. The restaurant (at 5307 Ballard Ave. N.W.) has plans for tours of the rooftop garden; call 206-453-5014 or see www.bastilleseattle.com.

Valerie Easton is a Seattle freelance writer and author of "The New Low-Maintenance Garden." Check out her blog at www.valeaston.com. Steve Ringman is a Seattle Times staff photographer.

ADVERTISING

E-mail article Print Share

More from our network

Career advice: I don't want to socialize with my co-workers *From NWJobs - Career Center*

A tour of Seattle basketball: Five games in five nights *From The Seattle Times*

Arizona football player dies after game injury *From The Seattle Times*

Cookbooks connect us to what springs from the good earth *From The Seattle Times*

Stocks edge up after earnings gains from retailers *From The Seattle Times*

More from the Web

Selected for you by a Sponsor

12-time PGA winner says "Ditch the conventional swing" *From Golf Tailor*

Colin Kaepernick disappointing in 2nd year as San Francisco 49ers starter *From Sports Illustrated*

Hines Ward's Transformation from Football MVP to Ironman Athlete *From YouTube*

Does Peeing In The Shower Cure Athlete's Foot? *From upwave*

Top Towns to Find Sunshine All Year Long in The Northwest *From Actively Northwest*

Tom Izzo suggests Kentucky 'forfeit' after John Calipari's 'unfair' comment *From USA TODAY*

Recommended by

More Pacific NW

Seattle's parks in peril: the choices are to shrink, skimp or pay up

Taste: Muffuletta sandwiches are the Big Easy's best

Plant Life: Seattle's Fisher House offers a place of peace

NEW - 7:00 PM

Wine Adviser: Some good Washington wineries got away

Destinations - A Traveler's Glimpse: Earth Hour: lights out to make a difference

[More Pacific NW headlines...](#)

Comments

No comments have been posted to this article.

[Read all comments / Share your thoughts](#)



Get home delivery today!

ADVERTISING

Site map

Our network sites seattletimes.com | [Advanced](#)

News
Home

Marketplace
Jobs

Subscriber Services
Subscribe



Find a Home

For sale
New Homes



Search
properties
for sale



Rent a
home or
apartment



Post your
property or
rental

Open Houses

Find all open houses.



Most read **Most commented** **Most e-mailed**

1. The Percy Harvin hype is finally, spectacularly a reality | Jerry Brewer
2. Seahawks are showing that much more is possible | Larry Stone
3. Cheney family at odds over gay marriage
4. Video shows near-vertical crash of Russian plane
5. Dazzling games carry PS4 players to new worlds | Brier Dudley
6. 777X vote shows bitter rift in Machinists leadership
7. Ace Hotel founder Alex Calderwood dies at 47
8. 'Squeeze play' on Machinists is reality elites failed to feel | Danny Westneat
9. Ex-Seahawk John Moffitt turns his back on NFL fame, fortune
10. Sarkisian accepts Pac-12 apology but would rather have had TD

Most viewed images



The Seattle Times Company
[About the company](#)
[Employment opportunities](#)
[Seattle Times store](#)
[Advertise with us](#)
[Newspapers in Education](#)

Services
[Your account / Log in](#)
[E-mail newsletters](#)
[Contact us](#)
[Feedback and questions](#)
[Submit listings](#)
[Send us news tips](#)
[Historical archive](#)

[Local](#)
[Nation/World](#)
[Business/Tech](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Living](#)
[Travel](#)
[Sports](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Extras](#)
[Today's news index](#)

[Autos](#)
[Homes](#)
[Rentals](#)
[Classifieds](#)
[Shopping](#)
[Personals](#)
[Post an ad](#)

[e-Edition](#)
[Pay for your subscription](#)
[Subscriber rewards](#)
[Temporary stops](#)

Other editions
[News by e-mail](#)
[Mobile](#)
[RSS feeds](#)
[e-Edition](#)
[Low-graphic](#)
[Twitter](#)
[Social media](#)

Malware attacks are a growing problem on all Web sites. [Read more](#) about what to do if you see something suspicious.

[Privacy statement](#) | [Terms of service](#)
Copyright © 2011 The Seattle Times Company