

PLANTING PRIDE

URBAN GARDENS

Nexus Corp. donates greenhouse to New Roots Urban Farm in St. Louis to support community gardens.

Nurturing Urban Gardens

by **DELILAH ONOFREY**
Ornamentals Group Editor
donofrey@meistermedia.com

AN urban garden in St. Louis will be able to produce more fresh produce for its neighborhood this spring thanks to a new greenhouse it received from Nexus Corp. as part of a national contest.

New Roots Urban Farm was chosen as the winning entry. The nonprofit was founded by four friends in 2004 to provide healthy, locally grown food for the impoverished neighborhood located between St. Louis Place and the city's Old North neighborhoods. No grocery stores are available within walking distance to offer healthy food options. The consensus-based collective is dedicated to serving as a model for urban agriculture, food security and self sustainability.

Last year, the farm harvested more than 3,000 pounds of fresh produce and distributed it through its farmers market, which accepts food stamps, and through food pantries, churches and community centers.

With the new Cultivator Premier Kit

Greenhouse from Nexus, the farm will be able to sow its own starter plants and dramatically increase yields and crop rotations. These starter plants can also be sold to residents to plant their own vegetable gardens at a low cost.

"New Roots is first in its area to provide healthy food options by bringing food to the community from within the community, where the only means of food comes from convenience stores, which offer unhealthy, packaged foods," says April Ford Griffin, Alderwoman of St. Louis's Fifth Ward. "New Roots is dedicated to instilling healthy food habits among residents, especially among children, as well as teaching kids about healthy habits and food sustainability."

She adds that children will help harvest vegetables and prepare lunches together, which will help fight obesity and diabetes.

Nexus Corp.'s Marketing Director Lynn Hackett says the volume of applications for this first contest was surprising. They came from community gardens in small and large cities throughout the United States.

"Over time, we at Nexus

Corporation have become aware of the significant role that community gardens play in our cities," Hackett says. "Each garden is defined slightly differently. Some grow produce for locals at a fair price. Others just have land and allow people to grow their



New Roots Urban Farm's market is an oasis that sells fresh produce to community members at a reasonable price. Food stamps and subsidized coupons are accepted.

own crops. Some exist just to clean up an otherwise blighted area and make a peaceful garden for people to visit. We decided to do what we could to draw attention to those gardens and to reward at least one that was most worthy of attention." **GG**

Reproduced with permission from Greenhouse Grower, March 2007