

THE NATURALS

Our featured green-minded guys dish the dirt on what it's like to work with Mother Nature, Martha Stewart and even a large herd of hungry goats. Plus, they reveal five (or more) wildly fascinating facts about their specific line of work.

- CHRIS DEMEO** WHOLESALE FLORIST, FISCHER & PAGE
- DUSTIN JOHN** GREEN ROOF DESIGNER AND BUILDER, FUTURE GREEN STUDIO
- ANDREW BECKMAN** EDITORIAL DIRECTOR OF GARDENING, MARTHA STEWART LIVING OMNIMEDIA
CO-OWNER, LOOMIS CREEK NURSERY
- JOSH KILMER-PURCELL** "ACCIDENTAL" GOAT FARMER AND CO-OWNER, BEEKMAN 1802
- STEVE PROVENZANO** PROJECT MANAGER, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT,
KELCO LANDSCAPING
- COLLIN ABRAHAM** PRESIDENT AND COO, POLLEN NATION EVENTS & FLORAL
- ZACH WOLF** FARMER, STONE BARN'S CENTER FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
- BRENT RIDGE** "ACCIDENTAL" GOAT FARMER AND CO-OWNER, BEEKMAN 1802
- CHUCK BAKER** LANDSCAPE, FASHION AND FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHER
- MICHAEL GRADY ROBERTSON** AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR, QUEENS COUNTY
FARM MUSEUM
- BROOK KLAUSING** LANDSCAPE DESIGNER AND OWNER, BROOK LANDSCAPE



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DUSTIN JOHN

GREEN ROOF DESIGNER AND BUILDER, FUTURE GREEN STUDIO

Brooklyn, NY

How'd you get your start? And why rooftops?

The start came from an opportunity to collaborate with a coworker of mine, David Seiter, who broke off and formed Future Green Studio, a Brooklyn-based design/build firm focusing on green roofs. We started with green roofs at small co-ops and brownstones in Brooklyn, and now we are actually involved in a lot of green roof advocacy and research and development with organizations like the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the Horticultural Society of New York. We're also planning to start a green roof nursery space on a lot near our office to train and grow the plant material ourselves. The aim has always been to advocate the green benefits for vegetating a rooftop, be it small or large, a simple carpet of green or a lush immersive garden.

Where do you look for inspiration?

Inspiration is like an act of breathing in a city like New York: you don't have to look, you're in it. I've always been drawn to the small enclaves of industry that one finds in Manhattan, the little districts where you talk to the people and they know their material but never thought of making a planter out of it, for example. I find those informed conversations quite



"I picked up this folding ruler at an upstate yard sale for \$4! You can stick it in all kinds of things—concrete mixes, soil—and you can scratch your back with it too!"



valuable to my building knowledge base. To know where to find things in the NYC area, be it plants or building materials, is a great skill to acquire as a designer. Hardware stores have also been known to spawn brilliant ideas for me.

What have been your favorite projects thus far?

I really enjoyed working on the Tribeca segment of Hudson River Park. During construction, we unearthed an old seawall that used to be the waterfront of Manhattan. But on the other side of the spectrum, a residential courtyard I designed and oversaw construction for in Bushwick is equally as rich of an experience.

Give us a five-fact crash course on green roofs.

1. The Design Trust for Public Space has estimated that the available vacant lots and undeveloped roof space in New York City equal 13 Central Parks in area—meaning the potential to transform the city into a green metropolis is abundant.
2. Every 90 square feet of green roof space will absorb as much CO₂ as one street tree.
3. According to a survey conducted by Green Roofs for Healthy Cities in 2007, Brooklyn was listed fourth in the Top Ten Green Roof Cities in the U.S. (as rated by square footage of green roof implemented). Chicago came in second and Baltimore was third.
4. New York state recently passed legislation in 2008 following the lead of other successful city initiatives that gives a property tax credit of \$4.50 per square foot of vegetated rooftop to property owners who install a green roof on at least 50 percent of their roof space. That accounts for roughly a quarter of the total cost per square foot of the installation of an extensive green roof system, including labor!
5. Green roofs have consistently been proven to reduce year-round heating and cooling costs by up to 25 percent for the floor directly below the roof. The savings to the landowner also come in the extended life span of the existing roof with the protective layer of UV-sunlight-shielding soil and plants.

How do you work to encourage a greener future?

The words "green" and "future" are on our business cards for a reason. The increasing visibility of the landscape architect as a key player in the quest for a greener future is really what I hope that my work contributes to. I'd like to see a whole generation of landscape architects and designers take on the urban rooftop and 50 years from now see an aerial photograph of New York City as a tile mosaic of green, a patchwork of different spaces that speak to a heightened cultural value for landscape. That means something, and that vision was the generator of our logo for Future Green Studio. We have a ways to go to achieve that vision. But hey, if the sea levels do rise by then, at least the rooftop gardens I've created will still exist!

Side project:

A photo-booth rental company: a curveball from the landscape field, but it sometimes happens when your imagination runs wild. Visit shootbooth.com to learn more.

VISIT FUTUREGREENSTUDIO.COM TO LEARN MORE.

