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## Specialty Greens - Fresh Hydroponic Veggies for Delivery

By Sophie Braccini



Patty Phaneuf grows hydroponic vegetables Photo  
Sophie Braccini

What is a speech therapist doing commercially growing vegetables under fluorescent lights? It might sound odd, but for Patty Phaneuf, it is the result of a lifelong passion for vegetable gardening and finding the most sustainable way to grow them commercially, limiting the impact on water supply and agricultural land. "Hydroponics is the way of the future," says the Lafayette resident who decided to start her own business, Specialty Greens, once her kids went to college.

"I am a huge proponent of healthy living, consuming lots of highly nutritious greens, and I wanted to be part of the practical solution," says Phaneuf. "I provide high quality greens, chard, spinach, kale, micro greens, gourmet lettuces and herbs that are fresh and clean."

Hydroponics, or growing vegetables without soil, is a technique that has been around for hundreds of years and has many advantages. No dirt required - plants grow by being directly fed the nutrients and minerals that would be otherwise extracted through water in the soil. Hydroponics supporters claim that the technique requires only 20 percent of the surface and as little as one-twentieth of the amount of water regular agriculture needs to produce the same

amount of food.

"I have an area of about 1,500 square feet indoors for my planting," explains the hydroponics farmer. "With the fluorescent lights, it allows me to grow lots of plants in record time." Phaneuf explains that she completely controls the cleanliness of her production, and she does not have to use pesticides to keep her plants pest free. "You can eat them fresh out of the bag," she says. The vegetables and herbs are fed with nutrients that are provided by Dyna-Gro, a fertilizer producer that also offers a line of nutrients for hydroponics agriculture.

Phaneuf started to work on her project a year ago; it took that full year of research and investment to start selling commercially. Now she delivers to businesses in Lamorinda and adjacent Bay Area cities free of charge, she is working on a home delivery system, and is looking for retail partners. She also sells hydroponic systems for those who want to grow vegetables in their own homes.

For more information, visit [www.specialtygreens.com](http://www.specialtygreens.com).

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