



HOW TO MAKE IT... HOW TO SAVE IT... HOW TO SPEND IT

## Green roofs a cool way to save money

### High-rise gardens can help lower city's temperature

**G**OING GREEN — with your roof, that is — can save you green.

With the summer picking up steam, apartment owners are finding that adding green roofs — a combination of insulation and real plant life — can help cool them down and lower their energy use.

Some New Yorkers are swapping their “tar beach” with a hard-to-kill garden of wildflowers and succulents planted in a few inches of lightweight artificial soil atop layers of insulation and waterproofing.

Nonprofit Earth Pledge has been campaigning through the city to encourage the widespread use of green roofs on residential and commercial buildings through a project called the Green Roofs Initiative.

The city's roofs throw off so much heat that temps here are 3.6 to 5.4 degrees higher than in the suburbs — a phenomenon called the urban heat island effect.

On a hot summer day the temperature on a conventional roof can hit 150 degrees, while it's just 80 degrees on a green roof, claims Earth Pledge executive director Leslie Hoffman.

A lower roof temperature can dramatically cut air-conditioning bills, by 20% to 50%, Hoffman said.

Also, a typical green roof retains 70% to 80% of the rain that falls on it — which helps mitigate the problem of rain water ch o k i n g city sewers. About half the time it rains in New York City, raw sewage runs into the Hudson River and other city waterways.

Launched five years ago, the Green Roofs Initiative has spoken with more than 1,000 developers, architects, engineers and landscape designers about green roofs, and given public lectures that thousands of other New Yorkers have attended.

And Hoffman's given presentations on green roofs at about 20 co-op board meetings. Interested co-op and condo groups

**BY LORE CROGHAN**  
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and tenant associations can contact her via e-mail at [Info@earthpledge.org](mailto:Info@earthpledge.org).

Green roofs have been installed in as many as 100 buildings in the city, Hoffman said. These include Silvercup Studios in Long Island City — where “Sex and the City” was filmed — the Calhoun School on the upper West Side and two Battery Park City rental-apartment towers, the Solaire and the Verdesian.

“For a long time, landlords shied away from green roofs — they were worried about leaks and long-term maintenance,” said Russell Albanese, the developer of the two apartment buildings. “The technology in roofing systems has advanced to the point that these aren't a concern.”

The Albanese Organization spent \$285,000 for a 5,000-square-foot green roof on the 19th floor of the Solaire, where tenants lounge in Adirondack chairs among wild roses and river birches and watch the sun set over the Hudson. At the top of the building, a simpler, slightly smaller garden tenants aren't allowed to use costs \$121,000.

The green roofs shave \$1,400 a year off the Solaire's water and sewer bill and a couple hundred dollars off the electric bill, and the big payoff is they're good marketing tools, Albanese said.

“Tenants write us thank-you notes. We have folders full of them,” said Michael Gubbins, who manages the Solaire.

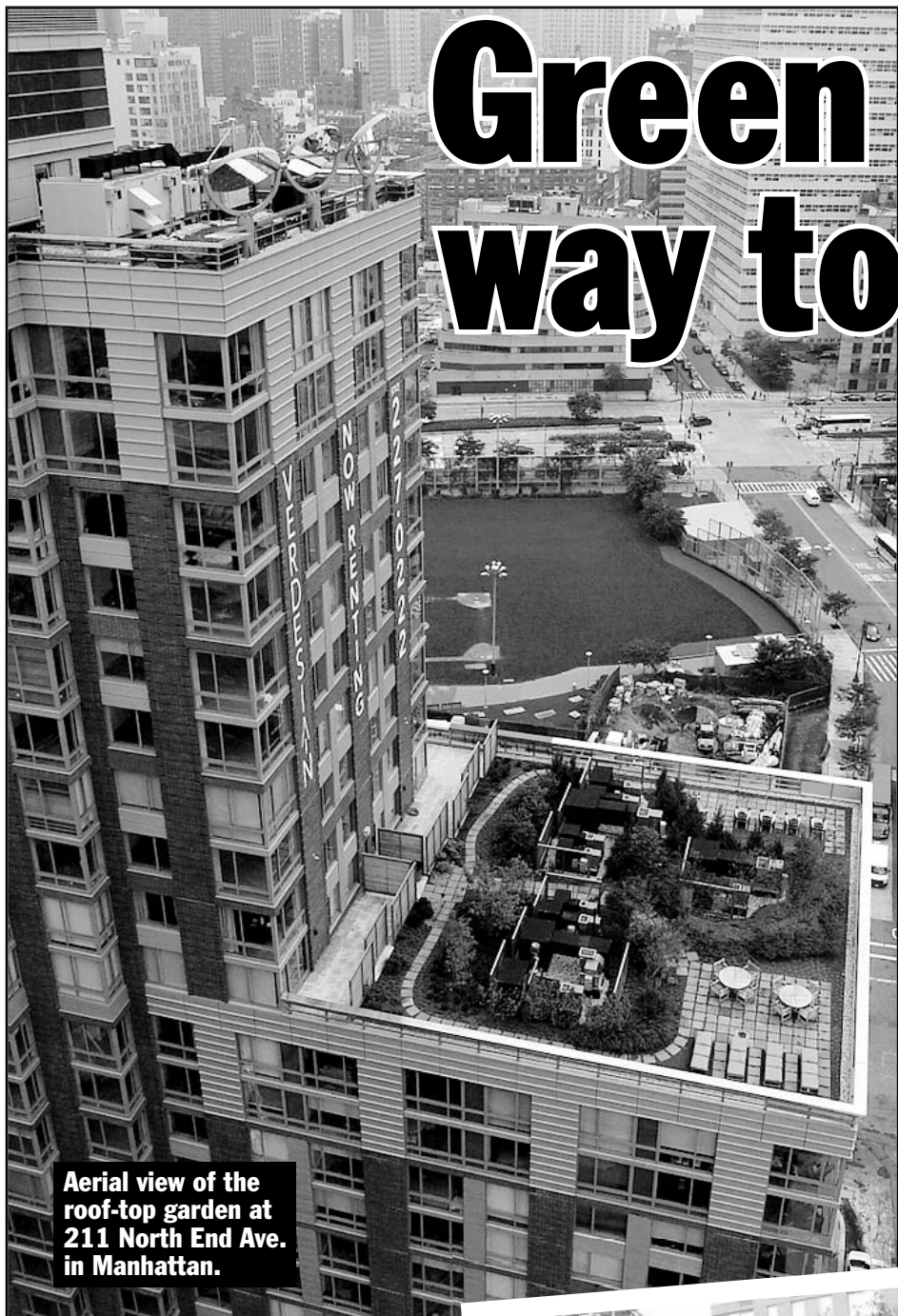
The only downside to green roofs is the expense of installing them, Hoffman said. The technology has been refined during 30 years of use in Europe — today's green roofs retain enough water so the plants don't die.

The logical time to install a green roof is when a building's roof needs to be replaced, Hoffman said.

Besides the \$7 to \$10 per square foot cost of a new waterproof roof, a garden with a shallow layer of “growing media” — which is what the artificial soil is called — costs an additional \$8 to \$15 per square foot. Deeper gardens with shrubs and trees cost \$15 per square foot and up.

The long-term payoff, however, is that a green roof lasts two to three times longer than a regular one, Hoffman said.

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Aerial view of the roof-top garden at 211 North End Ave. in Manhattan.

PHOTOS BY LINDA ROSIER DAILY NEWS

## Firm finds fame going TectaGreen

**G**OING GREEN has brought Tecta America plenty of black and white — ink, that is.

Mark Gaulin, who heads a division of the country's largest roofing contractor, started the TectaGreen program in 2000 and has received plenty of consumer and media attention.

Green roof construction brings in just a few million dollars a year for Tecta — less than 1% of its total revenues. “But it gets us 80% of our media coverage,” said Gaulin.

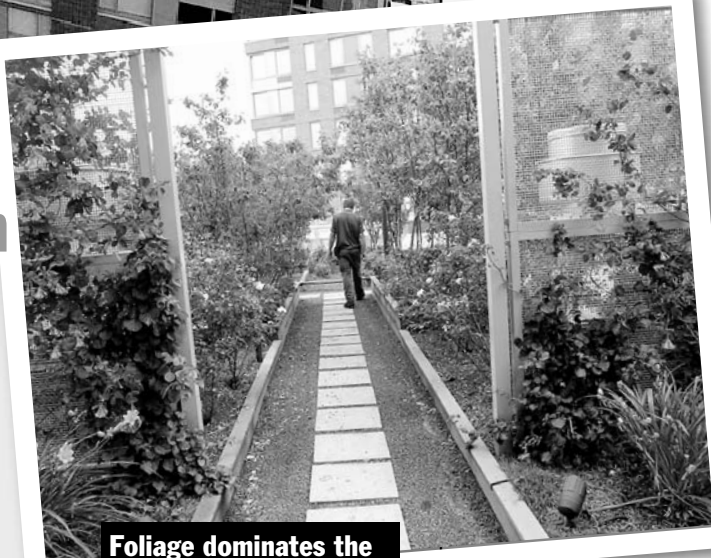
The firm also gets attention with its Web site [greenroof.com](http://greenroof.com).

The number of visitors checking out the site has hit 3,045 per month — more than triple the number just two and a half years ago.

Tecta just made its New York City green roof debut — with a 10,000-square-foot job at the Bronx Supreme Court building. Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión — whose office is in the building — said he's “very excited” about the project.

And the business is growing. High-profile jobs include green roofs at the Baltimore Aquarium and the headquarters of the American Society of Landscape Architects — which has members who do green-roof design. “That was a coup,” Gaulin said.

— Lore Croghan



Foliage dominates the roof at 20 River Terrace in Battery Park.