

Tennessee Grower Profile:

Hassan Sharaff, HydroHouse Farms

Davidson County – Hermitage, TN

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County Agent Host: Amy Dunlap

Chronicling Specialty Crop Marketing in Tennessee

FOCUS ON MICROGREENS

Rachel Painter | Center for Profitable Agriculture

Annette Wszelaki | Department of Plant Sciences



Hassan Sharaff, owner of HydroHouse Farms, with Amy Dunlap, the Davidson County Agriculture Extension Agent outside of the greenhouses.

TENNESSEE MICROGREENS MARKET SUMMARY:

Microgreens have been steadily growing in popularity since their introduction into high-end restaurants in the late 1990s. While the majority of microgreens are marketed through restaurants and chefs, microgreens are also popular at farmers markets, especially in urban areas. Microgreens simply means plants that are harvested when they are still in an immature state, when the first true leaf after the cotyledons emerges. The harvest stage for many crops sold as microgreens is when the plant is approximately 1.5 to 3 inches tall. Sprouts are consumed with roots intact while microgreens are harvested by carefully cutting at the soil surface. While production time does vary, most microgreens take between 7 to 21 days to be ready for harvest. The use of microgreens has expanded from simply being used as a garnish to being included in many different dishes to incorporate different colors, textures, and flavors. Microgreens are often sold in mixtures such as a "salad mix", "sweet mix" or "spicy mix" so that chefs and consumers can quickly and easily add a variety of microgreens to dishes. Microgreens are often sold as a flat or tray to chefs to prolong the shelf-life and in smaller quantities in clamshells to consumers. Microgreens are packed in clamshells to protect the plants from bruising and cooled quickly after harvesting to increase shelf-life. Due to the potential risk of contamination and food-borne illness, it is important to follow all food safety requirements when producing microgreens. More information about production methods for microgreens can be found in publication W346-J, "[Small-Scale Microgreen Production](#)".

Series of grower profiles of selected specialty crops in Tennessee.

- Cut Flowers
- Persimmons
- Blueberries
- Elderberries
- Garlic
- Microgreens

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COMMENTS & OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FARM

"I grow microgreens and leafy greens hydroponically. We keep it as basic as possible."

"We produce lettuce, arugula, kale, swiss chard, and basil. The wasabi arugula gives a nice blast of spice that doesn't linger, and customers seem to especially like Italian basil. I continually see what customers like and try different crops."

"We keep very good records of what was grown in each cell in the greenhouse. That cell number follows the crop to the customer. Traceability is very important for food safety and helps build confidence with the customer because they know exactly how it was produced and that is it safe to eat. This protects me and my business but also the health of my customers."

"As these crops are consumed raw, I take traceability and care of the crop very seriously. I'm adamant about never spraying anything."

"As soon as you see the radical, force it under lights so that it is short and stocky."

"The shelf life will be about 4 weeks in a fridge."

"We harvest at night or early in the morning for longer shelf-life."

"We stagger plantings every week. It has been tricky planning and matching production with sales. With hydroponics especially and microgreens in general, it is better to sell in high volume."

"I've had to learn how to sell the product. The shelf-life of our microgreens will surpass any extra cost and the cleanliness and quality is far better than any other product they can get- especially from further away."

"This is not just farming. It's understanding plumbing and electricity, engineering, computer sciences, and sustainable systems. I think it is so important to expose students from elementary age to college to agriculture and farming."



"I mostly sell to restaurants and chefs. Normally I will be delivering almost daily. That's why it is so important to have larger clients to not spend so much time delivering small orders."

"I also sell at a local food shop that I work at on the weekends. I love sharing about what I grow with the customers and learning more about consumer preferences- what they like and what matters to them – there on the weekends."



"You have to really care about your business and realize that it takes time to grow your business and your clients."

"I've been selling to restaurants for 5 years now and just got a large weekly order from a convention center. Building relationships and a business like that takes time."

"Ideally you want someone managing sales, distribution, and client relationships, and one person managing production to meet those sales."

"I am full-time and have one part-time employee too. I am up at sunrise to check on everything each day and make any adjustments to the temperature or humidity for the day. I mostly need help for harvest."

"I learned a lot of what I know from other growers and online resources. CropKing consultants have been a huge help."

"My advice would be that you will go through a lot of failure and just learn to embrace mistakes."





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