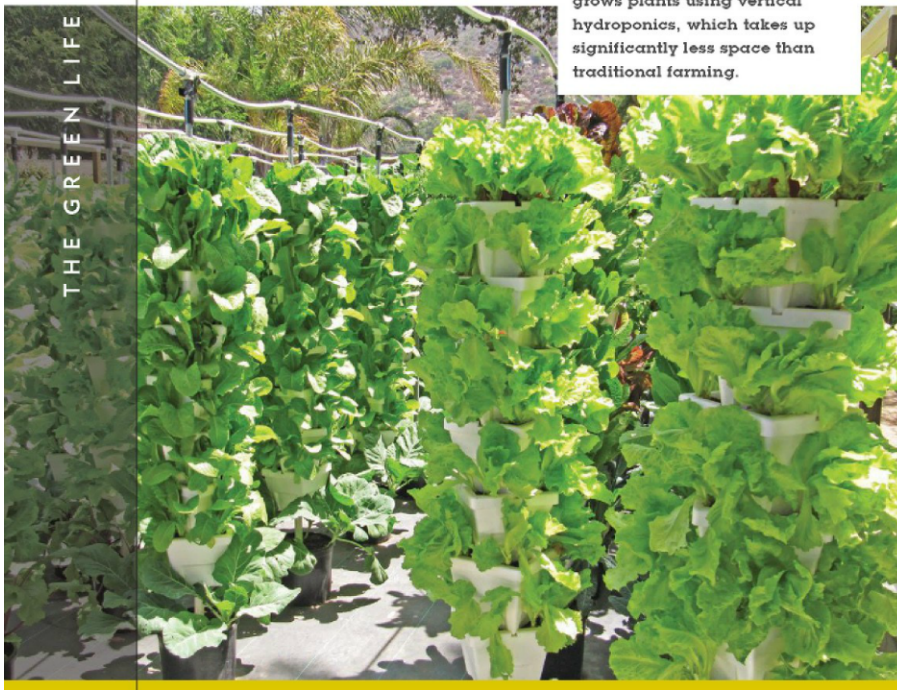


**Alegria Farm in Laguna Canyon grows plants using vertical hydroponics, which takes up significantly less space than traditional farming.**



## We're Making Progress!



It's always hard to find a Green Column for September. The Blue Issue in August covers so many of the conservation projects across the county that September topics are scarce. After following a few dead ends, this well-meaning writer gets an ill-advised idea in his head: "I could write an essay!"

The essay quickly takes shape. It will be called "We're All Hypocrites" and talk about the constant ecological tradeoffs inherent to the process of greening ourselves. It will give evidence of environmental hypocrisy on the national, state and county levels, before concluding with the author pointing a finger at himself. "Won't it be fascinating," he thinks, "for people to learn that even though I buy organic produce and ride my bike everywhere, I still use chemical-laden Tide to get my whites whiter?"

Luckily, the author is blessed with an equally well-meaning and significantly wiser editor. The editor will listen patiently to the author's brilliant essay idea, level her eyes at him and say: "Don't do that. People don't read articles to be shamed into taking action. They're inspired by progress."

The author goes back to the drawing board. He also stalls until his deadline is ready to crash like a tidal wave. Finally, he catches not one but three breaks, each of which supports the thesis of the wise editor.

### THE ABC GREEN HOME BREAKS GROUND.

Southern California Edison and *Green Home Builder* magazine are building a home that is affordable, repeatable and has net-zero energy use in Irvine's Great Park. Besides enough solar panels to totally offset the electric bill, the house features gray water recycling, on-demand water recirculation and roof tiles made of recycled rubber. The house will be the first of two experimental homes that Edison will build in Orange County, with support from the homes' designer, KTGy Group architects, and Newport Beach-based *Green Home Builder* magazine. The home will be on display for a year before being given to a family in need to be designated by Habitat for Humanity.

### ALEGRIA FARM BECOMES ORANGE COUNTY'S FIRST VERTICAL HYDROPONIC FARM.

In March, we covered vertical hydroponics and spoke to Erik Cutter of Enviroingenuity. At that time, if Cutter had plans to start his own farm, he was keeping mum. Vertical hydroponics saves enormous amounts of water, avoids pesticides completely and takes up drastically less space, but in Orange County it was still just a nice theory. That is, until August, when Cutter launched Alegria Farm in Laguna Canyon, growing 10,000 plants on less than one-fourth of an acre. Alegria is already selling vegetables online and over the phone.

### LAGUNA BEACH SETS A HARD DATE FOR THE END OF PLASTIC BAGS.

The Laguna Beach plastic bag ban seemed to travel a more circuitous path than most city legislation. The original grace period for grocers to use their last plastic bag was extended long enough for the public to forget about the ruling at all. But now, the end is near: on January 1, 2013, plastic bags will not be allowed in grocery and convenience stores in Laguna Beach.

The well-meaning writer mentions these three snippets to his editor. The editor smiles sagely. She encourages the writer to mention these things in his column. "Let people know we're making progress," the editor says, "and that alone will inspire them." —STEVE BRAMUCCI

■ **BE INSPIRED** :: Learn more about the green home in Irvine's Great Park.  
:: [abcgreenhome.com](http://abcgreenhome.com)

■ **GET VERTICAL** :: Order some vegetables from Alegria Farm.  
949.230.2486 :: [alegriafresh.com](http://alegriafresh.com)