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AgroSci Inc. looking for solid growth

By [Lee Howard](#) Day Staff Writer

Colchester business develops system for indoor gardeners

Colchester - Gardening, as anyone who has pulled weeds for three hours in the middle of summer will be quick to tell you, is a lot of work.

But the new Colchester company AgroSci Inc. has found a way to take much of the mind-numbing and knee-scraping labor out of going green with its indoor growing system marketed as My Lazy Gardener.

"The Aerogation system is really what differentiates us," Christopher Pianta, chief executive of the company, said in an interview at AgroSci's modest office and warehouse space on Dr. Foote Road. "It's the better mousetrap."

AgroSci's subsurface irrigation system, which directs vapor and heat to the root system of soil-based plants, was developed by Pianta's partner, Mark Prescott, the company's chief scientific officer. The key feature is its self-watering ability, which allows gardeners the luxury of planting and walking away as the system delivers just enough water at exactly the right pace, conserving resources along the way.

The patent-pending irrigation system has been used as the basis for a variety of products being marketed by AgroSci, including Purrfect Air, which takes the smell out of cat litter boxes; Humidaheat, an ecosystem for amphibian and reptile tanks, and Greenwalls, an indoor growing system that includes the benefits of improving the quality of indoor air.

Pianta said some of AgroSci's technology can be traced back to NASA in the 1970s as the aerospace agency was searching for ways to maintain a livable environment in space.

He said the root system of plants utilizing AgroSci's irrigation system can actually break down contaminants in the air, replacing them with oxygen, and this applies as well to kitty litter smells.

"It can be tied into the HVAC system in buildings," Pianta said. "We're pretty excited about it."

Two companies on the West Coast are setting up test beds for these Greenwalls at their corporate headquarters, saying their main interest is in providing a pleasant environment for their employees, Pianta reported.

"Used in conjunction with interior Greenwalls, Aerogation can effectively clean contaminated air in buildings - solving sick building syndrome, eliminating noxious odors and gases, eliminating mold odors, and creating a healthier, cleaner environment for workers and visitors to the facilities," according to marketing material on the company's website.

Pianta admits the air-filtering benefits of Greenwalls can be a tough sell because corporate executives cannot directly see how the system works. But AgroSci has been able to set up a demonstration in which the strong smell of ammonia dissipates almost immediately in a Greenwall environment, he said.

AgroSci, which uses the taglines "Innovations in Agriculture" and "Innovations in Growing Technology," relocated to Colchester from Stephenville, N.Y., earlier this year, promising to bring in at least 10 new employees in the next two years.

Part of the attraction, Pianta said, was the region's position halfway between New York and Boston, which makes the company convenient to a large number of major corporations. Pianta also found the development agency SouthEastern Connecticut Enterprise Region to be receptive to funding the relocation of a small company in the early stages of launching products.

"SeCTer was just there with open arms," Pianta said.

Now it's just a matter of executing on the business strategy, which includes talks with two major pet retailers to

Business Snapshot

What: AgroSci Inc.

Who: Chris Pianta, CEO, and Mark Prescott, CSO

Where: 36 Dr. Foote Road, Colchester

Established: 2009

Number of employees: 3

Website: www.agrosci.com

Phone: (800) 935-1183 x101

Email: info@agrosci.com

offer AgroSci's Purrfect Air and Humidaheat products to customers nationwide.

Pianta said the most likely scenario would be to have a test rollout at a couple hundred stores before gaining national traction if all goes well.

Pianta said the company's My Lazy Gardener product, launched in 2009, has a decent following through independent lawn and garden stores. The hopes are that some major retailers will pick it up as well.

Employment will likely gear up this fall, Pianta said, starting with administrative, accounting, customer service and sales positions. Eventually, a consumer products manager will be hired to handle that side of the business, while Pianta will focus on the Greenwall applications, which require more of a hands-on approach.

AgroSci's Colchester site has on hand all of the consumer products the company offers to retailers and directly through its website. It also just finished setting up a decorative wall to show off its Greenwall technology.

"We've got products in the warehouse," Pianta said. "We're ready to lock and load."

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