The Crisis is Making People Think Laterally, Even Vertically for Solutions

There is a lot of media in one’s face at present to do with how things financially are crumbling around our institutions. The governments of various countries are facing bankruptcy, banks are with little good standing or integrity, and people are facing joblessness on a scale somewhat like the great depression of the 1930s. It is as if the lifelong premises that once set up the foundations of society are imploding and the dawning of a new era with new ways is evolving. We need destruction before we create a new; it is essential...but not always pleasant.

However out of the flames rises the phoenix, and there are some fantastic innovations that are coming about due to inner city living with a desire to increase self sufficiency. Vertical gardening is one such phenomenon. I have visited urban walls that have been converted from eye sores and depressing features of the urban landscape into eco art! With reticulating water drip systems and pocket planting in mass it is creating a huge and dominant plant feature where once stood concrete and starkness.

In Paris there are some innovators of this vertical gardening concept and it shows with a community based thinking and action, a little engineering ingenuity, and the will to look after things that grow up at staggered intervals and in great heights, anything is possible! It is all done with a drip system; capillary acting felt material and has a hydroponic basis to it. Due to planting species that survive with superficial root systems and that grow in nature on rock faces and in low soil areas, the maintenance is minimal and self evolving.
It does seem that this application of using vertical and private spaces within buildings maybe an excellent place to grow a few plants outdoors in a hydroponic system. Since many people are without gardens in Europe and live mainly with a small terrace it maybe just the thing to think about if you are looking for a new way to use old spaces. Out of necessity grows innovation!

The next example of lateral thinking arising from a crisis in mind is the smart usage of old grow rooms to accommodate both indica and sativa based plants at the same time.

Basically a friend of mine asked me some advice about being able to grow in a small set up both indica and sativa based plants. He had an indica of 6-7 weeks and a sativa of 11 weeks, and asked how to harvest them and grow them together without having to move plants all the time.

What we did was to centralise the indica plants that flowered in 6-7 weeks to the centre of the room directly under the lamps; in this case 8 lamps. Indicas were set out at 16 per square meter and within the desired space directly under the lamps. Considering the sativa based plants grow large enough indoors in lower light or indirect light areas we began stapling the growing limbs of the sativas to the wall that was the perimeter of the room. By stapling i mean we located the growing branches between the open center area of the staple. We set the staple gun to only anchor well to the timber but leave a free gap of 2-3mm so the branch was undamaged but supported well and free to move a little within the size of the staple used. These plants were directly attached against the wall of the room and there was enough space for a person to walk between the indica and sativa areas to give water.

As planned in this flowering room all clones went in the same time, directly into flower and after the 3rd week there was again the need to staple up the branches of the sativas to keep things vertical and flat against the wall. Then as the indicas were finishing the sativas were going into bud.

We replaced the finished indicas without disturbing the walls of sativa budding plants. Then as the new indicas went into week 5 of flowering, the sativas had flourished into a camouflaged wall of tops. It was a sight to see all these flowering tops jutting out from a vertical wall all over the perimeter of the room, while seeing the main crop of indicas close to their second harvest!

Now my friend has readapted all his spaces to do this and says he not only increased his total yield weight by 50%,
but has some of those long flowering flavoured sativas in his own stash year round, instead of only during the outdoor season. Needless to say he and his mates are using this technique in all their small rooms and there does not seem to be any crisis with them any longer.

The last example of thinking a little out of the box as well as for increasing yields and overcoming the crisis comes from a story about some greenhouses in Switzerland. The normal season for tomatoes and cucumbers begins in the greenhouses no earlier than April 20th and usually around first week of May...things are pretty much finished in August or September...and without heating the greenhouse it means things are quiet and non productive from Sep till April each year.

A group of fellow growers and I, decided to maximise things and attempt to elongate the growing season by adapting our knowledge of strains to continue the production and increase the workload for our crew. With some basic planning and knowing the plants we worked with very well in all types of growing conditions, we sat together around a table to try to adapt Cannabis to these greenhouses and maximise the sun and conditions we got for free with expenses of running a greenhouse in varying times of the year.

It meant we needed to go down around April 20th or that week, allow the clones to take root and then by 10th of May begin darkening the greenhouses, making the first crop harvestable by the end of June. We then cut and replanted on the same day, making harvest no.2 beginning from July 1st, rooting for 2 weeks and then darkening again. This then meant that the second harvest was completed by 10th of September again using a 7 week indica plant. Now at this point most were already very happy with the double harvest using only darkening from the sun and the fast finishing strains.

However, not being totally satisfied the greenhouses were still not being made as efficient as they could be I had half the amount of sativa clones ready the day we finished cutting the second indica crop and had these all planted by the 15th of September.

Considering sativas go into flower at 12/12 or fewer hours light, it meant using the natural light regime of nature in September. Sativa plants grow quite quickly in their first 2 weeks of flowering and reach a good height for greenhouses in this time. We did set darkening to work on this crop but it could also work naturally being a strain that flowers close to the equator where the light
is usually all year 12/12. The added advantage was sativas are less inclined to get damage from humidity and therefore were excellent candidates for the Christmas crop...as it was fondly known as. All we had to do was keep the heating levels at temperatures that the plants could work within so often night temperatures were 12C while day may not have gotten more than 22-24C at that time of the year. Supplemental heating was necessary but this meant the crop of greenhouse Sativas were harvested in January or even in one I recall the first week of Feb. Thus the efficiency of greenhouse growing and the yields with the low cost and no lighting costs, all make extremely good sense when the bills are continuing to come and the work is not as it once was.

Of course planning and timing of cloning is essential in larger operations but this is a factor that can be worked out one time and implemented year after year. I might just add that within a year of this technique being a good working model there was very few greenhouses left in Ticino without a sophisticated automatic darkening system. The largest I was involved in was a hectare inside under automatic darkening and it opened at 7am daily closing at 7pm nightly so we worked with our crews within this time period to do all our daily work.

With the final crop being cut by end of January, we split a greenhouse into sections and heated an area to pre-grow clones with the aid of some artificial lighting to be ready for April. So where there was a 5 month non productive time to a greenhouse in Switzerland, it soon became common knowledge that if you had the right strains of Cannabis plants with some experience you could change things from dormant non productive times into year round work and in the process extra profits that were not even there before due to the traditional type of plants and vegetables that were worked with.

As things get seemingly desperate and all gloomy and doomy, it is attitude with good planning and a little innovation that will get people out of a hole. It means alot of hard work and plants do not wait, they need the work done when the work is ready to be done, and it is not always easy. But if there is a desire to keep things in order or just to create work or pay extra bills there is always something you can tweak or make more efficient with smart planning and lateral thinking. So do not worry, be happy and the world will smile with you.