

renegade

game changers | thought leaders | rule breakers | style makers

# COLLECTIVE

ISSUE 5

**48 RADICAL  
ENTREPRENEURS**  
FROM ALL OVER THE GLOBE

**WISE  
BRAVE +  
UNDISCOVERED**

**COFFEE BOY TO  
MILLIONAIRE**

HOW TO  
CREATE A  
DISRUPTIVE  
START-UP

**WHAT DO  
ZUCKERBERG  
JOBS + DORSEY  
HAVE IN COMMON?**

YOKO ONO  
COLLETTE DINNIGAN  
GRACIE OTTO  
MOVEMBER  
TROPFEST

*Jessica  
Mauboy*  
**THE WORLD  
IS WATCHING**

SHE'S PERFORMED FOR  
**OPRAH, ELLEN + OBAMA**  
+ TOURED WITH **BEYONCÉ**  
**WHAT'S NEXT?**

FASHION / DESIGN / FILM / FOOD / TECH / ART / SOCIAL CHANGE / TRAVEL



# *the organic* OFFICE

THE VEGIE PATCH *needs to be as important to the OFFICE or APARTMENT as the COFFEE MACHINE,* says URBAN COMMONS design duo Justin Hutchinson and Shawn Ashkanasy.

WORDS: EDWINA STORIE

**P**icture your city. Now imagine the laneways flourishing with fruit trees, vegetables sprouting from office rooftops and apartment windowsills hosting herb gardens. This is the dream of green urban designers Justin Hutchinson and Shawn Ashkanasy.

When Justin realised his daughter would grow up thinking lettuce grew in plastic bags instead of in the earth, he knew he had to do something. The urban sprawl has created what the duo believe is a cult of disconnection — we’ve become isolated from Mother Nature’s food cycle and one another in the process.

They say we live in concrete islands that import everything; in a society where cities are built around cars instead of footpaths, and people source their fruit and vegetables from supermarkets instead of soil. But the guys who started Urban Commons to make a radical difference in the architectural space say things can be different. Combining Justin’s skills as an industrial designer with Shawn’s from his life as a chef and social studies academic, they set out to upscale the vegie patch in mid-

sized developments and make it as important an addition to the office or apartment as the coffee machine.

Their vision is to see edible gardens revive the spirit of the commons; to break down social barriers and bring back neighbourly connection. In their ideal world, we’d have edible gardens in primary architectural plans as opposed to them being an afterthought; every office would have a kitchen garden where workers could mingle amid the mint, or casually brainstorm over the tomatoes.

Urban Commons’ latest project with innovative developers Kalex sees herb gardens lining each residential courtyard of the sustainability-focused luxury townhouses on Melbourne’s Clarke Street, while communal gardens blossom on the rooftop. They’re currently working on embedding a medicinal tea garden into a hospital yard. Innovative? Oh yeah.

“There’s something innate about having a connection to where our food comes from and that can even come from simple herbs on your balcony,” says Shawn. “But sometimes you just have to start, even if it’s a herb growing from a recycled coffee bag.” ■



## GREEN MY CITY SPACE

Container gardening can bring a little edible wonder to your otherwise concrete habitat. According to Urban

Commons, it’s up to us to have the confidence to remake our urban spaces — it’s about approaching the building manager for approval, talking to the local council about that neglected patch of land on your street, or taking a trip to the local nursery and setting up a container garden of your own. So, go on, off you go.

Hang on, before you do, say Shawn and Justin: plants need soil, water, sunlight and nutrients to grow. Drainage is king, so make sure you have it and don’t forget that water evaporates faster the higher you go (think apartment block). Get advice on the right system for you — there’s a plethora of pots and containers, DIY kits and hydroponics — and which plants will best work in your conditions. And finally, remember to have fun and enjoy what you grow with the people you love. Dinner party, anyone?