

Industry Spotlight:

Peninsula Microgreens prosper in Astoria

Pacific County basement business booms amid coronavirus pandemic

Story and Photos by Luke Whittaker

Coast River Business Journal
lwhittaker@crbizjournal.com

Richard Baumann's big plans were born from small plants.

Baumann, 56, first planted the seeds for his Peninsula Microgreens Farm about three years ago and today the fruits of his labor are paying off with a growing demand for his fresh produce harvested daily in the basement of his Long Beach home.

"I always wanted to be a farmer," said Baumann standing between aisles of microgreens illuminated under fluorescent lights.

"It just always seemed like a pipedream because I thought I needed land and a tractor," he said. "But all the sudden, I'm a farmer. It's like a dream for me."

Covid-19 crisis dials up demand for fresh, local produce

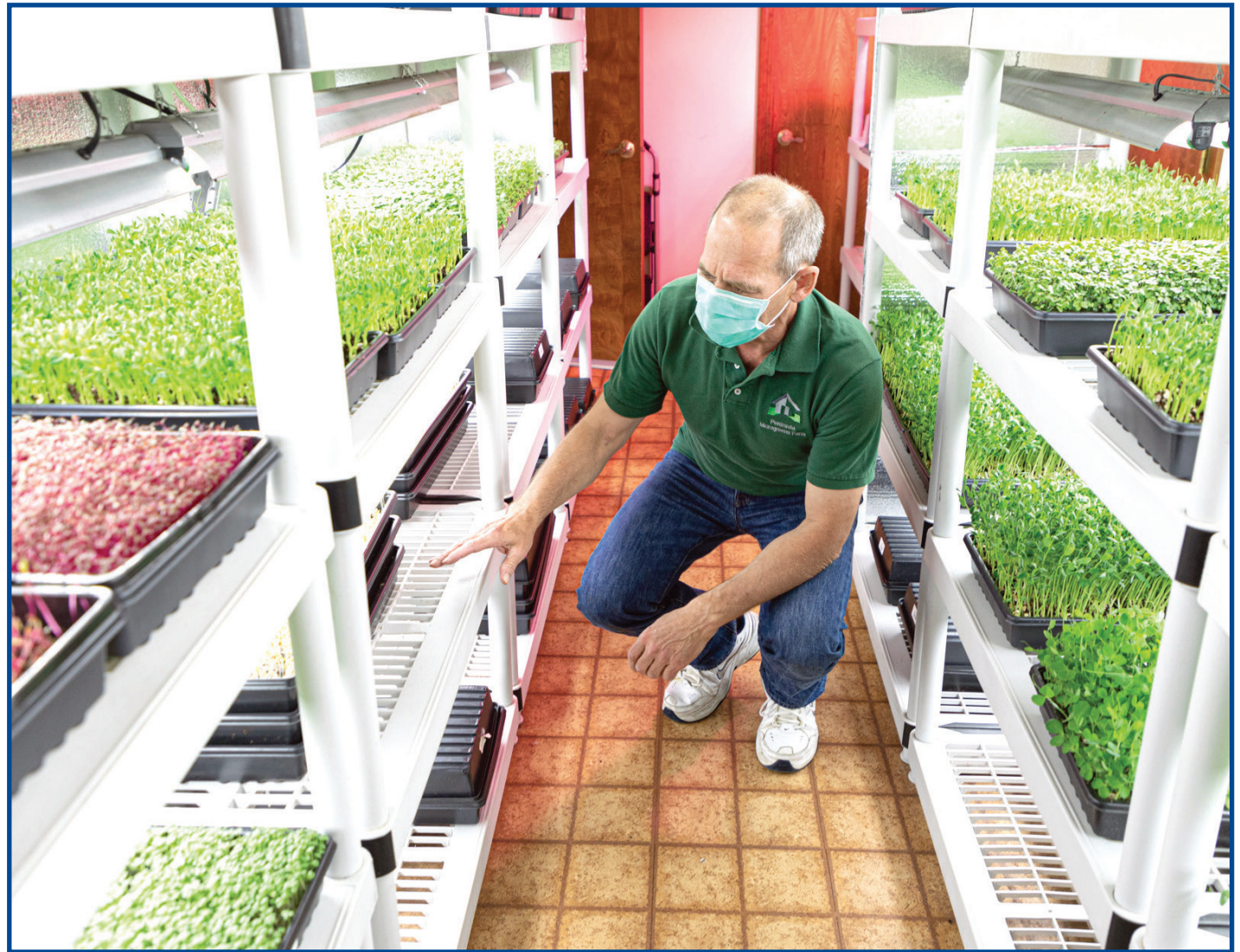
It was only a few months ago when Baumann was worried the covid-19 crisis would smother his small business. Instead, Baumann is experiencing unexpected growth and eyeing an expansion fueled by an increasing demand for his specialty microgreen salad mixes.

"We were preparing for our greatest year at the (farmer's) market, this was going to be our best year, then covid-19 happened," Baumann said.

"We thought we were going to hurt big time, so we reached out to the community. The community responded. We are making up all the market revenue and extra business since covid-19 started because people want local produce."

Baumann is proud that his fresh produce has been a big help during the pandemic, when some residents were hesitant to visit grocery stores for fear of exposure to the covid-19 virus.

"Covid-19 gave me an opportunity to do something that I think is valuable for the community. I'm providing them with produce that's delivered to their house so they don't have to go to the store. It's safe and local. It's just a good feeling to be a part of the community and give back in this way," Baumann said.



Richard Baumann examines the different varieties of microgreens grown at his Long Beach home. Baumann grows pea shoots, sunflower shoots, Rambo radish, china rose radish, wasabi, swiss chard, amaranth, broccoli, red acre cabbage, basil and arugula which serve as the basis for the salads.



Mixing soil before planting microgreens



Adding soil while preparing to plant microgreens



Watering newly-planted seeds.