

## WOMEN IN HYDROPONICS

STORIES FROM THE  
STRONG, DETERMINED  
AND CREATIVE WOMEN  
THAT MAKE UP  
OUR INDUSTRY



Eva Landy with her father, Peter De Paola.

### *Eva Landy:*

HYDRO EXPERT &  
MOTHER OF THREE

*Eva Landy of Indoor Outdoor Gardener in Brooklyn, New York, was somewhat born into the horticultural world, but hard work and a passion for learning led to her co-owning the business. Exclusively for Maximum Yield, Eva shares her story of how she went from stocking shelves to being able to answer people's high-tech questions about hydroponics.*

I guess you could say I was actually “born” into the gardening business. My mother [Helena De Paola] started taking me to the family store two weeks after I was born. As I was growing up, I, along with my brother, spent many afternoons doing our homework at the store, and then on the weekends, I wanted to be there, too. With my parents' permission, I jumped at the chance to handle the register, and I always listened as my parents gave advice to every customer about all the plants they were buying. At that time, our store was only an indoor/outdoor nursery. It wasn't until years later that my father [Peter De Paola] added a complete hydroponics and grow light section.

When I was a little older, I majored in graphic design in college and became a graphic designer for several years after that, but knowing I wanted to have children (now two boys and a girl), working full-time was impossible. I suggested to my father that I come into the store a few days a week, return to my old stomping grounds and start to learn the family business while doing my graphic design on the side. He agreed, and I started out by helping customers, stocking the shelves and cleaning up.

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When the store wasn't busy, I was hanging onto every word my father would teach me about the equipment we sold. My mother handled a lot of the plant aspect of the business, and my father handled the high-tech products. I had an interest in the plants and learned a lot from my mother as well, but I really had a desire to learn about the high-tech aspect of the business, never really knowing if I, as a woman, would or could be successful in this industry. Customers would come in picking at my father's brain about their lights, the products they were using, how to fix their issues, etc. I was amazed at how he could answer all of their questions, how they trusted everything he said and time and again would come back to tell him how what he told them to do worked perfectly. They used to call him the "plant doctor" and an "encyclopedia of knowledge." I really wanted to learn what he knew, so I kept listening and asking questions, and eventually my dad became my mentor. He used to tell me to walk around the store and just read the labels of the products to familiarize myself on what they did. He said you always have to refresh yourself and never ever think you know all there is about the business because there is always more to learn.

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A very young Eva with her mom Helena during the Indoor Outdoor Gardener's early days

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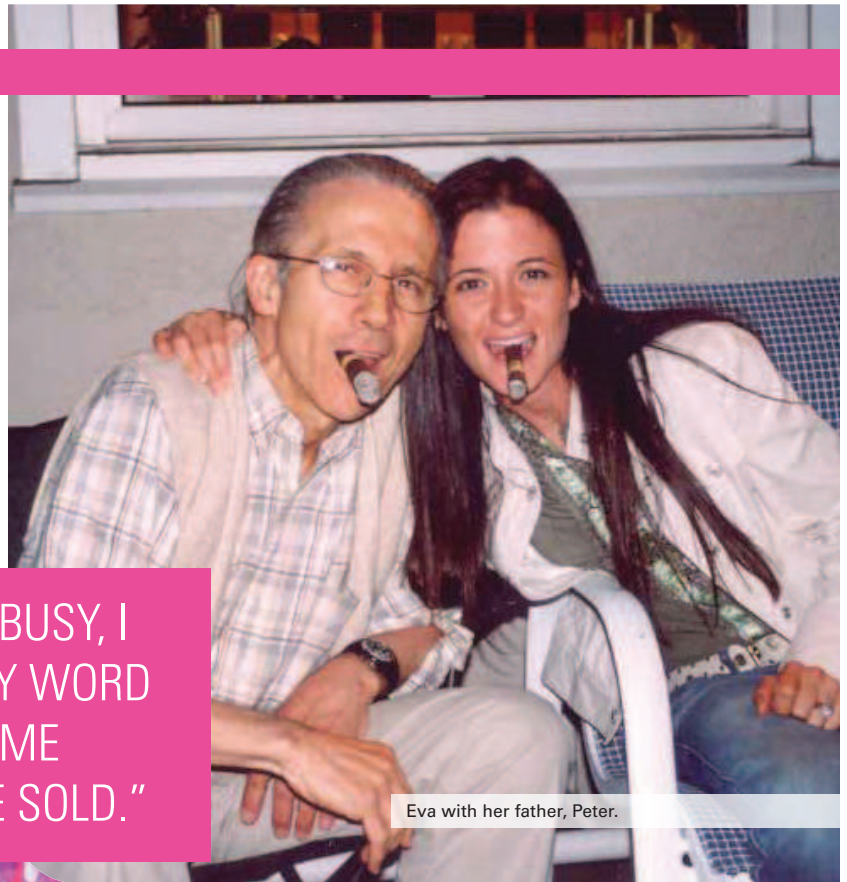


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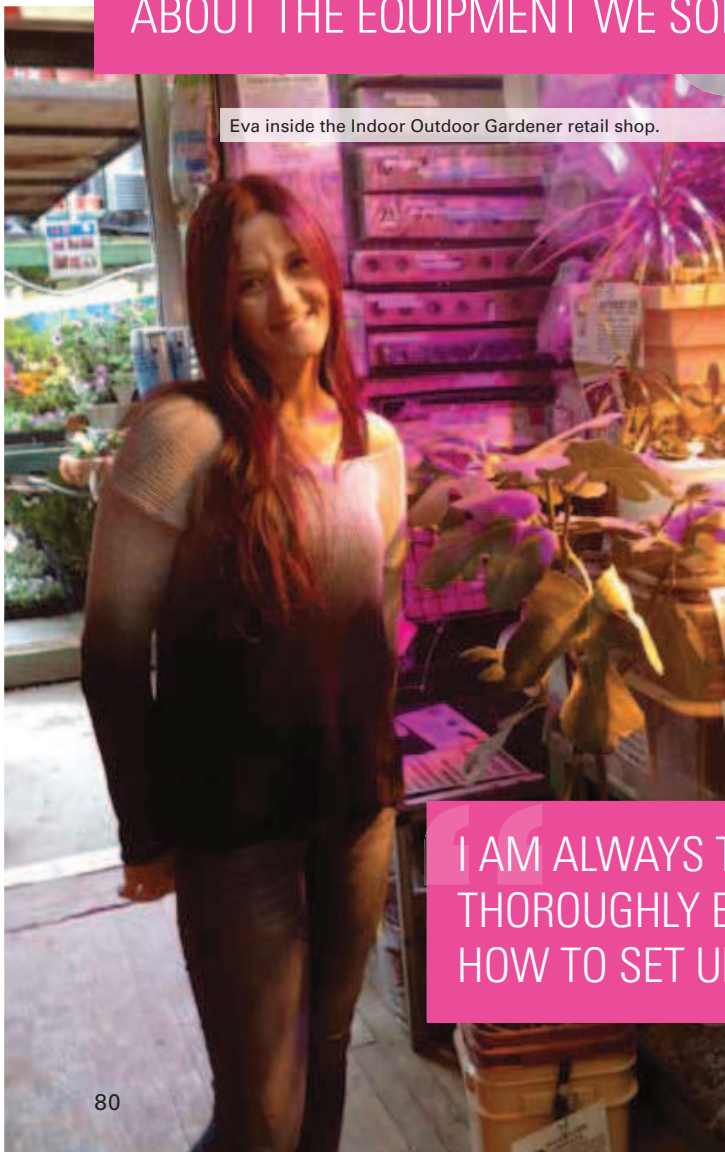
I can recall my father drawing me diagrams of ballasts connected to lights and he would write notes on what MH did verses HPS. We would stand in front of the atmospheric controllers and he would tell me what each one did, how they handled a multitude of things in a grow space, and I thought to myself, "Whoa!"

My father passed away in 2006, so together, my mother and I ran the store. My mother is also extremely knowledgeable with the plants, so she continued with that and I took over my father's aspect of the business, the high-tech. Eventually, my mother gave me half of the business. I am eternally grateful to her for giving me the opportunity to run this business with her and make her and my father proud.

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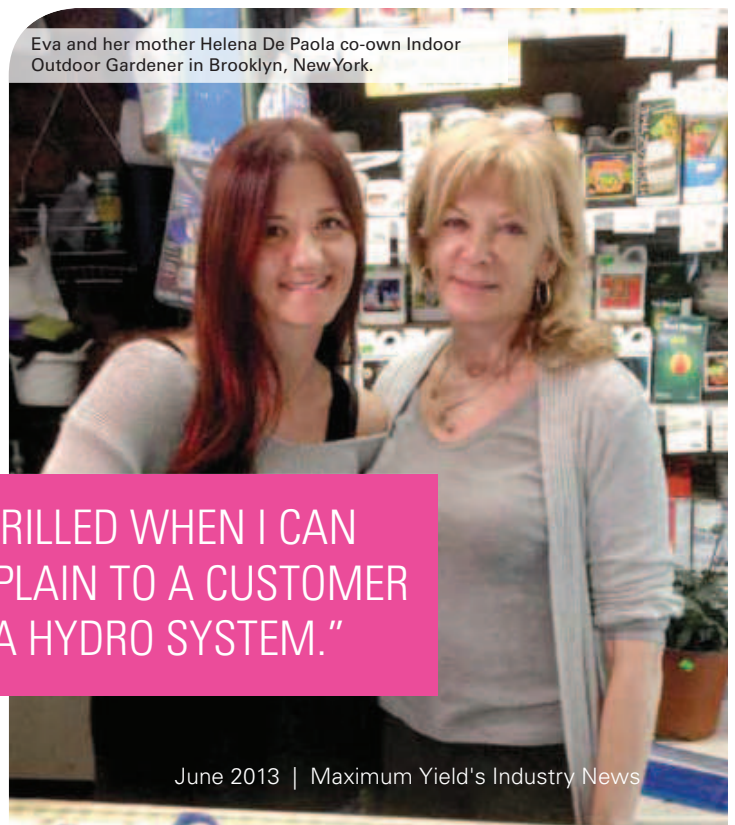
Eva with her father, Peter.



Eva inside the Indoor Outdoor Gardener retail shop.

I guess you could say out of all my siblings [two sisters and a brother] I am most mechanically inclined, so along with what I learned from my father, I became very knowledgeable in hydro and drip irrigation. I am now giving advice to many of the customers who used to rock me! We carry a huge selection of drip irrigation parts, and I am always thrilled when I can thoroughly explain to a customer how to set up a hydro system.

Eva and her mother Helena De Paola co-own Indoor Outdoor Gardener in Brooklyn, New York.




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What I find amusing is when male customers come in and ask for advice about hydro, and can't believe that I, a woman, have so much knowledge and can easily explain the world of hydro to them. And, a very typical situation is when a male customer comes in, and I ask him if he needs help. Quite often, I am looked at as if I have two heads! It is definitely challenging working in a male-dominated business, but it is what pushes me everyday. I am also motivated by the fact that I am able to answer questions to male customers because I, a woman, know more than they do about high-tech gardening. I really enjoy participating in a conversation with male customers about something they would never think they would be able to talk to a woman about. However, I do find that from when I first began in this business, to now, there are a lot more women getting into high-tech gardening.

Our company is unique, not only because we offer free advice to our customers, but also because we try out as many products as possible and when we are successful, we not only recommend them, but also guarantee them. We want our success to be our customers' success. My parents always prided themselves in that, and the customers very much appreciate and love us for it.

It is a constant challenge raising a family and running a business, but I love it! I have learned that in this business, there is really so very much to learn. There are constantly new products coming out, one topping the other. Again, a constant challenge is always trying to make sure we have the newest products. I tell my customers all the time that if there is something that they are looking for that we don't carry, I will research and track down the item for them. I pride myself in that and customers appreciate it greatly.

Over the years, I have gained a great deal of confidence in myself, and it is this confidence that my customers admire. They believe in me and that's such a magnificent feeling. And that's what it's all about. 



Eva Landy with her three children.

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