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# REPORT ON BUSINESS

Big, tall and green with ivy



BARAL GIBISZAK FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

## When the walls have leaves and the roof is in full flower

BY WENDY STUECK, VANCOUVER

Alan Darlington's quest for green walls began with a University of Guelph research project into how plants might grow in outer space.

Mr. Darlington, however, was more interested in how the research might apply here on Earth — in stuffy office buildings, for example, where a mix of toxic chemicals and recirculated air can leave people

suffering from headaches or gasping for air.

"My interest was much more terrestrial," says Mr. Darlington, president of Guelph, Ont.-based university spinoff **Air Quality Solutions Ltd.** "But the same principles apply for a space station or an office building — you're talking about a controlled atmosphere and a barrier between us and a hostile environment."

Dubbed green or living walls,

plant-covered installations of the type that Air Quality designs and builds are taking off like weeds, showing up in indoor and outdoor applications and generating increased interest among architects and developers.

The square footage of green roof projects in North America grew by 72 per cent between 2004 and 2005 to about 2.5 million square feet, according to a 2006 survey by Toronto-based industry association



**The green walls in particular are just taking off like crazy for us. We cannot keep up with demand.**

CHAD SICHELLO, ABOVE, G-SKY PRESIDENT AND CEO

Green Roofs for Healthy Cities. This year's numbers are expected to show growth of about 125 per cent, says president Steven Peck.

See GREEN on page B12