

CURRENT RESEARCH

At the Environmental Research Laboratory (ERL) at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Dr. Carl Hodges and Dr. Merle Jensen, in conjunction with Walt Disney Productions, have developed new concepts for presenting hydroponic technologies to the public as entertainment to enhance learning. The ERL helped create "Listen to the Land" and Tomorrow's Harvest", which are now major facilities at Epcot Center near Orlando, Florida. While

many currently believe that practice of hydroponics is "futuristic", as we have seen, they way of the future has been through a long history that can be traced back to man's first attempts at agriculture. Another point worth mentioning is that while the term "hydroponics" describes the specific method of cultivating plants in water, more often the term is being used to describe a mindset whereby all aspects of the cultivation process are carefully monitored and adjusted to provide the optimum growing environment. With its

extensive scientific resources, there is no better organization than NASA to provide us with a glimpse of what is possible when an ideal environment can be created for growing plants.

Hydroponics is NASA'S solution to providing space travellers with a self-sufficient food source. The administration has sponsored a research program titled Controlled Ecological Life Support System



(CELSS) in order to further develop the technology and carry it into the future. High Intensity Discharge (HID) lighting, which includes HPS and metal halide (MH) type lamps, is the best lighting due to their efficiency and close representation of the sun's color and intensity. Whether or not this technology is ever actually used in space travel, what NASA has learned from developing these self-sufficient food source programs can be used to great advantage by every gardener willing to give it a try.

Next week: It's All About the Roots

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