

WHAT IS HYDROPONICS?

Now that we have a better understanding of the natural growing process, we can see that hydroponics is all about enriching water with the very same nutritive salts found in nature. It's about creating and maintaining a "nutrient solution" that is perfectly balanced for your plants. Most hydroponic systems contain the nutrient solution in a closed system. This helps protect it from evaporation and from discharging into our environment as does the runoff from exposed, fertilized soil. This conservative approach to water management makes hydroponics the method of choice in drought-stricken areas worldwide, and as a result, it is rapidly becoming known as "Earth Friendly Gardening."

Since you will be practicing the art and science of "water gardening", it is a wise idea to know what your



local water contains. Contact your local water company and ask for their water quality analysis. If your water comes from a well, you will most likely have to send it out to a lab for analysis on your own. The most important factor affecting water quality is its relative "hardness" or "softness." Hard water means that there is a lot of dissolved mineral content, primarily calcium carbonate, which is often seen as scale on hot water pipes. Soft water is generally very pure or low in dissolved solids. Distilled (or deionized) water, or water that has been through a reverse osmosis filter, are all considered soft. Most commercially available hydroponic nutrients are made for soft water. However, if you have hard water, there are some nutrient products made for hard water as well.

Next week: Hydroponics cont'd

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