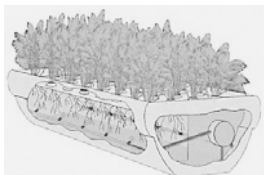


Aeroponics



The most recent technology to be developed in agriculture is Aeroponics, a method in which a plant's roots are fed and watered midair. The plants are generally suspended from baskets (similar to those in which strawberries are packaged) at the top of a closed trough or cylinder. With the plants suspended in this manner, all essential nourishment can be provided to the roots by spraying them with a nutrient solution. Since the roots are suspended in midair, they receive the maximum amount of oxygen possible. This method is also the most nutrient-efficient, because you need

only provide what the plants require, and any nutrient that is not absorbed is drained back into the reservoir and recycled much like the previous methods. It is of utmost importance that the atmosphere in which the roots grow is maintained at 100% relative humidity to prevent dehydration. A drawback to current aeroponic systems is maintaining root health in the event of pump malfunction or loss of power. Without the spray of nutrient enriched water, root systems will not remain healthy for long. They will rapidly dry up and die. However, the increased oxygenation that is received by the plant's root structure benefits growth at an unprecedented level and has been scientifically proven to increase crop yields by as much as 10 times over soil. The AeroSpring design combines aeroponics with a deep, reservoir to protect against crop loss in the event of a pump failure.

The Autopot

Relatively new to the market is the Autopot. A unique, self-feeding planter that has proven very reliable in commercial installations around the world. Within each Autopot double tray module resides a "SmartValve" that automatically sub-irrigates plants with nutrient solution on demand. Since the SmartValve can be gravity fed, there is no need for pumps and timers for small installations (20 trays or less). This makes the Autopot ideal for

use in unsupervised locations or where access to electricity is limited. One of the largest benefits when using these systems commercially is the elimination of wasted water and nutrients, since the SmartValve feeds ONLY when needed, with no waste. Another nice benefit of these systems is that a multitude of growing mediums may be used including Coconut coir, perlite, rockwool cubes and fine gravel.

Article from *How-To-Hydroponics*

Next week: *Vertical Gardening*

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