

The Rockwool Slab Drip System



The simplest and most common hydroponic method is using drip irrigation to deliver nutrient enriched

water to plants grown in rockwool slabs. Many commercial tomato and pepper growers use this technique since it is relatively low-maintenance and can generally deliver foolproof results although it does produce runoff. As the fruit is harvested off the bottom of the plant using this method, the growing vines are coiled around each other much like a rope is coiled on the ground. Air layering allows single vine plants to reach 40 feet in length in some instances.

The Nutrient Film Techniques (NFT)

In this growing technique, plants are placed atop an inverted 'V' shaped channel, sealed on all sides into a box-like tunnel, through which a thin film of nutrient solution passes along the bottom. A pump and reservoir combination situated below the channels collects and recycles the nutrient back through the system. Roots grow down along the channel, receiving oxygen directly from the inside of the trough, while receiving water and nutrients from the thin film of nutrient being carried along the bottom

of the channel by gravity. The enclosed channels maintain 100% humidity to protect against dehydration. Excellent results can be obtained with this system. However, maintaining the "nutrient film" becomes difficult once the roots form large mats at the bottom of the channel. The resulting puddling can create stagnation in the root zone, depleting roots of oxygen and fresh nutrient. Efficiency, on the other hand, is excellent because the closed channel limits evaporation

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Next week: *The Raft System*




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