

Hydroponics: speed vegetables to your table

CORVALLIS — Ask experienced gardeners what makes their garden grow and they'll come up with the same response: great soil.

Good answer, but not the only one. The same crops grown in soil thrive in water, too, as long as there are nutrients and oxygen involved.

In fact, vegetables grown hydroponically root and grow faster than traditionally grown plants, said Barry Burnsides, an Oregon State University Extension Service master gardener. This ages-old system uses a mixture of water and nutrients to grow plants inside or out. He does both, but prefers the outdoors because there's no need for lights.

"You can grow any plant in hydroponics if you use the proper system," said Burnsides, who spent months researching hydroponics and building four of the six types of systems. He grows lettuces, greens, peppers, cilantro, cucumbers, basil and even tomatoes, melons, squash and cucumbers on trellises.

He said the easiest system is the floating raft method. In its simplest form, a floating raft system consists of a sheet of foam with holes cut in it for the net pots that will hold the plants. The foam floats on a tub containing water, nutrients and oxygen. The oxygen is added to the nutrients using an aquarium pump pushing air through a 1-inch porous soaker hose. More nutrient mix-



KYM POKORNY
Your Garden

ture is added as the plants take it up.

Burnsides also recommends the nutrient film technique (NFT). In that case, pipes with holes drilled in them for plants are positioned horizontally at a slight angle so the water easily moves through with the help of gravity. The nutrient solution is moved by a small fountain pump through a ½-inch line to the highest point and flows through the pipe and over the plant roots back to the storage tank. An aquarium air pump is used to add oxygen to the nutrients in the storage tank.

"Hydroponics is efficient," Burnsides said. "It takes less water than growing plants in soil. In dry areas, it's a big plus. The other place it shines is if you're trying to grow in an area with poor soil."

Hydroponic systems generally need grow lights and heat when used indoors, according to Burnsides, who will teach a class at 11 a.m. April 8 at the Josephine County office in Grants Pass. Cost is \$85 for the public; \$70 for Extension master gardeners. For those out of the area, he advises doing a search of the internet for resources. There are many how-to articles and videos as well as materials



PHOTO: FLIC.KR/P/SYU95T

Plants take up water and nutrients that flow through a PVC pipe in the hydroponic nutrient film technique (NFT).

and kits to buy.

Though he grows inside — especially to start seeds or for cuttings of things like fuchsias, rhododendrons, coleus and hydrangeas — Burnsides suggests starting with a floating raft or NFT system outdoors. Be sure to give plants eight hours of sunlight and use shade cloth with 30 percent screening during the hottest part of the year, and frost cloth for freeze and bug protection.

"It's nice to set one up next to the kitchen," he said. "You can harvest salad or stir-fry for dinner right out your back door. You don't get any fresher than that."

For most plants, Burnsides uses a fertilizer formulated for tomatoes,

which is premixed with the correct amount of micro and macro nutrients. He adds it to the water and replenishes as plants take it up. Lettuce grown hydroponically is ready to harvest in 30 days rather than the 60-day cycle it takes when grown in soil. There's also the benefit of no weeds, fewer diseases and pests and the need for less space. Of course, there's always the best reason to grow vegetables in any kind of medium: the quality of the produce.

"You wind up with the ultimate, freshest veggies," he said. "The flavor and crispness and quality of what you can grow is better than what you find in the store. And to see the growth stages and know you were part of that is rewarding."

MI TOWN

Our local elementary, middle and high school students will be taking a break from classes and other school responsibilities next week, so families can enjoy time at the beach or just a few days catching up on sleep or hanging out with friends. It's been a long winter for everyone and we've crossed our fingers that Mother Nature will bring some welcome sunshine and blue skies to our corner of the world.

Springtime is a season of hope and renewal for all of us, and the signs of new life are all around us. At our house, we are trying to find time to do house and yard projects, see some excellent local baseball games, and enjoy the best of college basketball during March Madness.



PATTY TAYLOR DUTCHER
Columnist

Trees are beginning to blossom and bring some much-needed color and brightness to our communities, and not a moment too soon. Record-setting rainfall with flooding to low-lying areas have occurred this winter and springtime, and even the meteorologists have been surprised by the sheer amounts of rain and snowfall. Let's hope that one weather extreme follows another and that springtime will bring lots of sunshine and warm days for all to share.

Monmouth Public Library has excellent spring break programs for kids next week, with Bob the Builder at 10:15 on Tuesday, a Greenhouse make and take project on March 30 at 10:15 a.m., and the movie, "Trolls" on Friday, March 31 at 2 p.m.

Independence Public Library spring break programs include Go Fly a Kite on Monday, 3-D Pens and 3-D Printer on Tuesday, Bob the Builder on Wednesday, Goofy Science on March 30 and Makey Makey Boards on March 31. All activities are at 3 p.m.

The 11th Annual Community Health Fair is scheduled for April 6 in the gymnasium-cafeteria at Talmadge Middle School. Everyone is invited to visit the exhibits

provided by health care and fitness professionals, and learn more about services available in our community. The Talmadge Health Fair is a free event, and includes a dinner which is served from 4:30 until 6 p.m. All the exhibits will be open from 5 to 7 p.m., so there is plenty of time for your family to enjoy dinner and learn about health care options in MI Town. Please contact Cheri Higgins at chiggins@centraltalk12.or.us or call 503-606-2462.

Bob Miller, longtime MI Town resident, passed away earlier this month. Bob and his wife, Bonnie have given much of themselves to our community and have been wonderful friends and neighbors. Bob was a proud Navy veteran of World War II and Korea.

PEDEE NEWS

Daniel Russell traveled to Moravian Falls, N.C., to spend a week with longtime friend David Hofshi and family. The Hofshis are converting a barn into a beautiful home and are also working to find the best crops to grow on their organic farm. While there, Daniel visited the location of the 1753 Moravian settlement at Bethabara. Incidentally, the water that flows through that region becomes the Pee Dee River. Pee Dee Creek, and Pee Dee itself, gets its name from the Pee Dee River in North Carolina.

The students at the Pedee Campus of the Luckiamute Valley Charter School are doing all they can to earn money for their class trip



ARLENE KOVASH
Columnist

later this spring. They sold pies earlier, and they will be selling flower bulbs soon, as well as having a few car washes in the upcoming months.

On May 5, the kids will have a carnival fundraiser in the evening at the LVCS Bridgeport campus, which the whole community is invited to.

These Pedee middle-schoolers have also been busy with other events. On

March 10, they hosted a grandparent's day party in the afternoon and had several grandparents come, play games with the kids, and see what they've been doing. Then on April 25-27, the sixth-graders will be heading to outdoor school at Tapawinga Camp near Falls City.

The Kings Valley students have been having a great time, too. March 10 was the hundredth day of school. The elementary classes celebrated many different ways, such as dressing like they were 100, wearing a shirt decorated with 100 different things (Band-aids, buttons, pom poms, googly eyes), finding different ways to count to 100 (\$1) using

change, listing 100 different words to describe school, and doing 100 acts of kindness. Ten students and David Crowe did 10 different exercises. Lastly, there were 100 students in the preschool and elementary to celebrate 100's day!

Pedee Church will be having an all-church cleanup and mission fundraiser on April 1. In addition to cleaning up around the church, they will have a rummage sale (items needed), a bake sale, and a barbecue and potluck at noon. This will be a fun time to come together as a church and community to get things done and help raise money for Eric Schwanke's mission trip to Africa this May.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

These Polk County groups would welcome individuals who have time or expertise to volunteer. Organizations that would like to be added to this list should call 503-623-2373 or email lOnews@polkio.com.

- AARP Foundation Tax-Aide – 503-930-7636
- After DARC — 503-623-9501
- Arc of Polk County — 541-223-3261
- Central School District — 503-838-0030
- City of Dallas — 503-831-3502
- City of Independence — 503-838-1212
- City of Monmouth — 503-751-0145
- Crime Victims Assistance Program — 503-623-9268
- Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce — 503-623-2564
- Dallas Fire Department — 503-831-3532
- Dallas Food Bank — 503-623-3578
- Dallas Kids, Inc. — 503-623-6419
- Dallas Police Department — 503-831-3582
- Dallas Public Library — 503-623-2633
- Dallas Retirement Village — 503-623-5581
- Dallas School District — 503-623-5594
- Delbert Hunter Arboretum — 503-623-7359
- Girl Scouts of Southwest Washington and Oregon — 1-800-338-5248
- Ella Curran Food Bank — 503-917-1681
- Falls City Arts Center — 503-559-6291
- Falls City School District — 503-787-3531
- Family Building Blocks — 503-566-2132, ext. 308
- Friends of Dallas Library — 503-559-3830
- H-2-O — 503-831-4736
- HART (Horses Adaptive Riding and Therapy) — 971-301-4278
- HandsOn Mid-Willamette Valley — 503-363-1651
- Heron Pointe Assisted Living — 503-838-6850
- Independence Health and Rehabilitation — 503-838-0001
- Independence Public Library — 503-838-1811
- Kings Valley Charter School — 541-929-2134
- Luckiamute Watershed Council — 503-837-0237
- Luckiamute Valley Charter School — 503-623-4837
- Meals on Wheels — 503-838-2084
- Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce — 503-838-4268
- Monmouth-Independence YMCA — 503-838-4042
- Monmouth Public Library — 503-838-1932
- Northwest Human Services — 503-588-5828
- Oregon Child Development Coalition — 503-838-2745
- OSU Extension Service - Polk County — 503-623-8395
- Perrydale School District — 503-623-2040
- Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Polk County Inc. — 503-623-8473
- Polk Community Development Corporation — 503-831-3173
- Polk County Community Emergency Response Team — 503-623-9396
- Polk County Museum — 503-623-6251
- Polk County Public Health — 503-623-8175
- Polk County Resource Center — 503-623-8429
- Polk Soil and Water Conservation District — 503-623-9680
- Relief Nursery Classroom — 503-566-2132
- Rickreall Watershed Council — 503-623-9680
- SABLE House — 503-623-6703
- SALT (Senior and law enforcement together) — 503-851-9366
- Salvation Army — 503-798-4783
- SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) — 503-391-8423
- Salem Health West Valley Hospital — 503-623-8301
- Victim Assistance Program-Polk Co. District Attorney's Office 503-623-9268 x1444
- Willamette Valley Hospice — 503-588-3600

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LOGAN (Digital) (R)	(12:05 3:10)	6:15 9:20
CHIPS (Digital) (R)	(12:00 2:25 4:50)	7:15 9:40
POWER RANGERS (Digital) (PG13)	(1:00 3:50)	6:40 9:30
*BEAUTY & THE BEAST (Digital) (PG)	(12:10 3:05)	6:00 9:00
*BEAUTY & THE BEAST (Digital) (PG)	(12:40 3:35)	6:30 9:25
LIFE (Digital) (R)	(11:50 3:00)	6:10 9:25
LEGO BATMAN MOVIE (Digital) (PG)	(1:15)	
THE SHACK (Digital) (PG13)	(3:45)	6:45 9:45
KONG: SKULL ISLAND (Digital) (PG13)	(1:40 4:25)	7:10 9:55

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Sudoku solution

7	3	5	6	4	8	1	9	2
6	1	4	9	3	2	8	7	5
9	2	8	5	1	7	4	3	6
3	7	6	4	8	9	5	2	1
1	5	2	7	6	3	9	8	4
4	8	9	1	2	5	3	6	7
2	9	1	3	5	6	7	4	8
8	4	7	2	9	1	6	5	3
5	6	3	8	7	4	2	1	9

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