



# Sans the soil

Exploring the world of hydroponic gardening – *by Sungula Nkabinde*

**h**ydroponics is the method of growing plants in mineral nutrient solutions or other mediums like gravel, mineral wool, expanded clay pebbles or coconut husk in water – without soil. Due to the controlled environment in which crops are grown, specific nutrient supplies can be tailored to meet the needs of individual plants.

Hydroponic gardening is traditionally used in large indoor greenhouses to produce crops commercially, but it is also possible for home owners to transform an unused corner, garage or vacant space into a hydroponic garden.

“Soil is just the means through which the nutrients are held in close location to the roots for





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their absorption by the plant," explains Cheral Kennedy from Living Matter.

While it is by no means commonplace, hydroponics is an interesting hobby that is gaining popularity, especially for home owners who want larger harvests.

Hydroponic gardening offers many advantages – plants are able to grow in a confined space and are rarely affected by insects or other pests; the plants grow indoors, therefore they are not affected by outside weather conditions like drought and frost; and the water that is used for hydroponic gardening is recycled, reducing the requirement for a constant supply of fresh water from between 5% to 10% of the water used in a typical garden environment.

Some examples of plants that are well suited to hydroponic systems include cucumbers, lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard and other leafy greens.

Hydroponics can provide fresh cut flowers for use all year long as well; and some gardeners even use hydroponics for small fruit trees to provide organic fruit for at-home consumption.



Hydroponics evolved out of a combination of need and desire; and today, for people who don't have the space to grow their own fruits, vegetables and herbs, this is a great solution.

The more people hear about plants being coated in wax and pesticides, the more they worry about those substances being consumed, and are therefore looking for ways to ensure that they know the conditions in which fruits, vegetables and herbs are grown.

And, while it's impractical to think that we could go from buying all our food to growing it all in our apartments, the notion that we can supplement some of our produce in this manner is one worth contemplating.

Images courtesy of Thinkstock

With thanks to Hydroponics At Home, Living Matter and The Friendly Plant

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EFEKTO'S MARCH GARDEN TIP

Control caterpillars with Eco Insect Control – a natural bio-insecticide that is non-toxic to humans.

Start fertilising the lawns with Wonder VITALISER ALL PURPOSE 3:2:1 (19) + C (8) SR\*.

Prepare bulb beds by digging in old compost and some Wonder Bonemeal.

Start now with a spray program to control conifer aphids with Aphicide and Insecticide Granules.

