



Who Invented Hydroponics?

Many people mistakenly believe that the art of growing plants successfully without using soil, known as hydroponics, is a new technology. Leading Hydroponics experts and suppliers, Great Stuff Hydroponics, aim to throw some light on the origins of this ancient technique.

It is commonly thought, amongst gardening experts that the famous hanging gardens of Babylon could be the earliest example of a complex use of hydroponic techniques. Fresh water containing plenty of oxygen and nutrients were used to keep plants alive without having any soil surrounding their root structures. Other possible uses of hydroponics in the ancient world have also been suggested within Aztec culture.

However, it was not until the middle ages when scientific knowledge about the workings of plant life began to develop. In 1600, Jan Van Helmont deduced that plants take their nutrients only from the rainwater, rather than from the soil itself. He realized this because plant mass rises according to plant growth over time however soil mass stays much the same. This paved the way amongst scientists and chemists to find out more about exactly which nutrients need to be present in water to promote healthy plant growth.

Then the English scientist, Joseph Priestly, discovered that plants photosynthesize, converting carbon dioxide into oxygen, and that this process is speeded up when the plant is exposed to bright sunlight. This was also an important development regarding the lighting techniques which are now used for commercial hydroponic growth.

By the mid 1800's as a result of much interest in the subject and many experiments, a definitive list of minerals and nutrients needed by plants in order to thrive had been developed, with nutrient solutions created by the German botanist Wilhelm Knop.

The techniques of hydroponic growth, such as controlling the amount of light, water and nutrients available to the plant, are ideally suited to growing plants indoors. For this reason, in the early half of the twentieth century, commercial greenhouse growers began to realize the potential of hydroponics. Hydroponic plant growth uses only 1/20th of the water which traditional (soil based) agriculture demands. Also, soil borne diseases and virtually all pests are eliminated. These growth techniques are not only environmentally friendly, using less water and reducing agricultural 'run off' which would normally find its way into the water table, but it is also ideally suited to arid climates. This was proven brilliantly during the war, when American troops stationed on barren Wake Island in the Pacific, were able to survive by growing fresh food hydroponically.

Dr. William Gericke perfected hydroponic techniques during the 1940's, and even decided upon the name for them, amalgamating the Greek 'hydros' (meaning 'water') and 'ponos' (which means 'working') into one word.

Since then, hydroponic growth techniques have diversified into a variety of ways to grow plants in 'soil-less cultures', although they use other media instead of soil which means that not all soil-less cultures can strictly be defined as hydroponic any more. Not only that, but there is now also a plethora of different growth promoters, nutrient solutions and hydroponic lighting designed for different aspects of plant growth on the market.

No single person or culture developed hydroponics, however the broad depth of modern scientific knowledge on the subject, drawn from many developments and experiments over time, mean that it is a viable commercial agricultural method and is also well suited to researchers, hobbyists and enthusiasts alike. Amazingly, this ancient technique can be practiced at home, using one of the hydroponic kits available online from Great Stuff Hydroponics. Kits can be supplied to beginners and advanced growers in addition to all other hydroponic equipment and specialist supplies.

To find out more about Hydroponics and to purchase online, visit Great Stuff Hydroponics at www.hydroponics-hydroponics.com

About Great Stuff Hydroponics

Great Stuff Hydroponics is based in Middlesbrough (UK) and supplies a vast array of hydroponic equipment for all your hydroponic plant cultivation needs. The Great Stuff Hydroponics showroom is open Monday to Friday 9am-5pm and Saturday 10am-2pm. Sales can also be placed online at <http://www.hydroponics-hydroponics.com>

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