

Hydroponic Gardening in Wood Shavings



SINCE REX McDILL. A manufacturer of soluble plant foods in Tampa, Florida has introduced his method of growing tomatoes, and numerous other vegetables, flowers, bulbs, and plants of all kinds in ordinary untreated Shavings and sawdust, it has spread like wild-fire all over the country. The author in his magazine articles and Radio-Garden broadcasts helped start this practical and profitable method back in 1965. First it WAS called the Bean-Hamper Method for growing tomatoes, but later it was found that you could use large cans. Such as five gallon types (used for so many things) and produce even better results with less effort and cost. Because the familiar wood hampers used for shipping beans, and other vegetables are easily obtained from your local stores or markets, you may want to try them first. However, it is sometimes just as easy to obtain five gallon plastic buckets (or powdered milk cans) from bakeries or nurseries.

WHY USE THE WOODSHAVINGS METHOD?

First of all the flavor of tomatoes grown in the shavings-method is far superior to the average run grown in soil. Second, the size and quantity is superior to most plantings in soil. Third, it makes it possible to grow things where space is a problem. However, where you have plenty of apace, this method is very profitable for commercial production. Fourth, there is no cultivation problem, such as weeding, hoeing, etc. Fifth, you can grow by this method plants that will not produce in soil. For instance, some have grown honey-dew melons and many types of bulbs that have never been successful in Florida soils and climate. Sixth, very little equipment is needed, and the coat in comparison to results is very small. Seventh, older people, or those who are handicapped, may enjoy growing f lowers, vegetable, etc.

WHAT PLANTS CAN I GROW?

Because the tomato is a universal favorite and used by almost every family in this country, the first experiments were confident this vegetable alone. Even today, you will see thousands of Been-Hampers, bushel baskets, or cans lined up in rows or in singles or groups growing luscious tomatoes on vines that reach as high as 10 or even 12 feet I have seen as many 900 hampers in less than an acre of plot growing in Tampa, FL Reports indicate that even two or three times that many have been grown and proven the worth of this method. With the exception of a few low-growing varieties, all tomatoes grown by this method reach from two to five times the height as when grown in soil. You may grow any variety from the small pear-shaped tomatoes to the large Ponderosa or Beefsteak type. In Florida the varieties that have been grown successfully include the Homestead, Manalucie, Rutgers, Marglobe, Ponderosa? (Beefsteak) and the Jefferson which is a low growing type. Many others such as the Peron (from Chile), Kokomo, Grothen's Globe, Oxheart Pan America have produced excellent results. For commercial crops the Manalucie and the Homestead are recommended.

Many other edibles besides tomatoes may be grown in wood-shavings. For instance you may grow strawberries such as the Florida No. 90 (best locally) or the Missionary, Klondyke or others Bushel baskets filled with shavings are best suited for growing of strawberries, however you may use

other types of containers. Carrots, beets, turnips, and foot crops do well by this method. Sweet potatoes grown in large containers like barrels or half-barrels, large kegs, etc., are "out of the world" when it comes to flavor, size and production. Pineapples, papayas, honey-dew melons and a host of other edibles with that superior flavor are among the long list of plants grown in the Nutri-Sol Wood Shavings Hydroponic Method.

You may grow all kinds of flowers from seeds, bulbs, tuberous roots, or cuttings and with better color and quantity. Many have grown the Unwin types of Dahlia (from seed), Gerberas, Gloriosa or Climbing Lilies, Passion Flower vines, Zinnias, Marigolds, PetuniaB, Easter Lilies, Day Hi leg, Roses. In fact the list includes Just about every- thing that will grow in soil, and some that don't thrive under ordinary conditions.

WOOD SHAVINGS OR SAWDUST

For the largest majority of plants, wood shavings are recommended over sawdust. Sawdust has a tendency to pack and prevent good aeration to the roots, however it may be used for larger type plants such as Papayas, Roses, or any plant that may become top-heavy. Most any kind of wood shavings or sawdust may be used, such as pine, cypress, maple, redwood or oak. Old or new shavings or sawdust may be used. It is best however to use a new batch the second year. In other words do not use the same shavings or sawdust or ever the same hamper or wooden container after the first year. On specially built form a forms out of cypress or redwood use an asphalt paint or sterilize after first year's use. It is also best to use new cans the second year.

GROWING TOMATOES IN BEAN HAMPERS

You can purchase any number of bean hampers for 25 cents each or less from your grocery store, market, or supermarket Fill each to the top with wood shavings. Wet down shavings with a nutrient solution of "Nutri-Sol," (one -teaspoon fill of Nutri-Sol to each gallon of water in Nutri-Sol solution) and let them pack for two days. Be sure and keep container well filled. Next step is to secure tomato plants that have been grown in sterilize soil or spaghnum moss. You may prefer to grow your own plants, if so let them reach a height of six inches before transplanting to bean hampers.

After the shavings have been thoroughly soaked, punch a hole deep enough to insert the tomato plants so that first leaves will rest on top. Pack shavings around plant. Use only one plant per hamper. Keep all hampers or containers in full sunshine all of the time. Do not cut off suckers as they will make your third and fourth crop six to eight months after planting.

NUTRIENT SOLUTION

The nutrient solution must be applied once a day, and every day. It is made as stated by using one teaspoonful of "Nutri-Sol" soluble plant food to each gallon of water used. One-half cupful per day is used on each plant for the first three weeks. By this time your plants should be about two feet high. After the three weeks it will take a quart of solution per plant. For each foot of increase in height add another half pint of solution. Add an additional gallon of water per plant each day, if no rain has occurred, a plant six feet high will evaporate six quarts of water a day, in hot and dry weather. Should the plants wilt, just add water and they will come back strong and healthy in 15