Some Notes From The Farm Front

By John Russell

Hydroponics sounds like some new kind of medical treatment. Actually it's simply a highbrow name for the process of growing fruit, vegetables and flowers without the use of soil — and it's something that's interesting more and more people every day.

It isn't really new by any means. More than a hundred years ago a European scientist, in a laboratory test proved that plants would grow in nothing but clear water in which soil had been previously soaked. But its development was speeded up terrifically during the war, when large hydroponic farms were established to provide fresh vegetables to the troops on soilless rockeries like Iwo Jima and Ascension Islands. Even now American forces in Japan get vegetables grown in tremendous "tank farms"

The process is a simple one. Those wishing to start in a small way just punch a little hole or two in th bottom of a cigar box, fill it with fine, clean gravel, put in seeds, give the whole thing a southern exposure and begin the feeding process.

The necessary chemicals can be obtained through many drug firms; and there are also different brands of "ready mixed" plant foods on the market. A little of the mixture in powder form — stirred up in ordinary water — goes a long way, as the liquid caught by means of a drain hole in the bottom of the box, can be used over and over again.

You keep the gravel moist until the seeds sprout, after that sprinkle twice a day. Soon the little seedlings are ready to l transplanted to your regular garden, and are said to be as healthy and sturdy little fruit, vegetable and flower plants anyone would wish to see.

But that is what might be called a half-way hydroponic process depending, as it does, on the final use of soil. For those who want to go the whole way with gravel, here's how one man — told about in Collier's Magazine — went about it.

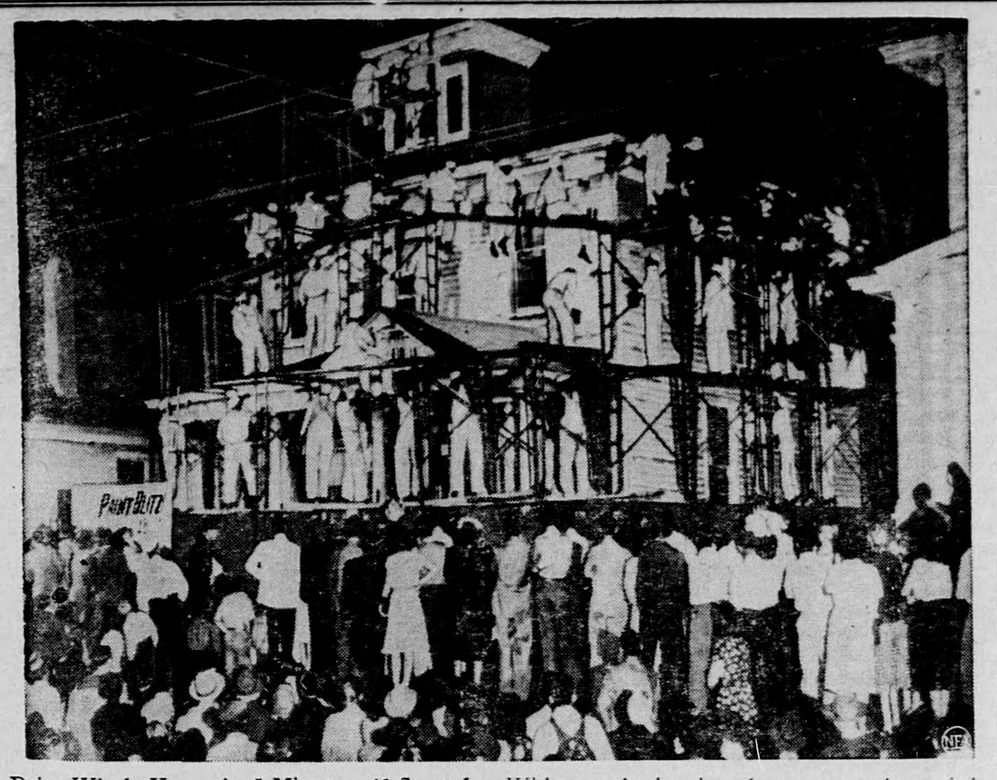
He made two boxes, each 30 by 54 inches, and set them at a convenient height — then planted his seeds in the five inches of gravel the boxes held. A pound of powdered chemical salts in a gallon of water as his "feeding stock" — this being measured out as required at the rate of one ounce of the mixture to a gallon sprinkling can of water.

Five weeks after the planting he and his family were eating tender string beans. Cucumbers were ripe on the vines in 36 days. The first tomatoes, started as seedlings, were ready for the table in 64 days. And he says that the quality of all he grew was incomparably delicious.

As a strictly commercial proposition, hydroponic gardening is still in the experimental stage, although millions of dollars have already been invested and some commercial growers have made a cleanup. others have not been so fortunate. Tomatoes, cucumbers and strawberries are among the favorite crops; and in many cases superior flavor and appearance are claimed to bring premium prices.

However, even if hydroponic gardening should neve. develop into a real commercial threat for the old-fashioned kind, as a diversion or hobby it's catching like wildfire. That's because any home that has a back yard, a roof or even a window sill can now have a garden — and one that grows things with a minimum of trouble and attention, and with record-breaking speed.

And then there's the very old one about the Southern farmer who was told that he could get his pigs to market a whole lot faster by adopting some new, time-saving method of feeding. "Why should I bother?" he replied disgustedly. "Heck; what's time to a hog?"



Paint Whole House in 5 Minutes, 40 Seconds—With crowds cheering them on, members of the Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers slap paint on the Memphis home of Mrs. Juanita Webb. The painters finished the job in 5 minutes, 40 seconds. The time is believed to be a new world's record.

CHRONICLES OF GINGER FARM

By Gwendoline P Clarke

We are all feeling so much better satisfied now than we were a few days ago because the men have actually been able to get on the land. The hum of the tractor has indeed been a welcome sound after such a cold, wet and backward spring. Now, although we have no grain sown the ground is ready and we expect the drill will be doing its job tomorrow—that is, if it doesn't rain again. Bob has been running the tractor all the time—with his leg still in a cast. It is amazing what can be done once a person is fitted up with a "walking cast", though I am sure it must be a very heavy and tiring thing to carry around.

* * *

From what I hear very little has been done in gardens anywhere—nothing at all right here—it has really been too cold and windy to work outside for very long. Our garden, this year, is full of disappointments. There are not nearly as many daffodils in bloom as usual and some of my shrubs are in a sorry plight. Two variegated elders that were so very decorative are just about done. The roots are still living but the long, sweeping branches will have to be cut right down to the ground. Some of the other shrubs also look pretty sick, partly due to the winter nibbling of rabbits. Growing things on the south side of the house have been more fortunate. We had asparagus before it appeared in the stores and the rhubarb has been particularly sweet and tender.

The taste of asparagus and rhubarb may have whetted his appetite, anyway Partner has been ambitiously planning our vegetable garden. My, won't it be good to have home-grown vegetables again? After being without a garden last year we shall be doubly appreciative of what we hope to get this summer. But I am afraid that will depend largely on Partner. When I look around the house and see the work ahead of me this year I can't see myself putting in much time on the end of a hoe.

* * *

I can see now it doesn't pay to let two years go by without doing some papering and painting around the house. Now it looks as if every room from attic to cellar needs attention—and all at the same time. But housecleaning has its good points. There were days this week when it was so cold and windy I wanted work to do that would keep me warm. (We don't like burning wood in a high wind and our coal supply is just about done, so the house was really cold).

I looked around at the kitchen. Cleaning it was not on the agenda for that day but I couldn't think of a better job to keep me warm, so I went right at it. Believe me, by the time I had the ceiling, walls and woodwork thoroughly separated from their winter coating of grime and smoke, I was warm all right. It was also an opportune time for another reason—the men were so busy in the field they had no time to pay any attention to what I was doing—nor to interrupt me. So long as meals appeared on the table as per schedule I might turn the house upside-down, or sleep all day, for all they would know about what I was doing. That night I said to Partner—"Do you think my kitchen looks any better?" He looked around. "Oh," he said casually, "Have you been cleaning it?" Had I! My hands were proof of that even if the kitchen wasn't.

* * *

Now what do you think of this little episode? Last Monday Bob and I drove to the city. On the way out to the "pick-up" I stopped to pick a bunch of daffodils for Daughter. Some of them grow practically wild among the grass. Soon after arriving in the city I went to a washroom in one of the stores and upon looking in a mirror I was horrified to see, caught up in the net on top of my hat, a bunch of burrs, the kind that grow on those beastly burdocks. "Well," I thought, "there is nothing like advertising the fact that one comes from the country!" Bob said — "Why worry? I don't suppose city folk would even know what it was in your hat." He, by the way, hadn't so much as noticed them. What a man! But when I told Daughter . . . "Mother—how awful—didn't you even know they were there?" No, but I did afterwards I sat in the waiting room for fifteen minutes picking burrs out of that bit of netting on my hat.

★

Rain, Today

Waiter (putting down plate of soup): "It looks like rain, sir."

Diner: "Yes, take it away. I ordered soup."

New, — And Useful Too

The following are brief descriptions of some of the latest useful novelties and inventions to come upon the market.

A UNIQUE CEMENT. Plastics, wood, metal, rubber, leather, crockery, glass, mirrors and labels can now be easily made to adhere to themselves or to each other by means of a versatile cement having a vinyl base. Two years of research has resulted in the development of this efficient all-purpose transparent white cement, which is easy to apply and does not affect any material to which it is applied.

LOW PRESSURE TIRE. A new, extra low-pressure tire which is said to increase an automobile's safety and comfort has just been announced. Officials of the company making this tire say that it requires only 24 pounds of air pressure, and that it will run cooler than conventional tires. In addition to making car handling easier, the tires provide better and safer steering.

SELF FEEDING PAINT ROLLER A new painting tool has just been put on the market. It consists of a patented roller made of plastic, into which is poured a pint of paint—enough to cover half the average wall or ceiling. The cylinder has holes, like a sieve through which the paint "leaks" to saturate the close-fitting nylon roller cover.

TINY BINOCULARS. Only one fourth the weight and one third the size of conventional kind, these tiny binoculars will be useful either for sport or at the theatre. Housed in magnesium, and weighing but 4½ ounces, the binoculars are said to have a performance equal to those many times the size and weight.

WET WATER FOR FIRE FIGHTING. A newly developed concentration of organic chemicals is of such fast penetrating action that, added to water in small amounts, it increases the fire-extinguishing action of the water from 200 to 400 per cent. Normal use calls for only 1 part of the penetrant to 100 parts of water.

NOVEL KEY CHAIN. Made on the principle of the retractable telephone cord, this key chain extends to six times its coiled length and, on release, immediately retracts to its original shape. A 5½-inch coiled length will extend to approximately three feet.

TABLE TALKS

Mix - Easy — New Cake Method

Here is the newest, quickest way to make perfect cakes. It's "Mix-Easy" because it puts a cake together in just two short beating steps, saving time, work, and dishes. This new method calls for specially balanced Mix - Easy recipes, like the following delicious Happy Day Cake.

Preparations. Have the shortening at room temperature. Line bottoms of pans with paper; grease. Use two round 9-inch layer pans, 1½ inches deep, or a 13x9x2-inch pan. Start oven for moderate heat (375 degrees F.). Sift flour once before measuring. (Use standard level measurements.)

- 2¼ cups Swans Down flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups sugar
- ½ cup shortening
- 1 cup milk with vegetable shortening or 1 cup less 2 tablespoons with butter or lard.

Step 1. Stir shortening just to soften. Sift in dry ingredients. Add about ¾ cup of the milk and mix until flour is dampened. Then beat 2 minutes or 300 strokes.

Step 2. Add eggs and remaining milk; beat 1 minute longer, or 150 strokes.

(Mix by hand or at a low speed of electric mixer. Take time out to rest as necessary and scrape bowl and spoon often).

Baking. Turn batter into the pans. Bake in moderate oven (375 degrees F.) about 25 minutes for layers, 35 minutes for oblong cake.

Lemon Cake

Flavor the Happy Day Cake with 2 teaspoons grated lemon rind, adding it to the shortening. Bake in two 9-inch layers. Spread with Orange Mist Frosting, adding chopped dates for filling.

Luscious Spice Cake

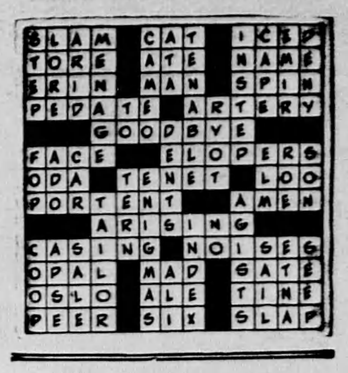
Add spices—1 teaspoon cinnamon, ½ teaspoon cloves, ¼ teaspoon allspice—to flour mixture in Happy Day Cake. Add 1 tablespoon molasses to the shortening. Bake in two 9-inch layer pans as directed. Spread with Lemon Cream Icing.

Picnic Cake

Carry this cake to picnic or church supper, right in the pan! Bake Happy Day Cake in a 13x9x2-inch pan. While cake is still hot, spread with Praline Topping and bake 5 minutes longer, as directed. Cool and cut cake in pan.

Note: Recipes for Frostings will be given next week.

Answer To This Week's Puzzle



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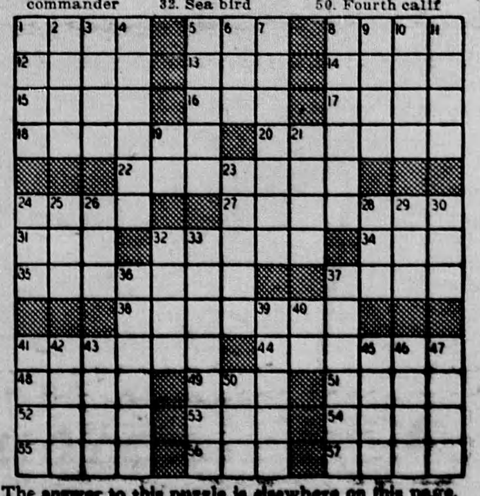
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1. Bang
5. Domestic animal
8. Frosted
12. Ran swiftly
13. Corroded
14. Mention
15. Ireland
16. Adult boy
17. Turn rapidly
18. Having feet
20. Blood vessel
22. Farewell
24. Clock dial
27. Absconders
31. Harem room
32. Dogma
34. Old card game
35. Sign
37. Verily
38. Going up
41. Window framework
44. Sounds
48. Stone
49. Irate
51. Glut
52. Norse capital
53. Malt drink
54. Prong
55. Equal
56. Half dozen
57. Cuff

DOWN

1. Pace
2. Learning
3. Barren
4. Household
5. Jewel
6. Mindanao native
7. Defensible
8. Pedal part
9. Headland
10. Arabian commander
11. Refuse
19. For
21. Hindu peasant
23. Hollows
24. Dude
25. Fuss
26. Elevator carriage
28. Tree
29. Eggs
30. Male child
32. Sea bird
33. Puzzles
36. Clothes maker
37. Pastures for pay
39. Forefinger
40. Not any
41. Chicken enclosure
42. Part of a church
43. Auction
45. Voyage
46. Volcano
47. Ooze
50. Fourth calif



The answer to this puzzle is elsewhere on this page.

LITTLE REGGIE — By Margarita