Aquaponics

BY JOHN MASON & STAFF OF ACS DISTANCE EDUCATION
CONTENTS

CREDITS

PREFACE

CHAPTER 1 SCOPE AND NATURE OF AQUAPONICS
What grows well in aquaponics?
Home systems
Commercial farms
Advantages of aquaponics
Aquaponics is about balance

CHAPTER 2 THE AQUAPONICS SYSTEM
What media is best for your grow beds?
What else do you need to consider?

CHAPTER 3 GROWING FISH IN AQUAPONICS
Key facts for growing fish in aquaponics
Feeding fish
How many fish?
Monitoring fish
Common problems and their symptoms

CHAPTER 4 FISH SUITED TO AQUAPONICS
Silver Perch (Bidyanus bidyanus)
Golden Perch (Macquaria ambigua)
Jade Perch (Scortum barcoo)
Murray Cod (Maccullochella peelii peelii)
Barramundi (Lates calcrifera)
Brown Trout (Salmo trutta)
Rainbow Trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss)
Carp
Common Carp (Cyprinus carpio)
Catfish ................................................................. 34
Eel Tailed Catfish (*Tandanus tandanus*) .............................................. 35
Channel Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*) ................................................. 36
Silver Cobbler (*Neoarius midgleyi*) ....................................................... 36
Lake Argyle Catfish (syn. *Arius midgleyi*) ........................................... 36
Eels (*Anguilla*) ...................................................................................... 36
Tilapia ................................................................................................. 37
Freshwater Crayfish .............................................................................. 38
Marron (*Cherax tenuimanus*) ................................................................. 38
Red Claw (*Cherax quadricarinatus*) ....................................................... 38
Yabbies (*Charax destructor*) ................................................................. 39

**CHAPTER 5 GROWING PLANTS IN AQUAPONICS** ........................................ 40

What system? ....................................................................................... 40
Planting guide ...................................................................................... 41
Planting .................................................................................................. 42
Herbs ..................................................................................................... 43
Some herbs to grow hydroponically ....................................................... 44
Basil (Sweet) (*Ocimum basilicum*) ....................................................... 44
Mint (*Mentha* spp.) .............................................................................. 45
Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) .............................................................. 46
Vegetables ............................................................................................ 46
Cabbage (*Brassica oleracea capitata* Group) ........................................ 46
Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*) ....................................................................... 48
Pak-choi and Bok-choy (*Brassica rapa - pekinensis* Group) .............. 50
Spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*) ................................................................. 50
Other ...................................................................................................... 52
Iris Species (*Iris* spp.) ........................................................................... 52
Nutrients and deficiencies .................................................................... 54
Mobile and immobile nutrients ............................................................. 54
Plant nutrition ...................................................................................... 54
The information in this book is derived from a broad cross section of resources (research, reference materials and personal experience) from the authors and editorial assistants in the academic department of ACS Distance Education. It is, to the best of our knowledge, composed as an accurate representation of what is accepted and appropriate information about the subject, at the time of publication.

The authors fully recognise that knowledge is continually changing, and awareness in all areas of study is constantly evolving. As such, we encourage the reader to recognise that nothing they read should ever be considered to be set in stone. They should always strive to broaden their perspective and deepen their understanding of a subject, and before acting upon any information or advice, should always seek to confirm the currency of that information, and the appropriateness to the situation in which they find themselves.

As such, the publisher and author do not accept any liability for actions taken by the reader based upon their reading of this book.
Aquaponics involves growing fish, crustaceans or something else in water; and then taking that water and using it to grow plants. It is an intensive way of producing food, that can be used on a small scale at home, or on a large scale for commercial farming.

The level of sophistication involved in aquaponics can vary from low to high. The biggest challenge is to ensure that when the same water is used to grow two different things, the characteristics of the water needs to be compatible for both.

The type of water required to grow some types of fish, for instance, can be quite different to the type of water needed to grow some types of plants. Success is achieved by both choosing plants and animals to grow that are compatible with the system you set up; and choosing a system that is compatible with the plants and animals you are growing. When you get these compatibilities aligned, you can then move forward, and provided that you manage the system appropriately, the potential for success can be staggering.

Aquaponic farming allows individual families to grow a much wider range of produce, in a much smaller space. They can provide the protein needed for their diet (from fish), as well as the vegetables and fruit they need. Aquaponic systems can be as small as a few cubic meters; or as large as many acres. They are an ideal way of improving productivity on a hobby farm; can be used by restaurants to produce the freshest produce on site, or established inside buildings, in big cities, for urban farming.

This book explores some of the more important considerations, and aims to inspire and inform you about the possibilities for aquaponics, in whatever circumstances you may consider using it.
CHAPTER 1 SCOPE AND NATURE OF AQUAPONICS

Aquaponics is a way of combining aquaculture or fish farming, with hydroponic growing. This is typically achieved by using the waste from fish tanks to fertilize plants, and waste water from plants to top up water in the fish tanks. The tricky part is to ensure that water taken from plants to fish, is chemically suitable for the fish, and that water taken from fish to plants is chemically appropriate for growing plants.

The nutrient-rich waste from fish tanks can be valuable as plant food to vegetables and herbs grown in hydroponic beds. Chemicals (including nutrients) naturally increase in any water in which fish or other aquatic animals live. Some of these chemicals (such as ammonia) are the result of excrement from the animals, and others may result from decomposition of dead animal tissue or left over food. As a result of its nutrient composition, water that is used for aquaculture is a useful source of nutrition for growing plants.

Golden Perch (*Macquaria ambigua*) is one of a number of freshwater fish species that have been grown successfully in aquaponics.