

The O'Hare Urban Garden



What does an airport have to do with gardening? As it turns out, a lot! Right in the middle of Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, you'll find the O'Hare Urban Garden. It is the world's first vertical aeroponic food farm inside an airport terminal. Aeroponics is the process of growing plants with only water, air, and nutrients.

Like most big airports, O'Hare International Airport includes restaurants that feed hungry travelers. The O'Hare Urban Garden supplies these restaurants with fresh produce. It features 26 vertical Tower Garden® growing systems. Each contains 44 slots for growing plants. The O'Hare garden has over 1,100 plants, including herbs, lettuces, greens, and other vegetables.

Each Tower Garden sits on top of a *reservoir*. The reservoir holds a 20-gallon solution of water and a special plant food. The plant food contains minerals and nutrients that help produce strong, healthy plants. A pump in the base moves the solution to the top of each Tower Garden. Then the solution drips back down the column and falls over the 44 sets of plant roots. This process is repeated continuously, recycling the water and nutrients. Very little water evaporates or is wasted. The gardens don't require the use of pesticides or chemicals. No soil is used.

Why is the O'Hare Urban Garden such a good idea? For one thing, it uses *sustainable* technology. That means the garden uses methods that do not completely use up or destroy natural resources like land or water. The O'Hare Urban Garden doesn't use herbicides and pesticides, and that is good for the environment. It also uses far less water and minerals than a traditional garden. The garden is close to the restaurants that use its food, so the produce is picked when it is freshest and most nutritious. There is also no need to store or ship the produce. One more thing: because the garden is not planted in soil, there's no weeding or digging either. Now that's a cool way to garden!

Answer these questions on your own paper.

Include evidence from the text to support your answers.

1. Who uses the food produced by the O'Hare Urban Garden?
2. True or false: An aeroponic garden uses soil, like a traditional garden.
3. How do you know your answer to question 2 is correct?
4. What is the best meaning for *reservoir* in the third paragraph?
 - a. large lake or pond
 - b. place where fluid collects
 - c. pump
5. What are three advantages of Tower Garden?
6. Why might the owners of restaurants at O'Hare International Airport like having their own Tower Garden?

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Answer Key

1. restaurants at O’Hare International Airport
2. false
3. The third paragraph states “No soil is used,” and the last paragraph states “Because the garden is not planted in soil,...”
4. B
5. Answers will vary but could include that it uses sustainable technology, it doesn’t completely use up or destroy natural resources, it doesn’t use herbicides or pesticides, it uses less water and minerals than a traditional garden, the produce is picked when it is freshest and most nutritious, there is no need to store or ship the produce, or there’s no weeding or digging.
6. Answers will vary.



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