

## Strawberry Project -Ongoing!

Last Updated Tuesday, 04 January 2011

New Project Our first new project for 2007 is an A-frame set up for growing strawberries.

Using wood that was doing nothing and with 4" drain pipes and smaller plumbing pipes - we got constructing! The small white plastic inserts are 6" long pieces of waste pipe, used to support the strawberry plants when they are first introduced into the system.

The frame is 25` long and the upper tier is 6` high - this will take 160 plants. Getting set up Small tube feeding nutrient into grow pipes Feed to gulleys. Returning water cascading into reservoir March 19th 2007 Gale force winds and freezing weather - but strawberries are coming along well. Three weeks later - April 7th 2007 Strawberry flowers are left to \*set\* now April 20th 2007 plants growing strongly Young strawberries now forming 26th April 2007 - First strawberry just ripening! 28th April 2007 Keep watching this space for more news and pictures to see how we progress! April 29th 2007 First strawberry of the season eaten - beautiful! May 3rd 2007 Coming on nicely! varying staggered stages of ripening and growth Sunday 6th May 2007 1/2 lbs picked today - enough for a feast! The grower's wife picks the fruit carefully and the grower shows off his early crop! The first good pickings of the year. Cut up and ready to eat with lashings of extra thick cream! October 19th 2007 Strawberries still growing well - slowed down slightly due to colder nights. And with just a sprinkling of sugar! With some rice pudding - that's our supper sorted!

Conclusions to this project:

Whilst the project was successful we feel that we could do with some modifications.

Whilst we are still picking strawberries in November- we are going to move the frame to a netted polytunnel frame for next year 2008.

The two main problems we had were the poly got too hot in the sun and the strawberries were cooking!

Also the weight of the plants was pulling the whole plants out of the channel.

We hope to plant into perlite next year (which should hold the roots better) and into more open gulleys.

Another problem we had was with the field mice who loved eating the biggest strawberries that they could find, and all attempts at catching the blighters was futile.

Watch this space for how we get on!

2008

Strawberries were moved into a netted polytunnel - to allow for more ventilation.

The strawberries were grown in the same runs but rooting into clay balls.

This seems to be working well and we have had quite a lot of strawberries already this year, even allowing for the inclement weather!

2010

Mother wanted some strawberries in the main polytunnel!

So- we started the year with building another strawberry frame in the main hydroponic tunnel.

This is to be made up of all odds and ends of material that we have lying around the place.

We have found that the A-frame setup to be the easiest to manage and obviously takes up less space than planting in the ground- and of course - no weeding!

The timber used here was part of the pallet on which the classroom was delivered. Up to now it had been left lying in the field.

Crossbars were added to make the frame more stable. Pipes were used that had been lying around the place! Guttering supports were used to support the pipework We tried to space the pipework to allow for quite a few starberry

plants! Round holes were cut at equal distances in the pipes for the strawberry plants. To support the plants we place them in 110mm offcuts of 40mm waste pipe (old scraps) which will be inserted into these grow tubes. Each grow tube will take 15 plants and 5 tiers will hold 75 plants. Next step is to rig up the irrigation system. The plant roots will dangle in the passing nutrient water,

The small pump in the reservoir has a 3metre head and pumps 2500litres an hour and the pipework is 19mm diameter. Securing the pipework with pipe clips.

4mm distribution pipes plugged into the 19mm feed pipe

Individual feeds to each grow tube.

The system up and running - now waiting for warmer weather before placing the strawberry plants in the grow tubes. The cost of the project up to now Timber + grow tubes + white pipe + old reservoir = £0 Pump = £24.00 Feed pipework and fittings = £8.00 February 2010 - Strawberries planted

End of March 2010 first flowers appearing on the \*earlies\* April 14th 2010 Strawberry fruits appearing April 26th

2010 Strawberries slowly ripening! Nearly ready Thursday 29th April 2010 - First one for eating! May 5th 2010 Father picking enough for supper where is the cream to go with them? Tuesday 11th May 2010 Today picked 2.300kilos of lovely juicy strawberries and managed to make some lovely jam in a Jam maker that I had invested in! well worth the money. By June all strawberries were finished either frozen or made into jam. The plants are being taken out of the A frame and planted into pots of perlite to get rooted runners ready for next year. Salad and herbs are now going into the A frame for autumn and winter. Here we now have sage, tarragon, lettuces, basil, mizuna, sorrel, spinach and mustard.