

Hydroponics used

# It doesn't take soil to grow these tomatoes



An over-view of the inside of the specially designed Quonset building. Montgomery estimates this building will yield him 1000 pounds of tomatoes per week, with a net income of about \$10,000 per house.

By JOAN LIESAU  
 SPRING CITY — Plump, fresh tomatoes grown locally at Christmas time may seem like a wild dream to the tomato lover, but it is a reality to William V. Montgomery Jr. of Spring City R1.

Using a new method in growing food, called hydroponics, Montgomery is making large deliveries, up to 500 pounds, to supermarkets in his area.

There is no soil, peat moss, sand or stone used. The plants are cultivated in water containing liquid fertilizer.

Montgomery and his partner Curt Nichols of Havertown began planting seeds (which are a tropic variety) on July 3, 1978. They began harvesting plump one-half pound tomatoes in early October when home gardeners began to see their plants wither from the first

frost. The plants are presently four feet tall, and loaded with tomatoes.

"Hydroponics is an old concept which recently has become practical thanks to a system of disposable plastic tubes that hold the roots of the tomato plants," Montgomery said.

"The plants grow to be 20 feet long, resting on inclined tables and suspended by a system of over head cables."

"The building is a specially designed Quonset building covered by a double-thick translucent polyester roof."

"My 900 tomato plants are fed a nutrient solution round the clock" he explained. Precise amounts of liquid fertilizer are measured out and dispensed so they flow by gravity for a ten minute period, followed by a five minute rest period."

Montgomery harvested his first tomatoes 90 days after

sowing the seeds. "The yield is several times as great as from tomatoes grown the traditional way, since the plants grow rapidly, produce in great volume and for a long period of time" he said.

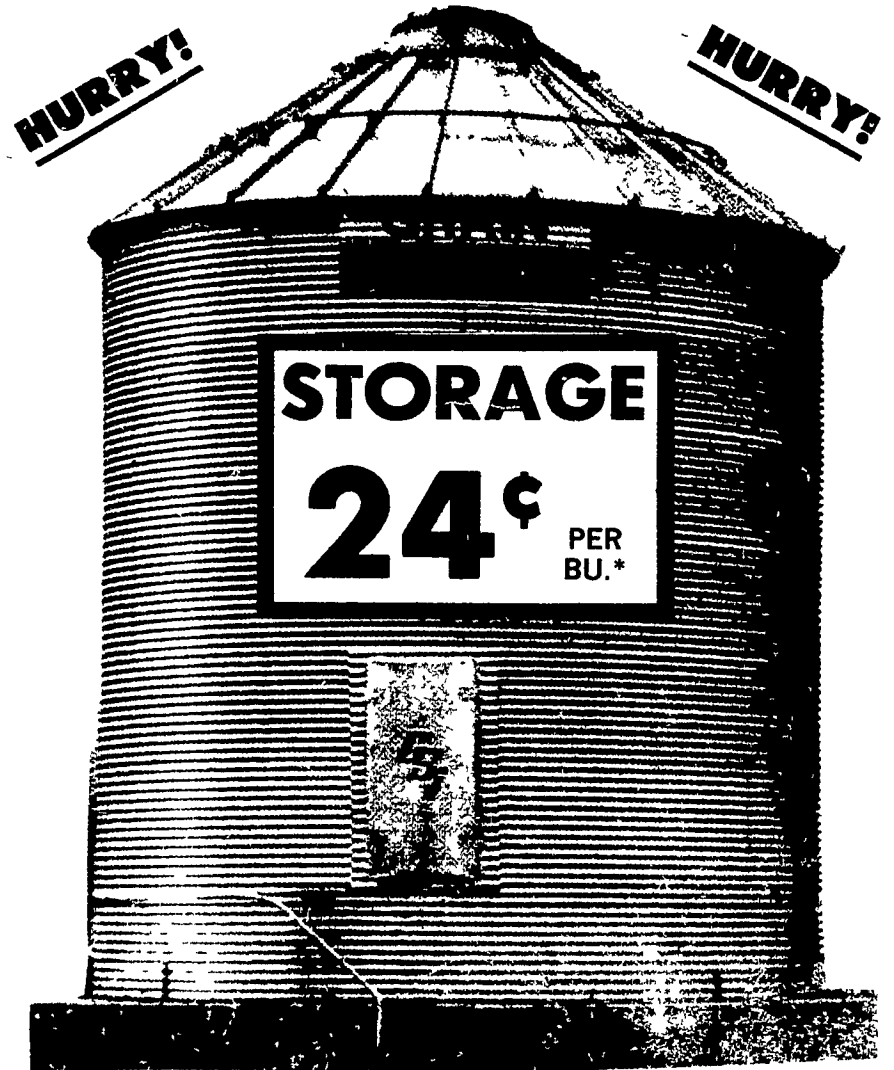
Montgomery estimates that raising tomatoes in his 124 by 30 foot building will yield him 1000 pounds of tomatoes each week. "We pick them several days before they are fully ripe," Montgomery said, "they ripen naturally, not artificially" he added.

Montgomery expects his tomato yield to decrease during the short-day December months because he does not use artificial lighting. He expects the yield to increase again in January and continue into June of 1979. When the plants are 12 months old, they reach the end of their reproductive efficiency. At that point the

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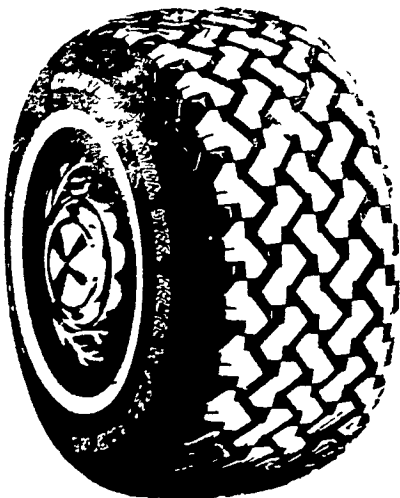
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