

Growth Technology

Press Release

Our company was recently asked to install a number of AquaFlow NFT systems at the Plant Sciences Laboratory at Cambridge University. We completed this work in the last few months of 2001.

Cambridge has been a recognised seat of learning since around 1200 and the sense of history and scholastic achievement is writ large in the magnificent and richly endowed colleges. It was a great experience to be working there for sure. On one occasion we were looking through a dusty window at another laboratory across the courtyard and were told that this was the laboratory where Crick and Watson unravelled the mysteries of DNA in 1953.



Arabidopsis flower

Our systems were needed for volume production of Arabidopsis under lights. *Arabidopsis thaliana* is a non-descript weedy little plant that has been plucked from obscurity and has become, to researchers at least, one of the most important plants on the planet. It is the first plant to have its genetic structure fully mapped and it was chosen for this work because of its relatively simple structure and, most importantly, because of its very short life cycle. The scientists at Cambridge are part of the Arabidopsis Genome Initiative, an international collaboration of research institutions that was set up to sequence the genome of the chosen “model plant”.

This little plant has now become the “fruit fly” of horticultural research. They have its genetic blue print to hand and can

conduct experiments that cover a number of generations in just a few months. Of course this has led to the need for continuous supplies of new healthy plants at various stages of growth. This is where we came in. The AquaFlow system is a free standing NFT system but it has the capability to be stacked two or three layers high and this maximises the production of clones, or any small plants from a given area. The old buildings at Cambridge are very beautiful to look at but they are not always an ideal working environment inside. Space is always limited and has to be utilised carefully. The flexibility and modularity of the AquaFlow system has proved to be the ideal system for maximum plant production in a restricted area.



Arabidopsis plants in AquaFlow systems at Cambridge Dec 2001

Obviously plants need light to grow and Arabidopsis actually has quite high light requirements. All the systems at Cambridge are illuminated by WhiteFire Fluorescent units. This lighting system has proven to be superbly suited to the task, giving high levels of light in exactly the right wave band without excessive heat.

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