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## **[cg] Re: Earth Boxes**

[Don Boekelheide Mon, 13 Mar 2006 21:39:57 -0600](#)

About Earth Boxes:

Here is a very clever homemade version:

<http://www.josho.com/Earthbox.htm>

Even if you don't make it, it shows how they work.

A cheaper way to accomplish much the same thing would be to use gro-bags (the BBC has a good basic primer):

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/basics/techniques/growfruitandveg\\_usingagrowingbag.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/basics/techniques/growfruitandveg_usingagrowingbag.shtml)

Fertilization in either system (or any kind of gardening) can be successfully handled 'organically' or 'synthetically' - the nutrient ions themselves are the same, no matter whether they come from chemical fertilizer or a certified organic product (feather meal, bone meal, etc...). I think an organic approach has many advantages, but that's especially true when using it to build soil - which you don't really have to care about with the box or bag. An organic approach usually does cost more, and requires more materials (since the concentration of 'macro' nutrients (NPK) is generally lower).

Personally, unless there is some major problem finding suitable land (absolutely no space; contaminated soils, endemic disease in soil, etc.), I prefer gardening in a garden.

One hidden cost of these systems is that management demands are relentless. The plants are totally reliant on the technology working correctly and on your care. They are 'boy in a bubble' techniques. For starters, you need to come up with a suitable soil (or soil-less medium) to fill your box/bag. Then, there is watering, troubleshooting, etc, etc.

You also won't create a garden with these - You'll grow plants as 'crop machines' in a little factory of plastic boxes or sacks that cranks out a product for sale or consumption. Gardens as gathering places, environmental greening, places of transformation and beauty - you won't find much of that down this path. I suggest being cautious, and really trying to envision what you'll be ending up with.

Good luck, keep us posted,

Don B, Charlotte, NC

(What UN agency is advocating them? In Peace Corps, I surely didn't see materials and resources that would make this approach cost-effective in Togo, except maybe for selling European veggies to expats in Lome, the capital - and that would come only at the cost of market share for traditional truck gardeners working

in the soil and composting wastes).

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