

Grow plants without soil

Developed in the USA for people living in apartments, the Aerogarden – billed as ‘the world’s first kitchen garden appliance’ – has recently gone on sale in the UK. We gave one to a busy family to try out at home over a six-week period.

Despite its hi-tech appearance, it was easy and fun to set up, and came with clear instructions. Seven types of herb seed supplied in their own little plastic cocoons all germinated on cue. The lights come on and go off automatically and a panel of lights tells you when you need to lift the lid and top up with water or drop in a fertiliser tablet.

With such an automated system, surely all human error was eliminated? Well, not quite: twice, the machine was accidentally unplugged for a couple of days. Then, one of the lights stopped working so the herbs in that half started growing towards the other light. The manufacturer tells us the bulbs should normally last six months. Despite this hiccup, it was great to have such a wide variety of fresh herbs so

handy in the kitchen, taking up an area about the size of a breadbin (it measures 40 x 26 x 40-53cm/16 x 10½ x 15½-21in).

Verdict: great for gadget lovers who are nervous about compost and plant care commitments, but expensive for green-fingered, eco-friendly gardeners.

The Aerogarden starter kit costs £119.95 plus delivery from www.aerogarden.org.uk. Refills of plants and light bulbs are also available.



Tried & Tested

PHOTO: Gardens Monthly (Justin Lambert)

