Case study – successful small scale bag & rack system
(2016 – per Peter Burns, Eastham grower)

The rack system I use is fashioned on what Big Rock uses in East Dennis. I run a 40ft rack that holds 20 bags. The legs and cross members are 1” PVC electrical conduit. The legs are 2ft long and the crosses are 3ft. The bags lay on 4 pipes of 3/4” PVC electrical conduit…not 3 as in the picture. Nothing is glued together I knock it apart and lay it down for the winter (have not lost a thing in 4 years). The best thing is that one rack costs $86.92 at present Home Depot price. The rebar racks now run about $75/rack and at 5 bags /rack you have a cost of $300 and you HAVE to bring them in for the winter! I attach the bags with bungee cords that I make up but other growers use zip ties. The disadvantage with the zip tie is if you need to work on a bag you have to cut the ties and then reattach.

I use 3 racks and I grow out 60K oysters. I start out with R8 seed that ARC overwinters (current price $38.00 per thousand). I put 1000 in a bag and the volume of that seed is just about 500 milliliters. The seed grows out in a 6 mil square mesh bag. I try to flip the bags over on a weekly basis but it gets most important as the seed gets bigger close to August. By mid-October the bulk of the seed is up to close to 2 1/2” and my seed is diploid. I find that most of my crop either petite or 3” can go to market the second Summer or Fall.

I agree that 150 for second year growout is a good number but if you want to use 1” bags as in the picture you can push 200 in a bag but again 150 is a safer number. With the current popularity for petite oysters at 2.5 you can move product to market but at a lower price. With current pricing at 55 cents for petite and 60 cents for legals I’m not pitting a petite so I can grow it to a legal to make a nickel.

The best advice I can give would be when you are starting out is use the biggest seed you can afford. Obviously small seed has to go in a small mesh bag and they easily foul …flow gets restricted …growth slows you might even get some die off.

With a newbie starting out the 85% survival may be somewhat optimistic.

ARC (Dick Kraus) also advises going with diploids as opposed to triploids. The trips grow like mad the second year but if they become unhappy they shut right down while the diploids (like a Volkswagen) just keep grinding along.
These are photos of the field plant seed mid-October Year one.