

WITH SPACE AND GREEN COVER
DISAPPEARING, TERRACE
GARDENING IS BECOMING
A HIT IN BANGALORE



ROOFTOP

'FARMHOUSE'

NISHANTH S COOFTOOR

Necessity is the mother of invention, they say. Even as we are complaining about the depleting green cover, many have devised ingenious ways to bring green into their homes, or rather, on top of their houses.

Called 'terrace gardening', it is an old concept that has managed to catch the fancy of the younger generation. The term basically refers to a garden on a terrace, roof or patio of a house.

EXTENDED GARDEN

It's just a mere elevation of an ordinary garden," says Myna of Green Carpet Garden Centre, a shop that provides for gardening needs. "It's time for pots to move over and think about developing a lawn. You can even grow plants in a balcony or small spaces on the roof-top," Myna adds. That is something the city folks are doing like never before. Hidden amidst Bangalore's concrete jungle is Anusuya S Sharma's terrace garden. She grows both flowering plants such as roses, gladiolus, dahlia, mogra, hibiscus and loves plucking vegetables from 'her farm'.

The list includes beans, chillis, radish, mint, tomato, palak and double beans. "It all started because of my interest towards this since 1990. I happened to attend a talk on the subject and later tried it at home," says Anusuya.

AIRY FEELING

She says as buildings sprang up around her house, restricting fresh air and sunlight to the plants, she shifted the pots to the terrace. After that, Anusuya started growing all kinds of

plants, including vanilla, on her terrace.

"Growing plants on the terrace is not just a hobby. It's so exciting to bring in new plants, nurture them and see them shoot up," she says. Not surprisingly, Anusuya's garden has caught the attention of not just her neighbours. "I have had handcoots climbing up my garden, ants making their way into the plants and monkeys dropping by."

SECRET WEAPONS

Anusuya gives away her 'secret weapons'. "One can reduce costs by preparing fertilisers and pesticides at home. I grow 'trap crops' like tulsi, marigold and garlic. One can also make sprays using these. I also recycle kitchen waste and use it as compost," she says.

"It does take some time and patience to maintain it," she adds.

But maintaining a terrace garden is not an expensive affair. One can save on money by growing plants in gunny bags, wood or thermocol boxes.

"There are some factors that one needs to keep in mind," says Myna. It is important to water-proof the building to prevent any damage. Enthusiasts must ensure that the terrace can withstand weight or allow plant to grow to a certain height. "A tree up to a height of eight feet can be grown on the terrace," she says.

With the limited space that is available in the city today, it makes sense to go vertical. It's time we thought of growing basic crops on our terraces. "It is healthy and economical if you can grow what you eat," says Dr B N Viswanath, retired botany professor from UAS and author of *A Handbook of Organic Terrace Gardening*.

SOIL-FREE

While most 'green guns' are aware of terrace gardening, very few are aware of a method that aims at cultivating plants in a soil-less environment - Hydroponics, to be precise.

"When we use soil to grow plants, it brings with it diseases and weeds. With no soil, these problems are rooted out. Here soil is replaced with recyclable substrates that include rice husk and so on," says CV Prakash, the founder of Optimus Interweave, Australia. His institute has tied up with Institute of Simplified Hydroponics, USA, and launched a project called 'Pet Bharo' or 'The Fill Your Stomach' project. Explaining about the project, Prakash says farmers always face

the problem of water shortage and stagnant yield and over-use of pesticides. However, this method increases the yield by 200-600 per cent. Although he plans to help spread this concept at the grassroot level through workshops, this is a viable option to practise at home. A garden can be started for about \$100 investment demanding a labour of about one to two hours a day. Ginger, garlic, onion, cabbage, carrot, tomato, potato and greens can be grown.



Myna in her green space

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