

Basic Gardening Techniques

By

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Nothing succeeds like success. A person who understands the basic principles - the location of the garden for sunlight, sow good quality seeds, checks the fertility and quality of soil, the quality and proportion of watering can be a successful gardener. All that is required is a little skill, imagination and perseverance and exchange of mind on gardening techniques with fellow amateurs. Such an amateur with experience behind will turn an expert.

This article is an outline of basic principles of gardening. It is aimed at providing a flavour of the techniques to be followed and be aware of while gardening. In a nut shell this article deals with: (a) garden planning, (b) buying plants and sowing seeds, (c) soil and manure, (d) watering of plants, (e) pinching and pruning, (f) mulching, and (g) pests and diseases.

Garden Planning

Plan according to the location of your garden. There are hundreds of kinds of plants which can be grown in our home conditions in any design scheme that suits. Sun is important to grow grass fruiting flowering plants and vegetables. Availability of sun greatly affects the choice of plans and planning of a garden.

Apart from evergreens, aromatic and flowering plants one must grow some vegetables. Leafy vegetables can be grown as borders. Rock garden or water body can be good focal point. Topiaries are another feature can be added if space permits. Ground covers like peperomia, vadelia or coleous can be grown in semi shaded areas. Creepers and trailing plants can be used as screen or trained on pergolas which will enhance the beauty of garden. At the time when space for growing plants is shrinking, we can extend garden upward walls and pillars can be used. Delicate plants, herbs, flowers and vegetables can be grown. Hanging baskets is also good option.

Buying Plants and Sowing Seeds

Buy plants according to your requirements and conditions. Always buy healthy and pest free plants. Yellowed, spindly, wilted, damaged and pot bound plants should be avoided.

Whilst buying a grown plant is a good option you may consider growing plants by sowing seeds. Buy fresh good quality seeds. Seeds germinate much more readily if the soil is warmed with a sheet of black polythene for two weeks before sowing seeds. Sprinkle compost layer over freshly sown seeds, it protects the seeds from light and prevents from drying out. Collect your own seeds in paper packets instead of polythene bags and store them in airtight jars in cool places.

Soil

Loam soil is considered to be the best medium to grow plants. To improve the structure of soil FYM and Compost should be added. Plants also need macro nutrients to keep plants healthy and disease resistant, these include nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Nitrogen is needed for general growth and leaf development. Phosphorus promotes root development and the production of seeds and

fruit. Potassium is essential to flower and fruit formation and also adds colour to the flowers and makes fruits juicier. You can use organic NPK to meet these needs of your plants. NPK is eco friendly, long lasting and slow releasing. FYM, neem khali, bonemeal, and wood ash are good source of NPK. Liquid manure if given fortnightly enhances the vigour of plants. Apart for the above you should add trace elements to your plants. These are to be added in very small quantities once a year.

Watering

Most plants are lost on account of over watering rather than deficient watering. You should remember that plants like other living beings need most water when they are actively growing or when temperature is high. Also in case of potted plants you should note that plants potted in clay pots will need frequent watering in comparison to plants potted in plastic pots.

While watering you should ensure that the plants are watered thoroughly, i.e. the water reaches down to the roots of the plant. Evening and early morning is the best time to water.

Washing of leaves is also very important. Clean leaves help the plant absorb more light and keeps the plant healthy.

Pinching and Pruning

Pinching and pruning of plants on a regular basis is important. Pinching promotes strong, compact and bushy growth. It also promotes more blooms on seasonal flowering plants. It is important not to pinch plants during damp weather.

Plants should be pruned so as to keep them in shape, and encourage fruiting and flowering in plants. Right time to prune is beginning of the growing season when sap is rising. Always use sharp secateurs to prune and ensure that the cut should neither be close nor too far from the growing bud.

Mulching

Mulch conserves moisture and improves the fertility of the soil. It suppress weeds from germinating, repels slugs and snails. Various mulch like sawdust, bark, compost, stone pebbles, straws can be used. Coffee ground and tea leaves also is good mulch for acid loving plants like Azaleas, Rhododendrons and Ferns.

Pest and diseases

You should as a matter of habit keep your garden clean. You should remove and destroy the affected plants to prevent diseases from spreading to other plants. You may, as a last resort, consider using organic pesticides or fungicide to protect your plants.

You can make organic pesticides at home. Neem, tobacco leaves, garlic, and turmeric to name a few can be boiled and stored in bottles. Do remember to dilute these with water before spraying these on plants.
