

a life in Gardening

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Gardening has always been an integral part of my life. I would like to share how this hobby has helped me throughout my life with the hope that readers can draw inspiration from my experience.

Since my childhood, I have been deeply associated with gardening. My family home has a large and beautiful garden in a hilly area of Uttarakhand. Here we grow not only a vast variety of fruits and vegetables, but also a large area has been reserved for growing flowers - both seasonal and perennials. I grew up in this environment and my lifetime ambition was to carry on working as a gardener.

Throughout my working life, as I moved from place to place, I always tried to create a garden in my home. This varied according to circumstances and availability of space but, even in a small area, I would keep pots - these would have to be moved along with my other belongings when I transferred to a different location. Gardening taught me to be flexible and how to adapt with changing circumstances.

"He who owns a garden, however small it may be, whose hands have planted it - flower, bush or tree; He

who watches patiently the growth from nurtured, who thuds a newly open bloom, is very close to God" - Katherine Edelman

Gautam Buddha said - "When you like a flower, you just pluck it. But when you love a flower, you water it daily."

The general landscape would be a lawn in the centre with beds all around. Mainly shrubs were planted in the beds which would be green throughout the year. I collected a large variety of roses over the years. Seasonal flowers (for example chrysanthemum, geranium, pansies) would be grown in pots and arranged along the garden. New ideas were developed to cope with space restrictions and to accommodate all plants - for example, wooden steps (shelves) provide more area to keep pots at different levels.

"Much of the satisfaction of gardening comes from nurturing plants and seeing them thrive"

After my retirement, a few fellow gardening enthusiasts formed a Floricultural Society, Noida. The Society came up with the idea of holding monthly meetings where they facilitate lectures by renowned horticulturists to guide the members. The knowledge is shared between keen gardeners, and all appreciate the benefits of this wonderful hobby.

Since its formation, The Floriculture Society, Noida has very keenly devoted time in other activities. One of the most important being the Annual Flower Show which is held usually at the end of February. We work in conjunction with Noida Authority and with time it has become one of the largest shows in Northern



India. The show is a big source for purchasing various new varieties of flowers, fruits and vegetable plants. We gather much knowledge of plants and seeds from these flower shows. One can get the latest expertise from the sales teams, as well as from the growers from all over the country. There is an opportunity to consult various nursery owners from various parts of India and abroad. Each year, the latest new and unusual varieties are on display which inspire gardeners. Garden designers constantly come up with a new stream of ideas and one wonders how this can be achieved year after year. Perhaps it comes from a passion for plants, and a desire to create an environment in which the plants thrive well.

Across the world there are great gardening styles and traditions. As such, many features and schemes for planting combinations can be adapted in our own home garden - there will always be room for new, unusual plants.

As a matter of fact, gardening is very good for us. It is relaxing, eases stress, provides exercise and improves psychological well-being. My fellow gardeners admit that just looking at their garden lifts their mood.

"There is nothing more spiritual than watching what you have planted in the ground. You plant it, you nurture it, and God provides the sun and the rain and helps it to grow. You see the absolute beauty. There is beauty in the simplest things - the flowers or the bark of the tree. Sometimes it belones us to stop and look."

Planting extra plants, and not paving over already green areas increases air cooling as well as improving air quality. This actually traps pollution and simultaneously insulates buildings. Vegetation mitigates flooding as it helps to intercept and reduce the impact of heavy rainfall. Your garden can add to the value of your home.

Gardening is a serious activity. In turbulent times,

it provides reassurance but it is not a place for sorrow or humour. Gardening has helped me to cope with the loss of my wife.

"To cultivate a garden is to walk with God" - C N Bowser

I observe that the weather is changing. The day has started to be cold and there is nothing but bitter weather to look forward to in the immediate future - in these times, it can be an uplifting exercise to have thoughts for creating something new in the garden. Generally, my garden-planning could be described as stale - there are areas within the garden which could do with a bit of freshening up. But I have realised that as I spend more time in the garden, I need it all times of the year.

The more depth we create in the garden, the more interest we take - it gives back more enjoyment as we put more into it. From late spring to autumn, using perennials and grass, bulbs and climbers as well as shrubs, we create a changing picture. To me, shrubs can provide interest throughout the year. For people who are busy, and really want to save labour by not engaging with the garden, shrubbery is the answer. On the other hand, there are people for whom gardening is an activity of joy including working out what to grow, when to grow and how the garden changes throughout the year. A garden is a constant source of delight, whatever be the solution. There are perennials that will thrive well, so the challenge lies in choosing the right variety for the borders. When you achieve a good result, it will provide a tremendous satisfaction.

Gardening has now become increasingly popular and is a big industry supplying everything a gardener might need: ornaments, landscaping materials and a large variety of plants and seeds. Expert advice is also available via the internet and media, along with books on the subject.

Thus gardening for me (as for many other keen gardeners) is a big source of inspiration. It keeps me busy, provides deep knowledge, and has led to good health as well as enjoyment throughout my life.

"Gardening adds years to your life and life to your years" - Unknown

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