

THE PLOT

A good garden requires constant care

You can maintain your garden perfectly with a few tricks of the trade, says N. CHANDRAMOHAN REDDY



ALL ROUND CARE: Clean, bathe and nurture your garden daily. - PHOTOS: N. CHANDRA MOHAN REDDY

Once the dream on paper is concretised, it is time to take a deep breath and relax, one would assume. But a garden is like a child with perpetual growth. One must clean it, bathe it, dress it, and nurture it on everyday basis, for it to remain spanking fresh. In short, one must mother it constantly with love and care. But don't give up, as you can maintain the garden perfectly with a few tricks of the trade.

Watering

Plants require water for proper growth, without which they will wilt and die. But too much water is bad for plant growth. Quantity and frequency of watering shall be

decided based upon various factors such as season, type of plants, light, soil, drainage and stage of plant growth. More water may be necessary during hot and windy weather, in dry sandy soils, for crowded intensive plantings and for the container plants.

Young or new plantings require more water with frequent intervals at the soil surface to help their roots get established whereas mature plants with deep roots shall be watered heavily and less often.

Feeding

Plants require large quantities of Nitrogen which is readily leached from the soil. It must be applied each year for vegetative growth. Phosphorus and Potassium are vital for leaf, stem and root development. Besides these three major nutrients, there are certain other elements like Calcium, Magnesium, Sulphur and other micronutrients required in smaller quantities for proper growth. Factors such as soil alkalinity, organic matter content, temperature and microbial activity will influence whether these elements are available to plants when they need them.

Manure helps raise soil nutrient levels by adding the organic matter content which improves the structure of the soil and the ability to hold water and nutrients. But they also could aid weed growth.

The term 'weed' is applied to all unwanted plants that compete with the desired ones for light, moisture and nutrients. Weeds pose a

constant problem to the gardens. Often they are the hosts for diseases and insect pests. Early identification and physical removal of the weeds can solve the problem. Proper soil preparation, closer planting and mulching prevent the weeds to a larger extent. When these methods are not feasible, chemical control may be needed.

Pruning

There are several reasons to prune the garden plants. You might be pruning the dead leaves or branches to keep the plants presentable, to encourage a more balanced growth habit, to control and maintain the plant growth in a particular direction or shape, to avoid shade on the neighbouring plants or to remove the diseased portion for preventing the spread of infection. The frequency and intensity of pruning depends on the objective, type of plants and season. Plants should be pruned in the beginning of the growth season or just after they have finished flowering. But removal of dead leaves and branches can be taken up year-round.

Lawn care

While most maintenance procedures for lawns are common to the other garden plants, there are certain special operations required for proper lawn management. While feeding the lawns, use one that is higher in nitrogen in spring when the leaf growth is at its peak, and one that is higher in potassium in autumn to toughen the grass for winter.

Dethatching (removal of dead grass that lies above the soil) is required at least once in a year for better soil aeration and good growth. Top-dressing (up to 1 cm thickness) with sandy soil is used to level a lawn or fill in any bald or damaged patches. Edging of lawns shall be done to avoid spread of lawn grass and also to define the geometric shape of the lawn. Mow your lawn according to the rate of its growth and don't remove more than one third of its height each time.

Pests and diseases

Beauty of any garden depends on good health of the plants. Generally plant diseases are caused by parasitic organisms (bacteria, fungi, virus, nematodes and external pathogens like insects and mites) or non-parasitic disorders (injuries, nutrient and moisture imbalances, adverse environmental conditions). Maintaining hygiene in the garden, having balanced soil mix with required organic content and good drainage, allowing enough light, proper watering and feeding in different seasons are essential. Post infection management includes quarantine, and cultural, chemical and biological control measures.

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HIRING CHOICES

Renting a life

Hiring options include a variety of furniture and electronic gadgets, says RASHI TIWARY



HOST OF OPTIONS: Venkateswara Furnitures offers a variety of furniture for the purpose of hiring. - PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL

If you're new to the city, you would have discovered by now that it's rather difficult to acquire a fully furnished house. Most of the times, even if you find a house through a broker, you end up only with a semi-furnished flat.

It is here that 'furniture for hire' which came up in different parts of the city can help you solve your dilemmas.

Here is an example of what is on offer. At RK Stores in Secunderabad, a mattress comes for a monthly charge of Rs.150, a sofa set for Rs.500 per month and a chair and table for Rs.200 per month.

Because the market is highly competitive, rates are more or less the same in all such stores.

At a similar store in Begumpet, the rate for hiring a cupboard for a month is Rs.300 and a dining table comes at a monthly rental of Rs.450. The proprietor, Vinayak Rao, says that the influx from different places, be it families or young professionals, who have been either transferred or taken up new jobs in the city, gave the industry a boost. Business is only growing by the day and is becoming increasingly profitable, he says.

To keep pace with the demand, such stores also invest in advertising. They try to popularise their services by placing ads in newspapers and also registering themselves with websites such as www.sulekha.com and

www.justdial.com.

Several of these stores also have electronic gadgets like televisions, washing machine, air coolers and refrigerators available on rent. While a refrigerator can be taken on rent for Rs.500 per month, a television set is available for Rs.600.

Debangana Singh, a working professional who just moved to Hyderabad and shares a flat with three others in Banjara Hills, says, "It's more reasonable to rent out furniture than buy it. Plus, if we rent, we can get a variety of items such as refrigerators, television sets and air-coolers that would otherwise meant a huge one-time investment". The hiring charges are shared by flat mates so that there is no pressure on just one person.

In several cases, working professionals from different cities staying here do not like to invest because there is the problem of transporting furniture to different cities when they need to move. Moreover, in the case of a refrigerator or television, investing in a second-hand one can prove to be a bad investment as most of these equipments become non-functional soon. Consumers of second-hand electronic gadgets often get cheated especially when they don't have adequate knowledge of how the system works.

Whether you're looking for a quick-fix or a temporary solution, these stores can fulfil your needs.

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