

LATEST IN THE MARKET

Magniflex for sound sleep

Since one-third of each day is spent in sleep, the point is whether it is spent blissfully slumbering or restlessly tossing and turning. Saying that, a lot depends on the mattress. Magniflex has positioned its latest product Duoform XS Firm mattress as specially crafted Italian masterpiece.



The new product is presented as one backed by an array of comfort factors and support feature. The core of it consists of an inner layer of Memoform Magnifoam and Eliosoft which aid in comfort, contouring and cushioning.

Embroidered by artisans with heart patterns, the "Love Sleep Cover" has been made of thermo-regulating Nulast Fabric created by the research of NASA and self regulates the body temperature, according to a press release.

Washing machine with rust proof plastic

Samsung Electronics has announced the launch of its new Direct Cool refrigerator and semi-automatic washing machine range.

According to a company press release, the new and improved range offers enhanced convenience and smarter savings. It promises energy efficiency, eliminates the need of a separate stabiliser and is equipped with 'Coolpack' feature that delays the rise in temperature even when the power is off. The range is offered in floral colour patterns and priced between Rs.11,300 to Rs.18,900.



Indus, the new range of washing machine from Samsung comes with a rust proof plastic and is available in four variants ranging from 6.5 kg to 7.2 kg capacities that are priced between Rs.10,950 and Rs.11,950.

Video door phones from Zicom

Zicom Electronic Security Systems has launched its IP-based Multi-Apartment Video Door Phones with Touch Screen technology and High-Definition supported 7-inch and 8-inch Indoor Units.

The indoor units' touch-screen facility allows hassle-free communication and when the apartment owner is not at home, the SD card slot saves the visitor's image. According to a press release, the units can be used as a screen to view multimedia files and also act as digital photo frames.



The two-way visual intercom between flats comes with an in-built camera in the indoor unit. It supports audio conversation and also allows residents to view each other during intercom calls. An in-built intrusion facility also supports multiple alarms such as fire, glass break, smoke and motion.

The wall mountable indoor unit does away with the need of a stand and the water-proof feature protects them against water sprayed from any direction, the press release adds.

Dewdrops bath ware from Prayag Polymers

Here is a new range from Prayag Polymers manufacturing bath and other kitchen & sanitary accessories. They have brought out Dewdrops collection of bathroom accessories from the H2O series. It lends a perfect mixture of elegance and sophistication to match your mood and choice. It has a breathtaking look and is made of brass metal, chrome plating and premium glossy finish.

Use of brass metal and glossy finish are meant to prevent rust or accumulation. The range comprises 12 different models with adjustable height in tune with your space and interiors.

The H2O series is available in all the leading retail hardware or bath ware stores across India. There is a warranty of 7 years.

A flower shower in the garden

Cassia plant is fully covered with flowers during blooming period and provides showy and delicate foliage during other times of the year, writes N. CHANDRAMOHAN REDDY



ATTRACTIVE: Cassias are evergreen, semi-evergreen or deciduous types with white, yellow, pink, orange or red flowers. -PHOTOS: N. CHANDRAMOHAN REDDY

A bloom, they provide an illusion of flowery shower halted midway. Devoid of blooms, the bright green foliage lends a luxuriant look to the whole garden. One of the oldest category of plants used in gardens, *Cassia* is a gardener's delight, as well as of the garden!

Cassia is a large genus of hardy flowering plants in the legume family (Leguminosae) with about 760 species of herbs, shrubs and trees distributed across continents.

Some of the *Cassia* species have long been studied and cultivated throughout the world for their medicinal properties and showy inflorescences.

Cassias are short trunked, with spreading branches and smooth bark. The leaves are soft, bright green and pinnate with eight to twelve pairs of oval or oblong leaflets.

Depending on the species, these plants are evergreen,

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semi-evergreen or deciduous types with white, yellow, pink, orange or red flowers. Flowers are five-petaled, bowl shaped, borne in clusters along branched or unbranched inflorescences. Fruit is legume, tubular or flattened; seeds are small and compressed. *Cassia* plant is fully covered with flowers during the blooming period and provides showy and delicate foliage during other times of the year and hence it can be the centre of attraction in a garden.

Their long blooming period makes them valuable addition to any landscape. Another added benefit with *Cassia* plants is that they serve as larval host plants for many types of butterflies.

Cassias can be grown in moist but well drained moderately fertile and neutral soils. They need full sun for optimum growth and profuse, colourful blooms. Watering shall be done as

per the climatic requirements. Since Cassias require moist soils for their optimum growth, profuse watering is needed during the growth period. Regular deep watering is required till the plants are established after which it can be reduced. Watering shall be minimised during winter.

Fertilize the plants before the commencement of the flowering season to have good display of blooms. Balanced liquid fertilizer shall be applied in the spring and monsoon.

With their lean stems and branches, Cassias are susceptible to wind damage. Staking (Tying the plant to long straight stick fixed in the ground for holding it erect) is needed to protect them from wind during the initial months till the plant stands on its own.

Cassia plants are generally hardy and resistant to pests and diseases.

Pruning

Cassia plants, with their prolific branching, develop a

disorganized tangle of branches in the canopy. Prune the lower branches on young plants and the drooping branches in mature ones to keep the canopy well structured. All the dead and diseased wood shall be removed.

Cutting back the branches by a third after flowering season will promote profuse blooms in the following season. But heavy pruning before flowering can disrupt the natural timing or production of flowers.

Propagation

Cassia plants can be propagated through seeds. But it is not easy because the seeds are very hard and water tight. Seeds being generally dormant, the process of germination takes quite a long. So the seeds have to be pre-treated with acid (scarification) and soaked in water for about a day for speed sprouting.

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Popular ornamental Cassias / Sennas			
Scientific name	Common name	Origin	Flower colour
Trees			
<i>Cassia fistula</i>	Indian Laburnum, Golden Shower	India and Sri Lanka	Yellow
<i>Cassia grandis</i>	Pink Shower, Coral Shower, Horse Cassia	Central and South America	Deep pink
<i>Cassia javanica</i>	Apple Blossom Cassia / Java Cassia	South East Asia	Pink
<i>Cassia javanica</i> subsp. <i>nodosa</i> (<i>Cassia nodosa</i>)	Pink Shower	South East Asia	Pink
<i>Cassia renigera</i>	Burma Cassia	Burma	Pink
<i>Cassia roxburghii</i> (Syn. <i>Cassia marginata</i>)	Ceylon Senna, Red Cassia	South India and Sri Lanka	Deep pink to red
<i>Cassia x nealiae</i> (Hybrid between <i>Cassia fistula</i> and <i>Cassia javanica</i>)	Rainbow Shower	Hybrid; originally produced in Hawaii	Combination of white, yellow, orange and pink
<i>Senna siamea</i> (<i>Cassia siamea</i>)	Siamese Senna, Kassod Tree	South East Asia	Yellow
<i>Senna spectabilis</i> (<i>Cassia spectabilis</i>)	Calceolaria Shower, Spectacular Cassia	Central and South America	Yellow
<i>Senna surattensis</i> (<i>Cassia glauca</i>)	Sunshine Tree, Scrambled Egg Tree	From Tropical Asia to Australia and the Pacific	Yellow
Shrubs			
<i>Senna alata</i> (<i>Cassia alata</i>)	Candle Bush	Africa, Tropical America, South East Asia, Pacific Islands	Yellow
<i>Senna polyphylla</i> (<i>Cassia biflora</i>)	Christmas Senna, Winter Cassia	Central America	Yellow

► The name *Cassia* comes from the Greek words 'Kassia' given to a related species. *Senna* has its origin from the Arabic word 'Seneh' which refers to the plant *Senna alexandrina*, native to Egypt and traditionally used in herbal medicine as a laxative.

► The genus *Cassia* has been recently divided into two genera, *Cassia* and *Senna*, and now many of the old *Cassia* species have been placed in the genus *Senna*. Though the plants of both the *Cassia* and *Senna* are similar in many characteristics, they differ from each other in certain features, the foremost being the flattened pods, and absence of small leaf-like structures on the flowering stalks (bracteoles) in the latter. In the horticulture trade the terms *Cassia* and *Senna* are often used interchangeably, as these plants were once classified under the large genus *Cassia*.

► All parts of the *Cassia* plants are used in traditional systems of medicine throughout the world, for curing various ailments such as constipation, fevers, urinary ailments etc. But it is not safe to ingest any part of the plant directly. Particularly the seeds are toxic, and care shall be taken that the children and pets are kept away from them.

► The bark of the Tanner's Cassia (*Senna auriculata*), which grows as a weed in open lands of many parts of India, contains one of the best known natural tanning materials and extensively used in processing leather.

► There is an interesting plant among ornamental Cassias called Rainbow Shower (*Cassia x nealiae*) which is a hybrid between *Cassia javanica* and *Cassia fistula*. Many cultivars have been developed out of this hybrid and various varieties have different colours of flowers such as white, yellow, orange and pink. The lack of pods from these sterile hybrids is an added advantage, since the hanging legumes are otherwise very unsightly.

House on stilts: built with a purpose

Lyngdoh Cottage, for instance, was built on a slope. The levelled garden had masses of cosmos flowers in beds of sunrise- yellow and soft-petal mauve and a lush green lawn that moved onto a wrap-around wooden verandah, which was balanced on two-foot high stilts

A House on Stilts- may sound quaint as a headline. A house on stilts in Shillong is very safe and practical, indeed. These light Accra-cane houses are built with a purpose and serve a purpose too.

Lyngdoh Cottage, for instance, was built on a slope. The levelled garden had masses of Cosmos flowers in beds of sunrise- yellow and soft-petal mauve and a lush green lawn that moved onto a wrap-around wooden verandah, which was balanced on two-foot high stilts.

Ten feet away were the second range of concrete stilts, four feet off the ground, on which were built the front room, the living room and the bedrooms. The cosmos flowers, growing on thin, drinking-straw-like stems peeped into these rooms. The ground naturally sloped away on one side and this was used to support the pipes and tubes which fed the bathrooms in that area.

The six-foot high pillars that stood further behind supported the dining, cooking and storage areas. Further down, about ten concrete



steps away and running under a sloping asbestos roof, were the servants' quarters. There were bathrooms for them which stood further away in the back garden;

compound demarcations, which designated the boundary to any house or indicated a 'compound limit'. Mild tremors of earthquakes I could detect each time the handle of the brass bucket in the bathroom went jiggling and making a tick-tick-click sound. As if in response Sooty, the Alpine pup (not a strange new breed, but part Alsatian+pi but nice=Alpine!) that we had picked up, would start to whine-and-snuffle and snuggle closer to my feet. The bucket and the puppy were more dependable and accurate than any Richter Scale.

Traditionally, the householder's cattle and goats were tied under the third shelter. It formed a natural shed and stored the hay and cattle feed. Under a huge over-turned basket, the hens were 'cooped' in for the night. In our case the black trunks afforded an even higher perch for a rooster who would want to crow to the world outside and tell them that yet another egg had been laid. Between puppies and children and sometimes a chicken

or two, there was as much to do 'under' the house as within it. What's more, in Shillong's unpredictable weather, there was a dependable covered-space to continue to play and one never had to declare 'Rain! No Game!'

On the last level, the plum trees that fruit in alternate year, fruited the year that we were at Lyngdoh Cottage. At first, birds and the children were up in the trees, eating them off the branches. But soon the children started bringing them to the kitchen in their pockets, then in pouches and bags and then in baskets and buckets. The plums just kept 'Marchin' In' as it were! Bright, shiny maroon, they looked good in the brass fruit bowl or in the crystal dish, or in the plastic tray. Friends began sharing their favourite recipes for plum jam, plum chutney, plum sauce, plum wine and plum brandy. I made each one at least once and the others several times over. No wonder a posting to Shillong was considered a 'Plum Posting'!

MEENA MURDESHWAR