

THE PLOT

# Trees that stand out to make you stand still

**Caudiciforms and pachycauls, some with large flowers, add an element of novelty to the garden, says N. CHANDRAMOHAN REDDY**



**GREEN MATTERS:** Trees are a welcome relief from the monotony induced by routine landscape. Photos: N. Chandramohan Reddy

The very mention of the word 'tree' brings to mind one single prototype with large, roughly-textured woody stem, branching off midway up till the top, where the foliage forms a sprawling crown covered with fresh shoots. Imagination of little children too, as can be seen amply in the drawing and painting competitions, is shaped after this very idea of tree.

But trees in reality do not stick to our imaginary prototypes. So there they are, in as many different shapes, sizes, colours, stems, foliage, and other attributes of appearance as there are species on the earth!

While we often fail to recognise the difference between two plants in our own garden, there are a few varieties, which force us to have a second look at them, and a third too! Standing out as one of their kind, they can be a welcome relief from the monotony induced by routine landscape.

The strange and curious-looking ornamental plants include caudiciform and pachycaul succulents with bulged, fat and disproportionately thick stems, some insect-eating plants, dancing plants, plants with large flowers and plants distinct by their branching patterns, leaf succulents, trees with showy bark, plants with obese trunks, trees shaped as bottles and barrels, readymade multi-crown topiaries and multi-tier trees, dwarf trees, grass trees, tree-form cacti, trees with braided or netted or twisted stems, etc., which can add the novelty element to the garden. (List of such trees with details will be discussed in the forthcoming issue)

They belong to different categories of plant species, from wide ranging taxonomic groups. They are native to many ecological habitats ranging from rainforests, subtropics, semi-deserts to deserts with amazing aesthetic appeal. Some of these plants owe their distinctive looks to careful nurturing. Placing of various categories of these



garden but also highlights the unique features of the plants. Many other plants around these individuals may distract the viewers' attention. Some of the **broad** plants with thick roots will display themselves better when planted with partial visibility of roots above the ground.

**Care**  
Since many of these uncommon plants are not native, more care is needed in shipping, having them settled, planting and maintaining them. Generally, a crane is required for loading, unloading and planting large specimens of trees to keep the shape and texture intact. Plant quarantine regulations should be followed while importing, to avoid spread of pests and diseases.

Before planting them, one should understand the native habitat of the plant, to create similar conditions in the garden. Once settled, the succulent plants can thrive well with less care. Evergreen plants need more care in terms of water and nutrient supply whereas dry succulents require less moisture. Proper drainage is must for all types of plants. Plants from rain forests require humidity and protection from summer heat. Feeding schedule should be based on the requirement of individual plant species.

**Where to get them**  
Most of these plants are exotic and only plant collectors apart from a few nurserymen import them. Some of them are prohibitively expensive. However, when compared with the huge costs incurred on building infrastructure, these plants are affordable.

(To be continued next week)  
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## Fun-iture!

**This online bespoke store turns waste into furniture gold**



hero's factory busy, now, smaller ones like Ahmedabad too are waking up to it.

"Our customer base is rather niche and we are not looking at mass production. We want to make furniture for young people looking for interesting things!" he says.

While anyone can draw up a sketch and get what they want made at Homehero, even the pieces in its current catalogue can be customised.

"While it sounds like a premium service to custom-order furniture and have it delivered to your home, it will actually cost you less," Zech says.

He also explains that using reclaimed materials doesn't just help the environment but also produces wonderful designs with unexpected colours and organic textures. The range includes chairs in various colours, a house bar, tables, benches, drawers with funky prints, and coffee tables.

Find it at [www.homehero.in](http://www.homehero.in)

Homehero, a new online store promises custom-built home furniture that has a history, is handmade and even delivered at your doorstep. But the furniture sure isn't for the fainthearted.

Here's a sample from its catalogue - Impress Inlaws Cabinet (made from recycled wood and original distressed paintwork), Mrs Rajesh (iron stool), Hangover Jute Sack (made completely from recycled jute), Indian Railway Sleepers Table and Stool (made from recycled railway sleepers), Munich Beer Fest Dining Set (as seen at the Munch beer fests). Run by German Wolf Zech, the online store 'upcycles' waste and furniture picked up at auctions held in Jodhpur by the Indian Railways and creates spunky new ware.

Zech left his cushy expat position with the European Union Chambers of Commerce in India to launch HomeHero.

"Now is the best time for entrepreneurship in India. A lot of people say it is difficult to run a business here, but it is very smooth compared to several other countries," he says.

The store is completely online and Zech feels that this has helped in reducing costs. "Now we don't have fixed expenses on real estate which is very expensive, anywhere in India. So all these extra expenses don't trickle down to the customer," he says. And because of the way it is run, the store was set up within two months.

"I decided to start something up in May 2012 and by July found a factory in Jodhpur," he says.

The firm has a small office in Delhi, while all the furniture is made in Jodhpur with the help of three carpenters, who mostly think up of new ideas for products. "They come up with ideas for furniture. Jodhpur has many auctions where we pick up reclaimed wood, tin, railway sleepers, etc." Sometimes the inspiration comes from Zech and business partner Jennifer Duthie too.

While so far orders from big cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore have kept Home-



## INTERIORS

# Blinds for all seasons

**They are available in a wide variety and colours that can make your house look beautiful, says RASHI TIWARY**

With the unusually early onset of summer this year, it would be a good idea to purchase blinds for your house. You can even use them as a substitute for curtains as they give substantially more protection from the heat. It is especially good to have blinds in doors or windows that face the Sun. Similarly, blinds become useful even to insulate the room during the winters.

Dressing up your window is serious business. And that is where the wide variety of shades and blinds in the market comes in handy. From rollers to shutters to honeycomb to duettes, the list goes on. There are also wooden blinds (popularly known as venetian blinds), bamboo blinds and screens, and blinds made from fabric.

Blinds can be either horizontal or vertical. The ones made from fabric are generally made of silk, organza or cotton.

At Devi Enterprises in Jubilee Hills, motorised blinds, i.e., the ones operated with remote controls come in the range of Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 35,000 while the manual blinds that are usually operated with the means of a cord, could cost anywhere between Rs. 900 to Rs. 3,500 per sqft.

Similarly, at Studio Orion, wooden blinds cost Rs. 600 per sqft whereas screens cost Rs. 300 per sqft. Ameena, an employee at the store, says, "These screens act literally as sunscreens by blocking out the harsh UV rays of the sun which can otherwise damage furniture inside the house. They also protect the house from dust and grime".

Starlet Furnishings at Banjara Hills also offers Venetian blinds. The cost of these blinds is between Rs. 110 and Rs. 395 per sqft.

"Venetian blinds lend a simple yet charming



**TRENDY:** Blinds used for window dressing showcased at Starlet Furnishings, Banjara Hills in Hyderabad. - Photo: Mohammed Yousuf

look to the house or office. Moreover, translucent and transparent blinds also lend a sense of privacy to the interior without compromising on the light," says Chandni, an interior consult-

ant at the store. Available in a variety of shades and textures, blinds blend in well with the interiors of most homes and are therefore a viable option.

## Robot to your rescue

Imagine having your home cleaned while you are away, without having to worry about its safety in the hands of strangers. Imagine not waking up to that dreaded message of absence or worse, the quitting of your trusted domestic help. Imagine being able to outsource your domestic duties to a robot a la Chitti from the film Endhiran.

Well that could just be a reality now, with Milagrow Humantech, a company that focuses on providing state-of-the-art intelligent robots that offer round the clock assistance, helping you overcome your dependence on domestic help. According to a press release from the company, Milagrow Redhawk Vacuum Cleaner is one such robot that performs multiple tasks to ensure your home is clean even while you are away.

This new-age robotic domestic help will start cleaning the house at a pre-scheduled time and once it's done cleaning or is low (less than 15%) on battery power, it will return by itself to the docking station to recharge. The Redhawk follows the infrared signal emitted by the docking station and docks itself to the charger. Its key features include robotic charging, scheduling, obstacle detection, stair detection and dirt detection.

The Redhawk is a bag-less model that has a one-litre dustbin to store the dirt it collects. The average power consumption of the robot is about 45 to 60 W. This battery operated machine

uses six different modes to clean. Priced at Rs. 18,990, it is available at home appliance stores such as Croma and also online at [www.flipkart.com](http://www.flipkart.com)

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