



Chalmugra helps fight leprosy.



Tulsi heals cough and common cold.

Nurturing the rare plants

National Botanical Garden in Mirpur now has a collection of about 170 indigenous species of medicinal plants

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

The rare medicinal plant collection at the National Botanical Garden in Mirpur is getting more attention in recent times from enthusiasts amid growing popularity of herbal medicines in the country.

At the first sight it appears to be an ordinary garden full of trees, herbs and shrubbery that usually grow in the wild across Bangladesh but the plant variety in its collection has many wonders to offer.

The medicinal plant section covers about 3 acres

of land nurturing nearly 170 species of rare valuable plants. The collection is based on indigenous species.

Zayed Hossain Bhuiyan, director, National Botanical Garden, said the main objective of the garden is to collect and conserve the fast-disappearing species of plants with rich medicinal value.

"Medicinal plants grow almost everywhere, sometimes in our backyard but we fail to value them for lack of knowledge about the wonders they have to offer," said Bhuiyan.

The botanical garden is a live documentation of these medicinal plants and many more indigenous and exotic plants species. The purpose of the garden is to categorise, document, conserve, research and display for scientific purposes. It also entertain and educate the general public, said the director.

Botanical garden also sells these medicinal plants to interested growers and users.

Established in 1962 covering an area of about 208 acres of land the botanical garden has about 56,000

individual trees, herbs, and shrubs of 950 species including its huge collection of medicinal plants.

The garden is divided into 57 sections and is managed by Forest Department under the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The assortment of the medicinal plants includes rare varieties such as Malabar nut (Basak), Snake root (Sharpa gondha), Devil's cotton (Ulot kombol), Common basil (Tulsi), Thorn apple (Dhutor), The creat (Kaal megha), Periwinkle (Nayantara), Life plant (Pathor kuchi), Arjun, Ashok, Chaste tree (Nishinda), Aloe Vera (Ghrito kumari), Neem, Sandalwood, Henna, Devil's tree (Chhatim), Pennywort (Thaankuni), Curry leaves, Hydnocarpus (Chalmugra) and many more.

Extracts of these plants are commonly used in many modern medicines. Alternative medicine practitioners (Ayurvedic) and traditional healers also value these plants very much. And herbal medicine is becoming more popular.

"If we could blend the practice of using medicinal plants with our modern lifestyle it will help keep us healthy for life," Bhuiyan added.

In Bangladesh about 500 medicinal plants have been found. However, over population and deforestation have led to the extinction of many species. About 106 medicinal plant species have been listed as endangered. But the issue still remains widely ignored.

There is no government policy or rules and regulations about the medicinal plants cultivation, conservation and marketing in the country. Only a few non-governmental organisations and university faculties are working on the plants.

Shamsul Haque, chief botanist of the botanical garden said, about 80 per cent rural population in the country used to be completely dependent on medicinal plants for their primary health care but it gradually lost its footing.

"The local people conserved traditional knowledge through their experience and practices, which was handed down orally without any documentation," said Haque.

Providing technical support in cultivation and raising awareness among the general public about its magic effect can give back its status in the country, he noted.



Bokphool, also used as a food item in the rural areas.



Ulot Kombol helps cure many intestinal ailments.

PHOTOS BY SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

PLANTS THAT FIGHT COMMON ILLNESS

Some of the medicinal plants are widely used across the country.

Malabar nut helps cure cough and lung related diseases and widely used in allopathic cough syrup.

Snake root has the ability to prevent hypertension, heart diseases and sleep disorder.

Bark of Arjun is used for medicinal purpose as in the cure of blood pressure, heart diseases. It is popularly used as a cardiac tonic.

Devil's cotton helps cure intestinal ailments while creat helps to cure fever, worms, dysentery and other gastrointestinal ailments.

Common basil juice mixed with honey is a very good medicine for cough and cold and chaste tree helps relieve pain caused by gouty arthritis.

Life plant is good for urinary problems. Aloe Vera is widely used in skin lotions.

Sandalwood has antibacterial elements good for skin infection. It is also a very popular beauty product.

Neem fights skin infection, works as preservative.

Devil's tree bark increases breast milk. It is also good for cold and asthma.

Pennywort works as appetiser and digestive.

Ashoka bark acts directly on the muscular fibres of the uterus and has stimulating effect on the ovarian tissues helping to prevent menstrual problems.

Henna fights against skin diseases.

Curry leave, an aromatic shrub is a good digestive. It strengthens the liver and helps in the metabolism of fatty acids.



Dhakeshwari Mandir in Lalbagh area



Burdwan House at Bangla Academy

400 YEARS AS CAPITAL CITY

Dhaka Amar Dhaka opens Nov 28

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The 400th anniversary of Dhaka as the capital city will be celebrated amid massive festivity and colourful activities.

A three-year state-level celebration titled 'Dhaka Amar Dhaka,' will be launched on November 28 followed by a daylong programme on the next day.

Chief adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed will officially inaugurate the programmes on the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad at 3 pm, releasing 400 balloons and pigeons.

The grand celebration will include state-level arrangements and events organised by different private bodies presenting the past and present of Dhaka. Various groups and performers have chalked out spectacular shows to mark the occasion.

Committees and sub-committees have been formed to organise and manage the anniversary programmes expected to run till 2010.

The celebration events include firing of cannon, grand rally with horses and elephants, fireworks show and releasing of fanush (lantern) on the opening day.

Among other special arrangements there will be traditional Kawali concert, dances, poetry recitals and performance by Dhaka's

famous traditional comic acts.

To recollect the lost heritage of the city the celebration will also include 'Dhakaiya' food festival, boat race, kite festival and display of Dhaka's world famous fabric the Muslin and Jamdani.

The organisers will also arrange fashion show, painting competition for children, festival of 'Dhakaya'

the city to the new generation.

Booklets, postcards, stamps and souvenir coins will be released presenting the past glory and significance.

Distinguished personalities of the city will also be honoured during the celebration.

Dhaka City Corporation, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, Dhaka

now in appalling state being widely encroached at many points and choked up by severe water pollution.

The authorities will be pressed to make an effort of reclaim the encroached areas of Buriganga and carry out dredging operation in the river to salvage its navigability.

There are several views of historians on the 400 years

of Dhaka as a capital.

According to the most popular version Dhaka was founded in 1608 A.D. as the capital of the Province ruled by Islam Khan during the regime of Mughal Emperor Jahangir and it was at that time renamed Zahangirnagar.

However, the history of Dhaka as a prosperous settlement can be traced all the way back to the 7th century.



Satmasjid in Mohammadpur

sports for the school children.

During the three-year celebration special arrangements will be made to put up shows at historical places and heritage sites like Bahadur Shah park, Lalbagh Fort, Ahsan Manzil, Hosaini Dalan, Curzon Hall, Shankhari Bazaar and other such places to reintroduce the histories and legends of



Ruins of a temple on BUET campus