



Being a great dad is easier than I thought

Quote of the day: A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other.

I have been laughing at that quote for years. I've been laughing a lot less since 2010. Every year, it's been a little less laughter and a little more fidgeting.

Since 2010, I have cast furtive glances at my never ending project: my car. I wonder if I have to let it go for something more sensible, something that doesn't require loving maintenance and care. Something I can neglect, like leaflets that try to sell you herbal medicine from the depths of the Amazon, or a deer. I can't figure which.

Since 2010, every New Year was a step closer to total annihilation of the way things were. 'Way things were' was a comfortable place. It was a known quantity when I was happily broke spending scraped together savings on my problematic but cool-in-my-eyes car. That was 2010.

That is the year my son was born. And I stopped putting my car(s) ahead of everything. It's the year cars became car. Being a dad changes you. For one, I no longer feel the sheer comatose joy of an uninterrupted sleep throughout the night.

Sleep is a series of pit stops involving feeding, bottle washing and subsequent toilet runs for the kid. It's a deal my wife made with me in return for not complaining about the pile of car parts lying under the bed, on top of the wardrobes, in the dog's house and in the kitchen. Our dog just roams free. Well, the wife did stop complaining after making me sell it all off.

2015 and my son is now four. Each New Year is a dreaded year because the worst is yet to come: school runs. People have asked me about his schooling plans since he was one. Most of those people have been my mother in different disguises. Some people I know have been planning to put their kid into coaching classes in preparation for nursery. Didn't even know it existed till it poked me in the eye.

School runs are scary. I have known some people who have aged prematurely from waiting on the road in school time traffic. And then there are the enrolment fees. Each year these fees are like government plans to build bridges: bigger, more cost intensive and promises to stop the progress of everything else.

But then I look at the kid happily sleeping while I type this. School runs are a must. He just promised me today, if I am a good dad, he is going to buy me a Corvette or a Lamborghini police car. And I realise, that is my chance at finally having a cool car. Of course, being a good dad according to him means taking him out to toy stores. A lot!

And for now, that's easy. My resolution for 2015: Be a great dad by taking my kid to toy stores. A lot. 2025 is when great 'daddy' might get a little difficult.

LOVING AND LIVING WITH PLANTS
BY LAILA KARIM



Vegetable gardening

with a difference



THE agricultural sector in Bangladesh has witnessed a silent revolution. Making best use of land is the call of the day and to optimise the use of land endless efforts are being taken, especially at the individual level; innovative ideas are being blended today with scientific approaches.

I will share a story of small town Kurigram, which was once known for its poverty but now a popular field of all development work. Terre des homes (TdH) is a Netherlands based, non-governmental organisation which is working hard since the early days of the 70s. TdH office in Kurigram town is remarkable for many reasons - first for their good work with children and then for its innovative agriculture cum nutrition programmes targeting the need of children.

Pit Hole Garden, as used by farmers of Kurigram, is a useful method for gardening or producing vegetables in a limited space. The front court yard of houses is the showcase of their innovations. To do that a well lit piece of land is required where a pit measuring one-and-a-half feet diameter is made. Now maintaining the same width, start raising the bed gradually up to the upper height of the pit. Fill the hole with layers of hay (khor), a portion of rich soil and manure, some green and dry leaves, perishable vegetable and kitchen wastes (even the drained water from washing rice, fish and meat, egg shells, used tea leaves and ashes produced every day from the household kitchen).

A bucket of water will be required, in between the mixes and at regular intervals. Through the process the pit will start producing potassium and nitrates, which are essential for the vegetable plants to grow well and produce healthy fruits. The pit should be covered with a plastic sheet or a used sack so that no air can pass.

This type of comprehensive gardening is suitable for planting creepers like bitter gourd and 'sheem' (beans) to grow at the

top on the bamboo platform. Different types of seasonal vegetables like egg plant, chillies, and okra can be planted at the upper level of the soil, while plants of smaller size and shape are planted at the bottom.

This will allow several varieties to grow together by sharing the space in a compact manner. You might have noticed that there is a plastic container hanging from the bamboo platform. This is a unique method of pest control to drive away and kill the winter flies (kuji machi) that are harmful for tender fruits like gourds, egg-plant, chilli and cucumber.

A plastic bottle with a capacity of five to six litres will be required. Fill one fourth of the container and add a pinch of regular detergent powder. Along with these a

'vermin bite' needs to be hung from the lid. Through the holes and from the upper open lid, flies will be attracted and fall in to the trap. This bite is available for Tk. 30 per unit, which is enough to cover a season. These are also available in packs at local pesticide shops. The water in the container is to be changed on 30-40 day intervals. This is a natural and an effective bug management system.

To learn more you may contact Altafur Rahman, Aquaculture Specialist and Community Mobilizer of TdH, Kurigram. He will be happy to share his knowledge and skills. Please feel free to send me email to share your thoughts, feedback, and photos of your garden, or to tell your story; or ask a question on the garden issue. Email to: lifestyleds@yahoo.com

