



Green walls, green living

Last week I was on a field trip, travelling to the northern districts of Bangladesh. Among all the places in the northern regions, Rangpur is special to me for many reasons especially because in the late 70's my family spent great times in this beautiful town.



In the days of undivided India, Rangpur was regarded as the gateway to this region due to its connectivity with the neighbouring towns on the other side of the border like Jalpaiguri, Shilliguri, Darjeeling, etc.

Rangpur was also renowned for its heritage buildings, age old trees, and rich culture, well educated people and a group of dedicated pioneer women like Syeda Maleka Ashraf, Anwara Syed, Eienun Nahar (only to name a few) to speak and work on behalf of the marginalised segments of society. This town was also highly regarded for its active civil society but most importantly Rangpur is always very special to us as this is the home of Begum Rokeya. Throughout the years, although Rangpur lost much of its pride, it is once again coming to the forefront. This divisional town, now turning into a city, is unique as it holds the most beautiful office complex of Bangladesh. The organisation is RDRS (Rangpur – Dinajpur Rural Services).

Soon after the war of independence, a Geneva based organisation came forward to assist this poverty stricken area. RDRS, now a national, non-government organisation is serving around 1,600,000 people from 18 districts. The organisation is not only unique with its

services but also different in its overall thinking.

Credit goes to its visionary architect Mobasher Hossain, the then consultant - planner of this complex (who is now the President of the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) and also President of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh). The far sighted archi-



tect not only sensed the essence of the work of the organisation but also thought about a simple and sustainable mechanism of maintenance of this people oriented organisation's

office.

Under the supervision of Almas Parvez (a dedicated long-time staff), Abdur Rahman has been doing the gardening work all by himself. He just used three types of wall creepers to decorate the office walls and few low maintenance plants and trees for the total premises.



All these creepers and plants are seen and available in small and big towns.

He placed the climbing one at the soil base around the walls and this only ensured that the

soil is wet enough to keep them alive and grow well. That's it! No fertiliser or insecticides are ever used to add vitality to the walls and their climbers. The walls are kept open – not polished with cement or covered with paints. I learnt that 'Paulding Plastering Insulation' is used to keep the walls dry. This uneven raw base allows the creepers to tighten their grips and helps them climb up.

For the vines, a cannal-type lining was made around the edges of the roofs, then filled with soil and fertilisers and creepers planted all over the lining. The vines grew fast and after a while they start multiplying themselves and flow down and created an amazing sight!

This, provided with some care, can easily be replicated in any urban setting. All you need is some patience. So start soon after completion or renovation of your house, building or flat. You will not only be relieved of the periodic expenses of painting and cleaning, but will enjoy the appreciation of the beholders!

Please feel free to send me emails to share your thoughts, feedback and photos of your garden, or to tell your story or ask a question on the gardening issue. Email to: lifestyleds@yahoo.com

Photo courtesy: Laila Karim