

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

Farmer at heart

HOW many times have you bought the nicest looking fruit and taken it home expecting a pat on the back only to be disappointed? The chances are high, even higher if you have grand parents. See, your grand parents never miss a chance to point out how the fruits and vegetables these days appear bland in taste.

They never miss an opportunity to tell you how fresh they got their greens and try as many organic-labelled items as you wish, it is impossible to match up to their expectation. But, remember the old adage: if you want something done, then do it yourself.

That's right, we are talking about harvesting your own fruits and vegetables.

It's the safest option really and you can hardly go wrong. You could produce the tiniest piece of guava ever seen, but if you do it in your own garden, it'll probably end up tasting better than everything else on the market.

If the taste fails, the freshness will not and there will be that reassurance that this thing is really formalin free. While you may argue that the current generation considers formalin an acquired taste they are fond of, in reality that is not true. Formalin is one of the reasons you will probably live a lot less than your grand-parents.

Of course, health and taste are not the only two factors. There's something earthy about growing your own food. Planting the



seed, watching the plant grow, nurturing it day after day and finally harvesting the fruit or vegetables brings about an unparalleled feeling of emotion.

It's like having your first child. It really is like having your own baby of sorts and the experience itself is rewarding. Plus, the entire process really gets you in touch with nature and that itself births a strange sort of comfort and tranquillity.

While plant rearing may not require too much hard work at first glance, it does though require a lot of patience and perse-



verance. Your first harvest will not be the greatest. Like a lady, plants have ticks and tricks that are hard to understand. Only by spending time with your plant and understanding its hidden requirements will you grow progressively as a gardener.

Start small. Considering the urban setting that is Dhaka, space will be an issue. For that reason, first start off in an area with plenty of sunlight, such as the rooftop.

As a beginner, try not to exert yourself too much at first go and end up with disappointing results. Try plants such as herbs,

head and leaf lettuce, chilli, radishes and such. They are easier to manage and can be grown in a container garden, meaning one where the plants are in pots, jars and plastic bottles.

Get organic potting soil for best results and never hesitate to consult those who are keen gardeners for more tips. Consult a gardener as well in order to find the best seeds and where to find them. Gardening is a peaceful activity and does not need to be rushed, so with patience you will be rewarded.

As you learn, let your garden grow in a free range environment. Do not try to control their growth or add chemicals because someone suggested it. Check your plant regularly, especially the leaves to see if any spots are developing or not.

Water your plants as required. Some plants require a lot more water than others and it's best to know that beforehand. Indeed, no one is born with a green thumb, but like a plant, the trait can be cultivated. If you have never had a plant, then it is time to do so.

Who knows, maybe you will do well enough to have a great meal every few months or so, a meal so fresh, your grand-parents cannot say one word of 'back in the days, it was better.'

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Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

