



Essential herbs

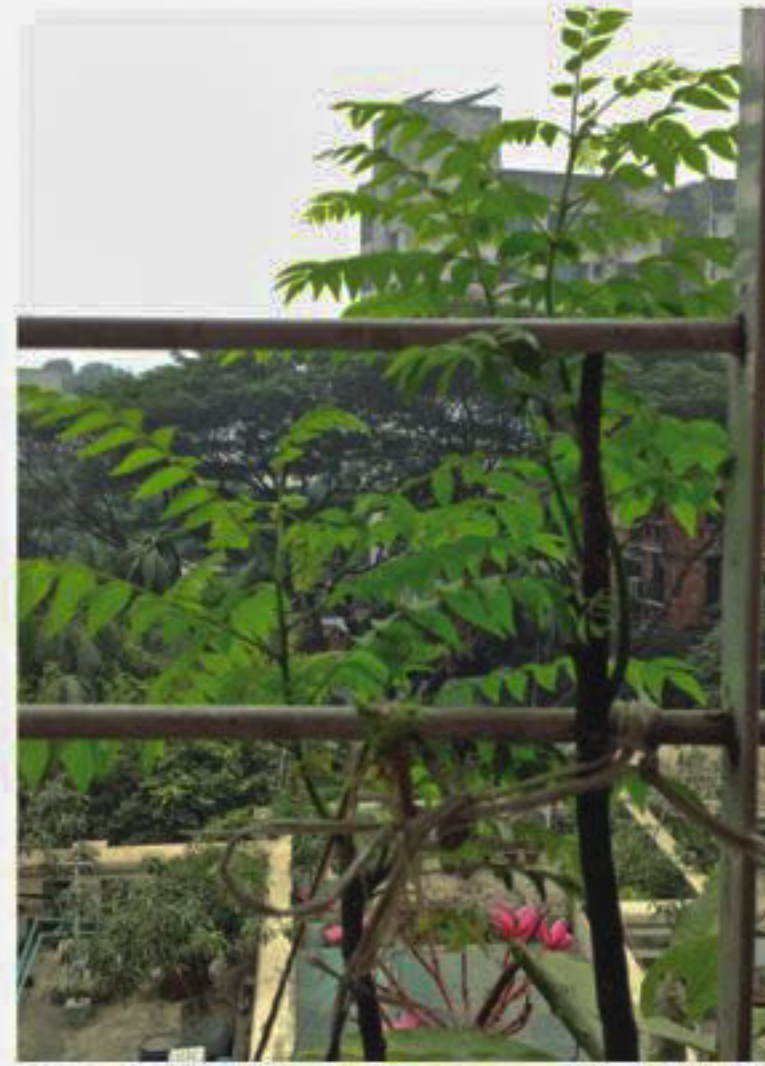
Just think of a day when you have run out of essential herbs in your kitchen. They are such an integral part of our everyday cooking that we simply cannot imagine a day without them.

Bengali cuisine relies much on herbs to make dishes flavourful. Curry leaves were once used for cooking only Indian dishes, but now they have become part of every culinary heritage around the world.

Tulsi (holy basil) is also an essential herb, known more for its medicinal properties than a culinary must-have. Basil is excellent in preparing home remedies to cure the common cold. Although syrups and other medication are available, home remedies are better as they rule out any chance of dependency at the slightest hint of a cold.

Many of us – especially the younger generation – do not know much about 'dhanantori' (juice extracted from tulsileaves) in controlling cough and cold. Tulsijuice with a bit of honey in lukewarm water works like magic on your throat and lungs.

Also, last but not least, we have the 'thankunipata,' also known as 'brahmi.' It is really good for curing indigestion or getting rid of any sort of stomach upsets.



These miracle herbs can be grown in your rooftop garden, balcony or even the hallway of your apartment. They are easy to maintain and the results can be gratifying.

GROWING HERBS PREPARE THE SOIL

Fill containers with a rich, loose, well-fertilised soil. The pot does not need to be

deep, about 10-12 inches. You can buy saplings from any nursery in town and at very modest prices. Plant them in the container and place the pots in a spot ideal for everyday exposure to sunlight.

TOO MUCH CAN BE A BAD THING

It is not a good idea to water the saplings excessively; the roots get damaged with too much water. Weed out overgrown sprouts to allow space and air for others. After one yield change the container and soil and go for replanting.

I usually reuse the roots once purchased from the market. You can sow the seeds instead. You may grow these in your roof or on the balcony which is flooded with sunlight and air. In addition, a reserve of some fertiliser and pest control measure is necessary.

SELECTING THE IDEAL SPOT

Deeply rooted plants like lemon, curry or tulsi are best grown on the rooftop. In case of non-availability of space, a balcony facing south-east is the only other option.

Curry plants grow fast when placed at the corner of a balcony. Remember to prune plants once or twice a year as it will allow new leaves to grow.

Once you have grown a tulsi plant it can invade onto other pots as well, so you need to keep an eye on them. The return is satisfying...good luck to your new love!

Please feel free to send emails to share thoughts, feedback, and photos of your garden, or tell your story; ask a question on gardening issue at email:

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