

Gardeners in concrete

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patrons, followers, fans - whatever you call it, to grow their food in the little space that is available to them, be it the veranda, or the window sill."

Inquired about the certainty of such farming methods, she confidently answered, "Bangladeshi weather is extremely suitable for agriculture. There are many countries in the world that face harsh conditions like extreme snow, heat, scarcity of rain, etc. but Bangladesh is lucky. Therefore, wherever a little sunlight seeps in, we can do this sort of gardening, on that very spot."

Discussing more about the benefits of a rooftop garden, Ashna mentioned, "Rooftop gardens, lawns and community can help in growing organic food while converting tonnes of organic 'waste' into nutrient rich compost. If ten households in a community are doing the same, use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides would be replaced with natural fertilisers such as homemade compost from food waste and natural fertilisers like tulsī water; food will ultimately become organic and healthy - this is called practical farming and to most scientists and researchers -this is the only long term (sustainable) solution that can save us from unexpected illnesses, starvation, disease and unnatural death".

Sowing a seed for the future

After reading all these, if you agreed that all did not seem bleak in the horizon, then you are perhaps right, because our next conversation with a seed wholesaler, Abul Hossain gave us high hopes.

"I have been in this business for 30 years now. My father was a farmer, my brothers are farmers and I am a seed seller," he said. With the recent advent of farming, malpractice and increased use of pesticides, we wanted to know why the farmers felt compelled to use so much harmful sub-

stances in their produce.

"Well, if you ask me it is because of the lack of knowledge; these people are not aware of what they are doing. Plus, the blame cannot be entirely focused on them, it is the consumers that are demanding increased yield, and that too which does not rot!"

"If the demand for such alterations

died out, farmers would have no other way but to go back to the healthy and natural way of farming."

Giving us high hope, Abul Hossain assures that a change has begun. "My brothers have attended workshops to learn about the organic way of farming and have successfully adopted the technique. Soon, we will see many others following suit," he further

added.

If urban gardeners like Fatema Mannan increase, seed sellers like Abul Hossain learn about the harmful effects of artificial farming and institutions like Prakriti help connect the dots, we can imagine a bright future for everyone - bringing back the green and healthy lifestyle that we so much yearn for.

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