



# Foes of mosquitoes

These days, a notorious fever –chikungunya– has become the talk of the town and many of us are pointing at the plants we raise in our homes. Container based plants are considered as one of the main culprits that 'host' mosquitoes in our surroundings.

To add to the fears of malaria and dengue, Bangladesh has entered into an era of chikungunya. Not just for us, the itchy mosquito bites have become a global health concern too. According to a recent media report, the US government declared war against the aedes mosquito with a budget of more than \$10 million for university research work to find a solution to this menace. Here in Bangladesh, our city mayors are fed up of talking about it. Public demand has pushed authorities to take up additional projects to start their fights against the mosquitoes as well.

Think about how powerful this tiny creature is! A simple bite is enough to send us to the hospital. Millions of takas are spent on pest control for the production of mosquito nets, coils, sprays and other devices to keep this pest at bay. There seems to be no respite, adding to our hospital medical bills and absenteeism from school and office.

However, there is hope. It is always good to know your friends, like a good lesson in life. This too applies in our gardening mission. There are some varieties of plants that are considered to be enemies of the mosquitoes and can help us drive mosquitoes away from our homes. Many of these plants (and herbs) are known to us as every day essentials in our kitchens and are also contributing to our good health. Every family can afford them in terms of time, space and money. Let's have a closer look at those.

## TULSI/HOLY BASIL

No need to introduce this useful house plant. It has been contributing to the lives of millions in performing religious rites and also for its use of medicinal purposes. For a cough and cold, the juice extracted from



the leaf acts as a miracle for the body and also to refresh our mind. This plant is much disliked by the mosquitoes. What good news for all of us! This tulsi plant is really quite sturdy and can live with no special care, on a simple soil base with moderate water intake and daily sunlight. So, raising one or two tulsi plants in your balcony should be quite easy. Periodic care like pruning of the old/fallen leaves, a pinch of fertiliser and shuffle of the soil is enough to make this plant happy.

## PUDINA/MINT

This is an essential for any kitchen garden. We heavily depend on its unique aroma to make our kebabs, paratas, salads and what not! Mint oil is also considered an environmentally friendly insecticide for its ability to kill some common pests. This plant is very easy to grow; just keep the stems and plant in any shallow container. In a few days, new shoots and leaves will cover the area. Keep one or two such containers close to your kitchen windows or somewhere accessible to sunlight. Mosquitoes hate this useful herb. The mint family plants are enriched with useful components to keep people well in many ways, such as relieving us from stress, depression, sore muscles and an overall feeling of relaxation.

## LEMON GRASS

There is no need to tell you about this useful herb. Without its leaf, no Thai food recipe is complete. Growing lemon grass in an urban apartment is easy too. The plant carries the fragrance of citronella in its foliage, and when a leaf is crushed and rubbed onto the skin, the aroma is very pleasant, yet it helps to naturally repel those mosquitoes.

Planting one or two shoots in a regular soil base in a container will do; no special care is needed for this hardy plant. Mosquitoes will keep away and will not dare enter your home!

## BASIL

This is another useful herb that is mostly known for its culinary uses, and is also an enemy of the mosquitoes and toxic to mosquitoes larvae. Grow this amazing plant in a simple manner -- remove the leaves off the basil cuts, about 2 inches from the end. Make sure the basil cuttings you want to regrow have not flowered yet. Place the cuts in a clear glass of water on the windowsill or where it can get good sunlight. Soon you will see new roots coming out. Next, transfer it into a container.

## MARIGOLD

This winter flower not only pleases us with its vibrant colours, but we are heavily dependent on this flower to make our

events colourful as well. In our childhoods, we learnt that to stop the cuts from bleeding free, the leaf extracts are really useful. Keep mosquitoes at bay by growing this popular flower in pots, or in a soil base - where sunlight is in abundance.

## CLOVE/LOBONGO

Not only is this plant needed to prepare many sumptuous dishes, this tiny spice is useful in keeping our teeth strong. Clove is a natural mosquito repellent you can use around the yard or use the oil from the clove to repel mosquitoes quickly. This year, I saw this plant at the Brikha Mela. You may find it in some good nurseries as well.

## GARLIC

This is an everyday must have in your kitchen. Garlic is recommended for a healthy heart, and also as a natural way to repel mosquitoes. One way to use it is to cut it up and sprinkle it around your outdoor living areas. Garlic can even be mixed with natural aromatic oils to create a mosquitoes-repelling body spray.

## LAVENDER

This repels flying insects like mosquitoes, moths, and flies. The flower's perfume is well-known, and while it will act as a scent, it is an effective way to control insects, particularly the oils.

## SAGE AND ROSEMARY

These smell good to us, but are unpleasant enough to most species of insects. Start by cutting a rosemary stem and keeping it in a moist soilless mix until it roots. It grows best in a south-facing windows or balconies. You may find the green bunches in some of our super shops here.

Slash your monthly bills to a minimum by planting these plants in your gardens, balconies and reduce your dependency on harmful chemicals, which may give temporary relief, but cause dangerous health hazards to you and your family. Happy gardening and stay away from the mosquitoes!

Photo courtesy: Laila Karim

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যা তৈরি হয় হাতের স্পর্শ ছাড়াই, সম্পূর্ণ  
অটোমেটিক মেশিনে। তাই ঘ্রাণ, মান ও  
স্বাদে অনন্য সাধারণ!

