

LS EDITOR'S NOTE

My own Scarborough

*Are you going to Scarborough Fair?
Parsley, sage, rosemary & thyme
Remember me to one who lives there
She once was a true love of mine*
— **Simon & Garfunkel, Scarborough Fair**

I named my herb patch Scarborough Fair, not because I have parsley, rosemary and thyme, but amusingly every time my husband sees me working on the herb bed, he sings this song. And somehow, I grew fond of the lyrics.

I am immensely passionate about the herbs in my small kitchen garden, however, our relationship — the herbs and I, is a bitter sweet love affair. One moment they are thriving and swinging merrily in the air, the next they are droopy and dead. They flourish, perish, they grow like weeds or they don't germinate at all, it's a constant oscillation between life and death for both my local and foreign varieties.

I am very superstitious about them



as well; I recite secret blow-on prayers, sprinkle gold and silver washed water on them every Saturday, hang soot blackened terracotta pot around them to scare off evil eye. Thus, I meddle with their natural growth and do whatever good I hear people say and maul them to death.

My coriander and mint are seasonal, they grow beautifully soft lush leaves and their scent fills Scarborough with love. However,



coriander perishes as soon as winter is over, I have no clue why, and my mint is not as healthy as I see my neighbour's mint on a small tub. So obviously, I jealously try to make my mint grow healthy, but it remains like small beads of dark green jade.

My Vietnamese basil grows all over my patch and would merrily move over to other drums and pots, you would find them even in my magnolia tub. I am exhausted of weeding them out and making pesto as gifts for friends. Then there are my Radha tulsi and Krishno tulsi, the red and white local variant of basil. Tulsi works well as cough and cold cures and I am constantly



offering friends and family a freshly brewed tulsi tea with a dash of orange pekoe in it.

Whenever we go on trips or my friends and family come from abroad, I ask them to bring herb seeds for me. The small packets are like precious bullion bars for me. I meticulously plant them and almost like Shylock, I count my seeds and save some in case of a miscarried germination. I go to supermarkets and kitchen markets and



buy celery, leek stalks, parsley, sawtooth coriander with jagged edges, with their roots intact, I rush home and plant them in small pots. I feel thrilled when they live and start to sprout and of course, go back to the store again, when they die on me.

My most precious bush is the sabarang bush, a kind of Chittagong Hill Tract special basil, with a lemony-liquorice taste that is used in mostly indigenous dishes of

vegetable fries, fish, or poultry. I got my sabarang from an indigenous fair and planted them after reciting several prayers to the herb god, hoping against hope that they survive the long commute from Rangamati to Dhaka and being bundled up for days in sacks. The hardy herb survived and my garden is full of their sweet leaves.

My dill, parsley, rosemary, oregano, thyme, and celery are in the process of getting strong, besides my bay leaves, mint, Thai basil, chives, and curry leaves. I have even planted black pepper vines, which gets its annual pod but fails to grow into full blown green peppers.

Anyway, what I want to say is growing herbs are kind of easy if you don't fret about them too much like I do. You don't need a big space or an actual garden patch to grow your own herbs, all you need is a pot, good soil, and sun. You should start with for an easy DIY container. You'll truly be amazed at what you can grow in a small space and how you can elevate your cooking game as well.

This Father's Day on 21st June, give your father a jar of homemade pesto and earn brownie points with him. I am sharing my personal hotchpotch pesto recipe with you today, surprise your father.

Vietnamese or Thai basil, coriander, mint leaves cut up roughly added with two cloves of garlic, two green chilli, a squeeze of lemon juice, olive oil, salt to taste; blend these ingredients together in a blender and voila! You get the best dipping sauce ever. You can have it with crackers, in your sandwiches, and pasta. And its full of antioxidants your father would appreciate.

Happy Gardening and Happy Father's Day.

— RBR

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed