



Hats off to our **GREEN HEROES!**

As more and more Dhakaites are trying to create green spaces, the role of professional gardeners has become more important than ever

People like Aziz Mia were the first to give gardening solutions to city dwellers before people turned garden up-keeping into a professional, expert solution. Aziz Miah's day job was at the Gulshan 2 Horticultural Centre beside the park. In the afternoons, he used to work as a part-time gardener in Uttara, Gulshan, and Baridhara.

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

The first time I fell in love with plants was when I saw my mother's glossy green pothos arranged in old porcelain bowls that were slightly chipped off. Her lush, green, coiled tropical vines in the upcycle planters would light up the corners she placed them in. And ever since then I have been a passionate lover of greenery in all its forms.

Dhakaites, longing for some green space, are optimising their rooftops by turning them into little green havens. According to the Bangladesh Agriculture Information Service, approximately 4.5 lakh roofs cover more than 4,500 hectares in Dhaka city.

I have been keeping a rooftop garden for 15 plus years and balcony plants for almost three decades. Yet, I know



and shrubs to be done. The nurseryman knows the right way of watering, which is not the same for all plants. You cannot just hold a hose pipe and water at random; saplings need sprinkling water with your hands, and if you water at a strong flow the precious earth mixed with nutrients will wash out.

Mixing proper plant feed is important because the key is to get the ratio of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium correct. These macronutrients are needed for healthy plants, you cannot use urea at random, and you need to know when to use fertilisers. Mixing products for pest control and preparation of

insecticides is also a subject where you need guidance.

Gardening is almost a round-the-clock job. An enthusiast cannot possibly do all this themselves.

"The gardens in our cityscape mostly belong to enthusiasts and amateur gardeners, who have taken it up as a hobby. They don't actually have time or the know-how to take care of plants. The need of the garden changes with seasons, a gardener knows what vegetables to grow in summer and what to grow in winter. Even if you have ornamental plants, making beds for seasonal flowers is a hard job. So, it is of utmost importance to go to gardening service providers for the up-keep of your green spaces," explains Rashid Shimul, founder and CEO of Green Me School of Alternative Skills Development.

Dhaka city is providing many such gardening services where horticulturists with diploma degrees come to give you support. You can hire them for a fee on a yearly or monthly contract. Then there are our very own self-taught gardeners who are also available for service.

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Md Rubel Islam, a diploma agriculturist who founded AR Green Garden, offers a complete 360-degree gardening solution. His team helps build your required green space from scratch, like making soil beds with the right amount and kind of plant food, they will source trees and plants to your liking. For a fee, his team will help you create a wonderland on your rooftops.

There are many such services offered in Dhaka now like Green Me, Green Garden Landscape and Design, and Green Savers to name a few. If you Google, you are bound to come across many reliable greenskeepers.

"You need professional care because gardening is expensive, there are many stakeholders in this

business and without a gardener you cannot rely on nursery salespeople to give you solutions for all your garden woes. If you want to collect seeds or grow saplings from seeds or even do grafting, you cannot do it alone. You need to know the grammar of gardening," Rashid points out.

Rashid believes that whatever small percentage of green the city has besides rooftop gardens, office gardens, premises landscape, vertical wall gardening, public green spaces, parks, resorts, road dividers, etc, all require maintenance service. So, there is a huge opportunity to generate revenue as well as create employment.

"At present I have 12 gardeners giving services to clients all over the city. My gardeners are all higher secondary graduates and those who are not I train them to give logistical support to our clients. All the cities in Bangladesh and big towns are in need of professional gardeners. As I said it can generate good revenue and job employment to city youths," Rashid says. Adding that the market size for garden maintenance service in the city is becoming more demanding day by day.

Dhakaites mostly opt for vegetable and fruit gardens; tending to them is almost impossible without professional help.

Vegetable gardens are hard to maintain as they have a high mortality rate; your gourd vine may flower but for the actual vegetable to grow is a feat in itself unless you are a professional farmer or seedsman.

Aubergines are notorious for their insect infestations. I can go on with vegetable gardening woes, but once you get it corrected the long beans or okra from your harvest are the best you ever had.

According to Rashid, urban agriculture helps reduce your carbon footprint, allows you to eat safe food, and most importantly introduces your children to plants and builds a relationship with the earth.

So, it is best to go for regular gardening consultation. Spending a fortune on acquiring the plant or tree and not investing in a proper gardener will have tragic consequences for your garden. Gardening can be an expensive hobby; bags of soil mixed with cow dung, vermicompost, cocopeat, sand, pebbles pesticides — the list of requirements is lengthy.

It's also a full-time pursuit. Employ gardeners to help you grow a beautiful green space.



nothing about proper garden care other than watering and making sunlight adjustments!

This is where professional gardeners come to the rescue! There are so many gardening needs to be addressed — when to use fertilisers and at what ratio, which plant needs pesticides, or when strong insecticides are needed for a particular outbreak.

A gardener's responsibilities are not limited to weeding gardens and keeping green spaces clear of debris. There is seasonal trimming of trees

