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Online edition of India's National Newspaper

Monday, May 11, 2009

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'Terrace-farming' of a different kind

Radhika Dixit

Scientist grows healthy vegetables in house

Photo: V. Sreenivasa Murthy



Forever green: B. Narayan Vishwanath working on a terrace garden in Bangalore. —

BANGALORE: How many of us in the city only dream of having a garden full of vegetables and flowers? But here is someone who single-mindedly has done it before, and is all set to do it again.

B. Narayan Vishwanath, a former lecturer with the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, says anyone with even a tiny patch can do it. With a Ph.D in Agriculture, Dr. Vishwanath has authored *Organic Terrace Gardening*, a slim book in which he has penned his experiences and successes while growing his own patch of greenery. Through his book, he urges everyone to grow plants in their homes, no matter how small the available space is.

Rise in pollution

"With a drastic increase in all sorts of pollution, especially in the cities, there is a greater need for people to grow plants in their homes to keep healthy," says Dr. Vishwanath.

He is particularly keen that chemicals — be they fertilizers or pesticides — be kept away from such terrace gardens. Instead, he advises people to opt for compost and bio-fertilizers. The rampant use of chemicals, banned elsewhere in the world, bothers him. "The only reason for permitting their use in India is the political system as well as the extreme lobbying at the Centre. People are making millions in the absence of a ban on these chemicals."

These chemicals have permanent effects on us, says the energetic 65-year-old: "It is a well known fact that the excessive use of chemicals in

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vegetables and fruits harms our health. If one is not cultivating large-scale, I believe everyone can grow enough to feed at least themselves and their children."

To propagate his views, Dr. Vishwanath gives lectures and conducts workshops on organic gardening. He has a diploma in television production, and has made a number of documentaries in support of his views.

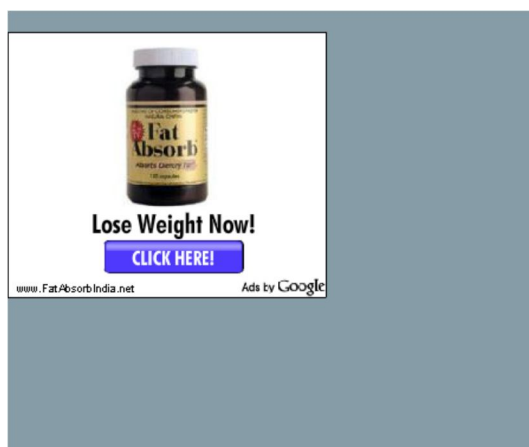
He did have a glorious terrace garden in a house he recently vacated in Kengeri. Having moved to a new house in Jayanagar Fifth Block, he has set to work with full enthusiasm on yet another garden, starting out with tomatoes and chillies on his terrace. He does not mind starting afresh, although he grumbles that squirrels seem to be reaping too much of what he has sown. He is also experimenting with growing a garden only in compost minus the soil.

So when did he start feeling so passionately about organic horticulture? He says he was inspired by Rachel Carson's seminal work *Silent Spring*. The book, as far back as 1962, had warned the world about the hazards of the use of DDT, and criticises the American chemical industry for spreading disinformation, as well as public officials for accepting industry claims uncritically.

Dr. Vishwanath can be contacted on 9845627217 or vishy_kadur@yahoo.co.in

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