

Nutrition Gardens

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In News

Indigenous fruits and vegetables are not only rich in minerals and vitamins but also contribute in a big way in maintaining health, overcoming hunger and malnutrition. **Cultivation of these crops by gardening in a systematic manner in small pieces of land available in households is known as “Nutrition Garden”.** The nutrition garden ensures access to a healthy diet with adequate macro and micronutrients at doorstep.

Features of Nutrition Garden

- **Short production cycles of vegetables** allow **multiple cropping** and a significant volume of vegetables grown worldwide are produced in small plots.
- Home gardens once used to be a cornerstone of traditional Indian farming systems, but over the time, they have slowly begun to lose their importance in people’s eyes as a relic of old-fashioned customs.
- But now, their importance is being recognized once again. Home gardens can be taken in many forms, **from a few plants in containers to large garden plots in the backyard.**
- **Promotion of local plants** is an appropriate strategy for increasing vegetable consumption in a particular region. Many local plants have **antioxidative, antimutagenicity and anti-inflammatory properties.**
- Hence every citizen has a vital role in converting his surrounding vacant land into a living kitchen garden, where location specific seasonal vegetables and fruits are grown.
- A scientifically laid out nutrition garden helps to meet the entire requirements of fruits and vegetables for a family all the year round. It is also **important in rural**

areas where people have limited income and poor access to markets. Thus, nutrition gardens can prove to be a sustainable model for providing food security and diversity to combat malnutrition at the household or community level.

- The **United Nations-ESCAP** has recommended the promotion of sustainable home or kitchen gardening as an effective strategy for **social protection, integrated with health and nutrition education.** UNICEF's **community-led Nutrition Gardens in Chhattisgarh** sets a good example in promoting nutrition levels, livelihood and improved indicators of food security, and reduction in incidence of diseases associated with malnutrition.
- **Cropping intensity should be maximum** in a nutrition garden. Fences, borders and interspaces of perennial crops are utilized for vegetable cultivation.

Initiatives in India

- **Odisha Livelihood Mission**, under the Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department, as part of the farm livelihood/ promotion of nutrition-sensitive agriculture is promoting kitchen gardens.
- The Karnataka Horticulture department with funds from MGNREGA is developing kitchen gardens called '**Akshara Kaitoota**' in government schools to promote consumption of vegetables and fruits.
- **Jharkhand Poshan Vari** initiative provides for backyard kitchen gardens where women grow cereals, pulses and vegetables to tackle poor nutrition and also for earning income.
- Tamil Nadu Horticulture Department has tied up with the School Education Department to **establish roof gardens in schools to create awareness on the importance of vegetables and fruits.**
- The **National Rural Livelihood Mission** is promoting kitchen gardens as part of farm livelihood intervention

strategy for the **National Nutrition Mission.**

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development has **developed guidelines for school nutrition (kitchen) gardens** in government and aided schools under the mid-day meal scheme.