

In the garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



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The hesitant gardener

After talking to several readers, I thought I'd address the hesitant gardener this week.

Those of you who are more experienced, stop reading and tend to your gardens. I'm sure many tasks await you.

To the rest, this is the year you are going to take that leap and become the confident gardener you have always wanted to be. So much that is written about gardening makes it sound daunting. It seems to require a great deal of prior knowledge and know-how. There are too many rules, and failure to comply portends disaster.

Yet, what is gardening after all? Nothing more than bringing order, beauty and functionality into a piece of earth. Realistically, humans have been gardening ever since they ceased to be nomadic. It started out of necessity and certainly the first gardens were higgledy-piggledy. Then somewhere along the line, through much trial and error, order was established. The rest is garden history.

Gardening is therefore as simple or as complicated as one makes it. Hence, if you are shy about getting started, cast all fear aside and plunge right in. Those "rules" are mere guidelines. Gardening is a constantly evolving art form, yet, it is also a science. It is this combination that makes gardening so satisfyingly

creative and useful. Like all art it is personal. So, make your garden however and whatever you wish. Your garden must reflect your personality. Pay no attention to those who speak as garden elitists.

Do what feels right to be content with your garden

Gardens, like people, come in all sizes, styles and shapes. Different cultures have different gardening traditions. And yes, mixing cultures is perfectly acceptable if you so desire. Just do what feels right to you. After all, you are the one who needs to be content with your garden.

If current fashion dictates are not to your taste, then toss them aside. Keep your focus on your vision and dig in! Just as one listens to music of one's choice, so must a gardener plant trees, shrubs, vegetables and fruits of her or his choice. My advice, though, is to make sure you garden responsibly.

Ensure that what you plant is suitable for your area and is not invasive. Organic, environmentally sound practices are essential and it behooves us all to learn and implement them.

Gardening is very therapeutic. I work through problems whilst I weed. It's good for getting over anger too!

Here is one activity where the satisfaction is not just in the end result but, in the doing as well. Gardening is also very forgiving. Mistakes can be erased (or pulled out) and remedied. Changing tastes can be accommodated. A garden is ephemeral and every stage is a learning experience. You can read all you want, but you really learn only by doing. It is a lifetime of learning.

So, start simple and small, but dream big. Just do it. Go along with me. Do what you can or what works for you. Before the end of the gardening season, you will be surprised by how much you've achieved. Have faith and surrender to your inner gardener.

