

My Hobby

A hobby may be defines in **Robert Browning** words

“I want to know a butcher paints
A baker rhymes for his pursuit
Candlestick-maker much acquaints
His soul with songs, or haply mute
Blows out his brains upon the flute”

Today, man lives in a world where strenuous struggles and efforts are necessary to for survival. He works like a Trojan from dawn to dusk. Physical and mental exertions leave him utterly exhausted and enervated. The invariable drudgery of daily routine rusts. In the words of Coleridge, his “Shaping spirit of imagination”. He needs some pleasing pursuits to sooth this stress and strain. Such pleasant activities that fill our idle hours are called hobbies.

Different people take different hobbies to effect. Though there are various things I do at the leisure moments, the thing that attracts all of my attention is gardening. Francis Bacon in his essay “Of Garden” says “God Almighty first planted a garden. And, indeed it is the purest of human pleasures”. Thus this hobby of mine is the ultimate source of joy and pleasure for me. It invigorates both my body and soul. It breathes a new life into my lethargic and lazy body. Gardening or growing plants is exciting activity. The gardeners generate lovely landscape, fragrant flowers, fresh fruits and tall trees. Today elaborate and decorative gardens have become part and parcels of elegant houses. Gardening for pleasure has become pervasive pursuit all over the world. One needs a little soil, small seeds and e few basic tools to grow a garden.

I delve deep and carry out radical research before selecting a plant to grow. Range of plants available is remarkably rich. The nurseries offer constantly new varieties. Plants differ in tolerance for heat, cold and moisture. Before sowing and growing a plant, I take into account the climate it needs. I evaluate the soil type, the sunlight that falls on the proposed site and may other such factors that can affect the growth of plant. I also consider the life cycle of plant before growing.

I have divided my garden into various sections. Its main oriental section provides a wonderful vista. Then it has seating area for recreation, a vegetable plot, a children’s play area, walkways and many other eye-catching features. While planting my garden, I have kept in view the blending and contrast of colours. I have grown such plants that give maximum display of colors in summer. But I have never ignored such plants that that bloom in early spring. I have grown flowering and shrubs along the walkways.

Fertile soil is indispensable for the growth of a luxuriant garden. Plants obtain nutrients from soil for their healthy growth. Most plants thrive in a soil type known as loam. It contains 50 percent sand, 25 percent clay and 25 percent silt. All soils do not have a right balance of nutrients. Moreover plants consume nutrients from the soil as they grow. Therefore I use fertilizers to maintain and enhance the productivity of the soil.

Before sowing seeds, I till the soil by various methods. I turn the soil with a spade and at times loosen it with a garden fork. Then I rake it smooth before planting. To keep the soil loose, I cover it with compost. Seeds are sown close together. When the seedlings are several inches tall, I remove extra ones so that the remaining seedlings are evenly spaced. Sometimes I opt to use transplants. I purchase young plants from nurseries. It gives the garden a head start. I cover each transplant with a plastic soda bottle with the bottom cut off. It acts like a small greenhouse to trap heat around the plant. I place transplants in a large bottomless box with a clear top. It is called a cold frame. The sunlight passes through the top and heats the air in the cold frame.

Water is as vital for plants as it is for the other organisms. It is essential for plants' biochemical reactions. It also stores the dissolved water nutrients. The best method of watering the plants is to apply water directly to the soil. Water should be applied directly so that it may percolate into the soil properly and no amount of it is wasted. This is how I water the plants.

Three types of pests can plague gardens. They are weeds, insects and disease. I pull up weeds by hand or dig them out with a hoe or cut them off with a mover. Sometimes, I use a weed killer, or herbicides to control the weeds. Some insects can be kept in check by introducing beneficial insects to the garden. Insect pests can also be reduced by growing a variety of plants in the garden. Diseases caused by fungi can damage plants. Some fungal diseases can be controlled with a fungicide. To provide plants with optimum soil, nutrients, light and water is the best approach to prevent diseases. I employ all these methods to save my garden from diseases.

I do my best to control the shape of shrubs and trees. I prune the branches growing in the wrong direction. I also remove the diseased or dead branches. In this way, I keep the plants in attractive shapes. In short I keep my garden perfect in all aspects. I love to work and sit there. It has proved to be a heaven of serenity and tranquility for me.

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