

Real Estate

Green house

C S Bewli

Garden beauties

Plants with different trunk structures and having varied leaf textures, shapes and colours add a pleasant variety to your home garden. Caudiciforms or plants with thick or swollen base, both underground or over ground, are an excellent choice for adding an exotic touch to your garden. The recent spurt in interest in these plants can be attributed to their easy availability in the region now. The swollen portion of the plant is called caudex. The formation of caudex and its character varies from species to species. Seed-grown plants generate a much better caudex than those grown from cuttings. The beauty of the caudex increases as it ages.

Most of the caudiciforms are adapted to arid conditions and have the ability to store water and nutrients in their caudices. They need comparatively less watering and maintenance than other plants. These plants are suitable for those who often remain out of their homes and also have less time for gardening.

Some of adeniums, adenias, bombax, dioscoreas, euphorbias, fockias, pachypodiums, dorstenia foetida, ornithogalum caudatum and jatropha berlandieri have amazing caudices and are popular plants. Here are two species that grow well and look beautiful in Indian conditions. With proper care and maintenance, these lend a unique aura and colour to the garden for a long time.

Dorstenia foetida

Dorstenia foetida is an Arabian mini caudex forming perennial succulent plant which has a tendency to branch off from the base to form a caudex upto 12-15 cm diameter for the plant height of up to 30-40 cm.



DORSTENIA FOETIDA

Growing tips

- Water generously during summers.
- Keep the plant in a shady location.
- Compost should be porous to allow extra water to drain off.
- Fertilise with NPK (nitrogen, phosphorous and potash) once in two months during growth period.
- Repot once in two years.



FALSE SEA ONION

Growing tips

- Needs well-draining soil and should be allowed to dry out between waterings.
- It's easy to cultivate and grows well, both in shade as well as in bright light conditions.
- Repot once in three years.
- Fertilise with NPK (nitrogen, phosphorous and potash) twice during growth period.

The leaves are wavy and dark green in colour, but vary in size and tend to fall off after turning brown during winters. For the foliage to remain green and the plant to exude its over-all beauty, it should be placed in a shady location or under filtered light conditions. Under full sun, the leaves turn brownish and the growth of the plant gets retarded.

The plants enjoy generous watering during summer months by allowing the compost to dry slightly between waterings. However, during winters watering should be reduced considerably failing which the plant will rot. The plant bears abundance of unique greenish flowers in the shape of star-shaped discs facing upwards. The seeds eject from these flowers as they ripen and disperse around a radius of about a metre and a half. This can be made out when small saplings start sprouting in the surrounding pots. Propagation is generally carried out by planting these saplings.

It is a natural bonsai that needs no pruning and no pinching. It can be made an eye-catching bonsai specimen within a period of three years by just following the growing tips.



DORSTENIA FOETIDA

False Sea Onion

Ornithogalum caudatum, a South African caudex-forming succulent plant commonly known as false sea onion has a swollen glossy green base. It resembles a spring onion but unlike onion, the bulb is exposed above the ground. The beauty of its ornamental caudex which grows upto the size of 8-10 cm is enhanced with its paper-thin epidermis. On removal of its epidermis the appearance of its fresh and glossy light-green caudex is clear. It is hardy and an easy to grow plant and grows well in Indian conditions. It can accept neglect, but for its good growth, it requires well-drained compost and filtered bright light to some direct sunlight; with excess of direct sunlight it is likely to get sun scorched.

These plants adapt to pot culture very well and should be ideally grown in a 15 centimetre clay pot or a bowl and needs repotting once in about three years. For the plant to reflect full beauty, the caudex should be placed just above the soil with roots in the soil at the time of repotting.

The leaves are strap-shaped and grow upto 70 cm in length when in cultivation. The leaves emerging from the apex spread outwards and normally turn brown at the tips. To ensure leaves to remain beautiful throughout; the tips should be cut with a pair of sharp scissors by giving the leaf a natural tip. The plant is basically grown for its caudex; small white flowers are formed on a stalk which may reach as long as one meter in length.

During summers these can be watered as any other house plant, but during winters, water only when the top soil gets dry. Propagation is through seeds or small bulblets which are formed under the skin of the main caudex and fall after growing larger and then sprout.

— The writer is the President of National Cactus and Succulent Society of India.