

# Real Estate

## **GREEN HOUSE garden on driftwood C.S. BEWLI**

A unique and a colourful masterpiece can be created in your garden by using air plants on driftwood. This can be hung on a wall in a balcony, pergola or anywhere in the garden in a shady area. This gardening concept adds zing to the look of the garden and will benefit those who have less knowledge of the nitty gritty of gardening, but want to incorporate a bit of green in their living space. Once created, it will exhibit no less grace than a terrarium or a dish garden and will be equally low-maintenance.



The use of driftwood as a part of flower arrangement, wall hanging and in decorative furniture is common, but using it to create a wall garden is something novel.

Driftwood is a natural piece of wood which is seasoned by nature to give realistic and a natural finish. These pieces are good enough to create such gardens even if these do not mimic some real form of any creature. However, if driftwood is not easily available, there is an option to cure any attractive piece of wood to make it look like driftwood.

### **Suitable plants**

The entire genus of Tillandsia often referred to as 'Air Plants' are epiphytic in nature that grow solely on air and do not need any soil. These absorb moisture and nutrients from the air through their leaves. These rosette-forming plants with narrow arching green leaves have a small root system which acts as an anchor to hold on to any tree, rock surface or any object that does not retain much of moisture and are most suitable for this arrangement of gardening. Flowering showy spikes in different hues emerge from the centre of the rosette. As in agaves, air plants also eventually die after flowering, but fortunately produce numerous off-sets at the base of the parent plant and reproduction is generally carried out by removing these offsets.

Besides decorating these on driftwood, these plants can be attached to walls and can even be suspended aesthetically in an inverted position to create an upside-down garden to compliment the décor. Not only this, a portable decorated mini garden that can be shifted on special occasions can be created by suitably placing these plants on any sort of driftwood to be placed on table-top, floor or on any flat surface.

Although tillandsias, like cacti, can survive long periods of drought, but these also need some water. The best way for their graceful survival is to soak these plants in water periodically or alternatively misting them on a daily basis.

These are hardy and easily adaptable plants that grow in a wide range of environmental conditions and come in a variety of sizes, shapes, textures, and colours. Smaller growing species are *Tillandsia bergeri*, *concolor*, *lontha*, *jucunda*, *streptophylla*, *stricta*, *vernicosa*, *geminiflora* and *gardneri*.

### **Tending tips**

- The best and effective way to water these low maintenance plants is to remove and immerse these in a bowl of water for a few hours once in a week, more so when placed in a dry area, taking care not to submerge the blooming flower; shake out any excess water from the plant after soaking. Alternatively mist the plants daily.
- The plants must be allowed to dry out completely before watering.
- Remove dried or damaged portion of leaves with a clean cut to retain the beauty of the plant.
- These plants should be misted daily to avoid drying of tips.
- No fertilisation is required as these plants draw nutrients from air.
- Need good air circulation to thrive.
- Put the plant under bright light, but not under direct sunlight to avoid excessive drying.
- Grouping plants should be allowed to form clumps as these look very attractive.

### **Wall gardening DIY**

- Get a suitable driftwood piece which can be hung on the wall.
- Decide on the angle and position in which the driftwood piece is to be hung on the wall in order to give the best display.
- Fix two brackets at the back of the driftwood to flush it against the wall and accordingly hit the nails on the wall.
- Identify such locations on the driftwood for placing of air plants between driftwood and the wall in order to hide the roots from sight as far as possible; create such places if need be.
- Place the air plants at the desired locations on the driftwood. Driftwood wall garden is ready that hardly needs any maintenance.



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