

Real Estate

GREEN HOUSE Delectable dish C.S Bewli

Dish or tray gardening is an art of planting small ornamental plants in a creative manner in wide and shallow vase, saucers or dishes of about 10 cm in depth to give an illusion of a miniature landscape. A pretty impressive miniature landscape of cacti and other succulent plants can be created using this technique. These plants are ornamental in nature and come in various shapes, sizes, textures and colours. Such dish gardens have gained a lot of popularity among plant lovers, as these plants can remain in the dish for years due to their slow rate of growth and ease in growing. They can be placed artistically to enhance the ambience of your home and also make excellent gifts for special friends. This mini garden can be moved to any location to add a special touch on special occasions.



A dish is any container which has holes at the base for drainage of excess water; success of any dish garden depends upon proper drainage. These containers can be made of ceramic, metal, plastic or even wood and come in different colours and textures. Designer, ornamental and antique containers are also available in plant nurseries.

Smaller and slow growing flowering species of succulents such as sedums, echeverias, aloes, sempervivums, hardy haworthias, drimiopsis, gasterias, agaves, euphorbias and jade plants are ideal plants and a natural choice for dish garden. Mammillaria plumosa, Ariocarpus retusus, Lophophora williamsii, Melocactus matanzanus, Gymnocalycium mihanovichii, Echinocereus rigidissimus, pectinifera and many other species are smaller and robust growing flowering species of cacti and do very well in dish gardens in this region.

The plants for the dish garden should be compatible with each other and should:

- Be able to survive extreme climate.
- Have varied leaf textures, shapes and colours.

Spreading gravel and moss at suitable places on the top surface and aesthetically placing small decorative items such as pieces of rock, ceramic huts and figurines etc add to the appeal of the dish garden. A couple of small solar lights will add grace and glamour to the dish in the evenings.

Arrangement of plants in the dish depends upon the place where it is to be placed:

- If the dish is to be viewed from all around, the tallest plant/plants should be placed in the middle.
- If it is to be viewed from the front only, then the tallest plant/plants should be placed at the rear.

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

CREATING A DISH GARDEN

- Spread half an inch layer of crocks or gravel with some wood charcoal pieces at the bottom of the dish for better drainage and fill the dish with moist cactus compost leaving one centimetre space below the rim of the dish.

- Place the selected plants one by one in the dish as per the abstract design, which can be changed for better creativity. Tap the dish on the ground 2-3 times so that the plants are firmly set in the compost. Don't press the compost tightly as this will prevent drainage and exclude air, which is necessary.

- To enhance the beauty of the dish garden, spread some gravel on the top surface and place decorative items such as small pieces of rock, ceramic huts and figurines etc.

- Place the dish garden in shade and don't water it for a week. After a week bring it gradually to a place where it will receive 2-3 hours of sunlight. Window sill with some sunlight is an ideal indoor location.

- Cactus dish garden needs very little care and maintenance once set up. It is watered only when the top soil gets dry during the growing season, and once in a week during winters.



TENDING TIPS

- Potting compost should be nutritious and free draining.
- The dish should be turned periodically for the plants to grow in all directions and remain upright.
- To restrict the plants from overgrowing, do not fertilise them.
- With the passage of time some plants will overgrow, these should be replaced with suitable plants or pruned if needed.
- Place the miniature garden where it receives bright light or diffused sunlight for about 2-3 hours for its overall balanced growth.
- Water only when the top soil becomes dry as soggy soil tends to kill the roots

