

La Gardenia: A paradise of fruit plants



As you enter 'Santipur'...



Dr. C.N. Muthyurayappa-Susha couple at their home-garden 'Santipur'.

By Dr. Mahadevaswamy Swamy

A garden is an outdoor space for cultivation, display and deriving pleasure and enjoyment of plants and other forms of nature. The most common type of garden is a residential garden built around the living place often designed as ornamental, vegetable or mixed on functional basis. While most of the garden types are a result of a particular local climate or landscape, a few gardens are specialised involving different kinds of plants sourced from diverse climatic regions and acclimatised to local weather in mixed plantings.

The garden at 'Santipur' in Srirangapatna, falls into this category. The garden, in an area of 100 sq.ft of land with a house in the middle, encompasses matches combination of ornamental, vegetable and fruit plants beyond one's imagination. It is a unique type of garden developed by Dr. C.N. Muthyurayappa-Susha couple with gemplains (genetic resources) of innumerable varieties of native and exotic plants from various parts of the world (USA, South America, Britain, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Africa, Madagascar etc.) planted therein. It is an amazing home garden cum orchard. It can also be called a conservatory of fruit plants sans greenhouse and an open pomology (fruit plant science) laboratory.

The couple claim that the garden houses around 300 varieties of plants which include around 200 varieties of fruit-bearing plants apart from ornamental and vegetable plants. They have travelled across the globe, nook and corners of India to collect these gemplains - a herculean effort by the couple in collecting and nurturing these plants. Recognising their outstanding contribution in conservation and sharing of Gemplains (fruits and other crops), Government of India (Ministry of Plant Resources and Farmer's Rights Authority, New Delhi), has awarded "Plant Genomes Saviours Farmer Reward 2015" to Dr. Muthyurayappa. He is the second recipient of the Reward from Karnataka ever since it was instituted in 2012. Award is not only a golden feather in the cap of Dr. Muthyurayappa-Susha couple, but also a proud moment for the people of Karnataka in general and Mysuru in particular.

ABOUT THE GARDEN

The garden is aesthetically designed with the fruit gate opening into a big path way leading to the entrance of the house decorated with exotic climbers on trellis, cacti in hanging pots and colourful vines on the ground flaunting their gorgeous blooms. The front yard, overlooking the house, adorn the choicest herbs, shrubs and climbers (ornamental, vegetable and fruit) interspersed with trees of various kinds. It includes beautiful climbers like Jade, Mysore clock vine apart from exotic Chestnut, yellow Cassia, holy Himalayan Rudraksha, Santalwood, Champaka

(Magnolia species), Jackfruit trees, Buddha's hand, Madalambica, Thailand Guava (fruits weighing 3kg), a special variety of Jasmine bush, Euphorbia milii, and other kinds of plants in pots or on ground.

The back yard and the adjoining areas of the house make up most of the garden. This is the prime area and focal point housing most of the plant taxa largely consisting of trees. The shrubs, climbers and herbs form the under storey and blend harmoniously with the tree flora. There is also a pond full of water lilies in various hues and lots of fish moving around fishing their tail back and forth.

A few honey bees find a place to encourage cross pollination. This area is a home to variety of fruit plants. The centre of attraction is the mango tree with 100 varieties grafted on a local variety. One can find varieties of fruit trees, most of them grafted. Citrus fruits (25 varieties include musambi, orange, pomelo and lemon besides a Switzerland lime (see inside), Sapota (4 varieties), Datura (12 varieties), Jack fruit (10 varieties with one gum-free variety from Madagascar), Pomegranates (6 varieties), Staphal, Rambal and Hanuman phal (all in one plant).



Exotic fig variety, Another side of 'Santipur'; Beehive (physical name: Zingiber speciosum).



Madalambica; Gumbaz Jackfruit; Monstera Deliciosa (Common names: Mexican pineapple, Swiss cheese plant and fruit salad plant); 100 varieties grafted Mango tree.

There are special kinds of exotic fruit plants unheard-of by most people in Mysuru. To mention a few:

- 01 Buddha's hand, a "Lemon with fingers" — this strange citrus is treasured for its sweet floral fragrance and mild zest. There is little or no flesh or juice inside.
- 02 Miracle berry is fruit that tricks the tongue causing sour foods to taste sweet.
- 03 Peanut butter tree, the fruit, taste similar to peanut butter.
- 04 Kumkum, miniature red oranges, which have a sour, citrus tang, but peel is sweet and delicious.
- 05 Egg fruit or Caneel, fish is sweet, with a texture often compared to that of a hard-boiled egg yolk.
- 06 Longos, an edible fruit looking like litchi.
- 07 Lulus or Sebuckhorn, the holy fruit of the Himalayas, like orange-coloured pear-shaped chalcid berries are fatty and contain an array of essential fatty acids, vitamins and carotenoids.
- 08 Dragon fruit, a cactus plant with large white flowers and a sweet fragrance produces flaming pink coloured edible fruits (available in local supermarkets).
- 09 Swiss cheese plant or Mexican pine apple, the ripe fruit tastes like a combination of banana, pineapple and mango (Raw fruit is poisonous).
- 10 Rambai or Rambal, which grows wild and cultivated for its sweet flavoured fruit appreciated in part of Southeast Asia in Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia besides Andhra, West Bengal, Papaya, Mulberry.

However, did not notice grapes. The other fruit varieties including exotic ones are Apricot, Apple (3 varieties grafted on to one tree), Blackberry, Rose apple (2 varieties), Almond, Sweet Almond (Bakara batami), Bar, Dates (2 varieties), Mangosteen, Plum, Pistachio, Praline, Raspberry, Star cherry, Sweet Tamarind, Kokam, Water apple, Velvet apple besides the rare flowering tree Surugi, special varieties of Durumoti, Agave, Veeravageshi-bringal, cherry tomato, hot and sweet chillies, leafy herbs like Mysore basil leaves (2 varieties), mint and many more. The list is endless. Undoubtedly the garden is fully organic using only animal manure. No chemical pesticides or fertiliser is applied. Furthermore, the fruits are not harvested by and large but left on the trees for birds which hover around the garden. [Continued on page 10]