

Amateur Gardners: A Column to Share Gardening Practices

MY GARDEN: BALM OF LONELINESS

By Dr. Anu Dogra, Assistant Professor, Department of Anatomy, IGMC, Shimla and a passionate gardener



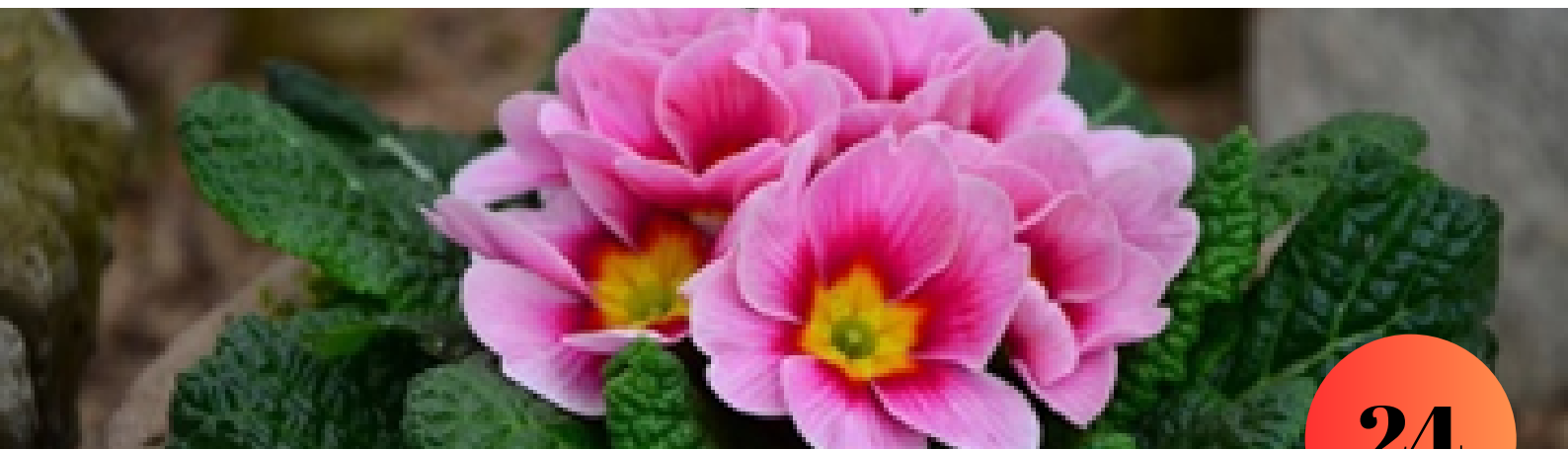
I live in Shimla at Dogra estate, near 103 tunnel. I was born and brought up in Shimla. I have one brother and two sisters. I am a doctor by profession and did my graduation and post graduation from IGMC Shimla. My husband was a lawyer and hotelier. He passed away few years back due to cancer. I have a daughter, who is an educationist and dentist. She is married and lives in Mumbai. At present I am working as an assistant professor in the department of Anatomy at IGMC Shimla.

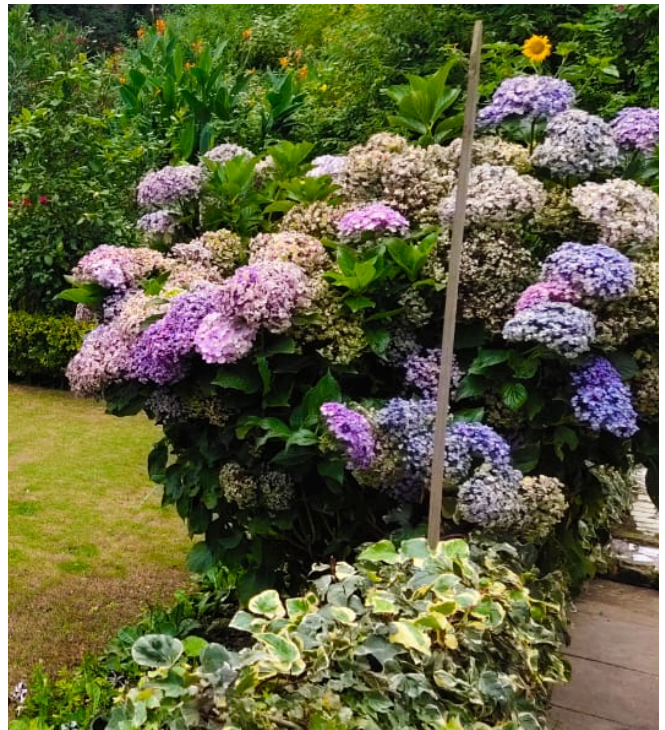
It was after my husband's death in 2015 that I found solace in gardening. Fortunately, I was able to employ a gardener and with his help I turned this untamed piece of land into a beautiful garden. Slowly I began to connect with nature. I could talk to my plants. Everyday I was busy but still aware of each and every plant in my garden. Nurturing and protecting them became my passion. I realized that these were the balm for my loneliness and thus we came good friends.

I was introduced to gardening by my parents in law. We had a house with a lawn surrounded by two sprawling weeping willows and few fruit trees like apple and apricots.

After my father in law's illness and my busy routine the garden remained unattended, but it always attracted me. I would clear the haphazard growths of and on. I can't say whether it was my passion for gardening or the habit of cleanliness.

I tend to my garden early in the morning from 6-8 am before going for work. It gives me peace and freshness and prepares me for the beautiful day ahead. Consistency and discipline comes automatically when you have a passion and love for plants. The results of your hard work and beauty of nature is very encouraging. I don't have any specific gardening practice but over the years I have learnt a lot. Gardening is a big challenge especially in Shimla. The monkey menace, shortage of water, unusual weather with hailstorms, children and dogs trampling the growing plants etc, but one has to be like king Bruce's spider "*try try again*". It has taught me patience and tolerance. Over the years I have learnt that we should go in for few permanent, low maintenance and sturdy plants that can survive harsh winter.







These keep your spirits high when everything is dry. So, Oleanders, Arum Lilly , Roses, Prime roses, Hydrangeas, Iris Lilly, China rose, and Thuja are few such sturdy plants. The exotic ones like Cyclamens, Geraniums, Begonias and Orchids can be tried in pots. Few seasonal plants like Petunias, Pansy, Dianthus, Zinnias, Salvia, Hollyhock etc adorn my garden in spring and autumn.

My tip to gardener friends is to never get disheartened. Every day with this practice we learn a new thing. Keep doing your work and the results will show. Spend time with your plants and you will love each other's company.

Dear Reader, Good Luck with home gardening.