

A mini farm raised at a school

March 08, 2019

When APL Global School shifted to Okkiyam Thoraipakkam in 2017, the new campus wore a drab look and during summer, it felt terribly hot. Nearly two years later, a cool descends on anyone who enters the campus, even while the midday sun is up in the sky. There is greenery almost everywhere. And there is a lot of edible stuff amidst the greenery; so much so that the campus is now called “edible campus”. For the institution, the campus garden is one way of promoting the Sustainable Development Goals drawn up by the United Nations. “In August 2017, we started an organic farming club called

‘Expressions’ with eight students who were interested in farming. We were already segregating and composting the waste generated on the campus and we wanted to put the manure to its best possible use. We also wanted to teach children where their food comes from and how they are grown,” says Kiran Merchant, the school principal. The brain behind the “edible campus” is Maya Ganesh, a consultant on regenerative agriculture and waste management, and socio-environmental researcher. When Maya was roped

in as a consultant to create an organic farm, the school campus was very dry. “Campuses are getting smaller and smaller and most of them lack adequate greenery. We decided to utilise every nook and cranny on the campus and planted saplings of native species,” she says. A permaculture practitioner, Maya adopted the food forest model, a low-maintenance and sustainable forest gardening. “This model imitates the growth patterns in forests and supplies food fresh and natural all year round. It is perennial trees, creepers, bushes and shrubs that ensure a stable supply of seasonal food with minimum human intervention. We just let nature do its job,” she adds. “We have more than 200 varieties of native plants and trees and shrubs. The greenery has attracted garden lizards and small reptiles, birds and insects, and earthworms, creating a small eco-system,” says Maya.

Grow your food

Students toil hard to nurture the garden and they take the produce to their homes. “The concept we promote is ‘Eat your school garden’. None of the produce is sold as we want the children to enjoy the process of growing something on their own and so they get to enjoy the fruit of their hands. The harvest is also shared by teachers and the staff of the school community,” she says.

SOURCE:-<https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-downtown/a-mini-farm-raised-at-a-school/article26463098.ece>

