



# Seeds of sustainability

Sixty-five Godrej Baug residents registered for the plantation challenge to nurture greenery over a period of six weeks

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“Remember it’s not just about growing a plant, it’s about growing a habit of care and patience. Keep your plants happy and healthy; your efforts will shine through in the weeks ahead.” Arzan Malegamwalla, chairman of the Environment subcommittee of the Godrej Baug Residents Welfare Association (GBRWA), assured the 65 participants who had registered for the plantation challenge from May 1 to June 15, 2025 culminating in prizes for the healthiest plant, most creative pot and best overall care.

His regular messages to the “green warriors/ green champs” as he variously addressed the participants on the GBRWA Plantation Challenge 2025 WhatsApp (WA) group were meant to ensure that none lost the interest or inclination to nurture their new “green buddies.” Ranging in age from children under five years to those over 80, there was near parity between males and females among the registrants.

Not all had showed up at the assigned time on the “Distribution and Demo Day” on May 1. The subcommittee members though had divided work among themselves with some collecting the registra-



tion fee of Rs 50, others distributing the plastic pots (with pre-printed names and QR code sticker at the base), soil (a heap of which was placed under a tree at the

Eco Park) and seeds (tiny yellow specks, the name of the plant deliberately not divulged). While suspense was building up for those assembled at the Pavilion, speculation had started: did they not resemble capsicum seeds? As part of the demonstration, the greenhorns were advised on the optimal level of soil to be filled in the pot, the moisture required for germinating and that a dozen seeds from the nearly 100 provided in the packet should be sown in the center of the pot about half a centimeter below the surface level of the soil.

Ready to implement what they had learnt, the participants on the upper floors kept their pots on their window sills. A couple of enthusiasts on the ground floor who had left their pots in one location found them missing from their original place, only to find them at another venue, beside a flower bed! Another eager participant having placed her pot in full sunlight was advised against doing so by a well-meaning neighbor whose pot too

was struggling! The amount of sunlight a plant is exposed to and at what time of day is crucial to its well-being.

“Ready, set, grow... Keep the green spirit alive and growing... Keep growing, keep glowing...” encouraged Malegamwalla at different times on the WA group. However, not all potted seeds were ready to oblige and sprout. Google search suggested placing the seeds on a dish of damp cotton and leaving them in a resealable bag until the first roots appear. Adopting this solution, the seeds that germinated were then transplanted to the pot where the first sighting of green leaves brought a sense of fulfilment to the grower.

As per the rules, only the pot provided was to be used, no change in the pot size or shape or material was permitted. It was necessary to keep the pot’s identification mark visible. To decorate the pots, eco-friendly or handmade decorations like recycled paper, jute, natural items were recommended while avoiding harmful or hazardous materials like glass and sharp objects.

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*Above: Arzan Malegamwala (standing with duly identified pots; right: child filling soil; facing page: seeds distributed and the differential growth rate*

and preserve it,” stated Malegamwala in response to queries from *Parsiana*. Since the Environment subcommittee believes that “every small step counts toward a greener tomorrow we sought to encourage residents, especially the younger generation, to engage in hands-on, sustainable activities. The inspiration came from the growing need to promote eco-conscious habits at the community level.”

The WA group settings were changed on Sundays to permit all members to post a photo of themselves with their respective pots and full name. When the settings opened for the first time on May 11, the most enthusiastic to send in a photo of his thriving saplings was an 81-year-old man. Since he had mentioned his age and flat number, many others too followed suit, some dutifully including a photo of themselves while others avoiding that, perhaps intimidated by the line: “Your updates will be featured on the official website.”

The majority of the pots showed the saplings were thriving. Those who

were struggling kept wondering: Was it the direction of the sunlight? Was it the unseasonal rains? Was the soil quality consistent for all? Was the plant getting sufficient coaxing from the owner? Was it evidence of the owner not having green fingers? One faithful even started reciting *Namaskar Orvar-no* (benediction for vegetation) while watering her plants in the hope of generating a more favorable response!

There were a few who did not share the progress of their plants on the WA group. Persuaded the chariman, “If you missed submitting this week, don’t worry, you can post your update next Sunday during the submission window... Let’s try to stay regular with our updates as consistent participation is an important part of the challenge.”

Determined to “celebrate our love for nature together,” the subcommittee is keen to make the activity “a fun and fruitful journey for all — kids and adults alike! By encouraging children (and adults) to grow and care for their own plants, we hope to give them a true sense of ownership and connection to nature — one that will hopefully inspire a lifelong commitment to sustainability. We intend to make this Baug an example for others.”

Even though the challenge may end on June 15, the subcommittee is hopeful that post that date participants will be inspired to care for their plants at home. If unable to do so, they will be given the option of surrendering them to the subcommittee that will ensure the plants are nurtured in a designated green space within Godrej Baug.

Among the 12 members who assist Malegamwala on the Environment subcommittee are seven women: Nilufer Nasirabadwala, Zenia Velati, Navaz Master, Meher Dastoor, Maharukh Rana, Jasmine Mistry, Binaifer Daruwala; and five men: Neville Daroga, Jehaan Darbari, Jeraz Mullan, Yezdi Sachinwala, Kourash Mistry. A clean-up drive and plantation drive along the pathway to Doongerwadi are next in the pipeline to beautify and green the areas surrounding Godrej Baug while also fostering a strong sense of environmental responsibility within the community. In 2023 too they had organized a clean-up drive before the monsoons and in June that year conducted a tree planting session in collaboration with the Giants Group when 50 saplings were planted around the colony.

The credo of the subcommittee has been “Let’s get our hands dirty for a clean planet!”