

## Chandar - The Home Gardening Champion



Chandar Prasad (middle) with his wife Bimla Wati (left) and the Assistant Minister for Agriculture Hon Jale Sigarara in his backyard

Nothing comes close to farming for 76-year-old Chandar Prasad.

Simply put, it's his passion. He draws inspiration from seeing his dedication bear fruit on the tracts of land available to him.

Even though he has encountered circumstances which would normally demotivate others from continuing farming altogether, he has remained unfazed by his predicament and has been faithful to his calling as a farmer.

He and his wife, Bimla Wati purchased land in Naitalasese and moved there from Labasa in 1993 before relocating to Bau Road in Nausori in 2001.

"In all of these places, all we did was farm, and we built our family on the farm. My children grew up exposed to crops and the market.

"My three children were taught the ropes of farming and the benefits farming brought to our livelihoods," he said.

While in Naitalasese, Chandar was a commercial farmer who toiled and made a living from the land, providing a steady supply of vegetables and crops to the Nausori market.

"Farming in Naitalasese has seen my family thrive over the years, I was able to send my children to school, built a home for my family and have helped to keep them healthy.

As someone who has farming coursing through his veins, he has never once thought to hang up his farming implements and call it a day, instead, he has used his spare time making full use of his backyard as a home garden.

His new home in Bau Road, is a splendid cove of leafy greenery as his backyard is littered with healthy vegetables, utilizing all the available soil that his own backyard has to offer; "I have planted, to name a few, moca, cabbage, bele, passionfruit, eggplant and a compost

heap for soil fertilization," he said.

"Vegetables are not only highly perishable and need to stay fresh to preserve its nutritional and market value, it is also the cheapest source of essential minerals and vitamins to humans," Chandar adds.

"Using the vacant land in our home backyard, this backyard farming has become a source of direct and passive income for my family."

He continues with his home garden as it helps to keep him fit and healthy, "It helps me physically and I always encourage my whole family to engage in this so they can be responsible too when I am not around," said Chandar.

"Although we have everything in place, my body is not tuned to be idle, I would always be in my backyard, planting and watering and it gives me inner peace

to just marvel at the vegetables in my backyard every day.

"The other thing that I do not allow to be used on my backyard farming is chemicals, I use compost and chicken waste as manure."

He shares that the benefits of practicing and starting up your own home gardens has its advantages as he has been at it for the last 20 years.

"We have limited space and living in urban areas like this, our diet is different and we tend to contract non-communicable diseases with our eating styles, this is a movement that can help balance our daily meal and save costs," he said.

"It is because of my experience that I am also able to assist farmers around the area who come to me for advice on backyard gardening and it delights me that they are able to see the benefits of it," he

said.

To supplement his income, Chandar sells his vegetables at the Nausori market, earning approximately \$50-\$60.

"We have it daily for meals and I distribute it to those that come to ask and because of its abundance in supply, every Saturday is my vegetable market day to sell the rest and I am content with what I get every Saturday," he said.

"For families living in urban and peri-urban areas, I urge you to try this simple farming technique, don't be ashamed to do it, it will have a positive impact on your families," he advised.

Chandar Prasad is a recipient of the Backyard Gardening initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, targeting urban and peri-urban households who are limited by land and space to plant vegetables.



Mr. Prasad's Backyard Garden

## Grow Eggplant for Cash (*Solanum melongena*)

### Recommended Varieties:

- Chahat
- Pritam/Long purple

### Seed Rate:

300grams/ha.

### Planting Time:

Best if planted during the cool season but can be grown all year around.

### Spacing

Between rows: 75cm.

Plants within rows: 45-60 cm.

**Germination :** 4 to 6 days after sowing.

Transplant 3-4 weeks after sowing.

Transplanting can be done during cloudy days or late in the afternoon.

Water the plants after transplanting and continue afterwards.

Seedlings raised in seed trays can be planted any time of the day.

### Fertilizer/Manure

**Poultry Manure:** 5 tonnes/ha Broadcast and mix well with soil 2 weeks before planting.

**NPK:** - 13:13:21 200kg/ha basal application at planting.

**Urea:** 100kg/ha. Side dressed in 2 split applications i.e 2 - 4 weeks after transplanting.

- Soil analysis should be done before fertilizer application.

### Weed Control/Management

Apply Tzar at 19ml/15L of Water. Spray at 4-5 leaf stages of grass weeds. Manual hand pulling of weeds and use hoe for small areas.

### Inter row

cultivation using scarifier or small rotovator.

### Pest & Disease Control Management

**Cabbage heart center caterpillar (LCM)**  
Use Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), but note the following:

- The spray needs to be applied carefully so that there is good coverage of the plant as the insecticide has to be eaten by caterpillar to kill them.
- Eggplants are not susceptible to Bt.
- Small larvae are more susceptible to Bt than fully grown ones.
- Avoid using broad-spectrum insecticides (such as pyrethroids and Organophosphate) as they will kill natural enemies.

OR

- Apply either Ag Chem BT at 8g/16L of Water or Prevathon at 10-15ml in 10L or Superguard and Multiguard at 8 ml/16L of water.

### Harvest/Yield/Food Value

Harvest at 60-90 days after planting.

### Yield:

15-20 tonnes/ha.

**Food Value:** Good source of Vitamin A, Vitamin B and Vitamin C.

### Disaster Risk and Climate Change tips

Good food and income alternative after a disaster, as it grows relatively fast.

Hardy plant that can withstand some flooding and dry periods.



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