

80 families @Palaj campus lead a GREEN life

*Spouses of IITGn faculty build farm
which cultivates organic veggies*

Niyati Parikh-Deshpande
@niyati_shantanu

Health benefits of organic vegetables are quite well known. However, the idea of local cultivation of through kitchen gardens and small, local farms among smaller communities to promote the use of organic vegetables is not widespread. Spouses of faculty members at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IITGn) have set an example through one such initiative at the Palaj Campus, by establishing an organic farm that caters to the needs of families residing within the campus.

Started in August 2015, the second phase of cultivation has just begun and this has led to the selling of 100% produce within the campus, twice a week. Prof Naran Pindoriya, an electrical engineering professor at IITGn, closely associated with the initiative said, "The institute has given us tremendous support in terms of funds and land allocation and this has led

this initiative to cater to vegetable needs of over 80 families residing within the campus."

Organic manure that is used for improving cultivation and production is locally produced at the campus.

"We are able to sell 30-40kg leafy vegetables in addition to others, each on Tuesday and Friday, when we put up a stall, from where they are sold," shared Shantu Pindoriya, wife of Naran Pindoriya.

At present, vegetables like spinach, tomato, chilly, brinjal, custard beans, cucumber, ridge gourd, bitter gourd, coriander, beet root and a few climbers are being cultivated. These vegetables are plucked fresh at around 3 or

ORGANIC FARMING

4pm, before being up for sale at 4.30pm. Faculty members have ensured that all vegetables are sold at market prices. The entire system functions on a no-profit-no-loss model. "This will soon become a self-sustained model. Whatever profit we may make will be diverted towards Nyasa, IITGn's social outreach programme," added Shantu Pindoriya.

Nyasa is run by students and faculty members and works towards improving the life of underprivileged children through education and training.

HEALTHY & WISE

Initially, there was a lot of effort put towards making the land fertile. Since it



is near an under construction building, the land had a mix of construction materials like cement, bricks

and small iron rods among others. Organic fertilisers like cow dung, neem leaves, hing and Aloe Vera, among others were added to the soil to make it ready for plantation."

Naran Pindoriya,
project volunteer

Going forward, we want to start with more varieties and map which vegetables to grow in what season. We also want to keep a track of the quantity that is required so as to know what vegetables to cultivate and in how much quantity. This will help us cater to the needs of the families better."

Gayatri Chandra,
spouse of faculty

