



Dispenser and soda bottles are used as planters

Homeowners get training on

BY FATUMAH NALWANGA

With prices increasing every day, people have come up with ways to grow food crops on small pieces of land so that they do not spend too much at the market.

Agrochemists under Nakawa Tumwebaze Cooperative Society, inspired by Dr Herbert Kasita of Kyanja Demonstration Farm, decided to set up demonstration gardens in Kyambogo, a Kampala suburb to equip people with skills in modern farming methods on the smallest piece of land possible.

The first training, which took place last Saturday, was free of charge. It attracted people from all walks of life and was quite interactive.

It was clear that people are yearning to find solutions to the burden of high food prices.

Training
The training took place at K2 village in Kyambogo, Nakawa division. It was conducted under the theme: "Tusimbudde", which means "we have set off" since it has been preparing to set up the demonstration garden for a while.

Why the free training?
Kasita says a good leader should lead by example. "It is our responsibility to set up these gardens to show people in modern farming methods on the smallest piece of land possible. The first training, which took place last Saturday, was free of charge. It attracted people from all walks of life and was quite interactive."

Gardening tip
Muhammad Tumwebaze, an agrochemist, says when you use urine as a pest control measure, you save a lot from spending on pesticides and even avoid fake products which affect plants

to fish than to give them fish. This practical knowledge will help increase their savings at the household level." He said they have all types of vegetables and are planning to add fruit trees in a few months. The demonstration garden

has tomatoes, eggplant, sukuma wiki (kale), dandelion and red type), carrots, spinach, and bulb onions. Spinach, mothers came with their children, while professionals turned up with notebooks and wrote down every detail. Also, the youth dominated all the three sessions.

Lucy Nakalema from Bungi, a Kampala suburb, said she could not miss the opportunity. "This training has opened my eyes. I have learnt that at my rented place, I can recycle water bottles and grow vegetables for consumption from the market," she said. Margaret Nakimera, another youth, said: "I have idle space at my home, so I want to learn how to utilise my space. I also want to grow vegetables to improve my diet."

CHALLENGES & ADVICE

Challenges

Muhammad Tumwebaze, an agrochemist, who is considering taking on backyard gardening as a full-time job, said it is not a business for the faint-hearted because it comes with challenges.

He highlighted the ever-changing weather as one of the main challenges in recent times. "Since our crops need much care, the changing weather is our biggest problem currently. Therefore, a farmer has to do continuous research and consult fellow gardeners to find out what kind of weather is favourable for what crop types," he said.

He further laments that fungal control is one of the biggest challenges for backyard farms. "They are notorious and may not easily respond to available pest control methods."

Advice

Tumwebaze called for developing marketing strategies. He said since these backyard gardens are for both subsistence and commercial consumption, it is important for someone to plan how to market their crops. "Marketing your crops is key in putting up a backyard garden because the vegetables make profits in a short time."

He added that market research is another important aspect that should be considered. "When you research, you learn new things which improve your gardening skills." He urged visiting fellow gardeners to exchange views.

Studying and understanding weather patterns is another tip that every gardener should do, so as to avoid planting in the wrong season. Be active. "This activity is not for the lazy. Crops are like babies especially in the earliest stages of growth. They need a lot of care," Tumwebaze emphasises. He insisted that crops need full-time attendants.



You can grow vegetables for both home consumption and sale in your backyard



Participants (above) touring a spinach garden. Photos by Fatumah Nalwanga

Plastic soda bottles have been recycled into vegetable hanging gardens

backyard gardening

Frequently asked questions

Many people wanted to understand why they have tried growing vegetables in vain. Muhammad Tumwebaze, an agrochemist, said some people buy fake seedlings, while others buy seedlings that have been mismanaged right from the suppliers.

"People sell seedlings after cutting off the first roots, which are key in the survival of every plant," he said. Most participants had questions about how to control pests and were advised to avoid fake products.

INNOVATIONS

Box gardens
Crops have been planted in wooden boxes to demarcate the compound appropriately

and create space for other crops. This is a format for both minimising space and beautifying the compound.

Water bottles

Mineral water bottles are of great value in these demonstration gardens. They have been perforated and hanged using strings across the fence wall, which gives the individual more space since they do not touch the ground.

Green sacks

These are big sacks which have been perforated and small hardcore stones are added in the middle of the soil to allow the irrigation of various crops planted in these sacks.

Dispenser bottles

The gardeners here have mastered the art of recycling

the big dispenser bottles used in office for drinking water. They are very good for any vegetable which needs space to expand.

Wood dust

Instead of using grass for mulching, this team has used wood dust to mulch their gardens, which helps in water reservation and the crop has water throughout the day.

Coffee husks

It is another innovation which was highlighted in this training. Coffee husks enhance soil fertility.

Animal manure

Participants were taught how to mix black soil and animal manure for better fertility of the soil, since many lamented that their soils are not favourable for vegetable growing.

Urine pest control

Tumwebaze shocked participants when he revealed to them that they can collect as much urine as possible and keep it for some weeks to manufacture their own pesticides. "When you use urine as a pest control measure, you save a lot from spending on the pesticides and even avoid fake products," Tumwebaze explained.

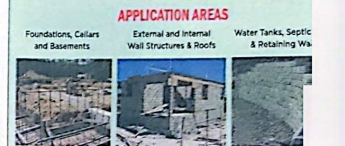
Front yard grocery

Kasita said every serious backyard gardener should innovate ways of marketing their products and setting up a local grocery at their home. "You can set up a small grocery shop in front of your home where you have the garden. Harvest as you display in the grocery shop. The crops will market themselves and you will even be overwhelmed by demand," he said.

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