

# Bonsai: A bewitching way of beautifying homes

**P**REFERRING a serene and exclusive life, this gentle lady despises publicity. Always staying away from propaganda, she says "I never try to promote myself as a woman who cultivates bonsai plants, but I try to increase the love for nature among the present generation. Greenery, has become a rare possession these days. Specially with people living in flats, the idea of rearing an indoor garden is very expensive."

Says she "I have seen many people having plastic plants and paper flowers at home. It is not that I am finding faults with them, as they are helpless too. They have the love for flora and fauna, but cannot afford to spend time and money on these things, hence they have to take resort to 'artificial beauty'."

I want to inculcate in children (as they are open to novel ideas) and their tender, fresh minds are ready to accept anything that feels

**Baffled, aren't you, after seeing this exquisite mural on the wall? This is no ordinary piece of art or a painting, but it is 'living art.' Yes, it is the 'bonsai mural' from the deft, artistic and caressing fingers of Sailaja Krishna. Possessing the knowledge of the exquisite art of bonsai, she aims at inculcating the love for nature among people. SAILAJA KUMAR talks to her to get some information about the wonderful art of bonsai.**

the branches according to our choice, regarding the direction of growth. A bonsai tree growing for years in a simple container is not a contradiction of nature, instead it is an attempt to portray nature in miniature.

The purpose of a bonsai tree is not however simply to emulate nature, but rather to capture the essence and the spirit of its wild brother, so that by gazing upon it, one could envisage where the tree might be growing.

The plant is not hurt or harmed by tying its branches with 'metal

brick powder. In addition to this, the mud in which the plant is growing is literally wrapped in 'moss' so as to avoid evaporation of moisture especially during summer.

However, tremendous expenses are involved for rearing these 'cute dwarfs.' It is not only expensive but it also constant care and labour to rear these 'ciliputs'. Though her kids Dhanvi and Dipya are diapers and have become independent, she continues to play the role of a dutiful mother to her bonsais.

Incidentally, Sailaja's passion for bonsai began 15 years ago when she made a casual visit to one of her friends place at Bombay. It was love at first sight she says. "I had a feeling that those cute green creatures were trying to say something to me, to take

become an inseparable part of me. I never feel like moving out of my house as they would miss me, my attention and care. They are such delicate darlings that even a drop of excess water would hurt their roots and a drop less would dehydrate them. My neighbours are very understanding and look after them fondly when I am away but still..."

Coming back to actual cost involved in these, she had to spend a whopping Rs. 18,000 just for renovating her already existing garden. "It is expensive, but I cannot help it. Some women have a passion for jewellery, some for clothes and some for cars, but I have a passion for these."

These are the coaxing words she says to herself whenever she has to spend 'solid' amount of money on them. Pointing out at an exclusive pine bonsai plant, she says, "This pot alone costs Rs 2000. Of late, I have started the

participate in this contest. I was truly overjoyed for having got this once-in-a-lifetime chance. I attended the workshop with three other people from Pune."

Besides having a different collection of rare plants, she has even common plants like papaya, sacred basil (tulsi) curry leaf and so on, all bonsai.

"I cannot call myself a master in this art, but so far, not a single plant which I experimented with has withered away, touch-wood!" she exclaims.

Sailaja has been freelancing as a horticultural consultant for various reputed hotels. She confesses, "I feel terrible when I have to part with these plants. Even today, I go to see them, just like a mother, who left her kids in the hostel," she jokes.

Both her children have taken to their mothers hobby. Cute little pots with maize and common grass on either side of their televi-



and looks good) and of course adults too, a 'sense of protection' towards environment."

"Green revolution?" I asked, to which she smiled ruefully, and said "People are becoming so mechanical these days, that I wouldn't use such big, complicated terms, but I love nature and I want people to love nature too."

She explains in more detail about the passion of her life - bonsai. "Contrary to the popular belief, bonsai does not mean cruelty to the plants by bending

strings'. On the contrary, we simply see to it that the growth is promoted in a particular manner. A typical bonsai plant should have a triangular or pyramid shape.

Its root, unlike the ordinary pots and plant should not traverse deep into the ground but should be just embedded in the soil and grow parallel to the earth. This again is just like the normal plants which grow in the nature.

We use special soil for this, which comprises of garden soil, good dried cow dung manure and

them in my arms, then I decided, I will make it my hobby." This is how a past-time was converted into a passion and obsession. Going around her house is a real 'green treat'.

An array of plants in the balcony, some like citrus, studded with gem-like fruits, are sure to make you squeal in delight. The most precious one of all her plants is a 'bougainvillea', which is in full bloom and stands proudly adjacent to her bedroom, reminding you of a colourful bouquet.

This is the token of our married life", she says with a dreamy look in her eyes. "If grew with me in this house, I consider it as my friend. You may be finding it absurd but I talk to her about everything under the sky. Today, these 'miniatures' have

## BEAUTIFUL HOMES



'rock-culture' which is the in-thing in bonsai. I have attended various conferences and participated in seminars conducted by experts."

She proudly displays the various certificates she acquired for having taken part in a workshop organised by Indo-Japanese Council.

"Here I got a chance learn the emerging trends bonsai. For example, now-a-days, it is not the age but beauty which is given more importance. Experts from all over the world were invited to

sion speak a lot about the kids love for greenery.

After the two-hour-long chat with her, I sat down at the dining table sipping the juice and musing over our conversation. I felt very small before these dwarfs, who suddenly appeared very majestic with their innocent appealing looks. The bonsai which was standing in full dignity and royalty in the midst of the dining table seemed to smile at me. Now, now was I imagining things, or was it true that plants 'sneak'?