

NKDA enlists experts to help residents grow own veggies

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In a bid to go green, New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA) is encouraging residents to grow fruits and vegetables in their empty spaces and for this they have empanelled five agencies that they may seek help from.

“Why should a cucumber be transported all the way from Bhangor for your salad? The truck would use up fuel, add to pollution...” said an NKDA official. “Rather, just like many of you grow roses and cacti, try growing your own food that would also be organic and healthy. This is called urban farming.”

The official was addressing the audience at Swapno Bhor senior citizens’ park and went on to introduce the five agencies vouched for by NKDA. Their contact numbers have since been uploaded on the NKDA website.

“Ever since the Green Revolution of the 1960s, yield has multiplied but the rampant use of pesticides and fertilisers has polluted the soil and produce quality,” said a representative of Palash Enterprise. “My own mother, who is diabetic, saw a drastic drop in her sugar level after switching to



Kunal Deb of Uthnao, one of the empanelled agencies explains their urban farming process at Swapno Bhor as NKDA chief Debashis Sen and others listen. Picture by Brinda Sarkar

organic food.”

A representative of Sarkar Nursery, situated near Vedic Village, said they would help in organic farming using vermicompost while one from Rajkumar Nursery said they can use up not just empty spaces but also plant trees in trays or PVC pipes with small openings on top. “We use vermicompost and cocopeat and shall take money for our services only after your plants bear fruit,” said the

representative.

Also empanelled are two agencies that have their work for all to see in the township. Uthnao had set up the 7,000 sq ft organic farm on the terrace of CB Market that is now being run by NKDA while Hari Mitti runs a kitchen garden in Swapno Bhor itself.

“We are also looking after nearly 90 rooftops across the city,” said Suhrid Chandra of Hari Mitti. “This is the need of the hour. If we depend

on markets, we eat a little bit of cancer everyday. Hari Mitti, based behind Sector V, plants the fruits and vegetables on crates or racks so as to not spoil the terrace floor with heavy pots.

Uthnao has in the past cultivated the terrace of Siddha Town in Rajarhat, besides the CB Market rooftop. “We would be using vermicompost, cocopeat, hydroponics. Everything is possible from chillies and brinjal to jhinge and spinach,” said Kunal Deb.

The agencies explained that even besides eating healthy, the process of gardening was sure to keep residents engaged and happy. “The other day I got a call from a customer at 5am. He wanted to share that his brinjal plant had borne a vegetable!”

The NKDA official said that they wanted to be a platform for buyers and sellers to meet. “Feel free to negotiate with the empanelled agencies now,” he said. “In case we get complaints from residents about any agency we shall remove them from the list but we have done background checks on them and they are reliable. We don’t expect urban farming to increase overnight but this is sustainable in the long run.”