

# BEEJPATRA

*An initiative on Urban Farming*

Beejpatra in Hindi translates as ‘cotyledons’- the part of seed which nourishes it till it grows its own roots. It also translates as “the original letter”. This Newsletter is an attempt to nourish the germinating hope that cities can be made beautiful. This ‘Beautiful City’ need not be limited to aesthetics and material pleasures -- it rather incorporates the beautiful ideas of freedom, equality and self-reliance. Urban farming is a step towards realizing this hope. Beejpatra is here to save and share the knowledge, experiences and possibilities in urban farming. Beejpatra is here to create a movement to radically transform our cities. Beejpatra, like cotyledons, is where the journey starts...

## EVENTS

## SEEDS OF RESISTANCE & HOPE

*A conversation between environmental activists and practitioners of urban farming in India, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine.*

Diverse practices of urban farming have come up amidst different contexts, in different countries and regions. At the core of it, all these acts of resistance are against the approaches of urbanisation being propagated by the state, which is for capitalist development and the involvement of corporates.

In India, urban farming became necessary for health and environmental reasons which have a wide systemic impact on the cities and their infrastructure. While in Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria, it became a way to show resistance and defy occupation. It was born amidst extreme violence and destruction and became a way to preserve life and dignity by growing another life. For people of these conflict-ridden countries, urban farming has become a way to go back to their roots, use local and indigenous seeds and practices of farming to resist the occupation by the State and other forces, become self-reliant, inculcate a feeling of community, revive the lost tradition, and most importantly survive in the face of overt oppression.

**FOR PEOPLE OF THESE  
CONFLICT-RIDDEN  
COUNTRIES, URBAN  
FARMING HAS BECOME  
A WAY TO GO BACK  
TO THEIR ROOTS**



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**The people of these countries are moving towards food sovereignty through the practice of agroecology. It has become not only a necessary means for survival but also a political act, in order to show how a new society can be imagined.**

**Urban farming has a big role to play in the fight towards food sovereignty. It not only helps meet the food demands of the people of Delhi but also makes use of the “waste”. It is a solution to urban problems and an important part of a self-reliant city. Many of the urban areas, like in Lebanon and also in Syria, have been able to resolve the problem of garbage generation by moving towards agroecological practices of farming in which waste is used as compost.**



A Labanese Urban Farm

**In Delhi, urban farming is not a new development but has been present in various forms, either as subsistence farming or commercial, contributing to the in-boundary food production of the city. In the upcoming frameworks for development, specifically the Master Plan Delhi 2041, activities like agriculture are not being given space. The State is blind to the actual practices and the practitioners of urban agriculture in Delhi and considers it to be non-existent, and has thus categorised the practitioners of farming on the Yamuna floodplains as “illegal”, “unauthorised”, and “encroachers”.**

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The act of urban gardening has been a crucial part of the Palestinian urban society, being their way of living. Recently, the practitioners of urban farming have started using local resources, heirloom seeds, harvesting their own water, and using community and indigenous knowledge in an attempt to bring back the social fabric of Palestinian society and also resist the Israeli occupation.

The Palestinian heritage of resistance through farming or “agro-resistance”, which became a popular means during the Palestinian uprising, the Intifada, lasting from 1980 to 1981 against Israeli occupation, took form in Syria as well. Lebanon, which is home to many Palestinian refugees has also witnessed the rise of resistance farming.

What is taking place in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and India, are not just random acts of urban farming but a movement that is resisting the corporatization of farming, commodification of food, encroachment by neo-liberal and imperial forces, “development” narratives of the State and also attempting to save indigenous knowledge, practices and move towards food sovereignty.

The struggle is not alone and is taking place all over the world. The act of urban agriculture is part of a larger movement towards food sovereignty, resisting the corporatisation of food, and moving towards agroecology. It is also a reimagination of a better future through shared action.



Pictures of various urban farming practices in Syria & Lebanon shared during the 'Seeds of Resistance' webinar

Webinar Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYBU2JoegUw&t=7730s>

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## FARMING THE CITY 2021

Call for Participation-Extended Deadline(31.03.2021)

**People's Resource Centre, in collaboration with Institute for Democracy and Sustainability (IDS) and with technical support from Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Programme (TRIPP) IIT Delhi, invites you to participate in the second edition of our annual convention on urban agriculture- Farming The City.**

**Building on the enthusiastic response received by the inaugural edition last year, we will organise the second edition as a series of webinars from Apr 16-18, 2021.**

**This convention is an attempt to bring together practitioners, academicians, researchers, students, and enthusiasts to enrich the debates on urban agriculture, with a special focus on marginalised communities, women, and in relation to food sovereignty, climate crisis and the ongoing farmers' protests.**

**The 3-day long convention will include talks, panel discussions, research paper presentations, case studies, posters, films, and photo exhibitions.**

**To participate, please send your papers/films/presentations up to 5000 words or 30 minutes by March 31, 2021, to [prc.india@yahoo.com](mailto:prc.india@yahoo.com)**

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## EXPECTED ACTIVITIES

❖ Panel discussions      ❖ Talks and informative lectures      ❖ Community interactions

We request the participants to evoke and enrich the discussions at the online gathering by presenting research/discussion papers, case studies, posters, book reviews, documentary films, or paintings/photo exhibition on any of the themes listed below.

## THEMES

**A. Framing the farming: ideating UA particularly in relation with food-energy-waste linkages, climate change, infrastructure, livelihood and meaningful work, sustainable farming using methods like agroecology, gender, policy, social ecology, decentralised participatory governance, local self-reliance, right to the city and other liberatory ideas of city, and working-class solidarity.**

**B. Rural-urban divide: Growing distance and alienation between producers i.e. farmers and the consumers i.e. city dwellers, commodification of food in relation to the ongoing farmers' movement; urban agriculture as a radical political activity.**

**C. Vulnerable in the city: Assessing the challenges of UA in the current social, political, economic and legal environment, and amidst the ongoing contestations over land, water and natural resources, with special attention to riverfront development projects.**

**D. Changing the map of the city: Focusing on interlinkages between development projects aimed at the concretisation and restructuring of the city like riverfront projects, expressways, Ganga pathway, etc. and its effect on urban agriculture, ecology, and communities.**

**E. UA as a means to food sovereignty: Making a case for greater localization of urban food system against corporate control, culturally and ecologically appropriate food.**

**F. Conceptual debates: Connecting UA to concepts like urban commons, production of space, collective memory and amnesia, etc.**

**G. UA and the making of future cities: contrasting the concepts of technocratic 'smart city' and 'global city' with a humanistic 'self-reliant city' or 'ecological city'.**

**H. Rising for the farming city: forging alliances, building solidarities with ongoing farmer movement, the urban agriculture community and expanding the scope of urban agriculture to include aquaculture, fisheries and cooperatively organised agricultural markets and supply chains.**

**I. Any other topic of your choice that may relate UA with other topics**

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## **SUBMISSION GUIDELINE**

The writings and the audio can be in any language, but the participants presenting in languages other than Hindi/English are kindly requested to provide a Hindi/English translation of the full or summarised presentation.

The word limit for a full (research/discussion/case studies) paper is 5000 words. To accommodate more and diverse presentations, the maximum duration of films is 30 minutes.

Please send your full papers/films/presentations by March 31, 2021(extended deadline), to [prc.india@yahoo.com](mailto:prc.india@yahoo.com). Please write 'submission' in the subject line.

For any queries, please write to [prc.india@yahoo.com](mailto:prc.india@yahoo.com) with 'Query regarding Farming The City' in the subject line.

For more details please visit: <https://prcindia.in/events/ftc21/>



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## RESEARCH WORK UPDATE

# RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

## on Urban Agriculture in India



People's Resource Centre (PRC) is documenting existing practices and emerging trends in urban and periurban farming in Indian cities. Urban farming may provide a systemic alternative to urban scarcity and severe ecological footprint and make cities and urban communities more resilient and self-reliant. Thus, this research fellowship was conceived as a project to study the history of farming communities and their cultural and political journeys in urban areas, crops and cropping patterns, issues of farmers, involvement of younger generations, entrepreneurial farmers, their motivation & economics. The project started in the first week of December 2020.

The Research Fellows were expected to conduct field research and documentation in the following cities; Patna, Ranchi, Pune, Mumbai, Indore. This involved taking and recording interviews with urban farmers, terrace gardeners, and communities living on the river banks or (likely to be) affected by infrastructure developments on river banks.

The resultant findings will be presented in the form of separate reports which will be published by People's Resource Centre along with photographs, video testimonies & detailed field accounts in writing.

### Our Fellows & their respective field locations

**Mumbai : Geetanjali Gurlhosur**

**Patna : Tejee Isha**

**Ranchi : Manoj Singh**

**Pune : Rosamma Thomas**

**Indore : Jayashri Bhalerao**

Updates about this ongoing Research Fellowship will be posted on our website [www.prcindia.in](http://www.prcindia.in) soon.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This Newsletter is a result of the joint effort of volunteers from the Urban Agriculture Community & members of People's Resource Centre. We also acknowledge the enthusiastic support of all those who presented and participated in 'Seeds of Resistance' webinar.

बीजपत्र - शहरी खेती पर मासिक पत्रक शहरी खेती करने वालों, इसपे शोध करने वालों और इसमें रुचि रखने वाले लोगों को अपने अनुभव, विचार और लेख साझा करने के लिए आमंत्रित करता है।

आप हमसे साझा कर सकते हैं-

- घर, छत या बालकनी में खेती करने सम्बन्धी अनुभव जो आपके या आपके दोस्तों/सम्बन्धियों के हों
- शहरों में खेती करने या खेती को प्रोत्साहित करने से जुड़े सामुदायिक प्रयासों पर संक्षिप्त रिपोर्ट
- शहरी खेती से जुड़े तकनीकी और सिद्धान्तात्मक सवालों पर विचार-विमर्श
- इनसे जुड़े शोधकार्य, लघु नोट या टिप्पणियाँ

### कैसे भेजें?

आप अपने लेख, तस्वीरें और वीडियो

**beejpatra@gmail.com** पर हमें भेज सकते हैं। आपके लेख/वीडियो अंग्रेज़ी या हिंदी में हो सकते हैं।

### बीजपत्र टीम में जुड़ें

शहरों को बेहतर, रहने लायक, हरा-भरा और आत्मनिर्भर बनाने के मकसद से हम कुछ लोगों ने मिलकर 'शहरी खेती समुदाय' की शुरुआत की है। हम लोगों का मानना है कि शहर मकानों और मशीनों के जमघट से कहीं बेहतर हो सकते हैं। शहर में रहने वालों के लिए शहर ज्यादा और बेहतर खाना उगा सकता है, साफ हवा और पानी दे सकता है और शहरी जीवन में सौंदर्य को निखारा जा सकता है। बीजपत्र इसी दिशा में एक कदम है। बीजपत्र के जरिये हमारा प्रयास है कि शहरी खेती के ज्ञान, अनुभव और उसकी संभावनाओं को आपस में और समाज के साथ साझा किया जा सके। हमें उम्मीद है कि ये हमें एक आंदोलन की ओर ले जाएगा है जिसमें शहरों के बारे में सोचने के तरीके बदलने के साथ-साथ शहरों में भी मौलिक बदलाव लाया जा सकेगा। हालांकि इस पत्रक के संपादन के लिए हमारे पास छोटी-सी टीम है लेकिन अगर आप दिलचस्पी रखते हों तो इसे इस प्रयास को और आगे बढ़ाने में मदद जरूर करें।

'Beejpatra: a leaflet on urban farming' invites urban cultivators, researchers and enthusiasts to share their experiences and ideas on urban agriculture. You can share with us-

- Your experiences (or experiences of your friends/relatives) of farming in the house, terrace or balcony
- Brief report on a community initiative of farming or encouraging farming in cities
- Discussion on technical and theoretical questions related to urban farming
- Original research work, short notes, or comments related to urban farming

### How to send

Send your articles, photos and videos to us at **beejpatra@gmail.com**. Your articles/videos can be in English or Hindi.

### Join Beejpatra Team

In order to make cities better, livable, green and self-reliant, some of us together have started an 'urban farming community'. We believe that cities can be much better than the gathering of houses and machines. For the city dwellers, the city can grow more and better food, can provide clean air and water and can enhance beauty in urban life. Beejpatra is a step in this direction. It is our endeavor through the cage to share the knowledge, experience and potential of urban farming with each other and with the society. We hope that this will lead us to a movement in which along with changing the way we think about cities, there will be a fundamental change in cities. Although we have a small team to edit this leaflet, but if you are interested, it should help in furthering this effort.

**Initiative supported by: People's Resource Centre, Delhi, India**

