

Bioaestheticity and Functionality of Houseplants: Information Empowerment of Urban Women

Bhawana Asnani* and Seema Dwivedi

*Department of Family Resource Management, College of Home Science, Maharana Pratap
University of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur 313001, Rajasthan, India*

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ABSTRACT A group of 30 women from urban areas of Udaipur district were selected randomly with the age group of 25-40 years, having good educational level. The specific objectives of the present investigation were to study the existing knowledge of urban women regarding bioaesthetic and functional role of houseplants; development of educational aid (booklet) on selection, care and maintenance of houseplants; and to study the impact of developed package in information empowerment in terms of knowledge gain. Data was collected just before the exposure to the aid (for pre-test) and again after the exposure of 24 hours (post test), to assess the impact of package in terms of knowledge gain, through the semi-structured interview schedule. Collected data was analyzed by using frequency, percentage, MPS (Mean Percent Scores), and pre and post knowledge gap was calculated through paired – 't' test, in order to assess the significant difference in knowledge. Before exposure to the aid overall knowledge of urban women was found poor to average in all the aspects, i.e., knowledge regarding houseplants, their arrangements, selection criteria of houseplants and related accessories, and care and maintenance aspect of houseplants with MPS ranging between 20.64 to 37.42 percent. After exposure to the booklet the gain in knowledge was found to be average to good with MPS ranging between 63.79 to 73.93 percent. Knowledge gain was found significant at the 1% level of significance – overall knowledge gain regarding all about necessities of houseplants (19.76- 't' value).

INTRODUCTION

An old saying goes like this:

"If you have only two pennies left with yourself, with one buy a loaf of bread, it gives you life, and with the other buy a flower, it gives you a reason for living."

We live on this planet by the courtesy of the earth's green cover. Plants are our natural heritage, which we have to preserve the posterity. The plants constitute the key elements of the life support system, forms on the planet earth. We depend on plants not only for food, medicine, clothing and shelter but also the precious life sustaining oxygen. Conservation of plant biodiversity is the need of the time. Plants have been used in religious rites, rituals and festivals and as offerings to God's ancestors. All the individuals of society felt need and their duty of keeping and preserving plants with or without any material gains out of it. (Ahuja et al., 2001). It is nice to live with plants. Man has always been doing that. Ancient man was born and brought up in the wild, in the lap of 'mother-nature'.

Though he led the life of a nomad plants always surround him. Even after he settled down he had a garden surrounding his abode. Growing plants indoors is an interesting, satisfying and rewarding hobby and an increasing number of people are discovering for themselves the pleasure to be derived from living with beautiful plants. (Dekhane, 2003).

People suffer if they are consistently deprived of contact with nature. The strains and tensions of modern life have perhaps, made more obvious. (Cruso, 1969). The plants growing indoors provide living bioaestheticity for the home, a means of decorating which mankind has used throughout the world for centuries. Houseplants, the living, growing objects of nature indoors, affect the emotional experience. (Simon et al., 1950). Plants are the most natural and cost effective means of decorating one's home. They provide a warm, snug and comfortable ambience and a home is almost incomplete without them. A large planting and grouping several houseplants together can create an impressive focal point. Housewife is the only person who maintains the household, alone, with tender and loving care. Thus, it is important to impart knowledge among them about the use of houseplants in home. The present study was done in order to make aware the urban housewives of

*Correspondence Address: Bhawana Asnani, 252/C, Pratap Nagar, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India
E-mail: bhawana_asnani@yahoo.com, bhaas2006@rediffmail.com

the bioaesthetic and functional uses of houseplants in the view of selection, care and maintenance, as a booklet.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the existing knowledge of urban women regarding bioaesthetical and functional role of houseplants.
2. To develop an educational package on selection, care and maintenance of houseplants.
3. To study the impact of developed package on information empowerment of urban women about houseplants.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in the urban areas of Udaipur district of Rajasthan State of India. Udaipur has 50 wards in all and divided into four major zones, viz., east, west, north and south. East zone contains 16 wards. Ward number 14 and 19 of east were selected purposively. The information building package was a booklet, consequent to careful review of secondary data, i.e., journals, books, magazines, newspapers etc. The booklet, named *House plants: A basis of Health and Aesthetics* elicits the information about the various aspects related to houseplants, viz., importance of plants in home (bioaesthetics and functionality); detailed information on beautification of home through houseplants; selection of houseplants; care and maintenance aspect of houseplant; pollution-indicating plants; some important registered nurseries, and shops for seeds, medicines and tools of Udaipur city. The booklet was developed with consultation of staff members of Department of Family Resource Management, College of Home Science and Department of Horticulture, Rajasthan College of Agriculture, MPUAT, Udaipur.

One group pre and post experimental design was used in the study. A preliminary survey was done to prepare a sampling frame, to identify the respondents having willingness and facilities to grow and maintain houseplants. Personal interview technique was selected for data collection. Semi-structured interview schedule was developed to assess the knowledge possessed by the women subjects. With the use of same tool pre and post test were conducted and thus,

the knowledge gain was assessed. The tool was developed by the investigator in the light of the developed booklet. The time gap of exposure to the booklet was 24 hours. Collected data was subjected to frequency, percentage, MPS and paired 't' test in order to see the significant difference in knowledge.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The booklet in Hindi was prepared with the help of concerned literature, subject matter specialists of Department of Family Resource Management, COHS and Department of Horticulture, RCA, MPUAT, Udaipur. It was titled as *Houseplants: A basis of Health and Aesthetics*. The developed aid was subjected to evaluation. The experts of panel committee determined the content validity of each and every topic of the booklet. It was rated above average to very good. The suggested modifications were incorporated.

Major findings of existing knowledge regarding all about necessities of houseplants are as follows:

- a) Majority of respondents (86.66%) were familiar about beautification through plants but very few were aware about functionality, medicinal value and related Vaastu of plants. Respondents were not aware of all types of plants. 73.33 per cent respondents knew about flowering plants, few told about creepers, shrubs and trees, and medicinal plants. Only one respondent was aware about cactus and succulents. Majority of the respondents (83.33%) did not give importance to Vaastu.
- b) None of the respondents were aware about arranging plants in staircases, bedrooms and bathrooms; few know that plants can be arranged at entrance, kitchen, terrace, dividers, window-sill etc. 43.33 and 53.33 per cent respondents answered that they arrange plants in balcony, verandah and dining room and majority of the respondents were limited to arrange plants in drawing room. 100 per cent women subjects were aware to arrange plants individually, while none of them ever heard the terms dish garden, bottle garden and terrarium.
- c) Most of the respondents were aware that plants when selected should be healthy and

of good quality, but few of them reached positively in other major reasons, viz., conditions of house under which plants are to grow, the purpose to be put, amount of time devoted in care and maintenance, without any insect infestation etc. Regarding qualities of pots, majority of respondents (86.66%) favored the strength of pots but only few of them were able to tell other important qualities, viz., light weight, according to size of plants and decorative.

- d) Majority of the respondents had poor knowledge regarding care and maintenance practices. Maximum respondents answered some common practices, which are correct.

The pre and post knowledge gap score were calculated for all the aspects related to houseplant along with the scores of difference between the two as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that for all the four aspects of houseplants, knowledge gap decreases at post stage showing knowledge gain on account of exposure to the educational package. The

knowledge gain for houseplants was 37.42% in pre test, which was increased to 73.93% in post test. Thus, the net gain was 36.51%. Similarly, there was gain in knowledge in all other aspects, viz., in arrangements of plants was 41.34%, selection of plants and related accessories was 45.9% and care and maintenance of houseplants was 43.15% as MPS.

The scores of paired 't' test were also computed and presented in Table 1 which shows that there was significant difference between pre and post knowledge for all the four aspects related to houseplants.

Table 1 : Significance of knowledge gain

S.No.	Aspects	't' value gain in knowledge
1.	Houseplants	24.92**
2.	Arrangements of plants	16.02**
3.	Selection of plants and related accessories	53.33**
4.	Care and maintenance of plants	15.04**
5.	Overall knowledge gain	19.76**

** Significant at 1% level with n-1 d.f.

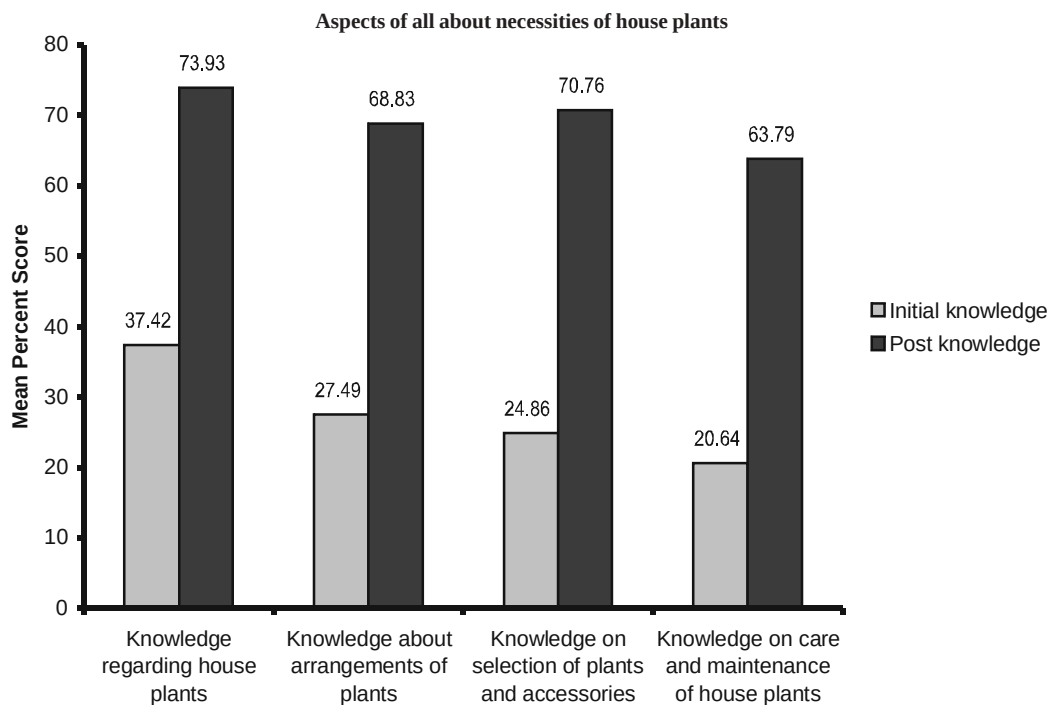


Fig. 1. Pre and post knowledge gap

Values given in table 1 point out that knowledge gain in all the aspects was found significant at 1% level of significance as calculated 't' values in all the cases. These findings reflect that the educational package was effective for housewives.

The decrease in knowledge gap and significant difference between pre and post knowledge confirm the fact that the respondents were able to gain sufficient knowledge. Thus, the booklet was effective in information empowerment of urban housewives, due to following reasons:

- Easy and simple language
- Interesting subject matter
- Picture and illustrations being used
- Short and with less technical terms

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