



# Urban Gardening STARTER KIT

India-Tested · Balcony-Ready · Zero Guesswork

Beginner Checklist + Plant List + Soil Mix Guide

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Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh | 4+ years | 73 kg harvested

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Works for balconies in Delhi · Mumbai · Bangalore · Chennai · Hyderabad · Pune · Madanapalle and every Indian city in between. All prices in Indian Rupees (Rs.).

## PAGE 1 — Beginner Checklist

The complete 11-step system at a glance. Tick each box as you complete it.

01	<b>Measure Your Balcony</b> Tape measure — record length x width in feet. Under 20 sq ft = 3 containers. 20-35 sq ft = 5 containers. Note: Subtract 60 cm from wall side for walking space. A 3-tier stand triples usable space.	<input type="checkbox"/>
02	<b>Choose 3 Herbs Matching Your Sun Hours</b> 4+ hrs = Pudina, Dhania, Methi. 6+ hrs = Tulsi, Ajwain, Chilli. 2-4 hrs = Ginger, Turmeric. Note: 3-herb rule for beginners: start with exactly 3, not 8. Easier to diagnose problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>
03	<b>Build Your Soil Mix</b> 50% cocopeat + 30% perlite + 20% vermicompost. Cost: Rs. 130-170 per 5 kg. Drains in under 20 sec. Note: NEVER use nursery soil alone — compacts to 180+ second drainage by Week 8.	<input type="checkbox"/>
04	<b>Select Correct Container Size</b> Dhania/Methi: 5L min (6 inch). Tulsi: 8L min (10 inch). Curry Leaf: 15L min (12 inch). Note: Undersized containers = root-bound plants = production stops at month 3-6.	<input type="checkbox"/>
05	<b>Map Sunlight Across Your Balcony</b> Check each spot at 7 AM, 9 AM, 11 AM, 1 PM, 3 PM, 5 PM on a clear day. Count direct-sun hours. Note: Minimum 4 sun hours for leafy herbs. Minimum 6 for tulsi and chilli.	<input type="checkbox"/>
06	<b>Gather 5 Essential Tools</b> Trowel (Rs. 80-120) + watering can rose head (Rs. 120-180) + spray bottle (Rs. 40-60) + pH strips (Rs. 50) + timer. Note: Do NOT buy moisture meter, grow lights, or drip system in first season.	<input type="checkbox"/>
07	<b>Decide: Seeds or Seedlings?</b> Always seeds: Dhania, Methi, Palak (taproots break on transplanting). Note: Always transplants: Tulsi, Curry Leaf, Ajwain, Lemongrass, Ginger/Turmeric rhizomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
08	<b>Plant Correctly</b> Transplants at same crown depth as nursery bag. Seeds: 0.5 cm cover, mist with spray bottle only. Note: Cover seed container with damp newspaper for 3-4 days. No fertiliser for 14 days after transplanting.	<input type="checkbox"/>

09	<p><b>Water the Right Way</b></p> <p>Water at 6-8 AM or 5-7 PM ONLY. Finger test at herb-specific depth before every watering.</p> <p>Note: NEVER water between 10 AM-4 PM. Cold water on heat-stressed roots kills herbs within 48 hrs.</p>	[ ]
10	<p><b>Maintain and Control Pests</b></p> <p>Neem oil spray (5 ml + 2 drops dish soap + 1L water) every 2 weeks at 6 PM.</p> <p>Note: This single routine prevents 80% of Indian balcony herb pest problems organically.</p>	[ ]
11	<p><b>Harvest for Maximum Regrowth</b></p> <p>Cut 2-3 cm above soil, leave growing tip intact. Each cut creates 2 new growth points.</p> <p>Note: Harvest outer stems first. Morning harvest (6-8 AM) = peak aromatic oil concentration.</p>	[ ]

**FIRST-SEASON GOLDEN RULE:**  
 Start with EXACTLY 3 herbs: Dhania + Methi + Pudina. These 3 cover your highest daily kitchen use, grow in any Indian city, and cost under Rs. 600 to set up. First harvest in 21 days from sowing. Add Tulsi in month 2. Add Curry Leaf in month 3.

## PAGE 2 — Best Indian Plants for Your Balcony

Tested across 4+ seasons in Madanapalle. All available at Indian nurseries.

### 12 HERBS RANKED BY KITCHEN VALUE

Herb	Sun	Container	First Harvest	Monthly Rs. Saving	Best Season
Dhania (Coriander)	4-6 hrs	10x6 inch rect	21-28 days	Rs. 300-410	Oct - Feb
Methi (Fenugreek)	4+ hrs	10x6 inch rect	21 days	Rs. 250-370	Oct - Feb
Pudina (Mint)	4+ hrs	6-8 inch round	3 wks (cutting)	Rs. 300-400	Year-round
Tulsi (Holy Basil)	6+ hrs	10 inch / 8L	Week 4 (pinch)	Rs. 120+	Year-round
Ajwain (Carom)	5+ hrs	10 inch round	Week 6	Rs. 150-180	Year-round
Curry Leaf	3-6 hrs	12 inch / 15L	Month 7 (yr 1)	Rs. 200+ (yr2)	Year-round
Green Chilli	6+ hrs	10 inch / 8L	Month 3-4	Rs. 200-400	Summer
Lemongrass	6+ hrs	10 inch deep	Week 8	Rs. 60-80	Year-round
Ginger	3-4 hrs	12 inch 25cm deep	Oct-Nov (harvest)	Rs. 150-190	Monsoon
Turmeric	3-4 hrs	12 inch 25cm deep	Nov (harvest)	Rs. 100-150	Monsoon
Sabja (Basil seeds)	2+ hrs	Any tray 3cm	7-10 days	Rs. 80-120	Year-round
Palak (Spinach)	4-6 hrs	10x6 inch rect	35-45 days	Rs. 100-200	Oct - Feb

### BEST STARTER HERBS BY BALCONY DIRECTION

Direction	Sun Hours	Best 3 Starter Herbs	Notes
South-facing	6-9 hrs	Tulsi + Dhania + Methi	Full herb range. Shade dhania/methi Mar-Jun.
East-facing	4-6 hrs morning	Dhania + Methi + Pudina	Best for beginners. Longest dhania season.
West-facing	4-6 hrs afternoon	Tulsi + Pudina + Ajwain	Dhania/methi Oct-Feb only. Heat-lovers thrive.
North-facing	2-3 hrs indirect	Ginger + Turmeric + Sabja	Shadow kit. Saves Rs. 300-450/month.

**DATA SOURCE:**

Original yield data from 14 containers tracked over 6 months — Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh, October 2024 to March 2025. DIY standard soil mix, standard watering protocol. 6-month total saved: Rs. 1,630 from Rs. 1,440 total setup cost.

## PAGE 3 — 3 DIY Soil Mix Recipes

All ingredients at any Indian nursery or agri shop. Verified prices 2025–2026.

### RECIPE 1 — Standard Herb Mix

Use for: Dhania, Methi, Palak, Pudina — all leafy cut-and-come-again herbs

Ingredient	Ratio	Cost Rs.	Where to Buy
Cocopeat 650g block	50%	Rs. 80-100	Nursery / agri shop
Perlite 500g bag	30%	Rs. 30-40	Agri shop / Amazon India
Vermicompost 500g	20%	Rs. 20-30	Local agri shop
<b>Batch cost: Rs. 130-170 per 5 kg</b>	Drainage (original data — Priya Harini B): 15 sec Week 1 — 18 sec Week 12		

**Pro tip:**

This mix drains 10x better than nursery soil at Week 12. Drainage stability is the reason herbs stay healthy past 8 weeks.

### RECIPE 2 — Fast-Drain Mix

Use for: Tulsi, Ajwain, Lemongrass — perennial herbs with drier-root preference

Ingredient	Ratio	Cost Rs.	Where to Buy
Cocopeat 650g block	40%	Rs. 80-100	Nursery / agri shop
Perlite 500g bag	40%	Rs. 30-40	Agri shop / Amazon India
Vermicompost 500g	20%	Rs. 20-30	Local agri shop
<b>Batch cost: Rs. 130-170 per 5 kg</b>	Drainage (original data — Priya Harini B): 10 sec Week 1 — 12 sec Week 12		

**Pro tip:**

Extra perlite prevents the 48-hr surface moisture that triggers crown rot in Indian monsoon humidity. Critical for tulsi and ajwain survival.

### RECIPE 3 — Rhizome Mix

Use for: Ginger, Turmeric — underground rhizomes need richer nutrition

Ingredient	Ratio	Cost Rs.	Where to Buy
Cocopeat 650g block	50%	Rs. 80-100	Nursery / agri shop
Perlite 500g bag	20%	Rs. 30-40	Agri shop / Amazon India
Vermicompost 1 kg	30%	Rs. 40-60	Local agri shop

**Batch cost: Rs. 150–200 per  
5 kg**

Drainage (original data – Priya Harini B): 12 sec Week 1 – 16 sec  
Week 12

**Pro tip:**

Extra vermicompost supports 5–6 months of underground rhizome expansion through the full Indian monsoon season. Green ginger harvestable from August onwards.

**DRAINAGE TEST — do this BEFORE planting**

Pour 500 ml water into filled container. Time from first drip to last drip. Under 25 sec = plant. Over 40 sec = add

## PAGE 4 — Sunlight & Container Quick Reference

Original temperature data from Madanapalle balcony, May 2024, 2 PM.

### CONTAINER MATERIAL vs ROOT ZONE TEMPERATURE

Material	Root Zone Temp (May 2 PM)	Cost Rs.	Verdict
Fabric grow bag (black)	32-36 C	Rs. 60-120	Best choice — all summer herbs
White / cream plastic	34-36 C	Rs. 90-160	Excellent — best summer option
Light grey plastic	34-38 C	Rs. 80-150	Good for leafy herbs
Terracotta	38-42 C	Rs. 80-200	OK for tulsi/ajwain, NOT leafy herbs
BLACK plastic nursery pot	<b>48-52 C DANGER</b>	Rs. 30-60	Wrap with jute (Rs. 20-40) from April
Metal / tin container	<b>55-62 C FATAL</b>	Rs. 0	NEVER use for herbs in direct sun

### SUN HOURS MEASUREMENT METHOD

1	Place chalk marks at your planned container positions on the balcony floor.
2	Check each mark at exactly: 7 AM — 9 AM — 11 AM — 1 PM — 3 PM — 5 PM.
3	Count the time slots where that position has DIRECT sun (not reflected light).
4	That count = approximate direct sun hours at that position.
5	Minimum 4 sun hours needed for leafy herbs. Minimum 6 for tulsi and chilli.

### WATERING FREQUENCY — ALL HERBS — ALL 3 INDIAN SEASONS

Herb	Test Depth	Summer Mar-Jun	Monsoon Jul-Sep	Winter Oct-Feb
Dhania, Methi, Palak	3 cm	Daily AM	Every 2-3 days	Every 2 days
Pudina	3 cm	Daily AM	Every 2 days	Every 2-3 days
Tulsi	4 cm	Daily AM+PM	Every 3-4 days	Every 3 days
Curry Leaf	4 cm	Every 2 days	Every 4-5 days	Every 3-4 days
Ajwain	5 cm	Every 3 days	Every 5-6 days	Every 4 days
Ginger / Turmeric	5 cm	Every 3-4 days	Rain only	Every 4 days

**GOLDEN WATERING RULE:**

Water at 6-8 AM or 5-7 PM ONLY. NEVER water between 10 AM and 4 PM. Cold water on heat-stressed roots causes thermal shock that kills pudina and tulsi within 48 hours. Always finger-test at herb-specific depth before watering – never water on a fixed daily schedule without testing.

## PAGE 5 — Your First 30-Day Action Calendar

Best started October. Works in every Indian city. Tick each day as you complete it.

### WEEK 1 — Setup (Days 1-7)

Day 1	Measure balcony. Chalk-mark sun positions. Check at 7AM/9AM/11AM/1PM/3PM/5PM. Record sun hours per spot.	}
Day 2	Buy soil ingredients: cocopeat + perlite + vermicompost. Total Rs. 130-170. Check local nursery first.	}
Day 3	Buy containers: 2x rectangular 10x6 inch (dhania + methi) + 1x 8-inch round (pudina). Total Rs. 220-340.	}
Day 3	Buy seeds: dhania (Rs. 20-30) + methi (Rs. 20-25). Collect pudina cutting from neighbour or market.	}
Day 4	Mix Standard Recipe (50% cocopeat + 30% perlite + 20% vermicompost). Fill containers. Drainage test.	}
Day 5	Sow dhania and methi. Mist with spray bottle until evenly damp. Cover with damp newspaper.	}
Day 6	Place pudina cutting in water glass (2-3 cm water). Position in bright indirect light.	}
Day 7	Remove newspaper if first shoots visible. If not visible yet, keep covered 1-2 more days.	}

### WEEK 2 — Germination (Days 8-14)

Day 8	First methi cotyledon leaves may appear (normal Day 4-8). Dhania takes 7-10 days.	}
Day 9	Begin finger-test watering routine. Test at 3 cm before every watering. Water 6-8 AM only.	}
Day 10	Pudina cutting: check for root nubs forming at base of stem in the water glass.	}
Day 12	Thin methi if overcrowded — leave 1-2 cm space between seedlings for full leaf development.	}
Day 14	Methi at 3-5 cm. Dhania at 2-4 cm. NO fertiliser yet — soil has 60 days of nutrition from vermicompost.	}

### WEEK 3 — Growth (Days 15-21)

Day 15	Begin seaweed extract: 5 ml per 1L water, 100 ml per 6-inch container, once weekly. Cost Rs. 180-250/500ml.	}
Day 17	Transplant pudina cutting to soil once roots reach 2-3 cm length. Crown at original level.	}

<b>Day 18</b>	Rotate ALL containers 90 degrees. Prevents asymmetric growth. Takes 10 seconds per container.	}
<b>Day 21</b>	FIRST METHI HARVEST if plant is 10-12 cm tall. Cut 2-3 cm above soil, leave growing tip intact.	}

**WEEK 4 – First Harvest (Days 22-30)**

<b>Day 22-25</b>	DHANIA FIRST HARVEST when stems reach 15 cm. Cut 2-3 cm above soil. Expected yield: 120-160g.	}
<b>Day 25</b>	Sow dhania Container B (succession: 14 days after Container A). Methi Container A second cutting approaching.	}
<b>Day 28</b>	5-Minute Sunday check: drainage test, pest leaf inspection, harvest any ready stems, rotate containers.	}
<b>Day 30</b>	Calculate first-month kitchen savings. Typical result: Rs. 200-400 saved from market herb purchases.	}

**SUCCESSION SOWING – never run out of dhania:**  
 Container A sow Oct 1 | Container B sow Oct 15 | Container C sow Nov 1. By Nov 15, Container A is at first harvest. By Dec 1, Container B is at first harvest and Container A is at second cutting. Three containers = fresh dhania every week from October through February.

## PAGE 6 — 8 Common Mistakes and How to Fix Them

The failures that kill Indian balcony herb gardens — with exact fix and cost.

#	Mistake	Why It Kills	Exact Fix	Fix Cost
01	<b>Garden soil in containers</b>	Compacts to 180+ sec drainage in 2-3 weeks. Fine herb roots suffocate from anaerobic waterlogging.	Replace entirely with DIY 50/30/20 mix. Run drainage test before planting.	Rs. 90 new soil per 10L
02	<b>Not pinching tulsi flowers</b>	Leaf production drops 60% within 2 weeks of first flowering. Plant becomes a seed producer, not a herb.	Pinch all flower buds the moment they form. Inspect weekly from month 2 onwards.	Rs. 0 — habit change
03	<b>Curry leaf in 6-inch pot</b>	Root-bound by month 6. Production declines sharply in year 1. Many growers think the plant died.	Use minimum 12-inch / 15L container from Day 1. Do not harvest for first 6 months.	Rs. 200-280 new container
04	<b>Same watering schedule for all herbs</b>	Tulsi and ajwain in consistently moist soil develop crown rot. Dhania in deep containers dries out.	Herb-specific depth test before every watering: 3 cm leafy / 4 cm perennial / 5 cm drought-tolerant.	Rs. 0 — habit change
05	<b>Not misting dhania seeds</b>	Watering can displace seeds into one corner of the container. Germination is patchy or fails.	Spray bottle ONLY for first 10 days after sowing. Never pour water directly on newly sown seeds.	Rs. 25 seeds + spray bottle
06	<b>Harvesting too sparingly</b>	Single growing tip continues upward, no branching occurs. Yield stays permanently low.	Cut 70% of dhania/methi stems. Each cut creates 2 axillary buds = 2 new growth points.	Rs. 0 — habit change
07	<b>Sowing dhania in May-June</b>	Bolts within 3-4 weeks above 30 C sustained. Stems go hollow, leaves become bitter, inedible.	Dhania is an Oct-Feb herb ONLY in Indian conditions. Never sow in summer.	Rs. 25 seeds wasted
08	<b>Black plastic pots in full summer sun</b>	Root zone reaches 48-52 C at 2 PM in May-June. Herb roots die within hours at this temperature.	Wrap with jute cloth (Rs. 20-40 per container) from April 1 through June 30.	Rs. 20-40 jute wrap

### THE 5-MINUTE SUNDAY CHECKLIST

[ ]	Drainage test on ONE container — pour 500 ml, time it. Over 40 sec = add perlite this week.
[ ]	Check tulsi for flower buds — pinch every one found immediately. Takes 60 seconds.
[ ]	Check dhania for central bolting stalk — harvest entire planter if present.

[ ]	Underside of 3 leaves per plant – white dots (whitefly), clusters (aphids), webbing (spider mites)?
[ ]	Finger test all containers at herb-specific depths – water only the dry ones.
[ ]	Harvest any stems ready – outer stems first, growing tip always left intact.
[ ]	Note yellowing pattern: bottom-up = nitrogen deficiency. All leaves at once = root or drainage problem.
[ ]	Rotate containers 90 degrees this week if not done last week.

## PAGE 7 — Shopping List & Free Guides

Complete first-setup shopping list + essential free guides on [thetrendvaultblog.com](https://thetrendvaultblog.com)

### COMPLETE FIRST-SETUP SHOPPING LIST

Item	Purpose	Cost Rs.	Where to Buy	Got it?
Cocopeat block 650g	Soil base	Rs. 80-100	Nursery / agri shop	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perlite 500g bag	Drainage structure	Rs. 30-40	Agri shop / Amazon India	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vermicompost 500g	Nutrition + microbes	Rs. 20-30	Local agri shop	<input type="checkbox"/>
Methi seeds	First harvest in 21 days	Rs. 20-25	Nursery / local market	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dhania seeds	Fastest-value first herb	Rs. 20-30	Nursery / local market	<input type="checkbox"/>
2x rectangular planters 10x6	Dhania + Methi containers	Rs. 80-120 each	Nursery	<input type="checkbox"/>
1x 8-inch round pot	Pudina container	Rs. 60-100	Nursery	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spray bottle 500ml	Seed misting – non-negotiable	Rs. 40-60	General store	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watering can with rose head	Regular watering	Rs. 120-180	Nursery / hardware store	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stainless hand trowel	Soil filling + transplanting	Rs. 80-120	Hardware / nursery	<input type="checkbox"/>

**TOTAL SETUP COST:**

**Rs. 570 — Rs. 905**

Break-even: under 2 months from first harvest

### FREE GUIDES ON THETRENDVAULTBLOG.COM

#### How to Start a Balcony Herb Garden — Complete 11-Step System

[thetrendvaultblog.com/how-to-start-a-balcony-herb-garden/](https://thetrendvaultblog.com/how-to-start-a-balcony-herb-garden/)

The complete expanded guide behind every page of this starter kit

#### Best Soil for Container Gardening India

[thetrendvaultblog.com/best-soil-for-container-gardening/](https://thetrendvaultblog.com/best-soil-for-container-gardening/)

Full drainage science, soil test data, and complete mix recipes

#### Plants Wilting Despite Watering — 7 Hidden Causes

[thetrendvaultblog.com/plants-wilting-despite-watering-7-hidden-causes/](https://thetrendvaultblog.com/plants-wilting-despite-watering-7-hidden-causes/)

What to check when your herb wilts even with correct watering

#### Root Rot in Container Plants — Indian Monsoon

Diagnose, treat, and prevent root rot before monsoon arrives

[thetrendvaultblog.com/root-rot-in-container-plants-in-indian-monsoon/](https://thetrendvaultblog.com/root-rot-in-container-plants-in-indian-monsoon/)

### **5 Balcony Layout Designs Tested for 14 Months**

Which container arrangement gave the highest yield per sq ft

[thetrendvaultblog.com/balcony-herb-garden-layouts-i-tested/](https://thetrendvaultblog.com/balcony-herb-garden-layouts-i-tested/)

### **Best Herbs to Grow in November India**

Month-specific planting guide for peak winter production

[thetrendvaultblog.com/herbs-to-grow-in-november-india/](https://thetrendvaultblog.com/herbs-to-grow-in-november-india/)

### **Container Drainage Failed in Indian Summer – Fix Guide**

Emergency fix when your soil stops draining in heat season

[thetrendvaultblog.com/container-drainage-failed-in-indian-summer/](https://thetrendvaultblog.com/container-drainage-failed-in-indian-summer/)

Questions about your balcony or city? Leave a comment on any guide at [thetrendvaultblog.com](https://thetrendvaultblog.com) — Priya responds personally to every Indian gardener's question. Follow [@thetrendvaultblog](https://www.instagram.com/thetrendvaultblog) on Instagram for weekly updates from the Madanapalle balcony.

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