

The Tulasi Devi Handbook

Guidelines and Instructions on the Importance, Care and Worship of the Tulasi Tree

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Preface

This consists mostly of the old Iskcon Tulasi Handbook (possibly going back to the early 1970s) that we used to have at the temples long ago. It was the first compilation of instructions that most temples had about Tulasi. I had collected a lot of these kinds of books and information, so I pulled my copy out, typed it up, along with doing some editing and rearrangement for ease of use, then added the additional research on who is Tulasi and some of her main pastimes from various Vedic texts. That is how this edition came together. I'm not sure who the author or authors were of the original handbook, but many devotees are most grateful for what has been done. It is a very descriptive and instructive booklet on the ways to take care of Tulasi, and this will help preserve some of the early knowledge and information on growing Tulasi that we had from years ago. Additional information and experience may be available now, but there is nothing like reviewing the original ways we used to do things. It was very successful at the time, and this will provide many ways to be successful in growing Tulasi today. However, new knowledge and information about caring for Tulasi should also be viewed, but something like this is better than nothing.

So this booklet will certainly help all who have Tulasi plants, or hope to have them in the future, and provide greater success in caring for her, and increase appreciation for the sacred nature of the Tulasi tree.

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Quotes From Srila Prabhupada

“I am very glad to learn that Srimati Tulasi-devi has favored you so much. If you actually grow this Tulasi plant, and I am sure you will do it, then you must know it for certain that your devotion for Krishna is testified. I was very much anxious to introduce this worship of Tulasi plant amongst our Society members, but it has not become successful till now. Therefore, when I hear that you have got this opportunity, my pleasure does not have any bounds.”

“Please take care of the Tulasi plants in the following way. This is the best season for growing Tulasi plants. From 15th April to 15th June is the best season for growing this plant. Now I understand that the seedlings are coming out, so the whole spot if possible may be covered by some net because the seedling stage creepers being very delicate are sometimes eaten up by the sparrows, so we have to give a little protection from attack of the sparrows. All the devotees should pour water at least once in the morning before taking prasadam. The watering should not be very much large in quantity, but it should be poured just to keep the ground soft and moist. Sunlight also should be allowed. When the creepers are grown at least seven inches high, then you can take them out from the planting soil and transplant them in a row in a different place. Then go on watering and they will grow like anything. I think this plant cannot grow in cold countries, but if the plants are dispatched from your place and if the devotees take care of the plant with a little care in a flower pot, then it may grow.”

NOTE: Tulasi leaves must be offered to Lord Vishnu or Lord Krishna, Lord Narayana, and Caitanya (Vishnu-tattva only).

“Tulasi leaf is very, very dear to Vishnu. All Vishnu-tattva Deities require profusely Tulasi leaves. Lord Vishnu likes garland of Tulasi leaves. Tulasi leaves mixed with sandalwood pulp and placed on the lotus feet of the Lord is the topmost worship. But we must be very careful that Tulasi leaves cannot be placed on the feet of anyone else than Lord Vishnu and His different forms. Tulasi leaves cannot be placed even on the lotus feet of Radharani, or on the lotus feet of the spiritual master. It is entirely reserved for being placed on the lotus feet of Krishna. We can place, however, Tulasi leaves in the hands of Radharani for being placed on the lotus feet of Krishna, as you have seen on the Govinda Album.”

The following is a portion of a letter sent by Srila Prabhupada, dated October 25, 1976, which answers some important questions regarding the identity of Tulasi.

1) Is each Tulasi a separate jiva soul or a expansion of one pure devotee?

Answer by Srila Prabhupada: Tulasi is one devotee who appears wherever there is devotion to Krishna,

2) Where does her spirit soul go when she leaves this body?

Answer: Tulasi's body is spiritual.

3) May we place jewelry in her soil or just moon stones?

Answer: Yes, jewelry is alright.

4) When Tulasi is being cared for by householders in their home, must two aratrikas still be offered?

Answer: If possible.

5) When Tulasi is being cared for by householders in their home may they use her leaves and manjaris on their home offerings or should they take them to the temple?

Answer: Tulasi leaves should be offered to the Deity.

6) When Tulasi is being offered aratrika by the householders, must she have a ghee lamp?

Answer: If possible.

7) Is it offensive to turn the baby Tulasi's back into the soil when they appear?

Answer: Yes.

8) There are even questions concerning Tulasi's aratrikas. We have always offered her incense, ghee lamp and flower. Is this correct?

Answer: Yes.

9) In the manual, it states that Tulasi should not be pruned. Does this also mean trimming the branches which no longer have leaves or life fluids flowing through them?

Answer: You may cut dead branches, but what is the necessity?

10) We were told you once spoke the “4 regulative principles of Tulasi care” which will keep her from getting sick: (a) keep her moist; (b) keep her clean; (c) give her morning sunlight (at least); (d) give her two aratrikas a day. Is this bona fide?

Answer: I never said that.

11) May Tulasi be made into a tea after she has been offered?

Answer: No.

12) May devotees carve Tulasi wood for Deity paraphernalia?

Answer: Yes. [Only once she has left her body.]

13) When Tulasi leaves her body and the body is too soft for carving beads, how should she be used? Should a small fire sacrifice be performed?

Answer: Use the wood for beads as far as possible; the balance may be placed within the earth. [It is also accepted that one can take dead Tulasi and put it in the local river.]

14) We have a letter from you requesting that no sprays be used on Tulasi devi. May we use a spray of buttermilk, whole wheat flour dissolved in water which coats her leaves to keep spider-mites from causing Tulasi to leave her body?

Answer: I said no chemical sprays.

15) Does Tulasi sleep? Should she be left undisturbed after night-fall?

Answer: Undisturbed means what?

16) Is it permissible to use scissors to cut her manjaris; and when transplanting, to use knives to loosen her from her pot?

Answer: Use common sense, and if you have none then consult with others.

17) Is it an offense to step on or across her shadow (or the shadow of any pure devotee)?

Answer: (As per letter of Jan. 1977, the answer is yes--it is offensive to step on the shadow of a pure devotee.)

18) For two years we have been waiting permission to use the following two prayers plus translations, and translation of the already existing prayer.

[Prayers not reproduced here.] Are these bona fide?

Answer: Don't try to introduce something new. The most important thing is love and devotion.

Srila Prabhupad said there are two kinds of Tulasi: Rama Tulasi which is greener, and Krishna Tulasi which is purple. Srila Prabhupada said also there will be little fruits shaped like temples in a year or so. Now, there are flower stalks, which He called Manjaris. His Divine Grace also mentioned that in India, in temple court-yards, there are always Tulasi growing. In temple courtyards they also grow in a 3 foot tall pillar that is like a big pot, and Srimate Tulasi devi is worshipped regularly by the devotees. Especially in villages, the women take very nice care of the Tulasi plant. They water and offer obeisances and circumambulate in the morning, and in the evening they offer lamp and incense, like arati. He said if arati can be done that is very nice. She is a great devotee and they offer respect. And She is very, very important and necessary paraphernalia in our worship. His Divine Grace said the plants will continue to grow for about 5 years.

"I am giving you herewith the mantras for Tulasi Devi, as follows:

Prayers and Mantras for Tulasi

Said when bowing down (pancanga pranam) upon seeing Tulasi Devi

*Vrindayai Tulasi devyai priyayai kesavasya cha
Vishnu bhaktiprade devi satyavatyai namo namaha*

"I offer my repeated obeiances to Vrinda, Srimati Tulasi Devi, who is very dear to Lord Keshava (Krishna). O goddess, you bestow devotional service to Lord Krishna and possess the highest truth."

When Collecting Leaves

*tulasya mrita janmasi sada tvam keshavapriya
keshavarthi chinomi tvam barada bhava sobine*

"O Tulasi, you were born from nectar. You are always very dear to Lord Keshava. Now in order to worship Lord Keshava, I am collecting your leaves and manjaris. Please bestow your benediction on me."

Srila Prabhupada explained: "The collecting of leaves should be done once in the morning for worshiping and for putting on the plates of foodstuff to be offered to the Deities. On each bowl or plate there should be at least one leaf. So you follow and practice Tulasi affairs and you try to distribute your experience to all other centers, that will be a new chapter in the history of the Krishna Consciousness Movement."

Sung While Offering Arati

*namo namo Tulasi krishna preyasi namo namah
radha krsna seva pava ei abhilasi
ye tomara sharana lasa tara vancha purna haya
kripa kari karo tare vrindavana-basi
mora ei abhilasa vilasa kunje dio vasa
nayane herivo sada yugala-rupa-rasi
ei nivedena dhara sakhira anugata kara
seva adhikara diye koro nija dasi
dina krishna dase kaya ei yena mora haya
sri radha govinda-preme sada yena bhasi*

"O Tulasi, beloved of Krishna, I bow before you again and again. My desire is to obtain the service of Sri Sri Radha-Krishna.

"Whoever takes shelter of you has his wishes fulfilled. Bestowing your mercy on him, you make him a resident of Vrindavana.

"My desire is that you also grant me a residence in the pleasure groves of Sri Vrindavana-dhama. Thus, within my vision I will always behold the beautiful pastimes of Radha and Krishna.

"I beg you to make me a follower of the cowherd damsels of Vraja. Please give me the privilege of devotional service and make me your own maidservant.

"This very fallen and lowly servant of Krishna prays 'May I always swim in the love of Sri Sri Radha and Govinda.'"

[The translation from the early days in Iskcon: "O Tulasi, beloved of Krishna, I bow before you again and again. The only desire left in me is to serve Radha and Krishna. O dweller of Vrindavana, the wishes of all those are fulfilled who seek your favor. Bestow your kindness upon me. I wish you to live in my small garden and you remain green forever. O storehouse of beauty. I am your follower and shakti, pray that by making me your maidservant of Krishna and this body is His—not mine. Bless me that in this body dwells only love for Radha and Krishna."]

While Circumambulating Tulasi

*yani kani cha papani brahmahatya dikani cha
tani tani prana shyanti pradakshinah pade pade*

"By the circumambulation of Srimati Tulasi Devi all the sins one may have committed are destroyed at every step, even the sin of killing a brahmana."

Sri Tulasi Arati

by Chandrashekhara Kavi

*namo namaha tulasi maharani
vrinde maharani namo namaha
namo re namo re meiya namo narayani*

*jako darashe, parashe agha-nasha-l
mahima beda-purane bakhani*

*jako patra, manjari komala
shri-pati-charana-kamale lapatani
dhanya tulasi meiya, purana tapa kiye
shri-shalagrama-maha-patarani*

*dhupa, dipa, naivedya, arati,
phulana kiye varakha varakhani
chappanna bhoga, chatrisha byanjana
bina tulasi prabhu eka nahi mani*

*shiva-shukha-narada, aur brahmadiko
dhurata phirata maha-muni jnani
chandrashekhara meiya, tera jasha gaowe
bhakati-dana dijiye maharani*

“O Tulasi Maharani! O Vrinda! O mother of devotion! O Narayani, I offer my obeisances to you again and again.

By seeing you or even by touching you, all sins are destroyed. Your glories are described in the *Vedas* and *Puranas*.

Your leaves and soft manjaris are entwined at the lotus feet of Narayana, the Lord of Lakshmi. O blessed mother Tulasi, you performed successful austerities and have thus become the chief consort and queen of Sri Shalagrama-shila.

You engadden and shower your rain of mercy upon one who offers you some incense, a ghee lamp, naivedya, and arati. The Lord does not care for even one of fifty-six varieties of cooked food or thirty-six different curries offered without Tulasi leaves.

Lord Shiva, Sukadeva Goswami, Devars Narada, and all the jnanis and great munis, headed by Lord Brahma, are circumambulating you. O mother! O Maharani, Chandrashekhara [the author] thus sings your glories. Please bestow upon him the gift of pure devotion [prema-bhakti].”

All kinds of sinful people, even a murderer of a brahamana, can become pure by circumambulating Sri Tulasi step by step.

How To Offer Tulasi Devi Worship (Puja)

Tulasi-puja is relatively simple, consisting of only three articles: incense, a ghee lamp, and flowers. Sooner or later, you will probably get an opportunity to offer *puja* to Tulasi, so here are the steps that you need to know:

Achamana (purification)

Take the spoon from the water (*achamana*) cup and purify both hands by sprinkling water onto them.

A spoon full into your right palm, chant om keshavaya namah, and sip.

A spoon full into your right palm, chant om narayanaya namah, and sip.

Another spoon full into your right palm, chant om madhavaya namah, and sip.

Then put another spoonful into your palm and wash both hands.

Offering the incense

Purify (sprinkle with a spoon full of water) the bell and the incense holder.

Light the incense.

Pick up the bell in the left hand; ring the bell throughout the *puja*.

Pick up the incense holder in the right hand and offer the incense to Tulasi with seven circles around her whole form.

Then offer the incense in the same way to Srila Prabhupada and then all the devotees.

Offering the ghee lamp

Purify the ghee lamp by sprinkling a few drops of water on it, like the incense.

Light it the ghee lamp.

Offer it to Tulasi: four circles to the base, two to the middle, three to the top, and seven to the whole body.

Then offer to Srila Prabhupada and then all the devotees.

Offering the Flowers

Purify the flowers.

Offer them to Tulasi with seven circles to the whole form.

Place one at her base (optional).

Offer them to Srila Prabhupada and then all the devotees.

Now the *puja* is complete and you can serve the devotees by assisting them to purify their hands by sprinkling a few drops on them before they take the other spoon to water Tulasi with a few drops of water.

Planting, watering, protecting, maintaining, circumambulating, seeing, bowing down to, praying to, and glorifying are all ways of serving and worshipping Tulasi and are highly beneficial.

Tulasi Devi: The Importance of the Sacred Tree

The Tulasi tree is a most important plant, and is often seen at numerous Vedic temples, especially those dedicated to Vishnu and Krishna. At such temples you are likely to find one or more in the courtyard wherein pilgrims circumambulate it, water it, or even offer prayers to it. Some temples will even have Tulasi groves, wherein you will see numerous Tulasi plants growing in a garden. Some temples will even have a special greenhouse just for taking care of Tulasi plants. At such temples, they may even prepare large garlands of Tulasi leaves and manjaris (the ends of the branches) for the Deity of Lord Krishna to wear. It is said that Tulasi will not grow well where there is no devotion to the Lord. In fact, how well Tulasi grows is said to be like a barometer that indicates how high the devotional attitude is of the devotee community around the temple.

Vaishnava devotees also use the wood to make neck beads and wear two or three strands of them around their necks signifying their devotion to the Lord. They also make their *japa mala* or chanting beads from wood of the Tulasi tree. Tulasi is considered to be a pure devotee of the Lord who has taken the form of a tree, and is very dear to Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu (Krishna) likes to wear garlands made of Tulasi leaves. Often sandalwood paste and Tulasi leaves are placed on the lotus feet of the Deity of Lord Vishnu/Krishna. Therefore she is given the utmost respect. This is also why many devotees and Hindus in general also grow Tulasi in their homes. In this way, the Tulasi plant plays an important part in the spiritual life of many devotees. So what is the significance, history and legends behind this little tree?

To begin with, the Basil plant (*Ocimum sanctum*) is commonly called Tulasi (pronounced tulsi). In some accounts of the Puranic story of the Churning of the Ocean (*samudramathana*), the Tulasi is added to the list of articles which emerged from it, and is sacred to Krishna (according to Wilson's *Vishnu Purana* p. 67. n.8). It is also sacred to Lord Vishnu's consort Lakshmi, and hence it is itself an object of worship.

The Tulasi plant also possesses curative properties and is said to be an antidote to snake-venom. It destroys mosquitoes and other pests and purifies the air. It even is said to ward off the messengers of Yama, the ruler of the dead, who will not enter a house containing a sprig of Tulasi. This is also one of the reasons why devotees wear the Tulasi as neck beads. When death occurs, the funeral pyre should be constructed of Tulasi, palasha, and sandal-wood.

There is further Puranic background for Tulasi attaining this spiritual importance. In fact, it is Mahalaksmi, wife of Vishnu, who had taken the form of Tulasi. There is a story about it in the *Devi Bhagavata*. The *Puranic Encyclopedia* summarizes these legends as follows:

1) The curse of Sarasvati. Sarasvati, Ganga and Lakshmi were all, in the beginning, wives of MahaVishnu. The Lord loved all the three equally. But, as part of a pastime to bring about benefits to bhaktas in the material world, one day all the four were sitting together when Ganga sent lustful glances at Vishnu which was immediately noticed by both Sarasvati and Lakshmi. Sarasvati got angry and rising up caught hold of the hair of Ganga and dragged her to the ground. Lakshmi then caught hold of Sarasvati to prevent further assault, but Sarasvati then poured all her rage on Lakshmi and cursed her to be born as a plant on earth. Ganga devi could not bear this and she cursed Sarasvati to be born as a river on earth. Sarasvati retorted with a curse that Ganga also would be born as a river. When the whole tumult was over, Vishnu called Lakshmi to his side and said, "Oh Devi, do not worry. Things have happened as predestined. You go and be born as the daughter of Dharmadhvaja and grow up there. From there by divine grace you will be transformed into a plant sacred enough to make all the three worlds pure. That plant will be named Tulasi. When you will be thus living as Tulasi, a demon named Sankhachuda with part of my virile strength will be born and he will marry you. Then you can come back to me. The holy river Padmavati will also be another form of your spirit."

2.) The story of Dharmadhvaja. Who was this Dharmadhvaja to whom was born Mahalaksmi as a daughter? In times of old there was a Manu called Dakshasavarni who was extremely virtuous and a part of Vishnu. Descending from Dakshasavarni were Brahmasavarni, Dharmasavarni, Rudrasavarni, Devasavarni, Indrasavarni, Vrisadhvaja. This last named was a great devotee of Shiva and because of his great affection for this devotee, Shiva lived a whole period of a *deva-yuga* in the ashrama of Vrisadhvaja. King Vrisadhvaja by an edict prohibited the worship of any other deity than Shiva in his country. Even the worship of Mahalaksmi ordained by the *Vedas* during the month of Bhadra (September) became extinct. All *yagyas* (Vedic rituals) and worship of Vishnu came to a stop. Surya (the sun-god) got angry at this belittling of other gods than Shiva and cursed the King Vrisadhvaja that he would cease to be prosperous. Shiva did not like it and he went to punish Surya, holding his trident in his hand. Surya was frightened and he approached his father Kasyapa. Kasyapa and Surya went to Brahma and acquainted him with all details. Brahma also was helpless in the matter and so all three of them went to Mahavishnu.

They prostrated before Vishnu and told him everything. At that time Shiva also came there. Addressing all of them, Vishnu said, "Oh, Devas, within this half an hour, twenty-one yugas have passed by on the earth. He about whom you have come to speak to me is dead and gone. Even his son Rathadhvaja is dead. The latter has two sons named Dharmadhvaja and Kusadhvaja. They are dull and splendorless now because of the curse of Surya and are now worshipping Lakshmi." Saying thus Vishnu disappeared.

3) Birth of Tulasi. Dharmadhvaja and Kusadhvaja did penance to propitiate Mahalaksmi. Kusadhvaja had a wife named Malavati. She bore a daughter named Vedavati. Sita, wife of Sri Rama, was a rebirth of this Vedavati.

King Dharmadhvaja had a wife named Madhavi. Maha-lakshmi entered her womb as an embryo and after a hundred years Madhavi gave birth to a daughter. Even at the time of birth the child looked like a matured girl and was extremely pretty. She was therefore called Tulasi, meaning matchless. (Tula= match). This Tulasi, abandoning all worldly pleasures, went to Badarikashrama in the Himalayas and started doing penance there with the prayer that MahaVishnu should become her husband. She did penance for twenty-four thousand years sitting amidst fire in the hot season and sitting in water in the cold season and taking only fruits and water as food. Then she did penance for another thirty thousand years eating leaves only, another forty thousand years taking air only as food, and another ten thousand years without any food. At this stage Brahma appeared and asked her the object of her penance. She replied that she wanted MahaVishnu to be her husband. Hearing this Brahma said thus: "Devi, you know the cowboy Sudama born of a part of Sri Krishna. That brilliant cowboy has now been born on earth, due to a curse of Radha, as a demon named Sankhachuda. He is matchlessly eminent and has once fallen in love with you seeing you at Goloka. You will become his wife and later you can become the wife of Narayana. At that time a part of your divine body will remain on earth as a plant named Tulasi. Tulasi will become the most sacred of all plants, dear to Vishnu, and all worship without using Tulasi leaves would be ineffective."

4) Marriage of Tulasi. Due to a curse of Radha, Sudama, the cowboy, was born on earth as a demon named Sankhachuda. He did penance sitting at Badarikashrama and obtained the Vishnu Kavacha. Another object of his was to marry Tulasi. He obtained a boon from Brahma that his death would occur only when the Vishnu Kavacha was removed from his body and the chastity of his wife was lost. At that time Sankhachuda and Tulasi met each other in the forests and were married. Sankhachuda, brilliant and majestic, went about with Tulasi in amorous sports creating jealousy even among the devas. His arrogance gave innumerable troubles to the devas, and they along with Brahma and Shiva approached MahaVishnu for a remedy. Vishnu then sent Shiva with his spike to kill Sankhachuda, and he himself started to molest the chastity of his wife Tulasi. Sankhachuda took leave of Tulasi to go and fight with Shiva. When Tulasi was thus left alone, MahaVishnu in the form like Sankhachuda approached Tulasi and after some preliminary talks entered into sexual acts. Tulasi found some difference in the usual affairs and suspecting foul play jumped up to curse the impostor. At once MahaVishnu appeared in his true form and said, "You have been doing penance for a lone time to get me as your husband. Your husband Sankhachuda was the chief of my Parsadas, Sudama. It is time for him to go back to [the spiritual abode of] Goloka, getting himself released from the curse. By this time Shiva would have killed him and he would have gone to Goloka as Sudama. You can now abandon your body and come with me to Vaikuntha to enjoy life as my wife. "Your body will decay and become a holy river named Gandaki; your hair will become the Tulasi plant, the leaves of which will be held sacred in all the three worlds."

Tulasi then changed herself into the form of Lakshmi and went to Vaikuntha with MahaVishnu. (9th Skandha, *Devi Bhagavata*).

5) The greatness of Tulasi. Everything of the Tulasi plant, leaves, flowers, fruits, roots, twigs, skin and even the soil around her is holy. The soul of a dead one whose dead body is cremated using Tulasi twigs for firewood would attain a permanent place in Vishnuloka [the spiritual abode]. Even great sinners would be absolved of their sins if their dead bodies are cremated with Tulasi twigs [or are wearing Tulasi beads]. If at the time of death one thinks of God and mutters His name and if his dead body is later cremated with Tulasi twigs, he would have no rebirths. Even he who has done a crore of sins would attain *moksha* [liberation] if at the time of cremating his dead body a piece of Tulasi twig is placed at the bottom of the funeral pyre.

Just as all waters become pure by the union with Ganga water, all firewood is made pure by the addition of a small piece of Tulasi twig. If the dead body of one is cremated using Tulasi twigs alone, one's sins for a crore of Kalpa years [1 Kalpa is a day of Brahma] would be washed away. Yamadutas [the soldiers of Lord Yama, the king of death] would keep away from one whose dead body is cremated with Tulasi twigs and servants of Vishnu would come near. If a light is burnt for Vishnu with a Tulasi stick, it would be equal to burning several lakhs of lights for Vishnu. If one makes the Tulasi leaves into a paste and smears it on one's body and then worships Vishnu for one day, one would be getting the benefit of a hundred ordinary worships and also the benefit of doing a hundred *godanas* (gifts of cows). (Chapter 24, *Padma Purana*)

It is also accepted that if ever a person leaves his or her body while wearing Tulasi beads, either around the neck or elsewhere, it creates the same affect as described above as having one's cremation fire burnt using Tulasi.



Glories of Tulasi Devi

From Patalakanda of the Padma Purana

Lord Shiva said: "My dear Narad Muni, kindly listen now I will relate to you the wonderful glories of Tulasi Devi.

One who hears Tulasi Devi's glories will have all his sinful reactions, stored from many births, destroyed and very quickly attain the lotus-feet of Sri Sri Radha-Krishna.

The leaves, flowers, roots, bark, branches, trunk and the shade of Tulasi Devi are all spiritual.

One, whose dead body is burnt in a fire, which has Tulasi wood as fuel, will attain the spiritual world, even if he is the most sinful of sinful persons, and the person who lights up that fire, will be freed from all sinful reactions.

One who at the time of death takes the name of Lord Krishna and is touching the wood of Tulasi Devi will attain the spiritual world.

When the dead body is being burnt, even if one small piece of Tulasi wood is put in the fire, then that person will attain the spiritual world; by the touch of Tulasi all other wood is purified. When the messengers of Lord Vishnu see a fire which has Tulasi wood burning in it they immediately come and take that person whose body has been burnt to the spiritual world. The messengers of Yamaraj will not come to that place when Tulasi wood is burning. That person's body which has been burnt by Tulasi wood goes to the spiritual world and on his way all the demigods shower flowers on him. When Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva see that person on his way to the spiritual world, they become very happy and bless him and Lord Krishna comes before him and taking his hand, He takes him to His own abode.

One, who happens to go to a place where Tulasi wood has been burnt will become purified of all sinful reactions. That Brahmin, who is performing a fire sacrifice and places amongst the other wood Tulasi wood, will get the result of one agnihotra yajna (fire sacrifice) for each grain offered in that fire.

One who offers Lord Krishna incense made of Tulasi wood will get the same result of one hundred fire sacrifices and of giving one hundred cows in charity.

One who cooks an offering for Lord Krishna on a fire which has Tulasi wood in it, will attain the same benefit as one who gives in charity a hill of grains as large as Mount Meru for each grain of such an offering to Lord Krishna.

One who lights up a lamp to be offered to Lord Krishna with a piece of Tulasi wood will attain the same benefit as one who offers ten million lamps to Lord Krishna.

There is no one more dear to Lord Krishna than that person.

One who applies the paste of Tulasi wood to the body of the Deity of Lord Krishna with devotion will always live close to Lord Krishna.

That person who puts the mud from the base of Tulasi Devi on his body and worships the Deity of Lord Krishna, gets the results of one hundred days worship each day.

One who offers a Tulasi Manjari to Lord Krishna gets the benefit of offering all the varieties of flowers after which he goes to the abode of Lord Krishna.

One who sees or comes near a house or garden where the Tulasi plant is present gets rid of all his previous sinful reactions including that of killing a Brahmin.

Lord Krishna happily resides in that house, town, or forest, where Tulasi Devi is present.

That house where Tulasi Devi is present never falls on bad times and due to Tulasi Devi's presence that place becomes more pure than all the Holy places.

Wherever the smell of Tulasi Devi is taken by the wind it purifies everyone who comes in contact with it.

In that house where the mud from the Tulasi Devi is kept, all the demigods along with Lord Krishna will always reside.

Wherever the shade of Tulasi Devi falls is purified and is the best place for offering fire sacrifices.

NOTE: - One must only use Tulasi wood which has been attained after Tulasi Devi has dried up, one must never take Tulasi wood from a tree which has not dried up. (pages 64 – 66.)

Further Glorifications of Tulasi Devi

From the Sristikanda of the Padma Purana

Kartikeya inquired: "My dear father (Lord Shiva) which tree or plant is capable of giving love of God?"

Lord Shiva replied: "My dear son, of all trees and plants Tulasi Devi is the topmost; She is all auspicious, the fulfiller of all desires, completely pure, most dear to Lord Krishna and the topmost devotee.

Long ago, Lord Krishna for the welfare of all conditioned souls brought Vrindadevi in her form of a plant (Tulasi) and planted her in this material world. Tulasi is the essence of all devotional activities. Without Tulasi leaves, Lord Krishna does not like to accept flowers, food stuffs, sandalwood paste, in fact anything without Tulasi leaves is not looked upon by Lord Krishna.

One who worships Lord Krishna daily with Tulasi leaves attains the results of all kinds of austerities, charity, fire-sacrifices. In fact he does not have any other duties to perform, and he has realized the essence of all scriptures.

Just as the Ganges river is purifying all who bathe in her, so Tulasi Devi is purifying the three worlds.

It is not possible to describe the full benefit of offering Tulasi Manjaris (flowers) to Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna, along with all the other demigods lives wherever there is Tulasi Devi. For this reason one should plant Tulasi Devi at one's home and offer worship daily. One who sits near Tulasi Devi and chants or recites prayers will attain the results much faster.

All forms of ghosts and demons run away from that place where Tulasi Devi is planted and all kinds of sinful reactions are destroyed when one comes close to Tulasi Devi. One who makes a garden of Tulasi plants gets the result of all charities and of one hundred fire sacrifices.

One who puts into his mouth or on his head the Tulasi leaves after they have been offered to Lord Krishna attains the abode of Lord Krishna. In Kali-yuga, one who worships, performs kirtan in front of, remembers, plants or keeps Tulasi, burns up all his sinful reactions and attains Lord Krishna's abode very quickly.

One who preaches the glories of Tulasi Devi and also practices what he preaches, becomes very dear to Lord Krishna.

One who worships Tulasi Devi has already satisfied his guru, the Brahmins, demigods, and all the Holy places.

One who offers a Tulasi leaf to Lord Krishna becomes a Vaishnava very quickly. What is the need of understanding all the scriptures for one who has offered the wood or leaves of Tulasi Devi to Lord Krishna, for he will never have to taste the milk from the breast of a mother again (he will never take birth again).

One who has worshipped Lord Krishna with the leaves of Tulasi Devi has already released all his ancestors from this realm of birth and death.

My dear Kartikeya, I have told you many of the glories of Tulasi Devi. If I was to describe her glories for eternity I still would not be able to reach their conclusion.

One who remembers or tells others these glorifications of Tulasi Devi will never take birth again.

Sri Tulasi Stava of Sristikanda of the Padma Purana

The Brahmin said: "Srila Vyasadeva, we have heard from you the glories of Tulasi Devi's leaves and flowers. Now we would like to hear from you the Tulasi Stava (prayer)"

Srila Vyasadeva replied: "Previously a disciple of Shatanand Muni had approached him with folded hands and inquired about the Tulasi Stava".

Disciple: "Oh top most of all devotees of Lord Krishna, kindly relate that Tulasi Stava, which you had heard from the mouth of Lord Brahma."
Shatanand replied: "Just by taking the name of Tulasi Devi one pleases Lord Krishna and destroys all sinful reactions."

One who just sees Tulasi Devi gets the benefit of giving millions of cows in charity and when that person offers worship and prayers to Tulasi Devi then that person becomes worthy of worship in this Kali-yuga.

In the Kali-yuga that person who plants a Tulasi tree for the pleasure of Lord Krishna even if the messengers of Yamaraj are angry with him, what can they do to him, he need not fear even death personified.

*tulasi amrita janmasi sada twam keshava priya
keshavartham chinomi twam varada bhava sobhane
twadang sambhavai aniyam
pujayami yatha hatim
tatha kuru pavitrangi
kalou mata vinashini*

One who chants this mantra while picking Tulasi leaves and then offers them to Lord Krishna's lotus feet, the results of that offering is increased millions of times.

Now listen carefully to the Tulasi Stava:

1 munayah sidha-gandharvah
Patale nagarat svayam
Prabhavam tava deveshi
Gayanti sura-sattama

2 na te prabhavam jananti
devatah keshavadrite
gunanam patimananutu
kalpakotisha-tairapi

3 krsna-anandat samudbhntu
kshiroda – mathanodyame
uttamange pura yena
tulasi-vishnu na dhrita

4 prapyaitani tvaya devi
vishno-rangani sarvashah
pavitrata tvaya prapta
tulasim tvam namamyaham

5 tvadanga-sambhavaih patrai
puja-yami yatha harim
tatha kurushva me vighna
yato yami para gatim

6 ropita gomati-tire
svayam-krsnena palita
jagaddhitaya tulasi
gopinam hita-hetave

7 vrindavane vicharata
sevita vishnuna svayam
gokulasya vivridhyath
kamsasya nidhanaya cha

8 vashishtha vachanat purvam
ramen sarayu-tate
rakshasanam vadharthaya
ropit-tvam jagat-priye
ropita-tapaso vridhyai
tulasi-tvam namamyaham

9 viyoge raghavendra-sya
dhyatva tvam janak atmaja
ashokavana-madhye tu
priyena saha-sangata

10 shankarartha pura devi
parvatya tvam himalaye
ropita sevita siddhyai
tulasi-tvam namamyaham

11 dharmaranye gayayam cha
sevita pitribhiv svayam
sevita tulasi punya
atmano hita-michhata

12 ropita ramachandren
sevita lakshmanena cha
sitaya palita bhaktya
tulasi-dandake vane

13 trailokya-vyapini ganga
yatha-shastre-shu giyate

tathaiva tulasi devi
drisyate sacharachare

14 rishyamuke cha vasata
kpirajen sevita
tulasi balinashaya
tarasangam-hetave

15 pranamya tulasi-devi
sagarot tkramanam kritam
krit-karayah prahusthascha
hanuman punaragataha

16 tulasi grahanam kritva
vimukto yati patakaih
athava munishardula
brahma-hatyam-vyapohati

17 tulasi patra-galitam
yastoyam-sirasa vahet
ganga-snanam avapnoti
dasha-dhenu phala-pradam

18 prasid devi deveshi
prasid hari vallabhe
kshirod-mathanod bhute
tulasi tvam namamyaham

19 dvadasyam jagare ratrou
yah pathet tulasi stavam
dvatrim-shadaperadhans cha
kshamate tasya keshavah

Translation by Kusakratha dasa, Krishna Institute.

(1) O goddess, the munis, siddhas, gandharvas, the naga kings in Patala, and the great demigods sing your glories.

(2) Even though they have counted many millions of your virtues, the demigods, except for Lord Keshava, do not understand the full extent of your powers and glories.

(3) Born from Lord Krishna's bliss as He churned the milk ocean, Tulasi was carried by Lord Vishnu on His head.

(4) O Tulasi, I offer obeisances to you. When you are placed on Lord Vishnu's limbs, you purify everyone.

(5) As with your leaves I worship Lord Hari, please remove the obstacles before me. I take shelter of you.

(6) To bring auspiciousness to the world and to benefit the gopis, Lord Krishna planted you and cared for you on the shore of the Gomati River.

(7) To bring opulence to Gokula and to become able to kill Kamsa, Lord Vishnu served you in Vrindavana.

(8) O you who are dear to the worlds, in order to become able to kill the rakshasas, by Vasistha's order, Lord Rama planted you on the shore of the Sarayu. Planting you is like performing great austerities. To you, O Tulasi, I offer my respectful obeisances.

(9) When in the grove of asoka trees Sita-devi was separated from Lord Rama, she meditated on you and for this reason she attained the company of her beloved.

(10) To attain Lord Shiva, Parvati planted you, O goddess, in the Himalayas. To you, O Tulasi, I offer my obeisances.

(11) You are served by the pitas in the Dharmaranya forest of Gaya. You, O sacred Tulasi, are served by they who desire auspiciousness.

(12) O Tulasi you were planted by Lord Rama, served by Laksmana, and with great devotion protected by Sita devi in the Dandaka forest.

(13) As the Ganges, which flows through the three worlds, is glorified in the shastras, so Tulasi Devi is seen by the moving and unmoving creature.

(14) To meet Tara, and kill Vali, the king of monkeys served you Tulasi, in Rsyamukha.

(15) Bowing down to Tulasi Devi, Hanuman crossed the ocean, and, happy and his mission accomplished, returned home again.

(16) By touching Tulasi, one becomes free of all sins. O tiger of sages, in this way, one becomes free of the sin of killing a brahmana.

(17) If one holds on his head the water that has washed a Tulasi leaf, he attains the result of bathing in the Ganges or the result of giving ten cows in charity.

(18) O goddess, O queen of the demigods, please be kind! O beloved of Lord Hari, please be kind! O Tulasi born from the churning of the milk ocean, I offer my respectful obeisances to you.

(19) Lord Keshava forgives 32 offences for one who, staying awake on Dwadasi night, recites this prayer to Tulasi.

One who worships Tulasi Devi on the Dwadasi (12th day) and chants this Tulasi Stava destroys all 32 kinds of sinful reactions. Lord Krishna becomes very happy with that person.

In that house, where this Tulasi Stava is present, misfortune never visits, not even by accident, and the goddess of fortune will happily reside there.

One who recites this Tulasi Stava will attain devotion to Lord Krishna and his mind will not wonder away from the Lotus feet of Lord Krishna.

That person who keeps awake on the Dwadasi night (12th day) after worshipping Tulasi Devi with this Stava will attain the benefit of visiting all the holy places and his mind will never contemplate enjoying separately from Lord Krishna. Not only this but that fortunate devotee will never be separated from the association of the Vaisnavas (devotees of Lord Krishna).

Asta-Naam-Stava

Eight names of Tulasi Devi

Vrindavani, vrinda, visvapujita, pushpasara,
Nandina, krsna-jivani, visva-pavani, tulasi

Vrindavani – one who first manifested in Vrindavan.

Vrinda – The goddess of all plants and trees (even if one Tulasi plant is present in a forest it can be called Vrindavan.).

Visvapujita – one whom the whole universe worships.

Pushpasara – the top most of all flowers, without whom Krishna does not like to look upon other flowers.

Nandini – seeing whom gives unlimited bliss to the devotees.

Krishna-jivani – The life of Krishna.

Visva-pavani – one who purifies the three worlds.
Tulasi – one who has no comparison.

Anyone while worshipping Tulasi Devi chants these eight names will get the same result as one who performs the Asvamed Yagna and one who on the full moon day of Karttik (Tulasi Devi's appearance day) worships her with this mantra will break free from the bonds of this miserable world of birth and death, and very quickly attains Goloka Vrindavan. On the full moon day of Karttik Lord Krishna Himself worships Tulasi Devi with this mantra. One who remembers this mantra will very quickly attain devotion to Lord Krishna's lotus feet.

The Marriage of Tulasi And Significance of Shalagrama-shilas As Elaborated from *Brahma-Vaivarta Purana, Prakriti-Khanda, Chapters 21 & 22*

This explains the marriage between Lord Vishnu and Tulasi, how Tulasi became both the Gandaki River and the sacred Tulasi tree, and how Lord Vishnu accepted the form of the sacred stones found in the Gandaki River known as shalagram-shilas.

CHAPTER 21

Narada said: "O Lord, please narrate how You (Lord Narayana) impregnated Tulasi."

Narayana answered: "Hari, in order to accomplish the design of the gods, took the form of Sankhachuda and cohabited with Tulasi. He took the amulet of the demon and approached the house of Tulasi. At the threshold he played upon a drum and through a spy announcing these words, 'May victory crown the King,' he convinced Tulasi of the success of her husband. Tulasi, through a window, gladly looked at the royal road. She made gifts to the Brahmins, the bards and the mendicants and caused the performance of many auspicious deeds. Lord Hari subsequently descended from his car and entered into the lovely house of Tulasi constructed with invaluable gems. When Tulasi saw her tranquil husband (whose form Hari had assumed), she wept with joy, washed his feet with water and bowed low to him. She entertained him with betel-leaves rendered fragrant with camphor and considered herself truly blessed, inasmuch as she saw her lord returned victorious from the battle. The licentious Tulasi, filled with joy, cast arch glances upon him and sweetly or gently asked him thus: 'My gracious king, how could you conquer Shiva who destroys numberless worlds? Reveal to me the matter.' Hari in disguise smiled and concocted a lie thus: 'O my lady, O my love, this fight lasted for a year and all the demons have been destroyed. Brahma himself came to the scene of fight and reconciled us both. By his command, I returned to the gods their jurisdiction and came home. Shiva likewise returned to his domain.' So saying, Lord Hari slept. O Narada, Hari cohabited with Tulasi but owing to the transgression of the former method of sexual intercourse, she became suspicious and said, 'O Lord of dissemblers, who are you? You have violated my chastity. I must, therefore, curse you, whoever you are.' Afraid of a curse, Hari assumed a very lovely form. Tulasi beheld in her presence the Eternal Lord, the god of gods, dark like a new cloud. His eyes were like autumnal lotuses. His face was beaming with smiles. He was decked with gems and yellow garments. His grace was like that of ten millions of Cupids.

"The woman at His sight was excited with lust and fainted, but immediately recovering said to Hari, 'Lord, you are unkind to me and possess a heart of stone. You have fraudulently violated me and killed my husband. As you are hard-hearted like a stone, you will be worshiped in the world in the form of a stone (shila). Those who call you merciful are deluded. Tell me why You killed an innocent votary of Yours for the sake of others. You are the soul of all and, though all-knowing, You do not realize the pain of others. Therefore, when You will assume a certain incarnation, You will forget Yourself.' So saying, the chaste Tulasi fell at his feet and wept bitterly in sorrow. The merciful Hari consoled her, using words fraught with counsel thus: 'O chaste lady, you prayed for me for a long time in Bharata-varsha (India). The lustful Sankhachuda had prayed for you and thereby obtained you as his spouse, and thus he enjoyed your society for a long time. I should now give you the fruits of your devotion.

"You should now quit your body, take a celestial form and travel with Me like Rama. You will now be converted into a sacred river called Gandaki. Let the clusters of your hair be converted into a plant called Tulasi or the holy basil. Fair one, the flowers and the leaves of this plant will be consecrated to the worship of the gods. In the course of my worship, Tulasi flowers will be held superior to other flowers in the three worlds and even in Vaikuntha. This sanctifying plant will grow in Goloka on the coast of the Viraja River, on the site occupied by the sphere of the Rasa, in Vrindavana, in the forest of the holy fig tree, the wood of the sandal tree, or the Champak flower, or in the groves of the jasmine, and the screw-pine tree, or in the grove of the climbing plants called Madhavi. All the shrines of the world will converge at the root of Tulasi.

"Fair one, all the gods will preside there to secure the fallen leaves of the holy basil. Anyone who will be anointed or moistened with the waters of the holy basil will reap the benefits of ablutions in all sacred rivers and the performance of all sorts of yagnas or sacrifices. Hari will not be so much pleased with the gift of a thousand jars full of honey as with the offer of a Tulasi leaf. The gift of one such leaf will bring the reward secured by the gift of millions of cows. Anyone who, dying, will get the water of the Tulasi leaf will be redeemed from all his sins and proceed to Vaikuntha. Whoever constantly drinks such water will be redeemed in his lifetime and get the fruits of a dip in the Ganges. Anyone worshipping Me with this leaf every day will reap the benefits of a hundred thousand horse sacrifices. Anyone dying with the Tulasi leaf in his hands [or also in one's mouth, as is commonly practiced] will be redeemed. Anyone putting on a wreath of the wild Tulasi will get at every step the fruit of a horse sacrifice. However, whoever with the holy basil in his hand will break his vow and perjure himself will go to hell. But anyone who, at the time of his death, will get a drop of the water of the holy basil will proceed to Vaikuntha. Hari will cut off the head of that person who, on the lunar day of the dark night (Amavasya) or the full moon, or on the twelfth or last day of the lunar month, or being anointed with oil just before bath, or in the noon, night, or at day break or sun down, or in a state of impurity, or in his nocturnal dress [sleep clothes] will cull or pluck the Tulasi leaf.

"O chaste one, if such a leaf is stale for three nights, it can still be used on the occasion of funeral ceremonies, in connection with vows, gifts, consecration of temples and the worship of gods. Tulasi leaves dedicated to Vishnu, even if they drop to the ground or water, if properly washed may still be used for other holy purposes. The presiding deity of the Tulasi plant will always sport in solitude with Krishna in Goloka which is free from diseases. The presiding deity of the Gandaki River will be the wife of the salt ocean, born of my digits. And personally, O chaste goddess, you will ever remain by My side and enjoy My company like Goddess Lakshmi. I, too, by your curse, will turn into a stone on the coast of the Gandaki. At that place the worms called Vajrakita will construct [carve] my wheel within the stone. That stone, dark like a new cloud, which contains at one gate four wheels and which is decorated with a wreath of wild flowers will be known as Lakshmi-Narayana. But the stone of the like nature without being decked with a wreath will be called Lakshmi-Janardana. A stone without a wreath but impressed with marks of cow feet will be called Raghunatha. A stone of two wheels, auspicious to the householders, will be called Dudhi-bamana. Such a stone, if decked with garlands, will be called Sridhara and give grace to the householders. A stone without a wreath, but thick and circular and containing two wheels will be called Damodara. A stone, fairly round, assailed by arrows, having quivers and two wheels will be called Rana-rama. A stone of moderate size having seven wheels associated with quivers will be called the king of kings and give royal prosperity to the people. A stone, thick, dark like a new cloud and associated with fourteen wheels will be called Ananta and give four kinds of redemption.

"A stone which looks like a cloud and contains two wheels, which is spherical, graceful and moderate in size will be called Madhu-Sudana. A stone which will bear the mark of the Sudarshana on one of its wheels and whose other wheel will remain concealed will be called Gadadhara. The two-wheeled stone with the face of a horse will be called Hayagriva. The two-wheeled stone whose face is expansive and hideous will be called Narasimha. The two-wheeled broad-faced stone, decked with wreaths and pleasing to the people will be called Lakshmi-Narasimha. The stone whose gate is conspicuous by two graceful wheels of equal size will be called Vasudeva fulfilling all desire. The stone having a slender wheel and many holes at the threshold, dark like a new cloud, will be called Pradyumna, and the worship of this stone will give happiness to people. The stone whose wheels are united and whose back is excellent, which brings joy to the householders, will be called Sankarshana. The yellow, beautiful, circular stone delightful to the house-holders, will be styled Aniruddha by the Savants. Fair one, the place where this stone will be discovered will be the resort of Hari and Lakshmi with her attendant shrines and holy places. Nay, Brahmin-slaughter and all other sins of the world are expiated by the worship of this stone. This stone, if it is in the shape of an umbrella, bestows a kingdom; if round, it gives prosperity; if like a cart, it causes pain; if like the front of a spear, it brings about death. If deformed, it causes poverty; if tawny in color, it destroys happiness; if its wheels are joined, it causes disease; if broken or split into fragments, it causes death. All holy

deeds, consecration of a temple, performance of a funeral ceremony, worship of gods, etc., can be performed through this Holy stone. Deeds of charity, circumambulation around the world, bath in the sacred rivers, all can be attained by a person by ablution in the waters [that have bathed or washed] of this stone. The touch of such a person will be desired even by the streams. He will be consecrated and redeemed in his lifetime. The worship of the stone will give the same fruit as the study of the *Vedas* or asceticism.

"Whoever will drink the immortalizing water of this stone will sanctify by his touch resorts for pilgrims and be redeemed in his life. He will be the slave of Hari and witness countless dissolutions of the world. Sins as heinous as the murder of a Brahmin will fly at his sight like snakes at the sight of Garuda. The earth will be consecrated by the dust of his feet. By his birth, he will redeem millions of his ancestors. Anyone who, while dying, will drink this water will be emancipated and go to the Vaikuntha. He will be free from the influences of karma and, being redeemed, will merge into the feet of Vishnu. Whoever, by laying hands on the stone, perjures himself or breaks his vow will remain in hell for millions of years. My beloved, whoever will separate the holy basil leaves from this holy stone, will suffer the pangs of separation from his wife from birth to birth. Whoever will dissociate the conches from the Tulasi will be deprived of his wife and health for seven births in succession. A wise person who will maintain the Tulasi, the conches and the stone at one and the same place will be dear to Hari. It is painful for a person to part from his beloved whose society he once enjoyed. You were the favorite of Sankhachuda for one Manvantara. Therefore separation from him has been a source of trouble to you."

"As Hari affectionately said so, Tulasi quit her body and went to Vaikuntha in a celestial form. Tulasi frequented the heart of Narayana like Kamala. O Narada, thus Hari happened to have four wives viz., Lakshmi, Saraswati, Ganga and Tulasi. When Tulasi died, her body was immediately turned into a river called Gandaki; and on the coast of this stream, a sanctifying hill out of the digits of Hari came into existence. The worms on the hill are constructing stones of various sorts. A stone that drops down into the river from the hill assumes the hue of clouds. A stone that drops from the rock on the dry land becomes tawny-colored through the heat of the sun. Now I told you everything. Please let me know what you want to hear."

CHAPTER 22

Narada said, "Lord, I gather how Tulasi became the favorite of Hari, how she became holy and was adored throughout the world. Now I want to hear the account relating to her form of worship and her hymn. In olden times, who worshiped her and recited her ode? How did she become adorable in the world? Kindly narrate these matters to me."

Suta said, Naryana smiled at these words and said, "Hari sported with Tulasi as soon as He got her and made her as blessed and glorious as Rama. Ganga and Lakshmi bore this new acquisition to their society patiently. But it was intolerable to Saraswati. Once the dignified Saraswati in vain quarreled with Tulasi in Hari's presence and hurt her. Tulasi in shame and disgrace disappeared. That accomplished, wise and adept Tulasi became invisible to Hari also out of anger. Hari thereupon took permission of Saraswati and went to the forest of Tulasi plants. There he bathed and with holy basil leaves reverentially adored Tulasi with the mystic formula of ten letters containing seeds of germinating principles of Lakshmi, Maya, Kama and Vani.

"O Narada, that mantra prepared by Hari ends thus: 'Swaha to Vrindavani.' After having uttered this mantra which is efficacious like the Kalpa tree, whoever will worship Tulasi with the light of the ghee lamp, frankincense, sandal flowers and sacrificial offerings will attain all perfection. Tulasi, pleased with the worship, emanated from the plant and took refuge in the lotus feet of Hari. Hari blessed her saying, 'You will be adored throughout the world,' and said, 'Beloved, I shall hold you on my head and in my heart. All the gods, therefore, will wield you on their heads.' So saying, Hari took her home."

Narada said, "Now tell me about the Dhyana or meditation appropriate to Tulasi, her ode, and her plan of worship." Narayana answered, "When Tulasi disappeared, the afflicted Hari went to Tulasi-vana (the forest of holy Tulasi), worshiped her and adored her with the hymn, "I adore my beloved Vrinda who in one place grows in the form of plants. I adore the blessed nymph who sprang at first from the forest of Vrindavana and is hence styled Vrinda-vani.

"I worship that goddess, all adorable in the universe, who is so-called as she is adored throughout the world. Being afflicted by Cupid I adore the all-sanctifying goddess so-called as she is always adored in the three worlds. I want to see Pushpa-sara, the goddess, the essence of flowers, without whom the gods are not satisfied with the offer of any number of flowers. I crave the favor of that goddess, also called Nandini, as attainment of Tulasi brings faith and joy. I seek the protection of this goddess called Tulasi, as she is incomparable in the world. May she preserve my life, the goddess who is also called the life of Krishna. Krishna having worshiped her thus manifested Himself to Tulasi who was lying prostrate at His feet. When He saw that the dignified Tulasi was weeping on account of her susceptibilities being wounded by Saraswati, he clasped her to his breast, took her to Saraswati and reconciled them both. He blessed her saying, "You will be adored throughout the world and sustained (carried) by every one on the head. You will be adored and honored by Me as well.

"When Tulasi was propitiated, Saraswati embraced her and seated her by her side. Lakshmi and Ganga also embraced her smiling and took her home. Whoever will adore Tulasi by the above eight names, pregnant with meaning, viz., Vrinda [one who has thousands of sakhis, associates], Vrindavani [one who never leaves Vrindavana], Vishwa-Pavani [sanctifier of the whole world], Vishwa-Pujita [whole world worships her], Pushpa-sara [essence of all the flowers], Nandini [gives happiness to everyone], Krishna-Jivani [the life and soul of Lord Krishna] and Tulasi [one with an incomparable form] will reap the fruits of a horse sacrifice. The benefactress Tulasi was born on the lunar day of the full moon in the month of Kartika, hence Hari has prescribed this day for her worship. Whosoever will worship her on this day will be redeemed from all sins and go to Vaikuntha. Whoever gives Tulasi leaves cut in reverence to Vishnu in the month of Kartika will reap the fruits secured by the gift of ten millions of cows. Nay, the recollection of her hymn gives a son to the sonless, a wife to the wifeless, health to the diseased, liberty to the prisoner, sanctity to the sinner, courage to the frightened and a friend to the friendless.

"O Narada, I told you about her hymn, now listen to the subject relating to her meditation and form of worship. You know the meditation (Dhyana) as mentioned by Kanwa-sakha. Without invoking the goddess, reverentially meditate on her and adore her with sixteen ingredients. Now listen to her Dhyana or meditation which destroys sins. The chaste Tulasi, the best of flowers, adorable and lovely, destroys the fuel of sins like a flame of fire, O Muni, she is most sacred of all the goddesses. Being incomparable she is called Tulasi. I adore the goddess who is solicited by all; who crowns the head of all; who is known as the consecrator of the world; who gives emancipation and the bondage of Hari; and who has been herself redeemed in her lifetime. Wise men, after this meditation and worship, should read her eulogies and bow to her."

How to Care for Tulasi

Many people take care of Tulasi plants in their home, or would like to. Yet, Tulasi is a sensitive plant and requires particular growing conditions and care in order to do well. Furthermore, it is considered that how well Tulasi grows is a sign of one's devotional attitude to Lord Vishnu or Krishna. It is said that regardless of how much care Tulasi devi may receive, without the proper devotion, she will not grow well. On the other hand, I've seen many devotees who had plenty of devotion but did not do well in knowing how to take care of Tulasi. So here a few instructions that may assist one in the care of Tulasi.

The most important and fundamental principle of Tulasi care is regular and perpetual care. She is a pure devotee, and her requirements are few and simple. She simply requires her own quarters with direct sunlight, where she can grow without disturbances and interruptions. She should be watered at approximately the same time everyday, and her leaves should also be collected at a regular time. Mornings between 7:30 and 9:00 are the best for both purposes. The most essential ingredient is one individual devotee to take the responsibility of tending her. This means that this devotee is conscious of Tulasi throughout the day—checking that her door is shut, that she has sufficient water, that her fan is on, that her leaves are being offered regularly and fresh. In this way, she is nursed through the day and night. It is not so much time consuming, but rather ½ hour to 40 minutes (depending on the number of Tulasis) in the morning and then utilizing the few spare moments through the day. If this is done regularly and in an orderly fashion, she will bloom and flourish.

LIGHTING

It has been found that she pines for sun. Tulasis grown indoors after 8 to 10 months do not fair as well as those given real sunlight. Greenhouses are not all that expensive to build. Porches, arbors, fire escapes, and roof tops can all be modified to fit the need.

If indoor lighting is unavoidable (actually some arrangement can always be made), then florescent tubes and fixtures (each holding at least 2 bulbs) can be suspended over and around her. The lights must be special indoor plant tubes, not your ordinary white florescent tube. The plant lights are effective only within a 6" radius, after which they drop to a potency of 0. Because of this, Tulasis grown indoors become "leggy," meaning long stems with thin stalks and only a few leaves, and a clump of leaves at the top near the light. Because the lights have such a short range effect, the leaves receive no real juice, and therefore fade and fall off. The result is a top-heavy Tulasi. To alleviate the situation, place one set of fixtures over her (as close as possible as she will not be burnt unless actually touching for a period of time), and then bank two more fixtures, one on each side, giving a total of three fixtures, totaling at least 6 tubes.

If done in this way, there will be a complete aura of light around her. Foil can then be used to provide a hood, catching all the reflected light and focusing it on her. Set the lights on some sort of pulley or adjustable chain affair, and in this way the lights can be raised as she grows. However, please do not use sun lamps.

WATER

Watering Tulasi in the proper amount is one of the most sensitive issues in regard to caring for her. Proper watering has to be adjusted according to weather, climate, size, soil and the particular nature of the individual Tulasi plant. (There is no mechanical arrangement as she is a person.) She would rather be just a little bit dry than too wet, but do not let her soil become hard like a crust and have her become limp. It is best to water in the morning, around 8 or 9 o'clock, as she uses the water for photosynthesis all day long. Her leaves should also be picked at this time as will be especially explained later.

Get a small tea pot, kettle, or anything clean with a spout, and use that to water her as it is easier to control the flow and also easier to maneuver. City water is full of chemicals, but if drawn in a bucket and let sit over night, the chemicals will evaporate out, so be sure the bucket is not a corrosive metal (no aluminum vessel should be used) as that would permeate the water. After the bucket has sat over night, aerate it, which is to say—pour it from one bucket to another, allowing it to free fall through the air for a distance. This process gets more of the chlorine out and also allows air into the water. Taste the water in the evening before and in the morning after and you will be convinced.

By using the teapot method, you can avoid the danger of over-watering, exposing her roots by washing soil away, and knocking branches trying to water her. As was said earlier, the watering of Srimati Tulasi-devi is not a mechanical process and will come with practice. Feel the soil by pushing your finger in her pot. Is she dried out? Then pour slowly, seeing how much she will absorb in just a few seconds. Never leave a puddle of water still above the soil. This means that she is saturated and can not accept more. Balance it so she is just dry on top by the next morning, not still soggy, nor so dry that she has drooped. If the sun is out, and it is going to be a hot day, she will need more water, and the converse is, if it is a cloudy day she will not need much. Afternoon sun is very intense and taxing, so always check her again around 2-3 PM. Every afternoon we spray her off as explained in the diseases section. At least once a week water her until the water drains out the bottom.

However, over-watering causes diseases in the soil, mold, faded and curled leaves, rots the soil, and causes root disease. A sign of over-watering is when she turns a pale green and apparently perfectly healthy leaves drop. She will go limp, if under-watered.

She breathes through the soil and over the process of time the soil tends to become packed. This causes uneven water absorption and poor ventilation. The cure is to break up the soil with a fork or a spoon handle. Dig down about ½ of an inch, breaking up and turning over the soil in small clods. This can be done as needed in accordance with the rate it becomes packed. Be cautious of her roots.

SOIL COMBINATIONS

The best soil is homemade, that is to say not some combination purchased in a store but mixed from local ingredients. A symptom of good soil is dark color, another is rich smell. It should hold its shape somewhat if pressed into a clod in the fist. Earth worms are another good sign.

Obtain some cow manure and allow it to set for 2 weeks, the reason being that it is very strong when fresh. The nitrogen content is so strong that it would burn the tender roots, so best to let it age. Spread it out and water thoroughly. Every few days turn it over so that the manure underneath the pile is exposed to the sun. Better to buy already composted cow manure than to chance a bad root burn, unless one is experienced at composting, etc. Earth worms can be purchased also. Earth worms are for gardens, but when put in pots they may damage roots. For your basic humus or plain old soil, find a garden that is producing profuse flowers and ask to borrow a quantity of soil. A little sand should be added and also a small quantity of fermiculite or perlite. Never use salty sand; salt kills plants, practically of every kind; so wash the sand thoroughly before using if it is beach sand.

POTTING

Most of this is elaborately explained by Govinda dasi in the preceding pages, so the remains are just a few notes. By transplanting Tulasi, there is always the danger of exposing her roots to the air. This causes them to dry and wilt. The answer is what is known as a root ball. Also there is one root, called the tap root which descends straight down from the stalk and is the longest and most important. If this root is broken, there is a good chance that Tulasi will depart, so always be sure to dig down far enough. That will usually be the same distance as the height of the tree from the soil. It is best to transplant in the afternoon, after 4 PM, or on a cloudy day that is not very hot. Never transplant in the heat of the day.

As she grows, Tulasi's roots will fill the pot, and at that point she will have to be transplanted again. This will be a perpetual duty, and as she grows you will have the blissful opportunity to move her. The new pots should be 2 to 2 ½ times the size of the root ball (root cluster). Take the chance to straighten her if she is growing crooked, but be careful not to plant her lower or higher than she was situated earlier as this causes diseases. Too high will mold her stem, lower will cause her to be unstable and to expose her roots to rot and mold. No matter how careful you are, there's always some shock and transplant setback. Thus, why transplant repeatedly? If you put the tiny 6" or 7" plant in a giant pot full of good soil, it may look funny for a while, but she'll appreciate the leg room and grow much more rapidly and be a healthier plant than if you repeatedly disturb her root systems by numerous periodic transplants.

NOTE: From experience we have found that if you put Tulasi in too large a pot, her roots will slow down their growth and root disease may set in.

FEEDING

There is really no need for artificial feedings. In fact, some foods (certain mixtures of 20-20-20) will actually build up a toxic in her soil and cause great damage. Stick with a little cow manure every 3 or 4 weeks, and once a month feeding of iron. This, combined with the perpetual replantings in fresh soil, are enough to keep her in fine health. Try a powdered iron solution; like 1 tsp in 2 gallons of water, and 1/4 cup every two weeks. Stay away from chemical fertilizers. They do build up toxins in the soil, and make it sterile of certain elements eventually. Use cow manure, and a good brand of organic compost is essential. The compost should be cultivated into the soil every few weeks, along with a little manure. Watch out for bone meal in the compost though (some brands have ground-up animal bones).

SEEDS

Tulasi has at least two flowering periods. Because of the variance factors of climate, age, and other conditions it is impossible to predict the times. Some will produce seed pods, shaped like a small temple and containing four little seeds and the other season produces smaller pods or fruits that also look like a temple, but contain no seeds. As will be explained later, it is not advisable to let her go to seed unless she is several years old, and in best of health. Even then, let only a few of the manjaris go to seed.

The process is to let the stalks stay on past the flower-seed pod stage. Watch as the pods drop the flowers and become firm and darker golden. When you look inside the pod and see that the four little seeds are a dark brown, then you know that it is time to pick the seeds. If you observe how she grows, you will see that at every intersection between a leaf and the main stem, there is a small bud developing. Follow the seed stalk down until the next pair of developing buds. The first set of leaves below the seed stalk and the buds sprouting from there are most always going to develop into another pair of manjaris. So rather than drain her energy, it is best to skip down one more joint to the next set of leaves and buds. Nip here, saying the mantra for picking leaves, chanting Hare Krishna, and using sharp surgical scissors. Best to pick the flowers when they bloom, because letting them go to seed does very much weaken the plant.

Once the seeds are gathered, let them dry for a short week or so. Be very careful when handling the seed pods, even when they are on the mother plant as they are arranged in such a way as to spring out of the pods when shaken. From there on in, you can follow the instruction contained in the seedling section. Tulasis flower constantly, perpetually, all the time, year round, but more intensely when there is lots of sunshine.

DISEASES

Generally speaking, if Tulasi is receiving correct watering, sufficient sunlight, in a pot of the correct size, and with suitable dirt, she will flourish. The only necessity is to be sure to protect her from wandering insects and the most lethal—red spider mites.

Always keep her in an area that is screened and continually check the underside of her leaves for insects. The primary concern in the U.S. is the ever present spider mites, so that will be the main concern here.

These rascals live on the underside of her leaves and lay their eggs in the dust next to the ribbing or veins of her leaves. When the eggs hatch, the young suck her juice. The beginning symptoms are pale and limp leaves with brown tips. The leaves become speckled with small pale green dots and begin to curl in. As she becomes weaker and weaker, whole branches will just turn yellow, curl up and drop all their leaves. The stems become pinched and brown. If you observe very carefully, you will see small spiders, no bigger than the head of a pin, scurrying around on the underside of her leaves and in the topmost clusters of branches and leaves. Hold her at different angles in the light and you will see fine spider webs crisscrossing the various branches. Finally, you will see small white eggs on the underside of her leaves and your whole Tulasi will be yellow and limp.

She can be saved! There is a simple process which you use at a regular basis to keep the spiders at a very minimal level, and Srimati Tulasi will flourish and bloom. Never use any sort of poison. Tulasi is meant for offering to Krishna, and how can she be offered if she is covered with some poisonous spray? She also becomes contaminated by the use of systemic sprays as they work their way through her system and ultimately deposit their poison in her leaves. Ladybugs are often offered as a solution, but from experience they have not been of much help. The real cure is the bathing process. (Actually, the eggs of the spiders are stuck on by some sort of natural adhesive and will not be washed off. They hatch at their will, so the regular bathing and periodic sprays with fresh water can keep the spiders and mites at bay.)

To do this, the needed paraphernalia includes: one large plastic bucket with a mouth of about 2 feet across; 1 bar of soap, non-scented and herbal is the best, or a vegetable soap made without animal products; and a hose with fresh water. It is best done in the morning or on a cloudy day, as it is a taxing endeavor and the sun is a strain. Water first, as this will help to keep the soil in the pot. The basic principles are: You dip the Tulasi tree in the soapy water, swish around carefully and then rinse off with fresh water. The soapy water coats the leaves and smothers the spiders, the clean rinse washes the soap off, along with the spiders and their webs. If done regularly twice a month, your Tulasis will survive nicely.

The water should be drawn the day before and handled just as written under the section WATER. This way it is also not too cold for her. Rub the bar of soap in the water until it turns a shadowy white, not solid white like milk, but more of a translucent white. If the soap is too concentrated, it can do some damage. Add a cup 1/4 of honey to 6 gallons of water as that will also help coat the leaves. Cut pieces of cardboard to fit inside the various sizes of pots (see picture page) as the cardboard will keep the dirt or your whole Tulasi plant from sliding out into the water. Work in an area where there can be water spilled in large quantities, but that is also protected from the wind, dogs, and other alien factors.

Get an assistant to help you hold her pot, and using the cardboard to hold her soil, tip her up and submerge her in the solution. Do not be timid, but also be gentle. It is either this or the slow death by the spiders. Swish her around softly, cautiously agitating the water by raising and lowering her in the bucket, like a pump so that the water will swirl against her. The whole time Tulasi is spent in the water should be no more than 5 seconds.

One danger is when She is removed from the water. Just like after you wash something, it has greater weight due to the added water that has been absorbed, so there will be added water suspended on her various leaves and branches. If you just pull her right out, the added water will cause her to droop over and be unable to support herself. If you grab her right out, there is every possibility of breaking roots and also tearing branches. As you pull her out, simultaneously grab hold of a strong part of her stem towards the base, several inches above the ground. By holding on to the stem in this way, it gives added support to her and also you can very gently shake off the excess water.

The next step is to lightly hose her off with fresh water, one reason is to wash the old soap off her leaves and the other is to finish off those spiders who were shaken loose by the bath but not completely removed. By placing a finger over the nozzle, you can make a jet-spray—there must be force enough to knock the spiders off but not enough to tear or rip her leaves. Be sure to get the underside of her leaves as that is where the spiders hide out. The main concern here is the possibility of flooding her pot with the excess water, so turn her pot on one edge, tilted to one side, and in that way you have a clean shot at the underside, and the excess water just travels right on by. Now very carefully, shake off the water, and unfold her leaves. Remove any of the old yellow leaves that may be caught in her branches. Have a “sacred throw out” container to take care of the unoffered leaves. She may be a bit limp (be very careful when you do this, have an assistant and think it out thoroughly before acting), but you will see her perk up by morning. (You may have to prop up a branch or two for a day or so—use a stick, being sure not to crush any buds or leaves.)

During the summer, you can spray her with water twice a day, once in the morning around 10 AM and again in the afternoon around 2:30. She loves this and shows by her green effulgence. The water soaking into her stems helps generate healthy fibers for carrying fluid.

There is also the possibility that you are taking up this process after the spiders have already gotten a strong grip and done much damage. Check the tops of her branches by holding her in different angles of light. Very fine meshing of webs can be seen. At this stage the spiders are like cancer and the only combating element is to somehow remove the sick limb. There are so many eggs that they will just serve to contaminate the rest of her. Also, it is like fighting a battle—if she is fighting off the spiders on too many fronts, she will be ineffectual on all fronts. Better to remove the worst places and let her concentrate on that which has potential to be saved. Once the leaves are yellow with browning tips and covered with the webs, there is no hope. Best to remove by following the tip down the stem to where she still remains healthy. Cut above a pair of healthy buds as seen in collecting seeds section. Contemplate the move first, cut off as little as possible and still do the job. Better to just cut her once than to do many, many small cuts—and yet don't butcher her. It is offensive to cut her branches, but treating her in this way has shown that she can make a comeback.

Flies are another problem which must be avoided as they are very dirty. The best thing is to keep Tulasi behind screened windows, and be sure to shut the doors. A fan also helps provide some resistance, especially if it is an exhaust fan that can suck them back outside.

If her leaves become speckled with a brownish pattern it is called mosaic or tobacco worm. Sometimes it is caused by a fungus and the best method is to bathe her and remove the contaminated leaves with sharp scissors. Another of the same type is called a mosaic worm which tunnels in between her two layers of skin in the leaf cells. They look just like they sound—that is to say the first sign is a white or tan line across the leaf which looks like someone dug a small tunnel. Just like a gopher, this little worm will weave all over her leaf until it looks like a mosaic. They live inside her leaves, so the only spray that is effective would be a systemic spray which is added to her water, drawn up through her roots, and deposited in her leaves. In other words, her leaves become poisonous and when the worm eats them, it dies. But then her leaves are unofferable to Krishna. So the easy and effective control is to simply nip the leaf containing the worm and be sure to remove it from the area. These worms do not spread at a rapid rate, so with a few leaf removals, they are gone. As a general rule, always be sure to separate the healthy from the sick, and keep it that way until the danger has sufficiently passed away.

Small white mites, which look like tiny white flies, or mouths, come when the air is stuffy and moist. Too much incense in an enclosed area which is damp will bring them. They are of no real danger, and will leave as soon as there is fresh air. Leaving her out at night, if steps are taken for her protection, is first class, especially on moonlit nights. Always be sure she is protected by screens as summer brings out the bugs, and they are especially fond of tender young Tulasis.

However, many abnormalities which appear to be symptoms of diseases are caused by changes in her natural conditions, such as too much water, too much sunlight, not enough fresh air, too much cold, etc. These can all cause discoloring and mutations. The safe and sure course is to make friends with a local botanist; approach the city parks system, or the local colleges. When you meet with them, bring them some prasadam.

In the northern regions, too much variation in temperature can also cause color disfigurations. Sometimes one whole branch will just wilt up and go limp while the remainder of her body will remain fresh and green. This can be caused by that one branch being too close to the side of the house and being exposed to the cold, or too close to the heater, or a pot that was watered late in the afternoon and the water in its soil froze, or not enough water and she dried out. So always be aware of changes in the weather, and try to retain a balance of water, light and heat.

HUMIDITY

Humidity means the amount of moisture in the air, and will change with the weather. The process for maintaining a balance will depend on the number of Tulasis you are blessed to be tending. If you have only a few Tulasis, then simply take a large tub or pan, fill it with perlite rocks, place slates over the top, and place her on the slates. Water pots simply left around the room or on top of a heater or radiator are ineffectual. If she is not getting enough moisture, the symptoms are that she will become a little limp, and brown spots and smudges will appear at the tip and along her center veins in the leaves. One cure is to apply the above method and if that is already in practice, try this: Make a frame with a coat hanger or other thick wire over her pot. Cover the frame with a tinted plastic bag, like a tinted trash liner bag. The reason for the tint is to filter out some of the harsh sun rays (if you don't, the enclosed heat will probably be too much and kill her). Then place moist sponges inside the covered frame on the ground level and also at the top. The moisture will evaporate and add to the humidity. Leave her in shaded light or only morning sun for the added humidity.

PRUNING

Cutting the branches of Tulasi-devi is not done. We do not do it. But only in extreme cases, if the trees have simply gotten too big, then they can be trimmed, but only if no other remedy can be done. The only times which necessitate cutting her body are for picking her manjaris for offering to Lord Krishna, or to keep her from becoming too top heavy, or removing those parts that are too diseased to be saved.

So how do we take care of this? If you carefully observe her transcendental form, you will see that where each leaf joins the main stem there is a bud developing. Look down her stalk from where you desire to prune, checking at each leaf, stem intersection for two healthy buds, one on each side of the stem. Cut about 1/8" to 1/16" above the joint, using a small pair of needle-nose scissors. (See picture page). Also be sure the scissors are sharp so that they do not disturb her any more than necessary. Keep them for only the use with Tulasi. Please be gentle, never cut her without serious contemplation.

In the matter of plucking her tops, this should be done as a regular procedure—not all at once, but gradually, a little each day as she develops. The situation is, that as she grows, she has a tendency to become top heavy, that is to say, a long stem that cannot support the leaf growth on top. The result is that she droops and bends. The remedy is to simply pluck the topmost developing bud, every time it has grown about 3 or 4 joints. If you observe carefully, you will see that whenever you nip the top bud, the next lower set of buds develops. The result is that her upward surge of growth is slowed down, and the energy used for growing up is re-channeled to developing the lower buds and strengthening her stem. In this way, she grows fuller and bushier.

The procedure is simple: Take the scissors and see if you can nip the center of the topmost bud cluster. Most of the time this little bud will snap right off, if done in the correct manner. If you have ever bent wire, the way to do it is to bend the wire in one direction and then back in the opposite direction. You do not twist it or turn it.

Before you start to prune or nip her, observe her structure and try to understand how she is growing. If you look closely, you will see that the little buds are little leaves that have not unfolded yet. As they open, a new bud of unfolded leaves is revealed. If you trace down the unopened central bud, you will see where the bud is connected to a little stem and where that little stem joins the next pair of buds. Nip right there, low enough to get the whole bud (if you get only part of it, it causes pain and mutation) and high enough to not mar the up and coming buds.

Always try the plucking method first as it is easiest and safest. Let the bud develop enough so that you can clearly distinguish the various parts. Don't be in a hurry, doing it right is the most important part. If you are dealing with a diseased Tulasi, then time is of the essence, so if you cannot distinguish the proper bud, go down to the first easily distinguished intersection and nip her there.

MANJARIS AND FLOWERS

These flowering stalks and clusters are the full blown expression of her love for Krishna. They are white on Rama Tulasis and purple on Krishna Tulasis. After the flowers have all bloomed and gone, the pods (each shaped like a little temple) nurture four small round seeds, [actual size like the period at the end of this sentence (.)], which turn a dark brown when fully matured. Manjaris are very intricate, and because of these fine and fragile features, they require much energy to develop. If your Tulasi is very young or sick, or recently received or repotted, she should not be allowed to develop into manjaris—only a few manjaris in proportion to Her health, size and age. Better to let her catch her breath to bloom for another reason than to let her attempt to maintain too many manjaris and be weakened and susceptible to disease.

To gather them, follow the same procedure as cited in pruning, only in the case of manjaris, the buds immediately preceding the actual flowering top are almost always another pair of manjaris which, if left to develop, are a great drain on her system. Clip below the second manjari buds, 1/16th" above the next developing set of buds. Not all of her flowers will develop at once, so choose a time when the flowers are about half way up the stalk, as that is when there are the most flowers. (See picture page)

If you are letting her go to seed, be sure she is in fine health. Seeds may often be obtained at the temple, but if you are still desirous of your own seeds, simply let the stalks stay on after the flowering stage. The pods will become firm and brown. Look up into the pod and when the four little seeds have turned dark brown, the seeds are ready. Simply nip the stalk as mentioned in the section above, being careful not to shake or jar the pod stalk, as that will send the seeds flying in every direction. Let the stalk dry out a little if the seeds are still a little bit green (better to wait and let them mature on the mother plant). For planting, follow the instructions, being very sure to remove the seeds from the pod before planting as they will have trouble sprouting otherwise.

She has two or three flowering seasons, depending on weather and if she is in a greenhouse. The season which produces the best seeds is during the summer months of June, July and August. The other times, she develops shorter stalks with smaller flowers. These may or may not produce seeds; generally they make like a small fruit which dries up and produces no seeds. (Manjaris have a blissful aroma and if the flowering stalks are put into Krishna's water or some cooling drink, it gives it a most transcendental flavor.)

OFFERING

The leaves should be washed 3 times before offering and kept in a bowl of fresh water inside a refrigerator. If they are not kept like this, they turn limp and pale. If they are kept in water but not in a refrigerator, they will turn brown. If they are simply kept out in the open, they will become dry. Be sure to change the water in the bowl everyday, and clean the sides of the bowl so no film will grow. (Proof that Mother Ganga is actually pure is that Ganga water will not become murky if kept contained.)

Estimate the required amount of leaves needed in a day and try to pick about the same amount each day, and in that way you will always have a supply and she will feel regular. (Sometimes in the case of manjaris there will be an extra amount.) Don't pick her leaves sporadically, but aim for the same time, same amount everyday. It depends on how healthy and bushy the plant is. If there are hundreds of leaves on her, it won't hurt to take a few. If there are only 13 or 14 leaves, like on a small plant, don't take any at all unless they are about to drop off. It depends on the size and health of the plant. Use your discretion in the matter. [One thing that Srila Prabhupada once said was that dried leaves are just as offerable as fresh green ones, and that dried leaves can be sent to centers or temples having few or no Tulasis.]

WORSHIP

As Tulasi's servant, your responsibility enters into all the different aspects of her existence. You must see that she is being maintained properly, that her leaves are always offered in a clean and fresh manner, and that the devotees all are given the opportunity to worship her.

NEEDED PARAPHERNALIA

You will need a stand or table on which she can be placed for worshipping her, plus ghee lamp, two bowls or *achamana* cups with two spoons (use small spoons to help avoid over watering), *arati* try to hold the paraphernalia, and a bell. For the *arati*, include incense and flowers. You can also have the words to the song that is sung during her *arati* in large letters on a poster board so everyone can sing along and learn it. Always ask guests to participate. The devotees should always bow down when they see her. Then the Tulasi *puja* or *arati* can be performed as described earlier.

DRESSING HER AND HER ROOM

Make her some skirts to fit around her pot when she is on the altar, and if possible, alternate the Tulasis on the altar everyday as the hot lights and lack of sun will affect her if only one Tulasi is kept on the altar for too long. Always remember to check and see that she has not been placed over a votive candle or ghee bowl that might burn her leaves. Always keep her room neat and clean, with fresh air that is not too cold or breezy is essential. Decorate her room with pictures. Use incense sparingly as it tends to make her sick if you burn it continually. One or two sticks a day are refreshing and sufficient as well. Garlands left for more than a day will mold and attract bugs. If she is in a greenhouse or an enclosed protection, and you find it getting too hot inside, try a whitewash of lime and water (very inexpensive) on the roof, and that will filter out much of the heat, but leave the necessary rays. Be sure to rotate her if she is in a window, so that she will grow symmetrically.

SCHEDULE FOR TULASI

Become regulated and follow the schedule arranged for her and you will be able to do more in less time. Do a little bit each day and you will always be on top of the situation. The daily squirting can be skipped occasionally, if the weather is cold or she is weak from something other than spiders. Material nature is constantly mutable, so be sure to check on her several times throughout the day, when you first wake up, around 10 AM, around 2 PM, sunset, and before taking rest. By letting yourself be absorbed in her service, you will become blissful. She is very kind.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

In talking with our local botanist, he informed us that Srimati Tulasi-devi belongs to a rare plant family which has what is known as a perfect flower, that is to say, the flower contains both the male and female developments which allows her to fertilize herself. In other words, there is no such thing as a male Tulasi.

The correct amount of sunlight determines whether plants will flower or not. So if your Tulasi is not flowering, try to make some adjustment for more light. They will flower under 14-16 hours of gro-lux indoor lights.

If you are building a greenhouse, or something for shelves, then plaster grating, which is a thick wire mesh, if supported with several wood braces, is first-class. As you work, you will see that wood shelves will warp and are hard to keep clean, while open-spaced mesh allows the dirt and water to fall right through.

Keep a thermometer in her room, having it in the shade at the average level of the Tulasis on their shelves. When she is first moved into a room or house, station several thermometers at different level and angles, as heat will not be evenly distributed. (Some corners catch more sun, heat rises, or air doesn't circulate regularly, there are so many variables—so seek them out and rectify.

MORE ON CAUSES OF DISEASE AND CURES

OSMOSIS: Too much nitrogen in the soil will cause all of her sap to leave her leaves and stems, and concentrate in the roots. The result is that she will go limp and die. It is a gradual process occurring throughout the entire plant. This will distinguish it from a virus which can hit just one branch and leave the rest of her intact.

Cure: Decrease watering, but don't starve her. This will keep more of the nitrogen from being absorbed at such a rapid rate. When she appears stronger, then carefully transplant her into a fresh soil with no nitrogen. Cow manure is all right to use, in fact it is the safest of all possible plant foods. Is there any doubt as to why the cow is so worshipable?

FUNGUS: They come from tiny seeds (spores) in the air and grow on her leaves or in the soil. Once inside her system, they work like a cancer and spread throughout her system. A whole branch can just wilt up and be gone while the rest of her stays intact.

Symptoms: Apparently healthy leaves drop off in large quantity. Branches wilt and die.

Cure: Separate infected Tulasis immediately. Keep her in a dry place. Water as little as possible. Spray with the fungicide spray Benlate immediately. Do not offer the leaves for four weeks thereafter.

VIROSES: These are hard to detect, and you need the help of your local botanist. Each case is different. If a virus strikes, those Tulasis should be segregated as viruses will travel to other plants by contact. Fungus will do the same. Be sure to keep all of your utensils clean and wash your hands after touching the infected ones. The doctors say to give her sunlight, and this is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gita*: "The sun-god can be worshipped for improved health."

DROPPING LEAVES: There are many causes, and one more is sudden changes in temperature. She likes hot, dry weather, and the changes from hot to cold to hot again will kill the cells which are at the joint intersection between the leaves and the stems. The result is that if your Tulasis are bumped or shaken, many leaves will fall off. The most dangerous places are in a greenhouse with insufficient heating, and in a glass window from day (hot) to night (cold).

NITROGEN BURN: Too much nitrogen in the soil can also cause the tips of her leaves to turn down. Yellow will creep in from the side rims, and the whole leaf will fade. So do the same procedure as osmosis.

SCRIPTURAL BASIS AND RELATED STORIES

In *Nectar of Devotion* (Page 57), "How to Discharge Devotional Service" explains: "So altogether there are sixty-four items for discharging the regulated practice of devotional service. Out of the sixty-four items, five items—namely, offering water to the Tulasi tree, hearing the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, associating amongst the devotees, and *sankirtana*, and living in Mathura—are very important."

The Ganges River is said to taste of Tulasi due to its having come in contact with the Lord's lotus feet.

The prostitute who attempted to seduce Haridas Thakura, was given the benediction of becoming a great devotee, due to her offering respects to the Tulasis which were growing outside Haridas' hut.

Prabhupada said that Tulasi was a devotee who was married to a demon, and Krishna came and saved her by killing the cruel, atheist husband.

[That is described earlier in this book.]

In Detroit, Srila Prabhupada said, "Where is Tulasi?" and when she was brought in, he put his garland around her and had her placed on the altar, saying, "Mother Tulasi is so kind." He said, "Treat her as you would any of Krishna's pure devotees."

One time in one story, the devotees had Krishna on a scale and were busy trying to balance Him with gold. However, no matter how much gold they amassed on the scale, still, Krishna outweighed it. Then one devotee had an idea. He wrote "Hare Krishna" on a Tulasi and placed it on the scale. Immediately, it outweighed Krishna!

Below: Tulasi branches with the Manjaris on top



Caring for Tulasi Devi From Seedlings

This gives directions on the most successful and easiest way to propagate Tulasis from seeds or seedlings, and how to transplant them as they begin to grow. This is often how many people first acquire their Tulasi plants.

IMPORTANT POINTS

If you have just received a Tulasi plant by mail:

1. Repot the plant in a clay pot with soil recommended in the "potting" section.
2. If dry, water thoroughly
3. If soggy, pot in moist soil and allow to dry out to normal moistness.

POTTING

Tulasis should be repotted immediately when they arrive as well as from time to time when roots occupy the whole inside of the pot. A Tulasi should never have a big pot if she is small as this tends to cause rotting and slow root system drainage should be provided by adding some pieces of broken pot over the hole at the bottom. A pot too small binds the plant, so repot in a slightly larger size pot.

In potting young seedlings, the pot may be partially filled with soil. The plant should then be held in place with the roots spread out in a natural way. The remaining soil should be added, and pressed firmly into place with the fingers. In small pots a space of ½ inch or so should be left on top between soil and rim of the pot. Don't bury the stem. You can use a good potting soil or make one from one part sand to three parts soil. Water thoroughly and do not place in full sun for a few days. Never pot in peat moss.

LIGHT

Light is essential to her growth. Full sunlight is preferable and a south window is excellent. In the summer you can put her in a protected place outside. Florescent plant lights are very good also; place seedlings six inches below and larger plants 6 to 14 inches below the light.

When plants are left in any one position for a long period of time, the leaves and stems will turn toward the light and growth will be unsymmetrical. So turn pots once a week.

TEMPERATURE

They will thrive well in temperature which ranges from 62 degrees to 70 degrees Fahrenheit during the day and which does not drop below 55 at night. Of course, she is used to a very hot climate and will do well at higher temperatures during the summer. During the winter protect her from frost near windows by a protective covering of newspaper between her and the window.

CONTROLLING THE ENEMIES OF TULASI DEVI

For control for aphids, use black leaf 40 (nicotine sulfate)

Spray Formula:

Black leaf 40—one teaspoon

Soap--1 cubic inch

Water--1 gallon

Spray every four to five days for one month.

For control of white fly—green house bugs. These are white bugs that fly and lay white eggs, and suck the juice of the plant. Do the same as for aphids.

For control of mealy bugs. These appear to be tiny dots of cotton, but if you look close they are bugs with many legs. These are found on the under sides of the leaves on new shoots. Control by wiping them off with cotton swab filled with alcohol.

Die back is one common, heartbreaking disease that begins on new shoots, gradually drying up and turning them brown until the entire plant dies this way. You should immediately control watering. Sometimes this is caused by bad soil, so check this and repot if necessary. The disease is carried by the soil.

Spider mites. These are tiny white spiders which make webs on the plant and suck her shoots. Control by using a syringe and spray frequently with light soapy water. [Also follow the instructions given earlier in this book.]

These are just a few of the many demons that plague Srimati Tulasi Devi, but you can help by checking her every day, especially the under sides of the leaves. Cut off dead branches and always make sure she is not too dry or too wet. Big beetles are often a problem as well as caterpillars because everyone loves her tender leaves. So destroy these creatures (while chanting Hare Krishna) when they decide to make their home on Tulasi Devi.

PLANTING

1. Buy a Jiffy Grower Seed Starter Kit (or similar brand) at a garden store. This kit consists of small peat moss seed cups arranged like an egg carton with seedbed soil pre-mixed and sifted. So all you have to do is fill the cups with soil mix and moisten (according to package directions) and press the Tulasi seeds into the soil about 1/16" deep, about 6 seeds per cup. Keep in warm sunny room, avoiding temp changes, out of strong drafts, and away from gas fumes (the alternative is to mix 2 parts clean river sand (unsalted), sift into seed flat or peat moss pots and water from beneath—don't sprinkle them-). This is more expensive, time consuming and not so successful.

2. The first Tulasi sprouts appear in 6 or 7 days, and will continue appearing for several weeks. Keep the plastic seed germination bag from pressing on the seedlings—prop it up inside with sticks if necessary. This will keep the remaining unspouted cups moist.

3. Buy a dozen 4"-6" deep peat moss pots and some good planting soil-mix. If you mix your own planting soil, use 2 parts sifted loam, 1 part clean river sand (unsalted) and 1 part sifted peat moss or leaf mold. Generally it should be slightly fertile, light with good drainage. There is no objection to mixing your own—its cheaper; but these peat moss pots are very nice as they give good ventilation, and simplify the eventual transplanting job.

4. In late afternoon, in a wind protected spot (preferably just in the vicinity of the seed kit so they'll be no temperature changes) take a few handfuls of rocks, a water bottle as described herein lots of tepid water; peat moss, and lots said soil mix. The idea is to simply put the sprouted cups into deeper cups for more root-growing room. Plant the whole cup, just remove its bottom. Begin by lining the bottom of the 4" peat moss cups with rocks for drainage. Wet the soil mix and fill the peat pots leaving a depression for the seed cups to enter. With knife carefully remove the bottom of peatmoss seed cup. Set the whole seed cup down into the moist depression, pressing down firmly on all sides. This eliminates air gaps. Water thoroughly making a moat or depression around the peat moss cup (planted) but avoid direct watering into the seed cup. (Direct watering may disturb seeds that are still germinating in the seed cups. Use a squirt bottle and tepid (not hot or cold) water. Never hit the tiny seedlings directly with the water stream. (If by accident you do, pick Her up and try to prop Her with soil very gently). When finished leave the pots in the same vicinity as the seed kit. Place the pots 2-3 inches apart on 'oven racks' or the like so that they get good air circulation and drainage from beneath and sides. Allow light but no direct sun exposure.

5. In a few days, gradually introduce them to filtered sunlight, under a tree out doors or under a lath screen (if weather is nice and nights not very cold). Arrange the pots as above on an oven rack or better yet on old bare bed-springs is the ideal thing—one pot in each wire spiral, this also gives good insect protection. Shield them from sun and wind. Protection from wind may be afforded by attaching parrarin cloth, burlap muslin, or plywood, to stakes, building a 4-sided box. Then fiberglass or aluminum window screen can be tacked to the box edge giving protection from sparrows, mynah birds and flying insects. (Flies are especially bad, they lay eggs in the leaves, so protect with screen).

6. Water the Tulasi seedlings thoroughly each morning, using tepid water bottle. Keep a large pot of tepid water nearby for refilling the water bottles, as they should be kept nicely moist. If the seedlings start turning purplish or grayish, then they're getting too much sun and not enough water. If this happens, keep them in shade for a few days till they recover, or else they may wither and disappear.

7. Care for the seedlings regularly in the above manner, offering obeisances and circumambulating twice daily, and in 2-3 weeks they will develop 2 or 3 more sets of leaves. Then if you have pots bearing more than one seedling (and you probably will) you will have to plan on separating them by transplanting each in a separate peatmoss pot (4-6 inches deep). This separation transplanting is difficult but it is necessary. So prepare the required number of peat moss pots as described in #3 and #4 and in late afternoon equip yourself with peat pots, a knife, spade, soil mix, water bottle, and lots of tepid water. Important: the seedlings must be put one to a pot as soon as possible when they have two sets of leaves. Beforehand be sure to water the plants to be transplanted thoroughly. This makes the soil stick to the roots protecting them. In transplanting, avoid breaking and loosening seedling roots. Transplant as quickly as possible because even momentary exposure to the air is damaging and to keep as much moist soil as possible around the roots. After watering, begin by cutting an inch or so deep into the peatpot dividing it into two or more sections, depending on the number of seedlings. Start sections by cutting them carefully, pull the sections apart, trying to avoid root breakage and root exposure as far as possible. Immediately plant the sections in the newly prepared peat pots, pressing down firmly and filling more with moist soil as needed and water thoroughly several times, (two devotees working together can do this part more quickly). Press soil around the plants firmly to eliminate drying air pockets, and water thoroughly several times. Full shade and increased watering should continue for 3 days, and longer if they wilt. If you do it quickly and carefully, there will be little or no wilting or drying up.

8. After three days of shade (simply cover the screened bed with cloth to provide shade) and double watering, gradually introduce them to filtered sunlight and continue caring for them as in #5 & 6. Continue this program for 2-3 weeks, until they have 3 or 4 sets of leaves. When more leaves have appeared, you may check periodically to see if any tiny white roots are coming through the bottom of the pot. One of the advantages of peat moss pots, aside from easy transplant, is that the roots never become cramped, thus dwarfing Her. When the pot becomes too small the roots just start coming through it. When you begin to see the roots coming through the bottom, its time to transplant Her.

9. Transplanting into Pots: It is advisable to put a few plants in pots for the winter, especially if your center or home is in a cold climate. Large 10-12" deep cement are sturdy (or redwood.) and porous; clay pots are porous but break easily; plastic pots are non-porous and are not very good. Indoors in cold season with use of a plant lamp you should be able to continue growing Tulasi plants year round, so use durable and large pots. Cement and redwood pots usually have little logs beneath for drainage and air circulation, which is very important.

10. Outdoor Planting of Tulasi: To prepare a bed for Tulasi outdoors, locate it in full sun, and construct a wind protection box, and screen for keeping out unwanted birds and flying insects. Tulasi likes light, fertile, well drained soil, slightly alkaline, and deeply cultivated. So find out what kind of soil you have, and add the required soil amendments. For example, if the soil is too heavy and clay-like, you add leaf mold, compost, sand and sawdust. But in any case, mist in good quantities of dehydrated cow manure, compost, and leaf mold (or peat moss). Then cultivate thoroughly.

Transplanting into the Ground: In late afternoon, equipped with knife, spade, water, and measuring stick, dig 4" to 6" holes, the size of the peat pots, spacing them 12" apart in rows 15" to 18" apart. Fill the holes with water and let drain somewhat. Then, one by one, carefully remove the peat pot's bottom, and set the whole pot and Tulasi down into the hole, pressing firmly, and watering again and again. There should be no problem in this setting, since you don't have to disturb the roots in any way. Keep them in partial shade for several days, and gradually expose them to full sun. Cultivate the ground every week or so, keeping it free from weeds. Water regularly each morning, and they'll grow like anything.

NOTE: These peat pots are very advantageous for growing plants more quickly, with less transplant set-back, but great care must be taken in handling them as they break and tear very easily. If you always pick them up with both hands, there will be little problem. If the bottom does fall out of one, however, get a new peat pot and line the bottom with gravel, fill it 2 inches or so with soil mix, and set the bottomless pot down into it, pressing firmly but carefully.

Soil mix: give Srimati Tulasi Devi a very nice planter and soil mix and she'll grow and flourish nicely. You can either buy a ready-mixed packaged soil, or mix your own, which is just as good, done properly, and cheaper. A good planter mix is 2 parts garden loam (more or less; depending on whether soil is

light or heavy in texture); 1 part compost; 1 part sand (coarse, clean & unsalted); 1 part peat moss/leaf mold; 1 part well-rotted dehydrated cow manure (cow manure must be dehydrated, fresh manure will burn the roots, buy it in a garden store).

Drainage: Be sure the pot drains freely. Place curved piece of crockery (broken clay pot) over the drainage hole, then line pot bottom with 1-2" of coarse gravel so that dirt will neither sift through holes nor clog them.

Procedure: In late afternoon prepare pot as directed and fill it with moist soil mix leaving a depression in the center of the pot. Water the Tulasi to be potted. Then with knife carefully remove the bottom of Tulasi's peatmoss pot and set peat pot and Tulasi (together) down into the depression, pressing firmly so there won't be any air pockets. Leave about 1 inch of room above the soil so there will be ease in watering. Water thoroughly by soaking pot in basin from below.

Care of Tulsi Devi in the Pots: The first thing is to water thoroughly when necessary and allow plant to absorb moisture or water a little each morning (about once every three days seems best). Be careful not to over or under water Her. She likes sun so give Her a sunny window or use a two bulb grow light.

Additional Notes:

Sec. 1. When planting new seeds from Tulasi Devi, the seed pods must be dissected and the seeds removed from them. Each pod contains 4 seeds. Some might have already fallen from the pod. With fingernails, carefully pick apart pods, allowing seeds to fall onto a soft cloth. Don't smash the pods. Avoid bruising the seeds or exposing them to damp atmosphere. Do not plant more seeds than you can properly maintain.

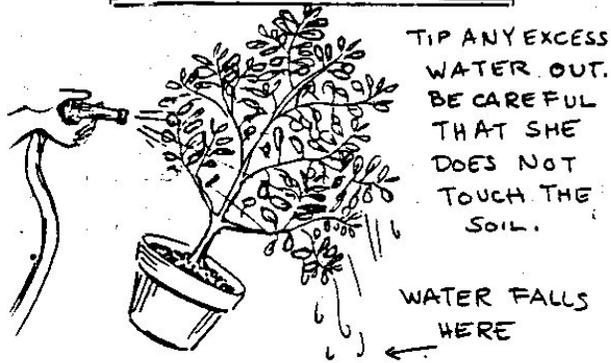
If Jiffy grower seed starter kits are not available in your area, then you can get pre-sifted planter soil mix, and put it into small peat moss pots, then cover with a piece of perforated plastic bag by means of a rubber band, and water from below.

Sec. 10. When plants are a little taller, for wind protection and to give them stability, drive a thin stake into the ground 1" or so beside the stalk base, and loosely tie stalk to it with a torn strip of soft cotton cloth (a strip at least 1" wide). Tie it loosely and in a place where won't obstruct growth of new leaves. This gives the slender delicate stalk good support, even in wind, and makes for more rapid growth. In a few months, the stalk is no more soft and purple, but becomes hard and woody, like a little tree. Still if the area is windy, best to leave the support stake in permanently.

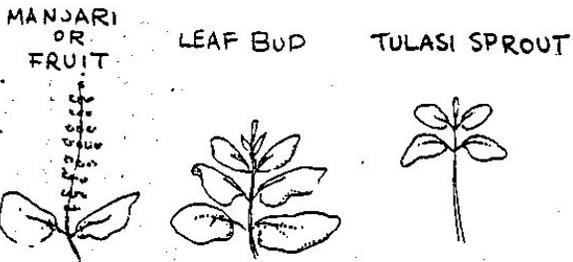
When collecting the leaves, collect the ones that droop before they fall naturally. Don't cut terminal leaves and wait till plants are big before cutting many leaves from them.

Picture Pages

RINSING AFTER A BATH

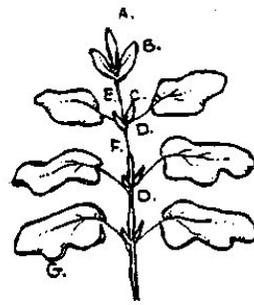


TYPES OF BUDS



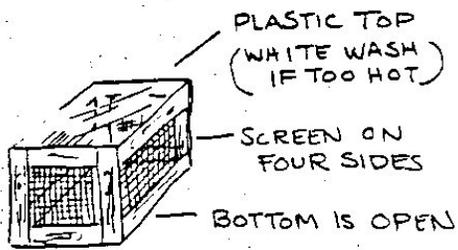
THE SPROUT WILL BE SMALL WITH A LONG STEM. THE FIRST SET OF LEAVES WILL BE ROUND AND THE SECOND SET POINTED.

PARTS OF TULASI



- A. DEVELOPING BUD OR MANJARI
- B. 1ST SET OF LEAVES
- C. NEXT BUD
- D. JOINT OR INTERSECTION
- E. NIP HERE IF "A" IS BUD
- F. NIP HERE IF "A" IS MANJARI
- G. DEVELOPED LEAVES

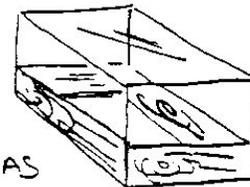
OUTDOOR SUN BOXES



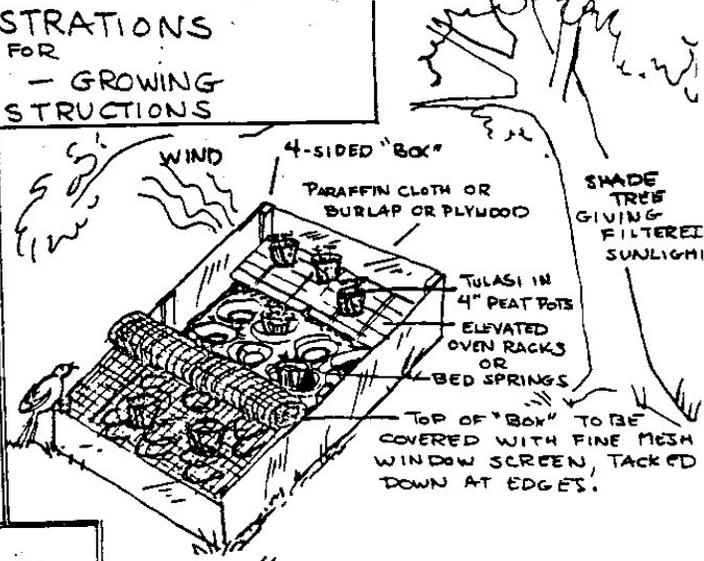
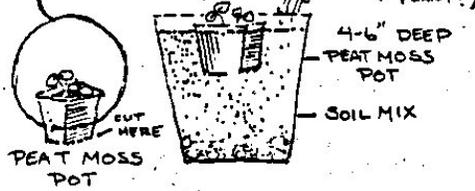
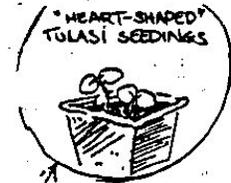
THE TOP KEEPS LEAVES AND BIRD DROPPINGS OUT!

PLASTIC TOP SIDING OF WOOD TO BLOCK WIND.

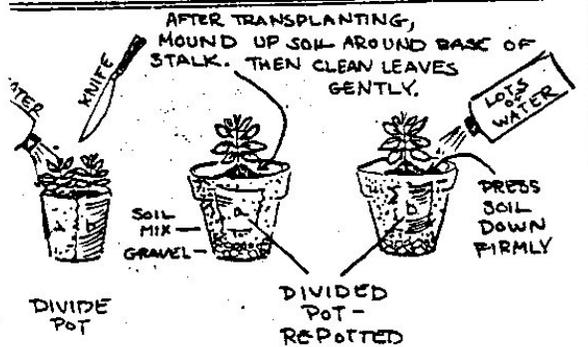
MAKE CANVAS SIDES WHICH CAN BE ADJUSTED AS NEEDED. CANVAS CAN BE ROLLED UP. MAKE DOOR WITH HINGES, OR HINGED ROOF.



ILLUSTRATIONS FOR TULASI - GROWING INSTRUCTIONS



PARAGRAPH #4 ILLUSTRATED

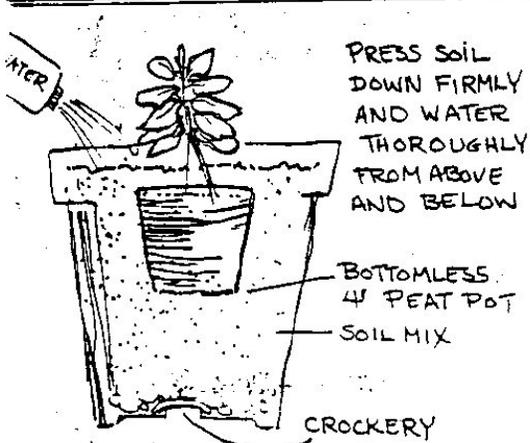


SHADE FOR 3 DAYS!

PARAGRAPH #5 ILLUSTRATED

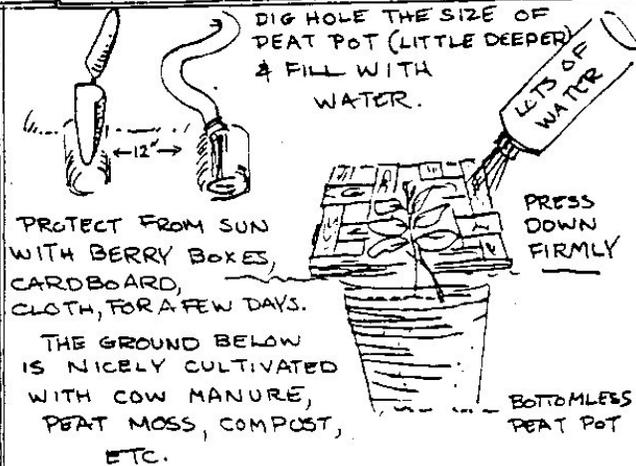


PARAGRAPH #7 ILLUSTRATED

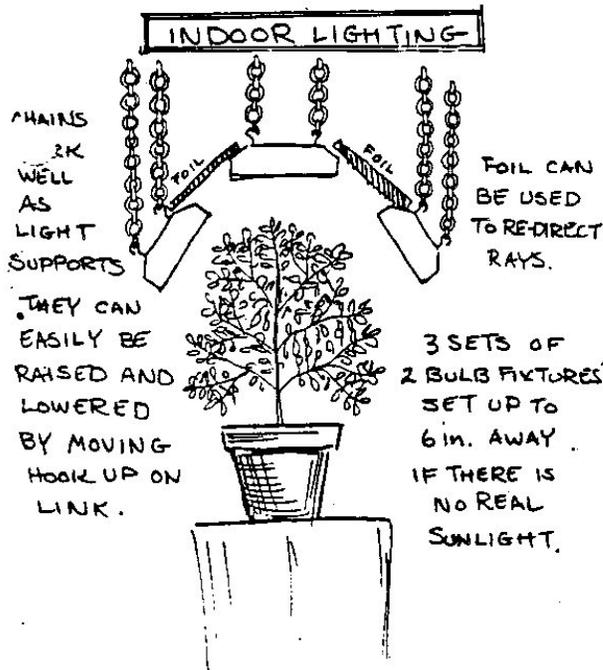


PARAGRAPH #9 ILLUSTRATED

PARAGRAPH #8 ILLUSTRATED



PARAGRAPH #10 ILLUSTRATED



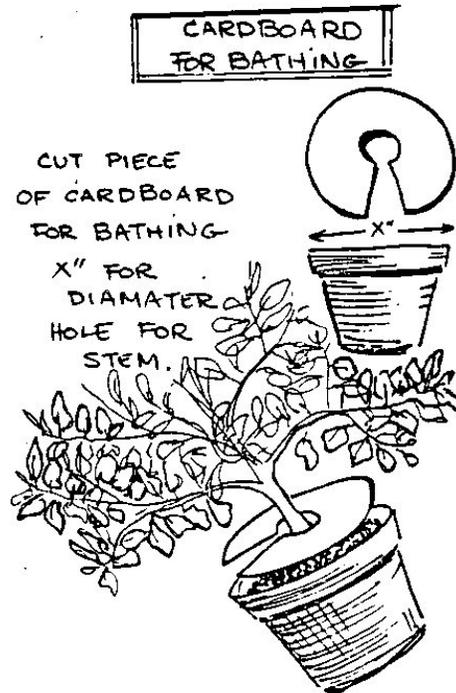
CHAINS
2K
WELL
AS
LIGHT
SUPPORTS

THEY CAN
EASILY BE
RAISED AND
LOWERED
BY MOVING
HOOK UP ON
LINK.

FOIL CAN
BE USED
TO REDIRECT
RAYS.

3 SETS OF
2 BULB FIXTURES
SET UP TO
6 IN. AWAY.
IF THERE IS
NO REAL
SUNLIGHT.

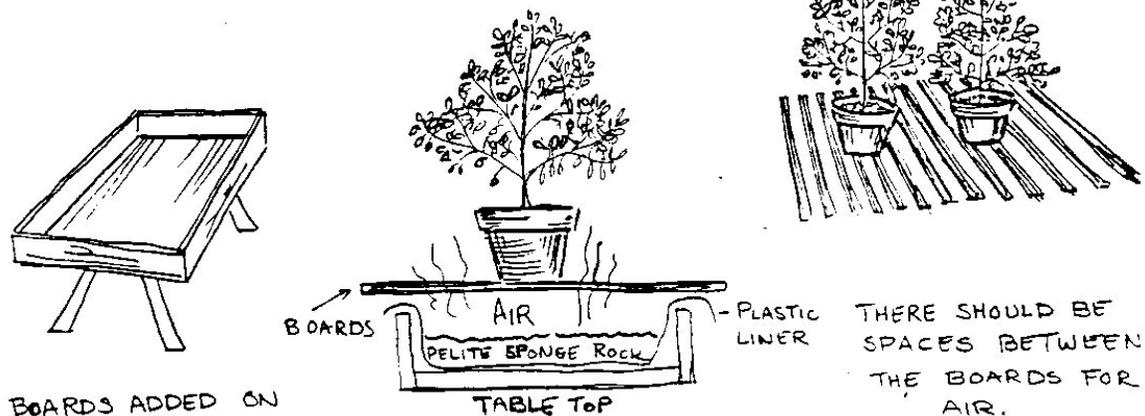
A SIMPLER ARRANGEMENT CAN BE
USED IF SHE IS IN A WINDOW AND
GETS SOME DIRECT SUNLIGHT.



CUT PIECE
OF CARDBOARD
FOR BATHING
X" FOR
DIAMETER
HOLE FOR
STEM.

IT SHOULD FIT SNUGGLY AGAINST
THE INSIDE RIM OF THE POT -
TO HOLD SOIL IN PLACE.

HUMIDITY TABLE



BOARDS ADDED ON
TABLE TOP AS SIDES.

WATER EVAPORATES
EQUALLY AROUND
TULASI

THERE SHOULD BE
SPACES BETWEEN
THE BOARDS FOR
AIR.

[This is available at www.stephen-knapp.com]

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