“Show me your hand, tell me what are you hiding from me”, asked Manu but Rupa was not willing to reveal her treasure. Manu could feel the excitement gushing out from her twinkling eyes, ears...everywhere, and he wanted to know the secret badly. None of his plead and charms were working today, and finally he had no other choice but to grab Rupa’s tight fist and force it open. There, standing in Rupa’s round, chubby palms was a beautiful necklace of bright and shining red and black beads. Even though it was so much of a ‘girl thing’ but Manu could not resist himself from admiring the beautiful beads.

"Where did you get this from", was his instant question. Rupa smiled mischievously and said, “Bantu mama came back from his botanical tour last night, and he gifted these to me, and he also gave me something else” and saying this, Rupa pulled out a set of matching earrings also from her skirt pocket. “Nice”, was all Manu could manage to say, obviously a little hurt that he did not get any gift. “I never knew Bantu mama also had an interest in the gems and jewellery. I thought he was only after plants” he mused. Sensing his feelings, Rupa dangled the red and black bead necklace again in front of Manu and whispered, “Do you know something, these beautiful beads are not actually beads, they are plant seeds”.

Manu’s expressions changed immediately, he could not believe what Rupa had just told him. “Stop joking Rupa, I know you are not telling the truth”. Rupa insisted and said in an earnest tone, “I am not joking Manu, see these seeds and then you will believe me” and she pulled out a dried looking pod resembling a thin, dried pea from her other pocket. Inside the pod, the beautiful red and black, tiny seeds, stared back at Manu. He could not believe his eyes.

“I never knew seeds could be so beautiful”, said Manu, marveling at the seeds. “Looks like a tiny beetle bug”. Rupa agreed and suggested, “come, let us go over to Bantu mama’s room, he was telling me that he has more of such pretty and different seeds collection, may be if he is in a generous mood, he will lend you some of the seeds for your science project too”. Manu agreed and they both ran over to their favourite uncle’s room.

The excitement was written all over their faces and wasting no time, Bantu mama led Rupa and Manu to his favourite corner and opened his treasure box. With anticipation and apprehension as if the invaluable gems would start falling off, Rupa and Manu held their breaths. What came out was a surprise. There were near transparent plastic pouches, labeled and all containing different and beautiful seeds. "Seeds are the most common plant part used for jewellery making. Seeds are generally uniform, often colourful and hard-wearing, and lend themselves well to forming necklaces, bracelets and other ornamental items”, informed Bantu mama.

“Some of the plant beads are also counted and prayers often recited in worship or meditation”, continued Bantu mama showing them the dried Rudraksha beads. Manu immediately recognized them as their grandma was always holding the ‘mala’ of these beads during her prayers. Bantu mama then informed them that “from childhood I have been fascinated by nature’s infinite variety of forms, colours, textures, shapes and sizes. Seeds display this amazing diversity, and over the years I have accumulated a sizeable collection of botanical necklaces”. He then showed Rupa and Manu some very unusual necklaces, there was a tulsi necklace, and then a pendant of giant tamarind seeds, a thick bangle of dried melon seeds in orange colour, rosary beads of sandalwood, white beads necklace belonging to the same family as that of the red and black beads and many more.

Next day, Rupa was feeling proud wearing the unusual jewellery for her fancy dress competition in school. She had dressed up as a girl from Nagaland, and with her tribal costume and makeup, the red and black beads were standing apart. Behind the stage curtain, she spotted Manu dressed as a ‘sadhu’ with a long “Rudraksha” mala around his neck. Rupa could not help herself but smile, marveling at the beautiful world of ‘botanical beads’.

To have a look at unusual, aesthetic and ethnic jewellery from plants, turn overleaf...
Who is not fond of jewellery? But it is not gold or silver jewellery we are talking about here. We are talking about the ‘Jewels in your Garden’. Would you ever believe that you can get the most unusual and striking jewellery in the world from plants in your garden? Have a look!

Heritage Amruth presents a range of plant jewellery in the form of attractive necklaces, bracelets, nose pins, rings and amulets that can rival any synthetic costume jewellery.

**Tulsi Necklace and Prayer Beads**

Beads are cut from the tulsi (Ocimum sanctum) stems and made into necklaces and rosaries or prayer beads. This rosary is also worn as an amulet to protect children.

**Rudraksha Pendants and Prayer Beads**

Rosaries worn by the followers of Shiva (Shaivites) are traditionally made from Rudraksha (Elaeocarpus sphaericus). They are categorised by the number of sections or mukhis which the seed is divided into, with one being the most coveted.

**Sea Heart Pendant**

The large brown seeds of the giant tamarind tree or the sea heart (Entada pursaetata) can be made into pendants and necklaces by making holes on the top portion of the seeds. Similarly, the tiny brown tamarind seeds can also be beaded together into a necklace.
Cardamom Garlands

Cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum) seeds, a symbol of hospitality, are strung into ethnic garlands.

Abras Bracelets and Necklaces

The colourful seeds of rosary pea (Abrus precatorius) are used into making attractive earrings, bracelets, necklaces, rosaries and other ornamental articles.

Clove Nose pin

Sharpen the clove (Syzygium aromaticum) sticks and pierce them into the ears as ear studs or in nose as nose pins. Clove necklace also looks very beautiful.

Melon Seeds Necklace

Smooth flat seeds of melon are used as such or dyed in different colours and strung together into a necklace.

Coconut Leaf bracelet

The coconut (Cocos nucifera) leaves are divided into 2-3 pieces lengthwise and braided in the hair or tied on the wrist as a bracelet.

Lotus seeds Rosary

Lotus (Nelumbo nucifera) seeds are used in making a rosary for prayers.

Gajra

The white, fresh flowers of Nandibatlu (Tabernaemontana divaricata) are tied together into beautiful gajra and garlands similar to jasmine flowers.