

A forest in my backyard

11 August 2019

Chennai: Since school reopened this year, students of Jain Public School in Chromepet have been having biology lessons in their 220sqft backyard forest. A forest they helped grow all of last year using the Miyawaki method, which has become the buzzword among Chennaiites fearing water scarcity. "We wanted students to understand science and ecology. Creating our own forest in the middle of a city of concrete was the best way," says principal Jalpa Shreyas Shah.

While the school hopped onto the Miyawaki bandwagon last year, since July, a few days after the 100-day dry spell ended, a horde of city dwellers has been discovering the methodology of growing urban forests fast and in little spaces named after its creator, Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki. From individuals to corporates, and hospitals to residents' associations — the Miyawaki method of growing forests has been the talk of the town or the WhatsApp forward.

Krishna Kumar Suresh, whose group Thuvakkam helps create Miyawaki forests, has received more than 40 phone calls in the last month from Chennaiites wanting to plant trees in their backyard. "People want results by next summer," says Suresh, who helped create the Jain school forest. The method, he says, is popular as it allows one to create forests in the smallest of spaces. "The idea is to grow native trees, a mix of flowering and fruit trees, just like a natural forest. Maintenance is minimal," says Suresh. He is helping a person in Anna Nagar create a forest over 100sqft, and a hospital create a larger one. For Environment Day, a corporate created a forest in 600sqft in My Lady's Garden in Periyamedu.

In Iyyapathangal, drumming prodigy, S B Sharan, 12, took the money he earned from his TV show to create a forest in a clearing in his apartment complex. "We got all the children involved in the planting so that they understand that the forest belongs to them," says his father Sakthi. Sharan and Co have planted 101 trees in round 800sqft of space, at a cost of about `40,000.

Neighbours peered into the forest creation, and now schools and other resident associations want to try it out. "Other than the initial trimming, once the forest grows, there is hardly anything one needs to do, other than step back and admire the green cover," says Sakthi.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/a-forest-in-my-backyard/articleshow/70624264.cms>