

NGO creates urban forests to ramp up green cover in Hyderabad

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Hyderabad: Amidst the growing concerns of air pollution, groundwater depletion, and declining green spaces in the city, the voluntary organisation Thuvakkam has taken a proactive step towards addressing these issues.

Introducing an innovative initiative, they are creating urban forests near water bodies to enhance the green cover and tackle environmental challenges. Moreover, the fruits of their efforts bear a heartwarming impact as the yield produced in these urban forests is generously donated to nearby government schools for use in the Mid-day meal programme, further nurturing the community and promoting sustainable practices.

Speaking to The Hans India, Krishnakumar Suresh, founder of Thuvakkam, said, "In our country, it is mandated to have a minimum of 33 percent forest cover, but unfortunately, we currently have only around 23 percent. This has led to many metropolitan cities, including Hyderabad, transforming into concrete jungles, neglecting the importance of green cover for the future sustainability of our environment. To address this critical issue, we have taken the initiative to create mini urban forests within the city.

The project was launched in 2022, starting with a pilot initiative at Kudikotalake in Gachibowli, where we planted approximately 1200 trees, focusing on native plant species to promote biodiversity enhancement. Our primary objective is to restore greenery and create sustainable habitats that can support wildlife and improve the overall ecological balance."

Our endeavor to create mini urban forests goes beyond mere random selection of native trees. We adopt a well-structured and systematic approach to ensure that the chosen tree species align with the region's natural biodiversity. By carefully examining the geographical signs of tree diversity, we identify the most suitable species that thrived in the area before urbanisation took over.

To gain valuable insights, we engage with the local community, including long-time residents and elderly individuals who can vividly recall the tree varieties that once graced the landscape before it succumbed to the concrete jungle. Their knowledge serves as a valuable reference, guiding us in recreating a green habitat that resonates with the region's ecological heritage. Moreover, we believe in fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship within the community. To achieve this, we actively involve the school children in the maintenance activities of these urban forests. Organising regular drives on weekends, we encourage the young generation to actively participate in watering, nurturing, and caring for the planted trees. This hands-on involvement not only instills environmental awareness but also establishes a sense of pride and responsibility in safeguarding these green havens, he added. "In the upcoming years, we have ambitious plans to expand our urban forest initiative across the city. Our next project is set to take root near Hyderabad Central University, where we have secured 1.5 acres of land. With a vision to enhance the city's green cover and promote ecological balance, we aim to plant an impressive 10,000 to 15,000 trees in this new urban forest. Our commitment to giving back to the community remains unwavering. Just like in our previous efforts, the yield produced from this urban forest will be generously donated to nearby government schools. By providing fresh and locally grown produce, we hope to contribute to the nourishment and well-being of the school children," said a member of Thuvakkam.

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