

Raising a mini-forest in a park

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Residents and other volunteers at work at SBI Colony Park in Chitlapakkam.

Continuing their efforts to make Chitlapakkam a cleaner and greener neighbourhood, the residents have adopted the Miyawaki model of afforestation at one of the parks.



The SBI Colony Park will have a small patch of dense forest in a few years' time. The initiative, which was kick-started on August 3, is being spearheaded by Chitlapakkam Rising with the participation of residents and volunteers.

"The team of volunteers has created two pits, each of which is 10 feet long, 5 feet wide and 3 feet deep. Digging for the second pit is under way and the team has layered the first pit with compost bought from the Chitlapakkam Town Panchayat and sugarcane bagasse and then with red soil. The saplings will be planted at an interval of 1.5 feet to 2 feet and about 15-30 saplings will be planted in each pit," says Sujay Kumar, a member of the 'tree team' of Chitlapakkam Rising.

The team will plant saplings of these following trees: naaval (Malabar plum), poovarasu (Indian tulip), pungai (Indian beech), vembu (neem), sarakondrai (golden rain tree), vengai (Indian kino), malai vembu (Malabar neem) and teak.

According to Sujay, when compared with the single crop cultivation method, the Miyawaki model of afforestation provides the option to grow a variety of native species in a limited space. “We have carefully chosen our trees after multiple brainstorming sessions. We will group the plants in different layers based on their growth. These densely-packed native trees grow faster as each plant competes with the other for sunlight and nutrition. They are also drought-resistant and need minimum maintenance,” he adds.

The team will entrust the maintenance of the saplings with the residents living near the park.

Chitlapakkam Rising is planning to identify more parks to create such mini-forests. “The team chose parks because of land limitations in other public spaces. The tree team is also planting saplings on the roadside in an effort to increase the green cover in Chitlapakkam. We received hundreds of saplings from environment-conscious residents when we launched a crowd-sourcing drive for saplings and we plan to plant them in parks and other suitable spaces in the coming days,” says Sujay.

Lend a helping hand

Chitlapakkam Rising is seeking more volunteers to assist them in creating these mini-forests. Volunteers will be working every day from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. at the park and soon, they will be launching the initiative in other parks. The team is also in need of tree guards to protect the saplings planted along the roadside and other public spaces. If you want to participate in the afforestation drive or sponsor tree guards, you may contact Sunil Jayaram at 95001 22151.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/miyawaki-in-chennai/article29023817.ece>