

Seedlings being readied for afforestation drive

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It is that time of the year when nurseries of the Forest Department are on an overdrive for readying up the seedlings required for the government's annual afforestation drive to mark World Environment Day on June 5. The department has been tasked with producing 64.12-lakh seedlings for the drive being implemented by the Haritha Keralam Mission.

Six nurseries

The six nurseries in the Thiruvananthapuram social forestry division are buzzing with activity. As in the previous year, ethnic species are being given focus among those that were being cultivated. According to J.R. Ani, Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry), Thiruvananthapuram, the cultivated seedlings were mostly fruit-bearing species such as gooseberry, Indian blackberry (jamun or 'njal'), jackfruit, mango, rambutan, custard apple, pomegranate, guava, and tamarind.

Teak stumps

Besides 30,000 teak stumps and 30,000 sacred grove varieties including *Cassia fistula* (kanikkonna), Bilva (koovalam), Indian blackberry, and Strychnine (kanjiram) were also being cultivated. The seedlings were being developed in the nurseries in Mylammoodu and Chettiyakonnakkayam under the Thiruvananthapuram range, Parasuvakkal and Mandapathinkadavu under the Neyyattinkara range, and Poovanpara and Puravur under the Attingal range.

Big basket

Separately, around 49,000 big-basket seedlings, each over a metre-long, were also being nurtured in the nurseries. Of these, 30,000 seedlings, which were of timber species including teak, rosewood and sandalwood, were being cultivated as part of the department's Golden Trinity scheme to promote economically important species. These plants were part of the 3.38 lakh big-basket seedlings, which have been developed across the State, to be kept on sale. Discussions were currently on with the Haritha Keralam Mission, which expressed interest to procure the entire batch for implementing its Pachathuruthu scheme that was involved in undertaking afforestation drives in local bodies, official sources said.

Social Forestry

The Thiruvananthapuram Social Forestry wing is also expected to cater to the institutional planting efforts that will be taken up at the Life Sciences Park at Thonnakkal and the Women Police Battalion headquarters at Menamkulam.

SOURCE; -<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/seedlings-readied-up-for-afforestation-drive/article27059572.ece>

