

## Sweet-scented eucalyptus may soon yield eco-friendly dyes

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Coimbatore: Scientists at the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) are studying if natural dyes can be extracted from the bark of pulpwood trees like eucalyptus and casuarina. If they succeed, the extracted natural dyes can be used to design organic and eco-friendly clothes and formulate a way to use and dispose of bark barks. Extracting dyes from barks of trees like oak, orange and brazilwood is an age-old practice. Brown colour dye is particularly extracted only from the bark of birch and oak. IFGTB director Mohit Gera said, “Most paper and plywood companies buy tonnes and tonnes of pulpwood containing trees like eucalyptus and casuarina.” “They just take the pulp and wood from the trees and are at a loss of what can be done with the barks. These barks land up either on farm fields again or landfills,” he said. “We wanted to find ways to use the tree bark so that they get disposed of and not

generate plant waste as well,” he added. This is the first time that a project has been undertaken to try extracting dye from eucalyptus tree. The Rs 20-lakh, four-year project sanctioned by the Indian Council of Forestry and Research (ICFRE) will include finding technology to extract shades of orange, yellow, sandal and brown from the bark and apply it to different cloth materials. “We want to boil it in distilled water in the right temperature and use natural chemical compounds to extract the dye,” said IFGTB scientist Thangamani, who will be working on the project. The process has been done earlier to extract yellow dye from other varieties of eucalyptus abroad but not in India, said Thangamani.

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