



Biodiversity park on cards at Mumbai University

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MUMBAI: A biodiversity park spread over 50,000 square feet will soon come up on the sprawling Mumbai University's Kalina campus.

This ecozone will encompass an urban forest housing native trees planted using the Japanese Miyawaki method, a pond, a butterfly garden with over 1,000 flowering plants, an astro-themed Nakshatra (constellation) garden and an amphitheatre.

The park, which will add to the city's green lungs, will be developed and maintained using corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds by the Rotary Club of Bombay (RCB) for 10 years and at no cost to the university.

The university has identified the land near the Marathi Bhasha Bhavan, where the pond is located, for the project. "Based on our initial assessment, we can plant over 4,000 native trees in the 10,000 square feet of urban forest that we plan to develop," said Rotarian Rajesh Choudhary, member of the national environment initiative of Rotary India.

The trees will be planted in the Miyawaki method, which is picking up in cities across the country. The technique of planting native species of trees closer to each other was pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki. "This forest grows in a shorter span of time and will be self-sustaining within three years," said university's NSS student Gopal Raithatha, adding that they have identified 65 species of native trees for the forest. The trees will be bar-coded, which will help nature lovers to learn more about the species.

"We plan to rejuvenate the pond, rebuild the walls around it, and then start work on the forest and the gardens," said Choudhary.

The university already has an amphitheatre near the pond and it will be rebuilt. The project is a culmination of ideas from members of the university's NSS unit.

"We regularly hold tree plantation drives, but we wanted to take up a sustainable environment project for our campus. The park will be a contribution from the NSS unit to the university and to the city's green space," said Sudhir Puranik, university's registrar and director of the NSS unit.

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