

'Biomineralised soil should be used to improve forest cover'

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Chennai: As 42% of the state forest cover has degraded and another 21% is vulnerable to degradation due to poor nutrients like carbon in the soil, Anna University's Centre for Climate Change and Disaster Management has suggested the use of biomineralised soil in the forests to improve green cover.

To restore the forest cover that is vulnerable to degradation, the centre recommends the use of 16 lakh tonnes of biomineralised soil for afforestation.

A Ramachandran, a professor, told TOI, "The soil of the degraded forest cover contains only 0.2% to 10% carbon content, which leads to a survival rate of just 10% and stunted growth." One kilogram of

compost or soil from bio-mining waste contains 18% carbon, he said, adding that it will be a rich source to boost green cover in the state.

Tamil Nadu treats 56% of the solid waste generated and makes around 2.87 lakh tonnes of compost per year.

Anna University says that to restore the forest cover vulnerable to degradation, they need 16 lakh tonnes of biomineralised soils.

"In eight years, we can restore the forest patches that are at risk of degradation," said Ramachandran.

The local bodies of the state try to sell the compost to farmers and to the horticulture and agriculture departments. Sometimes, they remain unsold. "It is better to send the bio-mined compost to the forest department for afforestation measures because it may contain heavy metals like lead and chromium, which are not ideal for use to grow crops." If the compost is used in edible crops, it can lead to health problems. The impact of heavy metals will not be huge in the forest, as the wood of the trees will reduce the biomagnification," he added.

Anna University will propose this in its workshop on 'Enhancing Carbon Sink in Tamil Nadu' to be held in the city today as part of capacity building for the state's senior forest officers.

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