

Celebratory plantation efforts transform 40 acres of barren land into urban forest

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Pune: Celebratory plantation drives have transformed 40 acres of barren land in Wanowrie into an urban forest.

Over the last 10 months, since the inauguration of the urban forest called Anandvan 4, citizens have planted thousands of trees to mark festivals, birthdays, anniversaries, and community events.

Under the purview of the forest department, the urban forest is managed by NGO Anandvan Foundation.

Neha Bamboli, who organized a plantation drive here for her son's birthday, said, "The plastic waste after throwing a birthday party always made me feel guilty. Instead, hosting a plantation drive

was great fun for our guests, many of whom were inspired to plan their own such event."

Bhupesh Sharma, secretary at Anandvan Foundation, told TOI, "We receive many enquiries from people who want to celebrate a special day by connecting with nature. Birthdays are most popular, especially among children and teens. Around 50-100 invitees, sometimes more, take part. Many also ask us to arrange other activities to make it more engaging for guests. For kids, we conduct sessions to explain what urban forests are, how to create them and more. Teenagers are interested in activities like bund wall building, learning about soil erosion, irrigation methods, etc. For adults, we provide information on native plants and their benefits."

Most participants plant fruit and flowering species, or long-living ones. 'Auspicious' options like kanchan, apta and ajan are also popular, while peepal and banyan trees are preferred by those who want to leave behind a legacy.

Yatin Nageshkar, who celebrated his two-year-old daughter's birthday here, said, "Our family wanted to inculcate respect for nature in my daughter."

Ankush Jain, another such parent, said, "Youngsters today are more conscious about the environment. My son and his friends had a lot of fun at the plantation drive."

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