

Delhi forest dept plans soil testing, internal audit to make tree plantation 'more scientific'

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New Delhi, Mar 2 (PTI) The Delhi Forest Department plans to conduct soil testing and an internal audit in a bid to make the plantation exercise this year "more scientific", according to officials.

Like last year, the plantation exercise will focus on native varieties. This will help further improve the survival rate of saplings, a forest department official said.

"Testing is being conducted in all the forest divisions in Delhi to ascertain the characteristics of the soil in a particular area. It will give us an idea whether the soil is alkaline or acidic, has enough nutrients and moisture and organic content to support the growth of saplings," the official said.

"For example, if the soil is alkaline, it will have to be treated to support sapling growth," he said, adding the aim is to make the exercise more scientific.

The agencies which will undertake plantation will also be aware of the pros and cons and accordingly, steps can be taken to improve the sapling survival rate, the official said.

An internal audit, which will be recommendatory in nature, will be conducted in April to determine the species best suited for a particular region and the factors playing a role in the tree mortality.

The department also plans to have seed collection centres in all the three forest divisions. A seed bank was created in the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary in South Forest Division last year.

This will ensure round-the-year seed availability with the department, he said.

At present, the forest department has seeds of 60 indigenous species. The target is to have seeds of 100 such species, he said.

The Delhi government had set a target of planting 33 saplings and shrubs in the last financial year.

Various government agencies planted 32 lakh saplings in the financial year 2020-21.

Delhi's green cover increased from 21.88 per cent to 23.06 per cent of its geographical area in the last two years, according to the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) report released by the Union Environment Ministry in January.

The capital's tree cover increased from 129 square km in 2019 to 147 square km. The overall green cover (forest cover and tree cover) increased from 324.44 sq km to 342 sq km, according to the report.

Source: <https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/general-news/delhi-forest-dept-plans-soil-testing-internal-audit-to-make-tree-plantation-more-scientific.html>