

Forest Department sets up wild fodder grass bank at Attakatti

WILSON THOMAS
COIMBATORE

First of its kind in the region, the Forest Department has set up a wild fodder grass bank at Attakatti near Aliyar where seedlings of wild grass species preferred by herbivores will be grown to improve their foraging areas in forests.

The facility has a collection of 50 species of wild grasses that are palatable to herbivores such as sambar deer, spotted deer, gaur and Nilgiri tahr.

According to officials with the Department, seedlings of these wild grass species, abundance of which are shrunk due to uncontrolled spread of invasive species like lantana camara, will be reintroduced in forest patches that are ideal for their growth.

I. Anwardeen, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Coimbatore Circle, also in-charge as Field Director of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR), said the main aim of the facility was to inventorise native wild



The wild fodder grass bank started by the Forest Department at Attakatti near Aliyar in Coimbatore district.

grasses preferred by the wildlife in different habitats.

“Our efforts are to identify erstwhile native grassland patches affected by anthropogenic activities and increase the palatable grass composition in its natural form,” he said.

According to him, the Department has plans to remove invasive species like lantana camara and restrict their growth through artificial multiplication of native

grasses by planting seedlings and sowing seeds in herbivore foraging areas.

“This will help for overall habitat quality improvement,” said Mr. Anwardeen who had taken up a similar initiative while working in Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve.

Of the 50 species inventorised at the grass bank, 20 are preferred by elephants, 24 by spotted deer, 16 by sambar deer, 13 by gaur and

four by Nilgiri tahr. Types of grass consumed by wild boar and bonnet macaque are also included in the bank.

Arockiaraj Xavier, Deputy Field Director of ATR, said the facility was brought up with the expertise of biologists of the Forest Department.

Forest Range Officer Naveen Kumar, who is in charge of the facility, said the nursery of the grass bank was spread in half an acre.