

Forest dept. to afforest over 270 hectares in the Nilgiris

The land is part of tea estates that were earlier managed by TANTEA

ROHAN PREMKUMAR
UDHAGAMANDALAM

More than 270 hectares of land that was part of tea estates managed by the Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Corporation (TANTEA) will be afforested with native trees and grasses by the Forest Department in the Gudalur forest division.

The land, which was handed back to the Forest Department in 2019, is located in Cherambadi and Pandalur and measures a total of 276 hectares, officials said.

District Forest Officer (Gudalur division) Sumesh Soman said that in the first phase, trees would be planted in around 20 hectares.

“Areas have been identified where the tea will be removed and replaced by either native trees or grasses, based on the suitability of the habitat,” said Mr. Soman.

Around 10,000 trees will

be planted in phases and the funds for the project was sanctioned by the Special Area Development Programme.

While the planting of na-

tive flora will lead to an increase in biodiversity, it would also serve to enrich habitats for wildlife already in the region.

One of the aspects of the

said land is that they are frequented by a variety of wildlife, including elephants, leopards, tigers and deer.

For instance, Palamedu in O-Valley is a crucial corridor



Forest Department staff inspecting a nursery for native trees at Pandiar in the Nilgiris from where saplings will be used for the afforestation drive.

for elephants, where there are plans for afforestation, the District Forest Officer said.

Native species identified

P. Ganesan, Forest Range Officer (in-charge) of Pandalur range, said that native trees and bamboo that make up the Gudalur landscape had been identified and collected over a period of months and grown in a nursery in Pandiar, which is home to 5,400 saplings.

“Using local indigenous knowledge, we tracked down the species of bamboo and other trees that are native to the landscape,” said Mr. Ganesan.

The Forest Department also plans to collect grasses from relatively undisturbed landscapes, ensuring that they are not exotic, before trying to plant them in suitable locations.