

# India's tree lovers get together for a nation-wide tree festival

By India Education Diary Bureau Admin - August 16, 2022

Looking for the signs of monsoon on trees. The August Tree Festival will be held from 15th to 31st August, 2022 all over India. The participants of the festival will go outdoors and observe 166 common tree species. The festival has 2 challenges – to observe more than 200 trees and as many Ficus trees as possible during the 17 days of the festival. One school and one individual will be declared the winners of each challenge based on a lucky draw of all participants who finish the challenges.

Even though we know climate change is real, understanding its impact is an ongoing task. One simple way of documenting this impact is by observing the seasonal changes in trees around us. As seasons change, so do the trees around us. Different kinds of trees in India produce flowers, fruits and new leaves or shed old leaves in particular seasons. This seasonal behaviour forms the basis for studying the impact of climate change on trees, and by extension on the lives of all other organisms dependent on trees. Tropical trees are diverse owing to the geographical and climatic diversity of India. This diversity makes it tricky to study the response of trees to climate change as each kind of tree behaves differently in different parts of the country. This is where citizen scientists can help – by observing trees in their neighbourhoods across the country.. SeasonWatch, an India-wide citizen science project is collating this information to understand the impact of climate change in India.

SeasonWatch organises quarterly tree festival events as a way of reaching out and inspiring citizen scientists to contribute observations on the trees around them. The ongoing August Tree Festival (15-31 August 2022) is one such event. About organising the festival, Sayee Girdhari, the SeasonWatch project coordinator, says, "For the tree festival, people from all over India will be simultaneously observing trees for a few days. Interacting with people and encouraging them to share their findings with us is rewarding. Through these festivals, we hope to make treewatching as mainstream as birdwatching."

Nature Conservation Society Nashik (NCSN), a collaborator of SeasonWatch shares their experience about a previous event – April Tree Festival – saying, "Nature Conservation Society of Nashik has been monitoring trees for the past 2 years. We have been participating in Tree festivals and from this year we have initiated a year-long project to document seasonal tree patterns of 32 tree species of Maharashtra's first Conservation Reserve – Borgad. During the April Tree festival we organised an Instagram live with Sayee as an awareness session in Marathi. We are encouraging the members of Nature Conservation Society of Nashik to participate in tree festivals by observing trees around them. We have planned to involve school children in the August Tree festival as well."

Dr. **Geetha Ramaswami**, the project lead of SeasonWatch and a participant of the tree festivals adds, "I had fun during the April tree festival because I got the opportunity to compare the trees I have been monitoring over the past three years in April. I had coincidentally taken photos of the same tree in April 2021 and '22 and it was amazing to see how nearly identical the tree looked!