

Native flora planted at housing unit in Udhagamandalam

STAFF REPORTER
UDHAGAMANDALAM

Grasses, shrubs and trees native to the Nilgiris were planted at the Gandhi Nagar housing unit in Udhagamandalam on Monday.

The initiative to restore native flora to the grassland-wetland area where the housing unit stands, will involve the planting of over 1,000 native grasses belonging to the genera *Andropogon*, *Chrysopogon* and *Themeda*.

“Hardy native shrubs belonging to the genera *Crotalaria* and *Osbeckia*, four varieties of *Strobilantes*, as well as 30 Shola trees will be planted,” said Godwin Vasanth Bosco, a restoration ecologist and the lead conservation gardener of ‘Upstream Ecology,’ which is providing the expertise as



The inauguration of the native flora restoration project was attended by the Nilgiris District Collector, J. Innocent Divya, Field Director of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, K.K.Kaushal, District Forest Officer (Nilgiris Division), D. Guruswamy and N. Ram, Director of The Hindu Publishing Group.

■ M. SATHYAMOORTHY

well as supplying the grasses and other flora which are being introduced at the restoration site.

The site, measuring almost an acre, is currently populated by exotic *Pennis-*

tum clandestinum (Kikiyu) grass and also by *Cestrum* plants, which had to be removed from the site prior to the planting of the native flora. The inauguration of the native flora restoration pro-

ject was attended by the Nilgiris District Collector, J. Innocent Divya, Field Director of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, K.K.Kaushal, District Forest Officer (Nilgiris Division), D. Guruswamy and N. Ram, Director of The Hindu Publishing Group (THG).

“There is a fine balance between development and ensuring the protection of the environment. I am very happy to see that this area, which is in the middle of the town, is being restored,” Mr Ram said.

The Nilgiris District Collector J. Innocent Divya commended the initiative shown by local residents in establishing the ecological park, which, she said, would serve to highlight the unique biodiversity of the Nilgiris.

M.N. Sagayaraja, president of the Gandhi Nagar

Housing Unit Residents’ Welfare Association, thanked the district administration as well as Mr. Ram for their assistance in the project.

“We are all extremely grateful for all the support from Mr. Ram, who sponsored the planting of the native species as well as the district administration, who have funded the fencing and associated infrastructure to ensure that the site is protected,” said Mr. Sagayaraja, who called on the residents of the Nilgiris to grow native trees and grasses in their backyards.

“Many of the Nilgiris’ endemic plants and grasses are all highly endangered. I hope people see this initiative and get inspired to grow native plants inside their own homes,” he added.