

Rare medicinal plants in forests to be made available for cultivation

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Trichy: Unique medicinal plants found only in the forests may soon be available for farmers for cultivation as the forest department has been propagating 10 such plants for mass cultivation. Since increasing demand for medicinal plants has been putting pressure on these forest resources, forest tree seed centre in Trichy has been carrying out research on 10 rare, endangered and threatened (RET) medicinal plant varieties.

A project of the forest research wing under the state forest department, the objective is to cultivate and conserve these unique plants by making them available for mass cultivation. The project will help increase the number of these plants and ease the pressure on forest resources. The plants which are grown in a limited place are closely being monitored by forest officials. If everything goes well, it will soon be available for cultivation for farmers and locals.

The work is being carried out since January this year at a cost of Rs 2 lakh with the creation of a nursery of such plants, especially RET species. S Puviarasan, range officer, forest tree seed centre, said propagation of medicinal plants is a challenging task as unlike normal medicinal plants they die once they bear seeds. Therefore, they must be artificially propagated for bulk cultivation.

Saying that the artificial propagation of the plants will take six to eight months, he said the plants will be artificially regenerated through cutting, grafting and air layering methods. The good demand for medicinal plants in recent times has put taken a toll on the medicinal plants available in the forest. Cultivating these plants on a large scale outside the forest will help in conservation of the plants in the forest, he said.

The forest tree seed centre is planning largescale cultivation in its facility so that it could cater to the pharmaceutical

companies in need of these medicinal resources. Saying that farmers will be educated on the benefits of cultivating these rare plants, forest department will be disseminating the message to locals who can cultivate them as horticulture crops on rooftops, said a senior official from the forest department.