

To save the hemlock, scientists turn to genetics and natural predators

An NGO in Agra, and known for its work across the world, SPHEEHA celebrated International Tree Plantation Day amid coronavirus crisis

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The importance of tree plantation is not new to us and trees have played a major role in the evolution of life as we know it today. Many individuals, corporate and social organisations conduct tree plantation across the globe to help maintain a balance in the ecosystem which gets skewed due to indiscriminate deforestation and natural disasters. In fact, many people plant trees as living memorials of life-changing events. The importance of tree plantation has only increased since July 29, 2019, which was marked as the Earth Overshoot Day; which implies that the global ecological footprint (consumption of bioresources) exceeded the natural global bio-capacity or the ability of our planet to regenerate natural resources on its own. SPHEEHA (which is a registered NGO in Agra, India and has global presence) has been in the forefront of conserving environment, ecology, and heritage. Since its inception in 2006, SPHEEHA has planted thousands of trees and committed itself to its maintenance and upkeep for three years after the plantation to ensure that the plants can survive on their own. It has a record of ensuring 81.4% survival of the trees it has planted over the past 14 years. Celebrating environment amid

coronavirus crisis As the public gathering has been prohibited in order to curb the spread of contagious diseases, Covid-19, SPHEEHA members planted thousands of trees (suiting the natural habitat of the location in which they were planted) in over 115 locations across the globe where they could assemble in minimal numbers with social distancing norms on August 01, 2020. In some places there was no feasibility to gather even in small numbers so the members planted in their respective homes/communities, spread across 75 cities in 4 continents. In many places, the plantation had the support of the local authorities who also participated in person.

Types of trees planted as part of SPHEEHA

Over 1000 volunteers participated in this year's SPHEEHA International Tree plantation drive and planted over 3000 trees of approximately 60 varieties, primarily comprising of **teak, fruit-bearing trees, medicinal plants, bamboo, spices and herbs.**

The unique aspect of the plantation was that these 115 locations live-streamed the plantation, co-ordinated by SPHEEHA's headquarters at Agra, India. Others could hear a commentary of the event via an audio stream.

Schedule of planting trees during SPHEEHA program

The program started with a prayer. This was followed by planting of a teak sapling by Prof. Prem Saran Satsangi Sahab, Chairman Emeritus of the Advisory Committee of Education, DEI University, Agra. The members then planted at their respective locations. A street play showcasing the importance of trees in our lives was enacted by young kids at Agra and streamed live. The program concluded with the signing of an MoU between SPHEEHA and DEI University, Agra for cooperation and sharing of resources towards fulfilling SPHEEHA's objectives and mission of creating an environment-friendly world. The MoU was signed by SPHEEHA President, M A Pathan and Director, DEI University, Prof. P K Kalra. Speaking on the occasion, Former Chief Secretary of Government of Haryana and the Chairperson of DEI University; who is also the Chief Patron of SPHEEHA, Prem Prashant said, "This is an illustrious day for SPHEEHA that it has managed to successfully conduct its International Tree Plantation Drive by following all rules, regulations and safety of the participants despite the pandemic." He also congratulated SPHEEHA and DEI for signing the MOU. SPHEEHA President M A Pathan (Former Chairperson of Indian Oil Corporation and Former Resident Director, Tata Sons) said that "SPHEEHA remains committed to the cause of creating a better and greener future for all species on this planet and will continue to dedicate its resources for further improvement in the green cover in every city where we have members. We would also like to thank the respective local authorities where this year's tree plantation has taken place, for their support amidst the Covid-19 pandemic."

Source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/international-tree-plantation-day-celebrated-by-spheeha-amid-coronavirus-crisis-1706928-2020-08-02>