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vital to select appropriate tree species for replanting

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Amlir said it was not a good idea to take seedlings from forest reserves for replanting purposes. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THE SUN

PETALING JAYA: Planting the wrong species of trees without considering soil conditions or suitability for a particular area can be detrimental.

EcoKnights environmental organisation vice-president Amlir Ayat said before a tree is planted at any location, a study should be carried out to determine the type of soil available in that particular area.



“Those who want to carry out replanting need to find out what trees are endemic to that location and the structure of the trees in the area. Like humans, trees don’t get along well and some are not ‘friendly’ to others. Some trees don’t get along with other species either.

“Before attempting to replant trees, it is best to get the views of locals in the vicinity to ascertain what type of trees grew there and replant the same species to ensure a higher rate of success,” Amlir said.

Citing an example, he said some trees cannot grow in the open and require the canopy of other trees to help them in the initial stages.

He added that care must be taken when carrying out a replanting exercise as this would ensure the environment is protected from unwanted tree species.

“Replanting will help regreen a location. It is important to ensure tree seedlings come from a proper location. It is not a good idea to take a seedling from a forest reserve for replanting.

“This is because the seedling is already growing in a safe and protected environment. Removing it could result in its death, so it is better to get seedlings from degraded forests or areas earmarked for development. This way, the replanting will save seedlings that could end up being destroyed.”

Amlir said moving and replanting a seedling just 10 to 20 metres away could kill it and little is known about why that happens.

The ecosystem is fragile and knowledge about it is scant due to its complexity, despite numerous studies conducted.

Malaysian Nature Society president Prof Dr Ahmad Ismail said before any replanting or reforestation exercise is done, it is important to note the type of trees in the area and the soil condition.

“Instead of planting trees anywhere, it is better to do so in forest reserves that have been damaged by encroachment. This replanting exercise can only be done after a careful study of the ecosystem. The community must have a sense of belonging to the area to ensure the reserves are protected,” he said.

He added that one major problem in the country is people plant 1,000 trees and then forget about it.

Whether they survive is another matter as those involved will feel they have done their part in greening a location.

He said regreening is not an overnight effort. It would take three to five years to plant 1,000 trees as they cannot be planted at one go, but over time. Seedlings which die also have to be replaced.

"Getting the community and non-governmental organisations involved will help the success rate. To ensure those involved in the replanting have a stake in it, they should each be given a seedling to look after for several years so that they can see the success of their efforts," Ahmad said.