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## Spring-summer bloom chaos

Untimely flowering of trees in Bengaluru indicates an ominous environmental future.



Rajmohan Sudhakar, DH News Service, Bengaluru, MAR 10 2019, 18:04PM IST | UPDATED: MAR 10 2019, 18:13PM IST



Golden Bells, commonly known as the Silver Trumpet Tree in bloom at Lalbagh. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Former Prime Minister of India, planted the Golden Bells in 1956.

**T**rees in the city have put up the spring-summer spread of the year -- the blooms of the season. As they carpet the streets and avenues in vibrant hues, it is an indication that not all is well: they blossom in a hurry, as if confused, and ahead of the season.

Blooms are a symbol of fruition. A cycle that has been at it for aeons, a reason for joy for all things living and a celebration of life coming of age.

Now, as human-induced climate change warms the planet throwing the plant life off-track the world over, it is only natural to wonder how it will impact the future.

Plants have survived over millennia adapting and evolving. They never anticipated global warming. So how they react to the challenge even the phenologists are yet to decipher.

As phenologists -- those who study the life cycles and flowering patterns of the flora in a seasonal context -- warn us of the irreversible consequences, the administrative machinery is the last to pay heed.

In Bengaluru, in certain pockets, the remnants of a rich floral past still linger, aching to be saved and nurtured.

Many exotic and native species flower in unison while many others blossom at other times of the year. The rain trees, the jacarandas and the gulmohurs are all conveying the same message: we need to collectively take steps to mitigate the imbalance.

“The Golden Shower trees are in full bloom on the IISc campus. I used to notice this in the last phase of spring. The sudden increase in temperature might have altered the phenological cycle of plants. This could be the reason for early flowering,” says Dr T V Ramachandra of the IISc.

“Another likely implication of unplanned urbanisation is the rise in air pollutants, which impair pollination. Phytotoxic effect on plants would have serious implications on healthy fruiting,” adds Dr Ramachandra.

The Bengaluru of the day is pacing towards so-called development, brutally trampling upon its rich flora.

“I notice that some species of the city’s trees do bloom ahead of time, the yellow jacarandas for instance. Technically they are March and April blooming,” says Sharath Ahuja, an avid observer of spring blossoms.







Thought to be a 1000-year-old tree, the Douglas Fir in Canada pictured above stands tall in a logged forest in Vancouver island as a towering symbol of resistance to what we are doing to the flora worldwide. The image depicts the scale of the catastrophe that is looming

### **Each one teach one**

We must acknowledge that mitigating climate change is not all that easy with our tree-hugger forums or social media rhetoric.

It cannot be a secondary concern as it is now, with a tweak here and a push there. The task of reversing what's done is impossible if all humans aren't on the same page.

It cannot be achieved by turning vegan, encouraging CSR, or pontificating at think tanks or international summits.

Unless a substantial transformation in our outlook, politic and lifestyle occurs at the individual level, we will not achieve even an iota of progress.

### **Why we should worry**

In 2014, it was reported for the first time that early flowering of plants, triggered by changing climate patterns, is in turn altering and affecting the life cycle of bees that depend on certain plant species not only for honey but for reproduction as well.

If such a symbiotic relationship is broken -- the case here of the early spider orchid and the miner bee -- it means the effect can prove crucial for our food supplies in the future. The food on our table is inherently dependent on certain species that pollinate certain plants.