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In Bangalore

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You are here: [Home](#) » [Supplements](#) » [Metrolife](#) » Spare a thought for the trees

Spare a thought for the trees

Nina C George

Scientific Planning

Monsoon has been taking a heavy toll on Bangalore's green cover.



Dangerous : Most of the times, old trees are eaten by termites resulting in their fall. dh photo

At least 70 trees have been uprooted during the downpour this season. The heavy monsoon this time

has led to uprooting of trees adding to the traffic chaos on the roads. Experts say that the tree toll only vindicates their demand for a scientific approach to everything concerning trees: from planting of saplings to pruning and maintenance of trees to pavement construction that has been eating into the roots of the trees.

Also, a scientific analysis of what kind of trees need to be planted and in which places is the need of the hour, they point out.

Metrolife spoke to the authorities, including the BBMP, forest officials and the people in general who concede that no scientific thinking and planning has gone into developing the green cover of the City.

M Krishnappa, Deputy Conservator of Forests, BBMP points out the trees that are weak and prone to fall easily must not be planted along the roads with heavy

traffic for it obstructs traffic and poses a threat to riders and drivers.

"A scientific planting of trees must be taken up. Most of the time, the trees are eaten by termites. The BBMP has to consult a forest official whenever it plans development in the City. That is not done," Krishnappa says. "The old trees have to be identified and pruned and that is not being done on a regular basis. Trees like the Gulmohar that consume a lot of water should not be planted along pavements. It absorbs a lot of water and there's no space for the roots to grow and spread," he adds.

The authorities are known to undertake massive renovation drives of the footpath which only end up in severing side roots of trees. "These side roots are what help the tree to anchor and as that's lost, they get uprooted at the slightest upheaval," says Dr T V Ramachandra of the Centre for Ecological Sciences, the Indian Institute of Science.

Covering of the surface of the soil with reinforced concrete layers up to the trunk of the tree stops percolation of water.

"At least two to three feet of earth space should be left undisturbed around the trees. Only then will the aeration and water absorption for the roots be possible," observes Ramachandra.

People feel the authorities must be more responsible in adopting their mode of development. They assert that an alternative should be found to cutting trees. Yashwant Prasad, a student of law, says he has been witness to several trees being chopped across the City. These trees are being cut down to widen roads to accommodate the increasing traffic.

"Cutting down trees will reduce the level of fresh air. However, the BBMP promised to plant new ones but nothing has been done so far. This has shaken the faith of people in the government. People too should cooperate with the authorities rather than worsen the situation," says Yashwant.

Jyotsna Sripada, another youngster, thinks there must be enough trees to absorb the carbon dioxide in the environment.

"Trees that are the most important carbon-absorbing units, are becoming a rare sight in the City. Even if road-widening is slowly becoming the norm of the day, I don't think the natural resources should be tampered with or exploited. The civic society must work hand in hand with the authorities to ensure our resources are sustainably utilised," she wraps up.