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Our Garden City is fast losing its green sheen

SHRINKING COVER: B'lore Has Only 1 Tree For 7 Persons: Study

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The tree-lined streets of Bangalore may soon become a distant memory as the Garden City fast loses its green canopy. Bangalore has only 14,78,412 trees, a study has revealed. Ideally, the city should have 1.1 crore trees. The city's tree wealth is grossly inadequate considering that its population increased from 65,37,124 in 2001 to a staggering 95,88,910 in 2011, pushing the population density up from 10,732 persons per sq km to 13,392 in 10 years.

An overall community well-being calls for 33% green cover in the city. Given Bangalore's geographical spread and population, it should have 1.15 trees per person. In reality, there is just one tree for about seven persons.

The study, Trees of Bengaluru, was undertaken by Energy and Wetlands Research Group (ENVIS) in association with the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board. The objective was to map trees in the city and compute wardwise tree density and trees per person. The team used Indian remote sensing satellite data and field data.

In some areas, the green canopy scarcity is acute. Padarayanapura, with a population of 67,623, has only 26 trees, while Shivajinagar has only 25 trees to cover 66,280 people living in the area.

In the heart of the city, green is a mirage in areas like Dayananda Nagar and Chickpet that have less than 100 trees. The tree density here is a dismal 0.002 tree per person. Effectively, this is one tree for 500 people.

Areas like Bellandur, Jakkur and Varthur are the city's saviours as they have one tree per person. The city also has its reservoirs of greenery like the IISc, which has a whopping 22,616 trees on its campus.

Avenue trees, coconut palms, popcorn bush cedars, Australian wattles, butterfly trees and red silk-cotton trees are some of the most popular Bangalore trees.

Whither Bangalore: The study traces the change in the city's green fortunes to 1965 when Bangalore began to evolve as a city of small-scale industries. By 1998, it became an IT hub. Trees were a casualty in the unplanned urbanization that followed. Many lakes and tanks were encroached upon and converted to concrete jungles while some became dumpyards. Citizens' apathy to green issues made it worse, say experts.

"The environmental literacy in Bangalore is a mere 3.5%," said T V Ramachandra, co-ordinator, Trees of Bengaluru study.

TIMES VIEW

It's ironic that the city of gardens is being depleted of its tree cover. Unbridled and unplanned expansion of the city has led to this dangerous trend. City planners and the state government should take the findings of the study in right earnest and try to undo the damage caused by rampant tree-felling. Any drastic fall in tree cover has direct implications on the ecosystem. The falling water tables, increasing pollution and adverse impact on the fauna are a result of this depletion. Tree-planting campaigns should ideally begin in schools so that conservation attempts are nurtured early.

HOW VERDANT IS MY WARD

AREAS WITH BEST TREE COVER			
Ward	Tree/person	Total trees	Population
Varthur	2.3	72,069	30,430
Bellandur	2.1	54,366	25,614
Chowdeshwari	1.4	29,259	20,897
Jakkur	1.2	37,695	29,628
Aramane Nagar	1.083	43,743	40,379

AREAS WITH WORST TREE COVER			
Ward	Tree/person	Total trees	Population
Kadugondanahalli	0.003	169	62,304
Kushalnagar	0.002	89	41,383
Shivajinagar	0.001	70	66,280
Chickpet	0	25	52,688
Padarayanapura	0	26	67,623

DRY DEAD CITY

“ From a Garden City, Bangalore turned into garbage city. Now it is a dead city considering that its green cover has depleted substantially over the years

T V Ramachandra |
CO-ORDINATOR, TREES OF BENGALURU

EACH ONE PLANT ONE

“ One person must plant one tree. That is the only way to solve this problem. Apart from government agencies, individuals must also make an effort to restore the green cover of Bangalore

Dr Vaman Acharya |
CHAIRMAN, KARNATAKA STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

