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# From 200ft to just 10ft! How IISc turned around the depleting water table

An experimental project in Indian Institute of Science tells us that Bengaluru need not turn into a man-made desert

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May 06, 2016, 6:04 PM IST



(<http://www.bfirst.in/sites/default/files/images/articles/2016/05/6/mini%20forest1.jpg>)

**Bengaluru:** The constantly depleting groundwater table in Bengaluru has been a matter of deep alarm. But within the heart of the City, at Indian Institute of Science (IISc), the story that has unfolded fills one with hope.

A tiny two-acre man-made forest developed by a group of researchers has turned into a groundwater reservoir. The forest adjoining the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) has raised the water table to a depth of just 10 feet within the institute. Before the project began, it was 200 feet deep.

A brainchild of Dr T V Ramachandra, faculty and senior scientist, Energy and Wetland Department, the forest was cultivated as an experiment to study adaptability and succession of the Western Ghats plant species in the urban conditions.

The forest patch now hosts over 40 species of Western Ghats plants. “Loss of green cover for road widening and rising concrete structures have been mainly responsible for the loss of groundwater in the City. Our experiment establishes how tree cover can improve the water level,” said Dr Ramachandra.

The green cover in the City, including arboriculture, is necessary for percolation of water and groundwater recharge. Dr Ramachandra said that creating such small forest patches and increasing tree cover would increase groundwater level, but also have an impact on the micro climate of the City.

“The temperature around CES, where the mini forest is situated is always cooler by two degrees celsius. This is the way it affects the micro-climate of this region,” explains Dr Ramachandra.

IISc’s mini forest now hosts wetter forest species from Western Ghats including *Mitragyna parviflora* and *Lophopetalum wightianum* and moist species like *Liana Entada Purshetha* (a giant creeper found in both moist deciduous forest and Western Ghats).

Ramachandra further said that through this research it has now been established that native species play a major role in holding water and increasing ground water table.

The success is now being replicated by a few other departments within the IISc campus and also a few private institutions.

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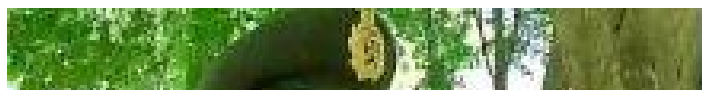
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