

Metro life

Your bond
with Bengaluru

● Urban vegetation

Going for the green



CHOKED Environmentalists point out the need to plant specific species of trees along the sides and medians in busy areas, like KR Puram, to shield the City from pollution.

The depleting green cover in the Central Business District areas as well as Whitefield, Hebbal and KR Puram have become a cause of concern. According to environmentalists, authorities have failed to strike a balance between urban development and urban vegetation resulting in soaring levels of pollution across the City.

There is a need to plant specific species of trees along the sides and medians of the road to shield the City from high levels of pollution, explains T V Ramachandra, faculty of Indian Institute of Science.

Ramachandra points out that the existing exotic plants that are planted along road sides, such as Gulmohar, Bougainvillea and other flowering plants, must be replaced

with Neem, Honge, Tamarind, Peepal and Champak trees. These species fall under the category of urban vegetation as they reduce increasing pollution levels and render the air clean.

He says that urban vegetation plays a vital role in moderating micro-climate, sequestering greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, and also assist the percolation of ground water.

“Maintenance of green cover is the need of the hour in urban areas. The selection of plant species to be planted at the road sides and along medians require utmost care. Exotic species flower greatly, but fail to withstand harsh wind and after certain age, the roots fail to hold the tree to the soil, resulting in them get-

ting uprooted during monsoon. These also release a lot of pollen into the atmosphere which trigger several lung-related illnesses and allergies,” says Ramachandra.

Urban planners, meanwhile, point out that every township must compulsorily have 15% of open space like parks and walkways which is currently not the case in Bengaluru.

Unfortunately, the emphasis is on beautifying buildings and structures, rather than maintaining green cover. This has resulted in the indiscriminate felling of trees.

Ashwin Mahesh, an expert on urban planning, says, “The pavements must be designed and planned to not only accommodate walkers but leave space for trees to be planted.

Currently, the pavements are being designed around trees which have broad trunks. This design narrows down the pavements making it difficult for more trees to be planted,” he says. He sees the need for urban vegetation not only on Hosur Road, Whitefield and KR Puram but in some of the busy stretches within the City too.

Those propagating the concept of urban vegetation while suggesting the planting of native tree species on the road sides, explain that medians need smaller trees that do not obstruct the movement of vehicles.

Elaborating this view, environmentalist AN Yellappa Reddy says an experiment involving urban vegetation and other factors involved in it, such as rainwater harvesting and groundwater percolation, have been carried out near Hebbal.

“Here, we planted some trees and created pores in the median and by the side of the road which helped divert the rainwater into the ground. It also prevented flooding on the road during the monsoons,” explains Yellappa.

He believes these specific species of trees help trap almost 500 kg to one tonne of particulate dust matter released from the vehicles and other dust from construction-related activities.

He states that there is an urgent need to strike a balance between urban vegetation and urban planning. “Urban vegetation reduces the road surface temperature which indirectly reduces the heat in the atmosphere. Planned urban vegetation improves the quality of life and reduces lung-related issues among people.”

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