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## Join tree fest to protect B'lore's greenery

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BANGALORE: Bangalore is fast losing out as a Garden City, thanks to rapid urbanization and cutting down of trees. Fortunately, a number of tree enthusiasts are getting together to celebrate the spirit of the city and its rich natural heritage. They will organize Bengaluru Tree Festival on February 8 and 9 at Bal Bhavan (Cubbon Park) and Venkatappa Art Gallery.

While on one side Bangalore is losing its tag as the Pensioners' Paradise and the Garden City due to cutting of trees and urbanization, a good news from the other side is that a number of tree enthusiasts of Bangalore have come together to celebrate the spirit of the city, its rich natural heritage and trees by holding a 'Bengaluru Tree Festival' on February 8 and 9 at the Bal Bhavan (Cubbon Park) and the Venkatappa Art Gallery here.

Sangeetha Kadur, one of the facilitators of the initiative, said, "We thought of it last August when some of us completed a course in plant taxonomy. We were taught how to understand trees and their importance. We thought we should share these ideas and information with other Bangaloreans. The result is the Tree Festival, which has been christened Neralu."

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People from different walks of life -- techies, students, artists, ecologists, photographers, homemakers, engineers, storytellers and resource people -- have come forward as facilitators for the festival.

Poornima Kannan, a volunteer, said, "Trees are a vital part of urban life. This ever-growing city moved away from being a Garden City to an IT capital. Yet, as Bangaloreans, we want to revisit the good old garden days that are linked to our histories and identities. This will help us relate to our city's trees. The festival is a tribute to them."

Anush Shetty, a software engineer, felt it is high time we understood the history of our trees and saved them. "With the city losing much of its green cover, the need of the hour is to identify trees and know their importance in our landscape. This is what we are going to do at the festival."

MB Krishna, an ornithologist, called for the need to guide youngsters to grow at least small plants at home. The festival will inspire participants to grow trees and understand that they are part of our lives."

### WHAT'S IN STORE

- \* Heritage, ecological and histo-cultural walks
- \* Screening of documentaries and videos about trees
- \* Exhibition by artist Rumale Chennabasavaiah
- \* Curated photo exhibition of tree stories by Bangalore-based photographers

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**WHAT'S NERALU**

Neralu, meaning shade in Kannada, indicates what trees mean to Bangaloreans. The city's trees have historical and ecological significance because they enrich the urban experience. Neralu, the festival, is a way in which this can be celebrated, shared and reflected upon.

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A better thing would have been to organize the festival out skirts where tree and lakes are being killed daily to make new buildings and roads.

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