

'Trees must suit the environment'

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LOCAL SPECIES SUITABLE FOR URBAN AREAS

Tamil Nadu has a rich variety of indigenous flora that are perfect for lining roads, avenues and coastal localities



Hibiscus tiliaceus
(*Neerparuthi or Athuparuthi or Athupoovarasu*)

Evergreen foliage tree with beautiful yellow flowers; good for seashores as well as inland. Salt and wind resistant.



Pongamia pinnata
(*Pungai*)

Attractive shiny foliage; provides good shade, seeds a source of bio-diesel



Mimusops elengi
(*Magizham*)

Evergreen; fragrant flowers; has religious importance.



Morinda pubescens
(*Manjanathi or Nuna*)

Evergreen hardy species; suitable for dry areas. Fruit used as source for Noni, a health drink



Calophyllum inophyllum
(*Punnai*)

Suitable for coastal areas; seeds are rich in oil



Thespesia populnea
(*Poovarasu*)

Evergreen foliage tree with beautiful yellow flowers, good for seashores as well as inland. Salt and wind resistant.

Hundreds of trees uprooted in the rains in Chennai have underscored the need for a rethinking in selection of tree species suitable for urban and coastal districts of Tamil Nadu. Careless planting methods and poor maintenance cause death of trees during monsoons, say naturalists.

“Can you identify a single Tamarind among the uprooted trees in the rain? We have this species thriving in *Neithal* [areas adjacent to sea]. Trees including Poovarasu, Punnai, Mahilam and Veppalai take deep root and are capable of withstanding gusty winds during rain,” said Professor D. Narasimhan of the Madras Christian College.

52 native species and four exotic species

He has identified 52 native species and four exotic species suitable for planting along avenues and for urban forestry.

Two of the trees that have borne the fury of the monsoon are *Peltophorum*, a native to Sri Lanka and Malaysia, and *Gulmohar*, introduced from Madagascar and known for their bright-coloured flowers.

Late naturalist Ma. Krishnan consistently campaigned against exotic species and advocated “cultivation of a narrow sort of patriotism in our floral preferences.”

Writer Ramachandra Guha in his introduction to Krishnan’s book *Nature’s Spokesperson* recalled an incident which clearly explained his take on exotic species.

“Disgraceful. You should uproot all those foreign,” he said when asked about spectacular yellow flowers of *tabebuia*, a Central American tree, planted at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore.

Describing the Gulmohar as a vermilion strumpet, Krishnan had said, “If you want to see truly impressive crown of red, you should see the flame-of-the-forest (*Butea Monosperma*)”

Mr. Narasimhan said the canopy formed by *Peltophorum* and Gulmohar make them “headstrong” eventually leading to their fall.

Careless planting

The careless planting of trees—shallow planting and denying them adequate space to breathe and take root—make them vulnerable during rains.

“Government agencies should not think their job is over after plating saplings. Regular pruning, especially in Tamil month of Aadi, is vital. It will help the tree sprouting new green shoots and prepare for a monsoon,” said Mr. Narasimhan, while agreeing that he could see a lot of local species getting planted.

“Aftercare is crucial. What is the point in planting a sapling and covering its trunk with concrete or vitrified tiles? Give it adequate space and allow it to spread its roots deeply,” he said.

Careless planting methods and poor maintenance cause the death of trees during monsoons, say naturalists

Source:

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/tree-s-must-suit-the-environment/article7879332.ece>