

The focus of Environmental Information, Awareness, Capacity Building & Livelihood Programme (EIACP) scheme is to disseminate environmental information to decision makers, policy planners, scientists and researchers across the world.

CERC-EIACP, Programme Centre - Resource Partner to MoEF&CC works on the thematic mandate of 'Environment Literacy - Eco-labelling & Eco-friendly Products'. This bi-monthly e-bulletin features latest of Environment, developments and innovations.



## Native trees: Guardians of biodiversity

According to definition given on IPBES (Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services), Native species are "Indigenous species of plants or animals that naturally occur in a given area or ecosystem". We encourage planting of native plants over exotic trees for following reasons:

- Native trees provides food and shelter for local wildlife
- They may have a better chances of survival
- They may not require large amount of fertilizers
- They may not require large amount of water
- They are non-invasive

## Van Mahotsav and tree plantation drives

Van Mahotsav, India's annual tree planting festival, serves as a powerful symbol of environmental responsibility. However, with increasing ecological awareness, we must move beyond simply planting trees to planting the right trees in the right places. This shift ensures long-term environmental benefits and fosters a deeper understanding of habitat integrity.

### Understanding Habitat Integrity

Every ecosystem thrives on a delicate balance. Forests, grasslands, wetlands – each has its own unique set of plants and animals that co-evolve and depend on each other for survival. Introducing foreign species, even trees, can disrupt this balance. For instance, fast-growing, non-native trees in grasslands may outcompete native plants for water and sunlight, ultimately leading to the decline of the grassland ecosystem and the wildlife that depends on it.

**Choosing the Right Trees:** So, how do we ensure responsible planting during Van Mahotsav? Here are some key steps:

#### Identify the local ecosystem:

Before planting, take some time to understand the surrounding environment. Is it a forest, a grassland, a wetland, or an urban area? Each ecosystem has its own set of native plant species that have adapted to the local climate, soil conditions, and existing wildlife.

#### Research native species:

Once you've identified the ecosystem, research native tree species that thrive in that particular environment. Local nurseries or environmental organizations can be excellent resources for this information. Planting native trees ensures a higher survival rate, promotes biodiversity, and strengthens the existing ecological web.

#### Consider the purpose:

Are you aiming to create shade, attract pollinators, or provide food for birds? Selecting trees based on their specific ecological benefits can further enhance the impact of your planting efforts.

#### Think beyond aesthetics:

While vibrant flowers or impressive height might be appealing, prioritize ecological benefits over purely aesthetic choices. The right tree might not be the most visually striking one, but it will contribute more to the overall health of the environment.

**Beyond Van Mahotsav:** Responsible planting goes beyond a single week in July. Here's how you can extend your commitment to a greener future:

#### Support local conservation efforts:

Volunteer with organizations dedicated to protecting and restoring natural habitats. This can involve planting native trees, removing invasive species, or participating in habitat monitoring programs.

#### Spread awareness:

Educate friends, family, and your community about the importance of choosing the right trees for planting. Sharing information through social media or organizing local workshops can make a significant impact.

#### Advocate for responsible policies:

Support policies that promote the use of native species in landscaping projects and discourage the planting of invasive species. By advocating for change, you can influence practices that have a lasting impact on the environment.

## The Future of Van Mahotsav

By promoting responsible tree planting practices, Van Mahotsav can evolve from a symbolic gesture to a powerful tool for environmental restoration. As we move forward, let's leverage this annual event to nurture a deeper understanding of ecological balance and encourage a more mindful approach to planting trees. Remember, every tree planted with intention has the potential to create a ripple effect, contributing to a greener, healthier planet for generations to come.

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## Planting Trees in Urban Areas

While the focus in natural habitats lies in preserving existing ecosystems, urban areas offer more flexibility. Here, planting trees can significantly improve air quality, provide shade, and create a more aesthetically pleasing environment.

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### In cities, you can choose trees based on specific needs and desired benefits:

**Pollution control:** Certain tree species are more efficient at absorbing pollutants from the air. Planting these trees along busy roads or near industrial areas can significantly improve air quality.

**Urban heat island mitigation:** Trees provide shade and release water vapor through transpiration, helping to cool down urban areas that experience the "heat island effect."

### 'एक पेड़ मां के नाम' Campaign

Hon. PM Shri Narendra Modi launched a campaign, encouraging the citizens to plant a tree as a tribute to their mothers on the occasion of World Environment Day this year. The initiative began with the Hon. PM along with the Environment Minister Sh. Bhupender Yadav and Lt. Governor of Delhi planting a peepal sapling in Delhi.