

KERALA

Plan for micro-forests in 12 districts

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Kerala Tourism to plant 30,000 saplings in 1.84 acres by December

Kerala Tourism will embrace the Miyawaki method of afforestation to create 22 micro-forests in tourist destinations in 12 districts.

By December 2020, around 30,000 saplings will be planted in 1.84 acres using the highly successful technique, pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, being used by the government and nature lovers to increase green cover in urban and semi-urban areas.

The micro-forests are expected to enhance the environment and nature-friendly surroundings of the destinations and turn an added attraction to visitors.

Two each in 10 districts

Two micro-forests each are being planned in 10 districts and one each in Thiruvananthapuram and Pathanamthitta, covering 10 cents. The saplings are expected to achieve an average height of 10 ft within 12 months.

Wayanad and Idukki have been left out in the initial phase as these two districts have the maximum forest coverage and rural ambience. The land will be identified by the Department of Tourism. The nature of the forest – whether pure evergreen, medicinal, flower and fruit – will be decided after finalising the location.

Indigenous wild species

Different species of plants varying from 30 to 100 depending on the locality and nature of the forest will be planted. Only indigenous wild species will be planted and medicinal plants will get priority.

A consortium led by Culture Shoppe has bagged the work through e-bidding. The Nature's Green Guardians Foundation (NGGF), an NGO, and Invis Multimedia are the partners.

The working group on tourism has cleared the project and the consortium will take care of maintenance, official sources told *The Hindu*.

The foreseen benefits include reduction in carbon dioxide levels, groundwater recharge, biodiversity conservation, tourist attraction, employment generation, and awareness

creation.

Last year, the NGGF developed a Miyawaki forest on five cents on the Kanakakunnu palace premises for Kerala Tourism with 426 saplings from 120 species.

Around 100 micro-forests are coming up across the State in government and private land.