

Green steps: Crusaders sow the seeds of change, strive for a sustainable Bengaluru



ART AS A TOOL: Residents of Richmond Town and Shantinagar paint the hockey stadium wall to ensure garbage is not dumped at the spot

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

RICHMOND, LANGFORD TOWN PUT THEIR HOUSE IN ORDER

Residents of Richmond Town and Langford Town have been laying the groundwork for the D-Day for almost two months now. They began with clearing the area of garbage piles, put in place a waste disposal system and implemented a blanket ban on plastic. Their efforts were geared towards ensuring that Environment Day doesn't become a mere photo op of tree plantation drives or walkathons.

Nithya Reddy, member of the Richmond Town and Langford Town Welfare Association, said, "Haphazard dumping of waste near my house on Alexandria Street had become a norm. We realized it was time to usher in change. We organized a clean-up drive with the help of contractors and BBMP staffers and began segregating wet and dry waste. We interacted with paurakarmikas and spread the word among other residents. The response was overwhelming. Today, we have achieved 100% segregation."

The community has done away with plastic too. "Most of us carry cloth bags; even vendors have stopped handing out plastic bags. The Rent A Bag initiative allows shops to lend bags to customers, who can return them during their next visit and get their money back," said Shoba Rander, a resident of Shantinagar.

On Environment Day, the community is planting saplings along 12 streets. An eco-friendly carnival has been planned, with

ENVIRONMENT DAY

food stalls, nature walks and mural painting sessions.

The SwachaGraha initiative will hold a workshop on 'starting a green spot'.

1,000 SAPLINGS TO DOT MANDUR FOREST PATCH

Mandur, which hit the headlines for mounting piles of trash in the midst of a forest area, will don a new avatar on Sunday. Volunteers will plant 1,000 saplings in five hectares of land (about a km from the dump). The #SaveWhitefield group is working closely with the forest department in this regard.

Utkarsh Singh, founder of

Shrinking green cover, dying lakes, alarming pollution levels – Bengaluru has little to cheer on the environmental front. But there's a silver lining to the grim picture. Many individuals and communities are working hard to keep the hope of a sustainable future alive. This **World Environment Day**, TOI salutes Bengaluru's green warriors and their endeavours



HEALTHY WAY: Members of A Green Venture, an eco-group, on a farm visit

#SaveWhitefield, said, "We have chosen trees which are appropriate for the forest area, ones that will provide shade and produce a large quantity of timber over time. The trees include neem and jamun; only local varieties will be planted."

Citizens will also help the department erect a fence around the forest area. "On paper, east Bengaluru has vast swathes of forest land. Let us come together to make it a reality by protecting forests," said Dipika Bajpai, deputy conservator, forests, Bengaluru Urban.

There are three big patches of forest land around Kadugodi, Mandur and Gunjur. Right now,

the focus is on Mandur. More than 500 people are expected to participate in the event. Booths will be set up where participants can learn about waste segregation and composting at home.

In another part of Whitefield, residents will have a chance to interact with farmers from across Bengaluru at a mall. Visitors can learn to look at waste as wealth through talks on how to create kitchen gardens, make compost at home and tap solar energy. Kavya Chandra, founder, A Green Venture, and organizer of the event, said, "Going green seems to be the mantra but some don't know how to go about it. We will hold 15 sessions on both days."

A GREEN CAMPUS OFF BANNERGHATTA ROAD

The Public Affairs Centre (PAC) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to research activities on public policy. It is one of the first few NGOs in the city to make its campus in Jigani, off Bannerghatta Road, carbon neutral. To sum it up, the campus hardly emits any pollutants and all energy systems being used are environment friendly.

J Jangal, head, environmental governance group (EnGG), PAC, said, "It started with the setting up of a modular air quality monitoring station — a citizen-led initiative to measure carbon monoxide, suspended particulate matter (including dust) and nitrous oxide in addition to temperature, humidity and rainfall."

The PAC weather station is among 17 such stations across Bengaluru. Rather than relying on grid electricity and fuel (to



POWERFUL IDEA: The Public Affairs Centre uses photovoltaic panels

feed generators during power outages), photovoltaic panels cater to 90% of the centre's power requirements. Rainwater harvesting is used to recharge the depleting groundwater level and to grow vegetables on campus.

"Around 7 million litres of water can be saved via rainwater harvesting in a year. This will not only help recharge groundwater but also boost storage levels in tanks," Jangal added.

THEIR OBJECTIVE: A TREE FOR EVERY HOUSE

(With inputs from Shravani Bheema)



PRECIOUS RESOURCE: Young girls from Raja Rajeshwari Nagar take part in a skit to create awareness on protecting lakes in the city

Ten years ago, MG Narasimha Prasad took a tiny step to make his surroundings greener. The eco-activist and resident of HV Halli in Raja Rajeshwari Nagar, west Bengaluru, planted saplings and vowed to nurture them. He has kept his promise. Narasimha's efforts have contributed to his area's verdant green cover and led to a movement called Vruksha Rashi.

Proponents of Vruksha Rashi themselves plant and maintain saplings on their respective roads and institutions. The residents registered as an organization in 2012 and have contributed to a systematic increase in green cover. They have never undertaken large-scale plantation drives, said Narasimha.

"Even if we plant 10 saplings, our aim is to ensure they are cared for. To achieve the objective, we give the responsibility to occupants of the nearest house or establishment. A tree for every house and a sapling for every person is what we want to achieve," he added.

The association is also making efforts to protect lakes. "A few months ago, we celebrated Kere Habba on the banks of a lake in the locality to bring the community closer to the waterbody. Rejuvenation work is on," said Dinakar K, a resident of RR Nagar.