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Greening Chennai, the native way

Staff Reporter

If the Chennai Corporation has its way, tree cover in Chennai could increase from 5.5 percent to 11 per cent in less than a year.

At a Corporation Council meeting recently, Mayor Saidai Duraisamy said that 20 lakh palmyra trees would be planted alongside waterways in the city. Work on planting of 6.5 lakh trees will start shortly, he added. The work is expected to be complete by March 2014.

The initiative is part of efforts to increase the tree cover to 33.33 percent of the area in the city. According to a study, palmyra trees were found to be suitable for climatic and civic conditions of Chennai, said Mr. Duraisamy. The Palmyra is the ‘State tree’ of Tamil Nadu.

There are 318 km of waterways in the city. Palmyra trees will be planted on either side of the Adyar, Cooum and Buckingham Canal. The trees will also be planted on the banks of 126 lakes and ponds in the city. The banks of the lakes and ponds cover a length of 113 km.

“The palmyra trees planted on the banks of the waterbodies will also help reduce soil erosion. Chennai had a large number of palmyra trees in the past. Urbanisation led to disappearance of the species. We will revive it,” said Mr. Duraisamy. Palmyra does not require regular watering and would not be affected by stray cattle, he added.

Chennai Corporation will also support cooperatives that will create awareness of the benefits of neera, palm jaggery and other nutritious edible palm products.

More programmes will be formulated on promotion of eco-friendly Palmyra products to help artisans associated with such industries in the metropolitan area.

The Chennai Corporation will also distribute 6.5 lakh red

sandalwood saplings to households with land suitable for planting such trees. After the trees grow, the residents will be permitted to harvest the trees for use.

The civic body will also take efforts to facilitate statutory developments on using such trees by the residents. The residents will have to plant a sapling at the same spot five years before harvest.

Chennai Corporation will commence distribution of 6.5 lakh nochi saplings to residents as part of mosquito control initiatives. School students will receive 6.5 lakh papaya saplings shortly.

Corporation plans to increase tree cover by planting 6.5 lakh palmyra trees by March.