

# Activists promote native species of trees

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**Pune:** Come monsoon and scores of people who feel obliged to their city will come out to participate in plantation drives. But just planting any tree isn't enough. Especially, the exotic ones (not native to a particular place) have proved to be of little help in environment conservation.

Now, Puneites have help at hand. A group of knowledgeable people have come together to guide nature enthusiasts in choosing the right native plant. The group called 'Native Growers' is run by six to seven nurseries who focus on creating awareness about native plants and why they should be chosen over the exotic varieties in mass



The green cover at the College of Agriculture

plantations, gardening and green drives.

The group will become operational on Monday, i.e. Gudhi Padwa. 'Native Growers' central database () can be accessed in a day or two. List of species and available quantities with each nursery will be on display along with contact details of each nursery.

Native plants are preferred over the 'outside' plants because they support the local flora and fauna. They provide diverse habitats and food sources, unlike exotic species. Ketaki Ghate, a member of the Pune Tree Authority, who is also a part of this initiative, said, "We appeal to people to plant natives every monsoon in the interest of positive nature conservation. Nature lovers and

enthusiasts can participate in seed collection and germination with the help of experts in the group."

Ghate said that exotic trees are invasive and disturb the ecological balance. They do not associate with local fauna and the eco-system. Besides they do not support birds, insects or honey bees. For example, in Pune, birds do not nest in gulmohar trees. Also, honey bees do not visit eucalyptus trees.

Sadly enough, more number of exotic trees are found in Pune as compared with the native species. Ghate said, "People take up plantation mostly with non-native species. But they cannot be blamed because native species are usually not available with the nurseries."