

THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY AWARENESS REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIVE TREES: A SURVEY-BASED STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Public perception and awareness are crucial for the success of programs that impact the public domain, particularly those aimed at environmental conservation. In response to present challenges of climate change and the need to reduce carbon footprints, tree plantation initiatives have gained momentum. However, many such programs often focus on fast-growing exotic species, due to their rapid carbon sequestration potential. In the long run, these well-intentioned efforts can inadvertently disrupt local ecosystems by outcompeting native species. In the process they alter habitat dynamics and threaten biodiversity. This study aimed to assess the public awareness of native tree species, which are inherently more climate-resilient and better suited to local ecological conditions. A survey questionnaire was designed with 10 questions to assess participants' knowledge of native tree species. The survey encompassed 200 participants, including students and individuals from diverse educational and professional backgrounds. The findings highlighted the need for increased public awareness regarding the ecological and cultural significance of native trees. Many participants were unaware of the term 'native trees' while others had a basic idea about them but were unaware of such trees in their surroundings. More than half of the participants believed that they were mainly used for ornamental purpose. Given their role in enhancing biodiversity, mitigating climate change, and fostering sustainable ecosystems, targeted educational campaigns and community-driven initiatives may help promote the value of native trees.

KEYWORDS: Biodiversity, Carbon Footprint, Ecological Balance, Native Trees, Public Awareness.

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