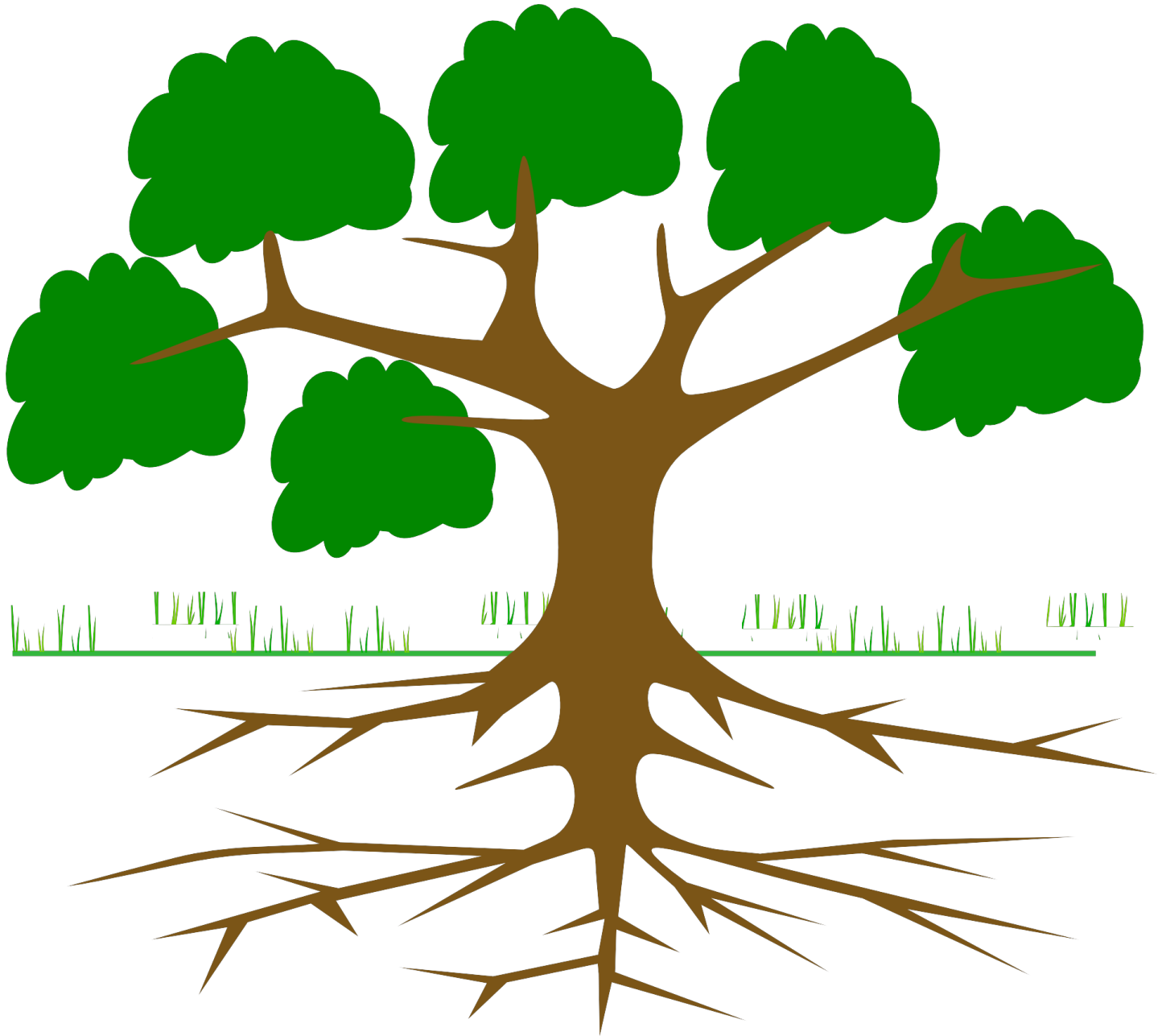


Transplanting instead of felling can salvage Delhi's green cover

<https://www.biovoicenews.com/transplanting-instead-of-felling-can-salvage-delhis-green-cover/>

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New Delhi: Back in 2015, Delhi was considered one of the greenest metropolises in the country with municipal records reporting a 20 percent forest cover for the national capital. Though this number still fell far short of the national forest cover policy requirement of 33 percent, it is the manner in which a state-run body like the National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) had quietly sanctioned orders for felling of trees over the length of its new development projects, that is a cause for current concern.

According to reports, plans for doubling residential units in areas like Sarojini Nagar, Netaji Nagar, Mohammedpur, Kasturba Nagar, Srinivaspuri and Tyagaraj Nagar apart from repair and the creation of a brand new trade center were sanctioned by the Lieutenant Governor's office. So far, 1,100 trees have been felled but none transplanted.

Assuming that a single tree absorbs 10 kilograms of CO₂ a year, the city could have reduced its annual emission by at least 11,000 kilograms. At present annual emission levels of 69.4 million tones, which is the combined emission capacity of Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad put together, Delhi has the worst carbon footprint rate in the country.

Forest and Rural development experts have long maintained that tree destruction is a disastrous process whose damaging effects are irreversible. Explaining why trees are vital to a city's respiration, Dr PR Sodani, President of IIHMR University, Jaipur said, "Trees are vital to protect living beings from the oppressive heat of summer. They help retain water vapor in the atmosphere and prevent waste water accumulation in residential neighborhoods. This fact is also associated with the presence of concrete in place of soils around major roads and landmarks in the capital. Bare ground helps absorb water better and prevents water logging during the torrential monsoons. Trees are known to hold off heat during the day and preserve it at night. This prevents violent swings in local temperatures that could propel the rise of infectious diseases in rainy weather".

For this reason, each tree uprooted should be accompanied by another transplanted preferably within sight of the earlier one so as not to disturb local water and carbon cycles. IIHMR, Jaipur recently saved six trees from being felled for construction on its campus by transplanting them all over the premises at a cost of Rs 18000 per tree. "It takes months or years for a native species of tree to grow and regain its youthful functions of serving the recycling process of carbon and water vapor in the air we breathe. It is much better to move the trees whole, to a different location to preserve their rate of carbon absorption and mitigate both long term and short term effects of climate change. More trees mean greater fresh air for a city's inhabitants. But this process should be accompanied by an appropriate reduction in the number of motorized vehicles on the city's roads", says Dr SD Gupta, Chairman, IIHMR University, Jaipur.

Municipal bodies can follow similar practices and enjoy economies of scale by adopting transplantation practices instead of destroying the few pockets of urban green that survive today and function as the city's lungs in an increasingly precarious environmental situation.

Loss of habitat for native flora and fauna is a profound impact of deforestation with the potential to change delicate ecological equilibriums. Meanwhile, in Gujarat, a proposed bullet train line connecting Mumbai and Ahmedabad is expected uproot at least 80,487 trees in the government's quest for modernization and rapid business transport corridors. Local farmers stand to be affected by consequent loss in soil fertility and its water retention abilities.

Soil productivity is another externality that is produced as a result of tree felling whereas transplantation will serve to transfer local centers of retention while keeping the nature of farmland unchanged.

***Note: This news piece is based on a press release.**