

# No Trees, No Tomorrow. Act Now.

## Interesting facts of Van Mahotsav:

### Who Started It:

While the idea of a tree plantation week was initiated in July 1947 by M.S. Randhawa, a Punjabi botanist, it was officially made a national activity and renamed "Van Mahotsav" in 1950 by Shri K.M. Munshi, the then Union Minister for Agriculture and Food.

### Historical Roots:

The movement has roots in a successful tree plantation drive held in Delhi in July 1947. Prominent national leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Rajendra Prasad even participated in these early drives, highlighting its significance from the very beginning of independent India.

### Beyond Just Planting:

Van Mahotsav is more than just a tree-planting event; it's a movement to create awareness and instill a sense of collective responsibility towards nature. It emphasizes the vital role of forests in maintaining ecological balance, combating climate change, and ensuring a sustainable future.

### Focus on Native Species:

Generally, native tree species are preferred for planting during Van Mahotsav. This is because native trees are better adapted to local conditions, have a higher survival rate, and provide better support for local birds, insects, and animals, thus promoting regional biodiversity.

### Combating Deforestation:

The festival was introduced with the intention to combat the extensive deforestation that occurred during India's post-independence development phase. It serves as a reminder of the urgent need for afforestation and reforestation efforts.

## Diverse Participation:

Van Mahotsav encourages participation from all walks of life – individuals, communities, schools, colleges, government departments, NGOs, and various organizations. Large-scale tree plantation drives are organized in public spaces, parks, schools, and along roadsides.

## Promoting Awareness:

Beyond planting, various activities are undertaken during the week to raise awareness, including seminars, workshops, rallies, art exhibitions (featuring nature and tree paintings), and competitions (like essay writing and poster making) for students.

## Economic and Social Benefits:

The festival also highlights the economic benefits of trees (timber, non-timber forest products, ecotourism) and their social impact on human health, well-being, and community development. For example, urban trees improve air quality and provide shade, crucial in a place like Thiruparankundram with its hot climate.

## "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" Campaign:

In recent years, campaigns like "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" (One Tree for Mother) have been integrated into Van Mahotsav, encouraging people to plant a tree as a tribute to their mothers, symbolizing the nurturing aspect of both nature and motherhood.

**Van Mahotsav is a powerful annual reminder of our dependence on trees and forests, and a call to action for every citizen to contribute to a greener, healthier planet.**

## Don't Just Wish for a Greener World - Plant One

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# Van mahotsav "Festival of Trees"



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## 2. Economic Benefits:

Forests are not just ecological powerhouses; they are also economic drivers. They provide us with timber for construction and furniture, wood pulp for paper, and fuelwood for energy. Beyond these, forests are a source of countless non-timber forest products (NTFPs) like fruits, nuts, medicinal plants, resins, and honey, which are crucial for the livelihoods of many communities, particularly indigenous populations. The burgeoning ecotourism industry also relies heavily on healthy forests, generating revenue and creating jobs while providing incentives for conservation.

## 3. Social and Cultural Significance:

The value of trees and forests isn't just quantifiable in economic terms; it's also deeply rooted in our social and cultural fabric. Spending time in forested areas has been scientifically linked to improved human health and well-being, reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. Green spaces encourage physical activity and can even lead to faster recovery times for hospital patients. For many communities worldwide, forests hold profound cultural and spiritual significance, serving as places for reflection, ceremonies, and a deep connection to nature. They also play a role in food security, providing direct sustenance and supporting agricultural systems by preventing erosion and regulating water.

## 4. Natural Disaster Protection:

Trees and forests act as natural guardians against various environmental hazards. Well-managed forests can reduce the impact of heavy rains and floods by absorbing excess water and slowing down runoff. They can also mitigate strong winds and, in coastal areas, act as crucial barriers against storm surges and tsunamis, like mangrove forests do.

## Importance of Trees and Forests

Trees and forests play an absolutely crucial role in the health and well-being of both the environment and humanity. They are truly the lifelines of our planet.

Here are some of the key reasons why trees and forests are so important:

### 1. Environmental Benefits:

**Oxygen Production and Air Purification:** Trees act as the Earth's lungs, absorbing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and releasing oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>). This is essential for the survival of humans and animals. They also filter harmful pollutants and particulate matter from the air.

**Climate Change Mitigation:** Trees are natural carbon sinks, storing carbon in their biomass (wood, leaves, roots). By absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>, they help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow down global warming.

**Water Cycle Regulation:** Trees influence the water cycle by absorbing and storing water, releasing it back into the atmosphere through transpiration. This helps regulate rainfall patterns, prevent floods, and maintain water availability. They also filter water, improving its quality.

**Soil Conservation and Erosion Prevention:** Tree roots bind soil together, preventing erosion caused by wind and water. Forests also enrich the soil with nutrients from decaying organic matter.

**Biodiversity Support:** Forests provide habitats, food, and shelter for a wide range of plant and animal species, making them critical for preserving biodiversity.



Van Mahotsav, also known as the "Festival of Trees," is an annual week-long tree-planting festival celebrated in India - July 1<sup>st</sup> to July 7<sup>th</sup>.



## Don't just think green, act green – Plant a tree!

## Key aspects of Van Mahotsav:

**Meaning:** "Van Mahotsav" means "the festival of trees" in Sanskrit.

**Purpose:** The festival aims to promote afforestation, raise awareness about the importance of trees and forests for environmental conservation, and encourage people to participate in tree-planting activities.

**Timing:** The first week of July is chosen for Van Mahotsav as it coincides with the onset of the monsoon season in India, which provides optimal conditions for planting saplings and increasing their chances of survival.

**History:** Van Mahotsav originated from a successful tree plantation drive in Delhi in July 1947. It was officially established as a national activity in 1950 by the then Union Minister for Agriculture and Food, Shri K. M. Munshi.

**Activities:** The festival includes various activities, such as: Tree-planting drives.

- \* Awareness campaigns through rallies, street plays, seminars, and competitions like painting and poster-making.

- \* Encouraging people to plant native trees, which are well-adapted to local conditions and have a higher survival rate.

**Significance:** Van Mahotsav is crucial for increasing India's green cover, promoting ecological balance, mitigating climate change, preventing soil erosion, and fostering a culture of environmental conservation.

**Theme:** The overarching theme is planting trees and celebrating the contribution towards environmental protection.