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Citizens plan to conduct tree mapping on Taljai hills

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While the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has undertaken a tree census from 2018, there is hardly any information found about the tree species in forest areas in and around Pune, especially in hill areas. Against the backdrop of heated debate between citizens and forest officials about the lack of transparency regarding tree cutting and ongoing work in the Taljai forest area, citizens plan to undertake a tree mapping initiative at Taljai Hill. A separate website has been created for this purpose, and citizens are urged to fill out information about the trees they see at Taljai Hills.

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Recently, citizens and green activists alleged that the Forest Department pruned native trees in the name of Gliricidia trees at Taljai Hills. The department official claimed that only Gliricidia trees had been uprooted, this argument did not receive any proper conclusion as the inquiry is still ongoing.

Mandar Joshi, a member of the Sahakarnagar Citizen's Forum developed an independent website to gather data on tree species at Taljai hill. The forum has urged citizens to come forward and volunteer for this documentation initiative.

Ketki Sathe, a member of the Sahakar Nagar Citizens' Forum said, "This initiative mainly aims to document trees existing in the Taljai forest area. As of now, at least 16 people have volunteered for this initiative. All plant species will be counted under this initiative, but the primary focus will be given to trees so that people will have updated data about what species of trees exist in the Taljai forest area. The forest area, which is about 108 hectares, is a vast area with a huge number of trees and we presently have a smaller number of volunteers, so we have not set any deadline yet. If the number of members increases, we might plan on setting up the deadline for the same."

While this citizen initiative will help in documenting the plant species of Taljai Hill, the forest department has a different method mapping of trees in the forest areas.

Deepak Pawar, assistant conservator of forests, Pune Forest Division, said, "The forest department does not conduct per tree census in forest areas. However, the department has a different mapping method as per the guidelines of the central government. It is mainly based on a canopy cover. The Taljai hill area falls under the dry deciduous forest category, which is characterised by tall trees that drop their leaves during the dry winter and spring months. Although there is no per-tree counting, the department keeps track of plantation activity that includes the number of trees planted, survival, and other plantation-related activities."

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/pune-news/citizens-plan-to-conduct-tree-mapping-on-taljai-hills-101715192784220.html>