

Department plants cane on a large scale in DK reserve forest areas

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The Forest Department has been planting rattan or cane, sought after by artisans for making handicraft products and furniture, in Dakshina Kannada on a vast scale for the past five years. Of them, some species are endemic to the Western Ghats.

“We have planted rattan seedlings on about 1,500 hectares [3,707 acres] in the thin reserve forest areas on the foothills of the Western Ghats in the past five years,” V. Karikalan, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Dakshina Kannada, told *The Hindu*.

The department will plant its seedlings on 500 more hectares [1,235 acres] in this rainy season in the district, he said. The department is focusing on planting three species of the cane. They are ‘Naga betha’ [I], ‘Onti betha’ [*calamus prasinus*] and ‘Handi betha’ [*calamus thwaitesii*]. They can be harvested in 12 years.

Of them, ‘Handi betha’ is a slow growing species with a girth ranging between 15 cm and 20 c.m. The other two species have a girth ranging from 12 cm to 15 cm, Mr. Karikalan said. According to K.R. Chandrashekar, professor of Botany, Yenepoya Research Center, Yenepoya [Deemed to be University], ‘Naga betha’ and ‘Onti betha’ are endemic to the Western Ghats.

‘Naga betha’ is a high climbing cane with clustering stems [bunches]. Their stems often straighten up to 4-5m and then climbing reach up to 25m or even more, Mr. Chandrashekar, who was a former chairman at the Department of Botany, Mangalore University, told *The Hindu*. The ‘Onti betha’ is a high-climbing solitary cane without any branching, he said.

The professor said that ‘Handi betha’ is distributed throughout the Western Ghats and in other regions, in moist deciduous, semi evergreen and evergreen forests of Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

It is a high-climbing and robust cane. Stems grow to the height of 20m or even more, he said.

Mr. Chandrashekar said that 51 species of rattans, belonging to four genera, have been reported in India, of which 14 are from Karnataka.

The professor said that the rattans of peninsular India belong to only one genus namely *calamus* and of the 21 species reported here, 20 are from the Western Ghats. Of these, the status of *calamus delessertianus* and *calamus rheedei* is uncertain and of the remaining 18 species, 15 are endemic to the Western Ghats.

Among the five States falling within the jurisdiction of the Western Ghats, Karnataka has the maximum number of *calamus* species (13), of which 11 are endemic to the Western Ghats. Of these, three species namely, *calamus lacciferus*, *calamus lakshmanae* and *calamus prasinus* are restricted only to the Karnataka region of the Western Ghats.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/departments-plants-cane-on-a-large-scale-in-dk-reserve-forest-areas/article31885919.ece>