

# 'A sapling is an invaluable gift'

*It is a common notion that environment concerns can be a pastime or a hobby and not a profitable profession, especially in an urban world. However, every commercial activity need not deprive Mother Earth of its flora & fauna, tells young business developer Supriya Patil who is associated with one such unique venture*



## Q: What is the Grow Trees initiative ?

Grow Trees is a social enterprise launched and dedicated to the Planet on World Environment Day, June 5, 2010. It aims to inculcate the practice amongst companies and individuals worldwide to plant real trees in public lands through the web to greet or honour someone by means of an e-TreeCertificate with a personalized message. The unique certificate number allows one to locate the tree project on Google Map.

## Q: What is the objective behind starting an online portal? How is it helping the environment?

Now a day, with the advent of electronic media everything is available online. Our e-commerce portal has helped us reach many individuals worldwide in order to create awareness about the current environmental issues like global warming, climate change etc. As trees planted by us will grow, they will help fight climate change by removing carbon dioxide from the air, storing carbon in the trees and soil, and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere. Additionally, our trees will aid in conserving the wildlife of the area.



## Q: How do you earmark which land to plant saplings and, most importantly, how do you ensure that the saplings planted grow into healthy trees?

We plant trees only in public lands, either in the periphery of Tiger Reserves/ Wildlife Sanctuaries or in the common lands of villages. We have tied up with experienced and grass root level NGOs who plant trees in the field with the help of rural/

tribal communities who in turn are paid for their labour. These NGOs have taken prior permissions to plant from respective authorities such as Forest Department, State Governments and various Village authorities. We have experts on board who decide the species of the trees to be planted. We always maintain the biodiversity of the area. Some species of trees planted through our projects include Karanj, Bamboo, Soapnut, Arjuna, Custard apple, Mango, Amla, Kala siris, Khair, Mahogany and Jungle jalebi. The rural communities are responsible for the maintenance of the trees as they are the ones getting benefitted with the fruits, fodder and non-timber forests produce apart from the monetary benefits. So far the survival rate of our planting sites have been between 70-90% with Kumbhalgarh having the highest 96%. We do one round of replanting in case the saplings don't survive in the current year after planting. We ensure there is only one tree allotted to one person/one certificate number.

## Q: You mostly plant on government or community land. Suppose that land is acquired for construction purpose, what would happen to the trees? Has something like that happened to you so far?

So far, this has not happened with any of our project areas. However, in case if this happens in future we certainly would request the decision making authority to find any alternate solution to the situation.

## Q: What is the relevance of the certificate that you provide? Is it a receipt of sorts or has some other value attached?

Our certificate is used to greet individuals with trees on different occasions (ex: birthday, anniversary, festivals etc) just like a traditional greeting card. FLO-CII Lucknow-Kanpur is also planting trees with us by gifting and honouring speakers/dignitaries on different events conducted by them with our certificates instead of a short-lived bouquet of flowers.