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## Come hail or storm, our green spirit stays alive

Students at Stella Maris are out to prove that Vardah's damage is not irreversible by planting saplings in their premises

### Express Features

**T**he students of Stella Maris College yesterday took the initiative to plant nearly 50 saplings in the campus to replace the ones lost in the fury of cyclone Vardah. Joining hands with the Burhani Foundation (India), which is commemorating its founder and spiritual head Dr Syedna Mohamed Burhanuddin's 106th birthday, the students and faculty took the first steps towards planting native species that would help replenish the biodiversity in the verdant campus.

"This was an important initiative for us, as ours was a very thickly wooded campus and we lost a lot of our trees during the cyclone," said Sister Jasinthia Quadras, principal, Stella Maris College. "We were looking for possible associations with organisations who were

looking to plant native trees, when we got in touch with the Burhani Foundation, who had a similar campaign in mind."

The movement was spearheaded by the students and faculty of the college who undertook an extensive survey of the damage to the forest cover after Cyclone Vardah. Nearly 100 trees were damaged out of the 461 in and around the campus. They also had expert assistance through Narasimhan, head of department, botany, at Madras Christian College who took students through a nature walk to assess the damage to flora and fauna.

The plan to re-plant saplings

### PLANTED SAPLINGS

The saplings planted belonged to 11 different varieties including neem, tamarind, wood apple, bael, badam and more. 53 trees were planted in the first phase

was adequately guided by faculty from his. "We have a list of nearly 25 trees that are native to Chennai. However, earlier we did not have a very systematic way of planting trees since it was mostly done by NGOs," said Priscilla Jebakumari, faculty, department of botany. "So now, the faculty has instructed students to plant only indigenous trees which can grow especially in our soil."

The saplings that were planted yesterday belonged to 11 different varieties of trees. "For now, we've chosen areas where there have been huge losses in tree cover. It will be an ongoing process where we will plant more trees over the course of time," said Sr Jasinthia. The zoology department also played a hand in the eco-initiative, studying and releasing a book on the butterfly species on the campus, where they found that they had more than 15 varieties.

Sampath Kumar



Students planting saplings