

**ECOLOGIC**

# Be Local, Stay Native to Save Precious Water

Smart planning in landscape design is crucial in conserving water. While selecting plant species, it is important to pick the native ones as they will adapt to the eco-system by adjusting to the micro-climate and other factors. The local plants need less water unlike exotic flora

**D**og days, *agni nakshatram* — call it what you will, but water is at the centre of public discourse. In Rajasthan, it is said villagers in the Thar desert can converse about a pot of water a whole day! Today social forestry is a huge movement there to battle the barren landscapes. A sustainable landscape strategy must include a lot of green cover. Extensive planting alleviates urban heat islands, improves air quality and brings urban societies together through community gardens. However, whenever a large green space is proposed either to the municipality or a private homeowner, the first question is: From where and how is water for the plants coming?

Smart planning for usage of water in landscape design goes a long way. While creat-

ing a planting plan, it is absolutely important to consider the species, whether it is native to the region or not, the density and the micro-climate factor.

The choice of plants is perhaps the single most important and the first step towards being sustainable. Native plants are those that have adapted to a limited environment or particular soil and water condition. An ecosystem consists of interactions between plants, animals, and micro-organisms with their physical and climatic conditions.

Native plants form a part of this ecosystem or co-operative community, where several species or environments have developed to support them. Examples of such dependence include the existence of a plant because a certain animal pollinates the plant and that animal exists because it



Native trees suitable for landscape design in hot and humid climate • Express

relying on the pollen as a source of food. This is nature's evolution towards sustainability! So importing just the plant species from a far off exotic

destination pretty much orphans the plant!

The other green advantage to having native plants is they only require extensive water-

ing for the first few months after sowing. Later, they are adjusted to the microclimate and ecosystem and will flourish with little to no watering for

the rest of their lives. There are many such plants that fit the bill very well for our hot and humid tropical climate. As natives always make better choices than the more common landscape plants available in a nursery, consider a garden 'audit' in your home to weed

**Consider a garden 'audit' in your home to weed out the more water intensive species. Include among your choices small plants with small or narrow leaves, grey or silver foliage and also leathery, hairy, curled or fuzzy leaves**

out the more water intensive species. Include among your choices small plants, varieties with small or narrow leaves, grey or silver foliage and also leathery, hairy, curled or fuzzy

leaves. Large leafed plants require and transpire more water due to their larger surface area. Leaves that reflect more of the sun's radiation (example: grey or silver) usually lose water through transpiration at a lower rate than green leaves. For example, small fine-leaved local palms have minimal water needs compared to larger leafed imported palm species.

It is no longer sensible to import exotic species of flowering plants that guzzle water. Many native grasses and easy growing plants are seen in most of the landscapes surrounding public spaces and large residential developments in cities. Be local, stay native and save water! That would be fashionable!

(The writer is an architect, urban designer, dancer and chief designer at Shilpa Architects)



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## CHENNAI DIGEST

### eBay Unveils Tracking Device



eBay India has unveiled a tracking device called Auxus Sequa which will help parents to keep in touch with their children always. The consumers are in for a deal during the launch as the device priced at ₹5,990 will be bundled with free Airtel data plan worth Rs1200 for six months. At any time and place, Auxus Sequa's GPS tracking will allow parents to keep a tab on the location of their children via the smartphone. ENS

### American Honour for Dr Cherian



The American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS), an international group of over 1,300 of the world's foremost cardiothoracic surgeons representing 41 countries has admitted Dr K M Cherian, founder and chairman, Frontier Lifeline Hospital as their Founder Circle member recently. He has been the member of AATS since 1998. ENS

### Colorectal Clinic at Fortis Malar



Fortis Malar Hospital inaugurated a comprehensive colorectal clinic on its premises. The clinic was inaugurated by Dr C Palanivelu, chairman, GEM Hospitals and Research Centre, Coimbatore and Professor Joel Leroy from France at Fortis Malar Hospital. The clinic offers treatments in proctology, pelvic floor diseases and laparoscopic surgery for colorectal diseases and cancer. ENS

### Anti-tobacco Campaign in Railways

The Health Ministry with support of Vital Strategies launched an outdoor campaign to raise awareness of the harms of smokeless tobacco. The images and messages from the recently launched *Tears You Apart* anti-tobacco campaign will feature on the exterior of trains on some of the busiest rail routes across eight states till September 2016. ENS

## Her Karmic Connect With the Four-legged Furrries

Apsara Reddy — editor of a magazine, pathbreaker, socialite, and of course, pet lover, has seven dogs, but wouldn't hesitate if you gift her another!

• Roshne B

**T**here was a lot of cute and energetic woofing and yelping at the recently held 'Pet Pawty' by *Provoke* lifestyle magazine. Amid the bunch of enthusiastic pet owners at the party, *City Express* caught up with Apsara Reddy, editor of the lifestyle magazine. 'Bane! Bane! Come here' she called out to her dark and dashing pet — a Rottweiler. Known for breaking gender barriers and for being exceptionally media-savvy, Apsara's love for pet is well known too.

The multi-faceted persona says, "Animals and pets are a blessing and they need to be treated properly. I am blessed with seven dogs." Panther, another Rottweiler is her protector, she shares. "Panther is like my protector and all my dogs are like a family. Though I don't get to spend much time with them amid a busy schedule, I make sure to cuddle them, go for long walks in the beach and indulge in fun activities whenever I get time," she says. Muffin (saint Bernard), Sumo (Pekingese), Brando (Pug), Tiara (Lab) and a Shih Tzu are the other pets Apsara owns.

Her relationship with ani-



Apsara Reddy with her Bane • Martin Louis

mals started at a very young age. Recollecting her first pet which was a fluffy white Pomeranian, she reminisces, "I think I've always been a pet person. My parents got me my first pet when I was two. I used to play with them and my relationship with animals has been very beautiful."

Having pets and being connected to them is karmic, she

says. "It's a very soulful and karmic connection. Pets understand when you are low and dogs are the most loyal best friends one could ask for," she explains. And we heartily agree!

So, what does she think about the current scenario of pet-human interaction? "It is seeing a positive change, but it needs to grow more. Pets

should be seen as therapy and must be loved. It's not about tying them up and giving them three meals a day...that doesn't add up to taking care of a pet," she points out.

In the US, the UK, and European countries, dogs are used to treat PTSD among women and children of abuse, and soldiers returning from war, as support for people with disabilities, and even for holistic healing and care of patients in hospitals.

Talking about pet care, she says, "People who own foreign breeds should keep in mind that those pets aren't show pieces. Their environment should be made adaptable, their skin and feeding habits should also been taken care of. Also, buying pets is a lifelong commitment and one should think before deciding to buy or adopt a pet as they should never abandon the pets afterwards."

Apsara endorsed the initiative 'magic collars' to prevent accidents involving animals. "I read that 600 dogs are killed or run over every day in Tamil Nadu," she avers.

More paw love in the future then? "Well, my hands are full with a lot of paws now. But, I wouldn't say no if someone gifts me a pet," she quips.

## Reflective Collars to Save Stray Dogs & Cattle



Animal welfare NGO, People for Cattle in India (PFCI), has initiated a project to fit stray animals with reflective 'magic collars' that will shine in the dark and make animals more easily visible. The NGO launched the new initiative by fitting collars on over 300 dogs and cattle in Chennai.

**We get many hit and run calls almost every day. According to a response to an RTI query we filed, there are over 84,000 stray dogs in Chennai**

— G Arun Prasanna, founder, PFCO



## ART & CULTURE



Syama Sastri, Saint Thyagaraja and Muthuswamy Dikshitar

## The Vaggeyakaras of Carnatic Music

**A** galaxy of great vaggeyakaras (who compose and sing the lyrics) and musicians were born either as contemporaries or in quick succession to enrich classical music by their wonderful compositions in 18-19th Centuries.

From the late 17th Century through the whole of the 18th Century, we had Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, the great genius, Teerta Narayana Yati, Soni Venkataramana, Arunagirinathar and Oothukadu Venkataakavi, whose creative music was a boon to musicians. The 18th Century had the honour of giving us the immortal trinity — Syama Sastri, Saint Thyagaraja and Muthuswamy Dikshitar. It was during this period Carnatic music was modernised with a *lakshya maarga* by the scholar musicians and vaggeyakaras, with the patronage of royalty. During this period, new forms

like *pada varnams*, *tana varnams* and *swara jatis* emerged forming the key aspects of Carnatic music as we know today.

Syama Sastri was the first among the trinity who composed songs in *bhakthi ragas* with rhythmic slant. Saint Thyagaraja (1767-1847) had a hereditary instinct for music and was taught by his mother Purandaradasa's *kritis*. He excelled in devotional music towards Lord Rama. Muthuswamy Dikshitar (1775-1835) composed songs mostly in Sanskrit. They never thought of preserving their songs to posterity as the trinity did not leave behind any written poem or work for the future.

A set of brilliant musicians trained in the *gurukula* system collected a good number of compositions of trinity and Kshetragna (1600-1680), a prolific Telugu poet and composer. One of the musicians Subbarama Dikshitar (1859-1906) produced Sangeetha Sampradaya Pradarshini that contains detailed information on the various aspects of *raga lakshanas*, *gamakas*, songs, and *varnams*, among other elements of Carnatic music. By the turn of 20th Century, we have got a Carnatic music which has a spontaneous flow of *bhava* and *rasa*, thanks to the efforts of vaggeyakaras whose sole aim was to infuse *bhakthi* in mankind.



NARAYANA VISHWANATH

## SOULFUL

# Meditation is a Process to Transcend the World

**R**eal meditation is the highest form of intelligence. It is not a matter of sitting cross-legged in a corner with your eyes shut or standing on your head or whatever it is you do. To meditate is to be completely aware as you are walking, riding on a bus, working in your office or in your kitchen. You are completely aware of the words you use, the gestures you make, the manner of your talk, the way you eat, and how you push people around. To be choicelessly aware of everything

about you and within yourself is meditation.

We are all capable of inquiry, discovery, and this whole process is meditation. Meditation is inquiry into the very being of the meditator. You cannot meditate without being aware of the ways of your own mind, from the superficial responses to the most complex subtleties of thought. Our fear is not of the unknown, but of letting go of the known. It is only when the mind allows the known to fade away is complete freedom from



the known, and only then is it possible for the new impulse to come into being.

We sit for ten minutes a day in a quiet room and 'meditate,' concentrate, fix their mind on an image, an image created by themselves, or by somebody who has offered that image through propaganda. During those ten minutes we try to control the mind; the mind wants to go back and forth and we battle with it. We play the game everlastingly, and that is what we call meditation.

All our life is based on thought which is measurable. It measures god, it measures its relationship with another through the image. It tries to improve itself according to what it thinks it should be. So unnecessarily we live in a world of measurement, and with that world we want to enter into a world in which there is no measurement at all. Meditation is the seeing of 'what is' and going beyond it, seeing the measure and going beyond the measure.

— Jiddu Krishnamurthi