

Biodiversity Study of Maharshi Dayanand College

Greenery has become a rare commodity in the cities especially like Mumbai. The Maharshi Dayanand College is situated in the heart of the island city of Mumbai. With lot many residential building towers coming up in/around this area, there is a depletion of greenery. Re-establishment of greenery in and around our college has made our college premises a unique and beautiful site in the locality.

The greening of open spaces in M.D. College Campus had started way back in 1962. This was being done by various Professors and supporting staff along with the occasional volunteering by interested students in the garden till today. They had brought seedlings, saplings, seeds of various plants from time to time and planted them in the College campus. Of course, this was done without any heed to whether they were endemic or exotic. Also, the planting was not in accordance with any particular order of gardening norms and this led to greening of the campus like a naturally growing mini forest so to say!

The efforts for listing plants in our college campus were initiated in the year 2020, with the kind permission and encouragement from our Principal Dr. C. S. Panse, as an activity of Nature Club of the college. The actual identification and proper listing of the flora and fauna started in or around the year 2020 with the help of teaching and supporting staff and some enthusiastic undergraduate students of our college.

The survey brought out many astounding facts about the greenery here, an important one being its diversity and that too in such a limited space of our college campus!

One more important thing that came to the light is that the College ground, that was used for parades and was left unattended during the present Corona pandemic, for such a long time, had been covered and rendered green by Ephemerals (seasonal, short-lived plants) that came up at the onset of monsoon. These plants grew, flourished, set fruit/ seed and perished after September/October, when the rains receded and the soils dried up. To mention a few of these along with the grasses and other annuals, lower plants like *Riccia*, a Bryophyte formed carpets of beautiful, green rosettes on the wet soil. Plants in the garden range from beautiful flowering plants, medicinal plants, fruiting plants and foliage plants as well.

This green patch hosts number of valuable plants which are slowly disappearing from common plants' list of Mumbai.

The greenery here provides shelters to many birds, butterflies and many more insects, which adds to the beauty of the college and the surrounding area as well.

These plants provide most important component of our life that is clean and oxygen rich air besides all other advantages. Identification of the flora and fauna here is an arduous task, since every plant in the garden hasn't set flowers which are essential for correct identification of the genus and species. So is the case of fauna. Identification of Genera and species of butterflies, birds, squirrels, some rodents is difficult due to their infrequent/ irregular sightings! Study of soil dwellers- millipedes, nematodes, VAM fungi, soil micro-organisms will give a complete, exhaustive document on "Ecosystem of M.D. College Campus", however, that will need a lot of work and time!