TAMIL NADU URBAN GREENING POLICY 2026

GREEN TAMIL NADU MISSION

Thiru **M.K.STALIN**

Honourable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

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1. PREAMBLE

Tamil Nadu is one of India's most urbanised States, with its urban population projected to reach 67% by 2031. Rapid urbanisation, coupled with industrial and vehicular emissions, has led to intensified urban heat island effects, declining air quality, and shrinking green spaces. It is well established in scientific literature that robust urban green-ecosystems or urban green spaces deliver a host of societal benefits - including disaster risk reduction (via storm-water drainage, flood-mitigation and reduced heat-island effect), pollution and noise mitigation, enhanced biodiversity, human physical and mental well-being, social cohesion, elevated land and property values, carbon sequestration and climate-adaptation resilience - making them indispensable for sustainable and resilient cities. Acknowledging this fact, international and national institutions have made urban green cover development mandatory and stipulated clear guidelines specifying green spaces per citizen, as well as percentages of total geographical area, including accessibility and spatial continuity. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11.7 stipulates that, "By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities."

The Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) guidelines recommend 12% - 18% of total urban area to be under green cover and the Urban and Regional Development Plans Formulation & Implementation (URDPFI) Guidelines, 2014 stipulate 10-12 sq.m of open/green space per person.

Given the growing challenges of rapid urbanization and climate change, cities require a robust and forward-looking urban greening policy - one that not only retrofits ecological spaces within already-developed areas, but also ensures that all future urban development is planned with strong ecological integrity and environmental resilience. Hence, it is imperative that the State's urban ecosystems adopt a structured green policy approach to integrate ecological balance with sustainable city development. This Urban Greening Policy aims to provide a unified framework for planning, managing, and maintaining green cover across Tamil Nadu's urban and peri-urban areas. It aligns with the State's Climate Change Vision, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, and the Green Tamil Nadu Mission, which aims to increase the State's green cover from 23.7% to 33%.

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2. VISION

To create thriving, resilient, and climate-smart urban ecosystems across Tamil Nadu through the integration of trees, forests, and green infrastructure into every aspect of urban planning and development.

3. MISSION

To enhance urban livability and ecological sustainability by promoting inclusive, science-based greening initiatives that restore, expand, and manage urban forests, parks, and green corridors in partnership with citizens, institutions, and industries.

4. SCOPE

The Policy applies to all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), development authorities, and peri-urban zones across Tamil Nadu. It encompasses all forms of urban greenery—parks, roadside avenues, urban forests, wetlands, canal banks, industrial landscapes, institutional campuses, and residential areas. It also includes blue-green infrastructure such as tanks, ponds, and riparian buffers.


Gopasandiram Nursery

5. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Urban Local Bodies shall endeavour to

- Improve the quantity, quality, and accessibility of green spaces in: urban areas.
- Integrate greening into master plans and land use frameworks of all cities.
- Promote citizen participation and stewardship in maintaining urban greenery.
- Strengthen institutional convergence across departments for effective implementation.
- Enhance Biodiversity and ecosystem services through native species planting.
- Monitor urban tree cover using geospatial and digital tracking systems.
- Contribute to Tamil Nadu's and India's NDC (Nationally Determined Contributions) and SDG commitments.

6. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In order to enhance ecological resilience, climate adaptability, and the overall livability of urban areas, the following guiding principles shall form the basis for all urban greening interventions across the State:

1. Indigenous and Climate Resilient Species:

All plantation, landscaping, and urban forestry works shall prioritise native, drought-tolerant, and pollution-resistant species suited to local agro-climatic conditions, with a view to strengthening local biodiversity and reducing long-term maintenance burdens.

2. Ecological Equity:

The policy shall endeavour to promote equitable distribution of green cover across cities, ensuring that the benefits of public open spaces and green infrastructure are accessible to all sections of society, with particular attention to low-income, high-density, and underserved neighbourhoods, including informal settlements.

3. Blue-Green Integration:

Urban greening shall be planned and implemented in conjunction with water systems, including water bodies, wetlands, stormwater channels, and watershed linkages, to enhance urban flood management, microclimate regulation, and climate resilience.

4. Community Participation:

Urban Local Bodies shall endeavour to encourage active participation of local communities, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), educational and research institutions, civil society organisations, and industries in planning, implementing, monitoring, and maintaining green assets, thereby fostering a sense of shared ownership and stewardship.

5. Data-Driven Decision-Making:

All planning and monitoring activities shall strive to be supported by scientific and spatial data, including satellite imagery, urban tree census, geo-tagged plantation records, and digital monitoring dashboards, to ensure transparency, accountability, and outcome-based implementation.


Guindy Park, Chennai

7. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

1. State-Level Coordination Committee:

A State-level Urban Greening Coordination Committee, chaired by the Chief Secretary to Government, is envisaged to be constituted to ensure effective convergence among the Departments of Municipal Administration and Water Supply (MAWS), Housing and Urban Development, Environment, Climate Change & Forests, Public Works Department (PWD), Horticulture, and Industries, for the seamless execution of the policy.

2. State-Level Nodal Agency:

A State Level Nodal Agency comprising representatives of the Municipal Administration Department and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force), the Chief Mission Director, Green Tamil Nadu Mission (GTM), Commissioners of two Corporations on rotation is envisaged to function as the State-level Nodal Agency for the implementation, coordination, convergence, and monitoring of the Urban Greening Policy across all municipal and urban development jurisdictions in the State.

3. Urban Forest Wing:

The Municipal Administration and Water Supply (MAWS) Department may establish a dedicated Urban Forest Wing to plan, implement, maintain, and enhance urban green cover across all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Urban Greening Cells within Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) may function under this Wing and undertake plantation activities, protection and maintenance of green cover,

community engagement, and awareness programmes. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) may prepare City-level Urban Biodiversity Plans and Urban Greening Micro Plans in consultation with the State Biodiversity Board and obtain approval from the District Green Committees. ULBs shall also endeavour to establish urban nurseries and ensure the long-term sustainability and upkeep of green assets. Urban Greening Cells may be staffed with Forest Officers on deputation, including Assistant Conservators of Forests and Forest Range Officers, to ensure technically sound planning and field-level execution.

4. District-Level Coordination:

District Green Committees, Chaired by the District Collector, shall coordinate inter-departmental actions, guide implementation, and ensure periodic review and monitoring at the district level to fulfil the objectives of this Policy.

5. Geospatial Mapping and Evaluation:

The Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company (TNGCC) may endeavour to provide support for geospatial mapping, carbon accounting, performance evaluation, and development of monitoring dashboards.

Further, support and assistance may be provided for assessing green cover in urban areas, including tree census and green cover mapping, through the Green Tamil Nadu Mission, with support from reputed technical or academic institutions of national standing.

8. FINANCIAL MECHANISM

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) shall endeavour to establish a dedicated financial mechanism to support the creation and maintenance of urban green cover. A proportion of the budget under urban development schemes implemented by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) may be earmarked exclusively for urban greening activities. All departments and agencies executing works within urban areas may also allocate a proportionate share of project costs towards greening and landscape restoration.

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) shall take efforts to ensure the convergence of funds from centrally and state-sponsored schemes, such as AMRUT, Smart Cities Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme, and Schemes under the Green Tamil Nadu Mission, and other relevant programs. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) shall also take efforts to mobilise citizen and corporate participation, including public contributions under Namakku Naame Thittam and other community stewardship initiatives. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) may consider levying a Green Fee/Green Tax linked to building permits, development approvals, and town planning sanctions to create a sustainable, recurring financial resource base for urban greening activities.

The Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) may consider providing incentives to institutions and individuals based on their achievement of defined "Urban Greening Factors" - a quantifiable measure of both the quantity and quality of green infrastructure integrated into an urban development site or neighbourhood. An Urban Greening Factor1 typically assesses metrics such as tree canopy cover, the extent of permeable surfaces, green roofs and walls, street trees, and effective vegetation cover across built-up areas. By linking incentives to performance in terms of these greening factors, ULBs can reward developments that demonstrate superior green cover, biodiversity contribution, microclimate regulation, and stormwater management — thereby aligning with best practices adopted by many countries.

ULBs may develop and adopt a park initiative to maintain, improve, and upkeep urban green spaces.

9. STRATEGIES & ACTION PLAN

To achieve the objectives of this Policy, the following strategies shall be adopted by all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs):

A. Urban Green Cover Targets

- Every Urban Local Body (ULB) shall endeavour to maintain a minimum of 15% of its total municipal area under green cover, in alignment with AMRUT norms and national benchmarks.
- ULBs may adopt a modified version of the 3–30–300 Urban Green Livability Guideline2, adapted to Tamil Nadu's ecological and spatial conditions, to enhance visibility of trees from residences, strengthen neighbourhood canopy cover, and ensure walkable access to usable green spaces.

B. Planning and Integration

- Integrate Urban Green Infrastructure layers into Master Plans, Local Area Plans, and Development Regulations.
- Consider developing the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) as a planning criterion for new layouts, institutional campuses, group developments, and commercial estates.
- Encourage adoption of Urban and Regional Development Plans Formulation and Implementation Guidelines (URDPFI) benchmarks for per-capita green space and accessibility.
- Encouraged to include a Geographical Information System (GIS) based Green Infrastructure Layer identifying existing ecological assets, open spaces, canopy zones, water-body buffers, and potential greening corridors. This can be used as a primary reference for prioritising greening efforts, especially in heat-stressed and low-green-cover zones, and can be updated periodically and made available on public dashboards.

C. Nursery Development and Tree Planting

- Each ULB shall endeavour to establish and maintain Urban Green Nurseries.
- Promote use of native, drought-tolerant, climate-resilient, and pest/disease-resistant species.
- Develop standard specifications for planting pit size, soil preparation, organic mulching, irrigation scheduling, staking, and protection.
- Promote Nagar Van / Nagar Vatika models and dense urban forestry approaches.
- Develop technical protocols for species selection, planting design, pruning standards, risk assessment, and long-term tree health management with the help of the Forest Department and Forestry Research Institutions.
- Tree removal shall be guided by District Green Committees, with transplantation as the preferred option wherever feasible.

- Develop Tree Parks / Urban Biodiversity Parks / City Forests on community development lands, OSR lands, institutional campuses, peri-urban buffers, and water-body fringes, aligned with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) Tree Park and Nagar Van frameworks.
- The Horticulture Department should be actively involved in developing aesthetically landscaped gardens and public spaces.
- Each ULB shall establish at least one City-level Tree Park and ward-level neighbourhood green commons, prioritizing heat-stressed and low-green-cover areas.

D. Landscape and Corridor Restoration

- Undertake canal bank, Lake Bund, and riverbank greening in coordination with Chennai River Restoration Trust (CRRT), Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA), Public Works Department (PWD), and local agencies.
- Plan, restore, and interconnect Blue–Green Corridors linking urban parks, wetlands, temple tanks, riverbanks, canal edges, institutional greens, and natural vegetation patches to enhance ecological connectivity, wildlife movement, micro-climate regulation, and flood buffering capacity.
- Prepare Avenue Plantation Plans ensuring appropriate native species selection, continuous shade canopy, uniform spacing, and root-zone protection during road and utility works.

E. Community participation Stewardship

- Organize an annual City Flower and Horticulture Festival to promote urban nature culture, nature appreciation, and community engagement in urban biodiversity stewardship.
- Provide recognition and incentives to encourage public participation.

F. Convergence and Funding

- Promote convergence with Green Tamil Nadu Mission, Green India Mission, AMRUT 2.0, and other relevant schemes.
- Mobilise sustained funding through Green Fee / Green Tax / Pasumai Nidhi, as approved by the Government.

Ottanchathiram

10. MONITORING, EVALUATION & REPORTING

Monitoring and evaluation shall strive to focus on outcomes, particularly canopy development, ecological functionality, climate resilience, public accessibility, and community stewardship, rather than plantation counts alone.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

ULBs shall strive to monitor and report progress against the following indicators:

i. Percentage of total municipal area under green cover (target: minimum 15%).

ii. Per-capita usable green space and access to green spaces.

iii. Tree survival rate (minimum 80%) based on geo-tagged survival audits.

iv. Species diversity and native species ratio, as guided by the 10–20–30 and 5–50–500 biodiversity benchmarks.

v. Extent and continuity of Blue-Green Corridors and water-sensitive landscape zones.

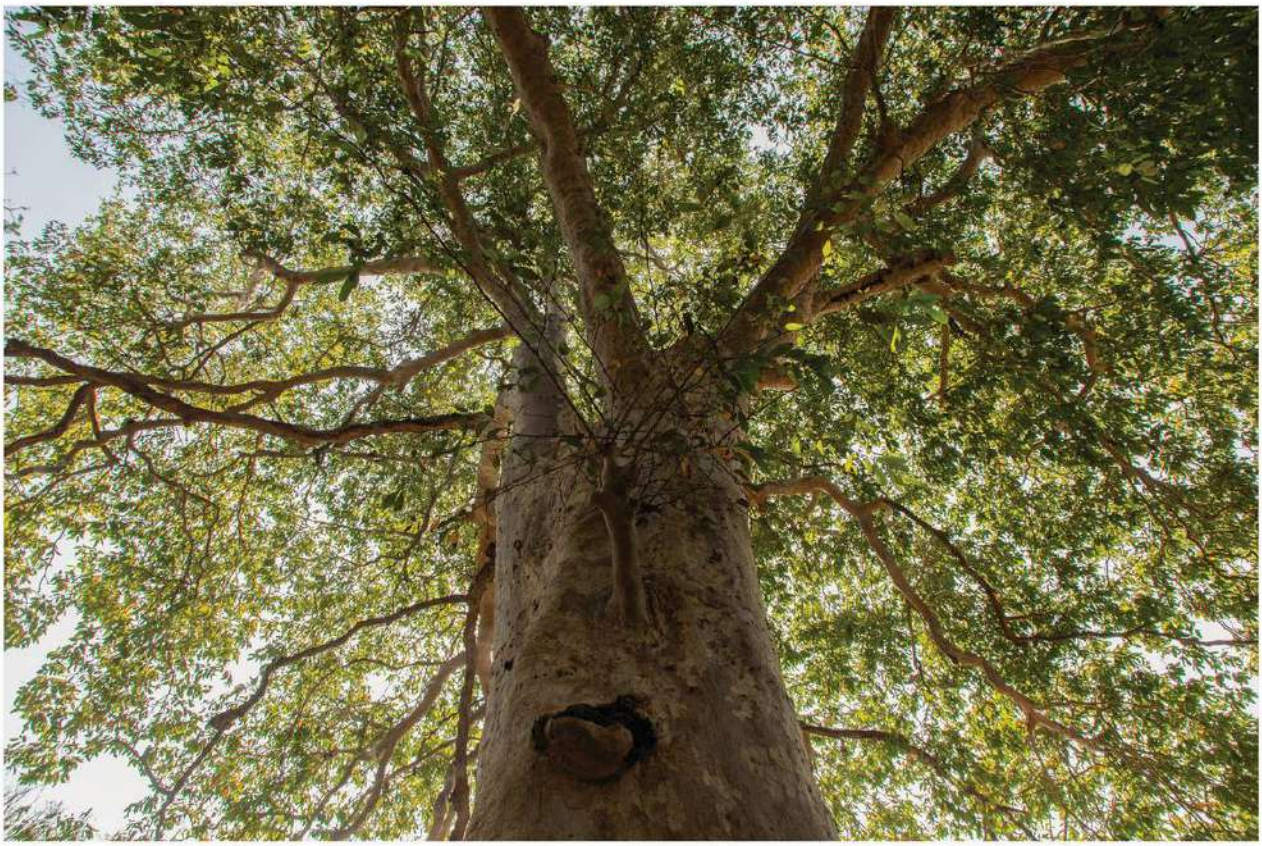
vi. Number and performance of Tree Parks / Urban Biodiversity Parks / Nagar Vans.

vii. Community stewardship participation (volunteers, RWAs, schools, SHGs).

viii. CSR and PPP contributions mobilised for greening activities.

B. Digital Tracking and Dashboards

- Promote Geo-tagging of all Planting sites through the Green Tamil Nadu Mission platform.
- Encourage maintenance of digital tree inventories, periodic updates on growth and survival.
- Encourage identification and preservation of heritage trees through a Heritage Tree Register
- Encourage integration of GIS-based Green Infrastructure Layers into public dashboards for transparency and community monitoring.



C. Evaluation and Audit Mechanism

- Quarterly progress reviews may be conducted by District Green Committees chaired by the District Collector.
- The Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company (TNGCC) shall take efforts to undertake Biennial Green Cover Assessment with support from accredited academic, forestry, or spatial analytics institutions.

D. City Biodiversity Scorecard

- Encourage the adoption of the City Biodiversity Index (Singapore Index)5 to evaluate biodiversity status, ecological connectivity, governance capacity, and ecosystem services.
- Prepare City Biodiversity Scorecards periodically to guide biodiversity enhancement and climate adaptation planning.

E. Public Disclosure

- Encourage publication of an Annual Urban Green Report detailing performance against KPIs, biodiversity outcomes, community engagement, funding mobilized, and climate resilience impacts.
- May make summary dashboards accessible to citizens to promote participation and accountability.

The strategies outlined above are envisaged to be implemented in a phased, data-driven manner and monitored through the monitoring and evaluation framework.

11. EXPLANATION OF KEY TERMS

1. Urban Greening Factor assesses metrics such as tree canopy cover, the extent of permeable surfaces, green roofs and walls, street trees, and effective vegetation cover across built-up areas.

2. The **3-30-300 Urban Green Liveability Guideline:** It provides for greener, healthier, and more resilient cities proposed by the Nature Based Solutions Institute, Sweden. As per this:

3: everyone should be able to see at least 3 mature trees from their home and place of work or study;

30: There should be a 30% tree canopy cover in each neighbourhood;

300: The maximum distance to the nearest high-quality public green space should be 300 m (> I ha).

3. The **10–20–30 rule** is a "rule of thumb" proposed in 1990 to promote urban forest resilience against species- or genus-specific pests and diseases.

10% (Species): No single species should comprise more than 10% of the total urban tree population.

20% (Genus): No single genus should comprise more than 20% of the total population.

30% (Family): No single family should comprise more than 30% of the total population

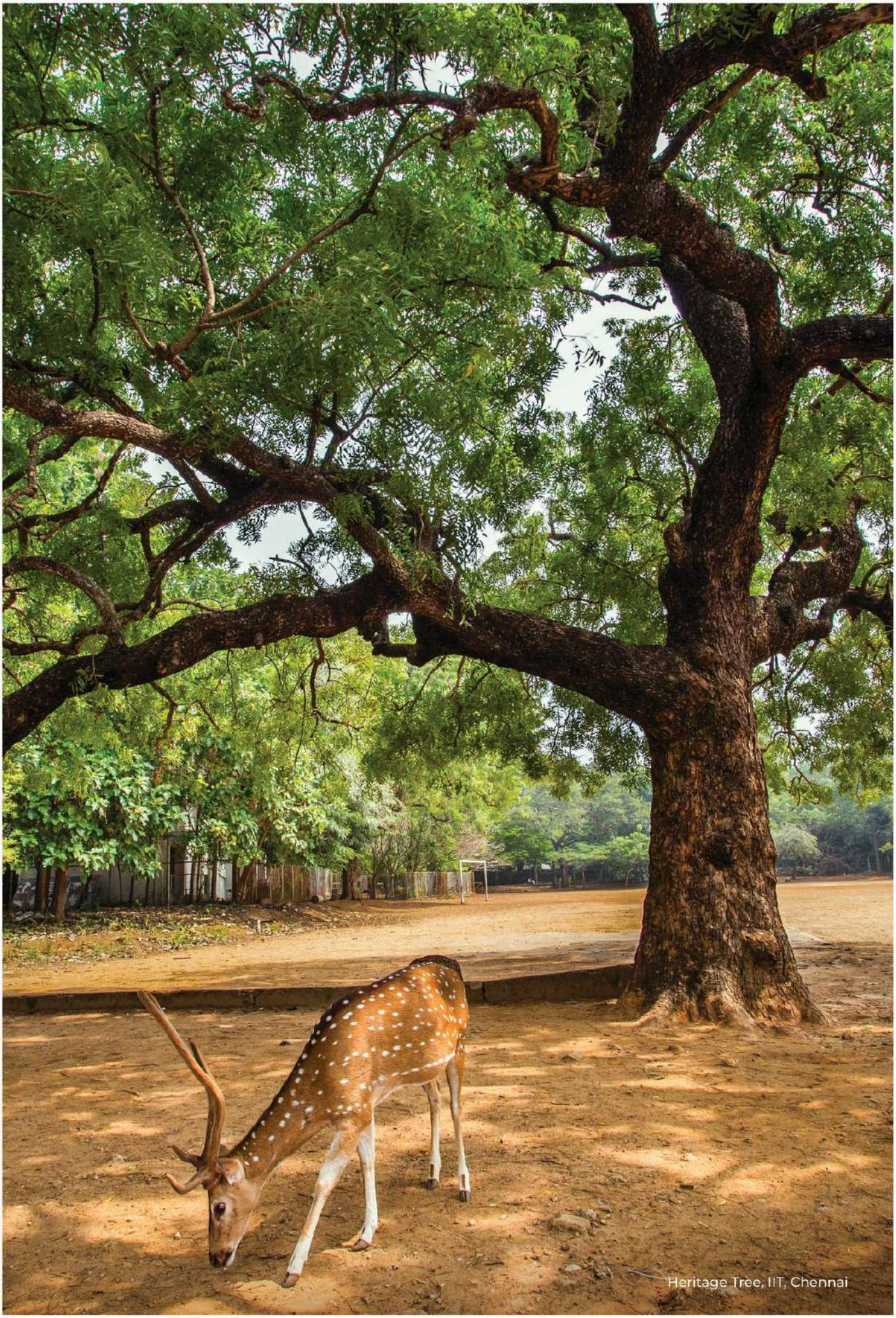
4. The **5-50-500-** These numbers are often cited as minimum population thresholds in conservation biology, particularly in the context of population viability analysis, though they are generalized guidelines rather than strict, universally applicable scientific laws.

5 (Minimum viable population for inbreeding avoidance in the short term): Historically, a minimum of 5 breeding individuals was a very rough estimate to avoid immediate, severe inbreeding depression. This number is now largely considered insufficient for long-term viability.

50 (Minimum viable population for short-term survival): A population size of around 50 is often cited as a basic threshold to prevent inbreeding from becoming a major issue in the near future.

500 (Minimum effective population size for long-term genetic diversity): An effective population size of at least 500 (often cited as 500 breeding individuals) is a widely recognized general benchmark believed to be necessary to maintain sufficient genetic diversity and adaptive capacity in a population long-term, allowing for evolution and adaptation to changing environmental conditions

5. The **City Biodiversity Index (CBI),** also known as the **Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity,** is a self-assessment tool designed to help cities evaluate, monitor, and benchmark their urban biodiversity conservation efforts against their own baselines over time.



Heritage Tree, IIT, Chennai