Rs 50 lakh to conserve palmyra genetic diversity – TN Forest Dept

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News

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department said on 13 November 2026 that Rs 50 lakh has been allocated to a 'Palmyra Genetic Conservation and Development Scheme' to study and protect the genes of the palmyra, Tamil Nadu's State tree. The aim is to study genetic differences among palmyra trees in different parts of the State, classify the distinct traits of each type, and conserve and improve them. Nature enthusiasts have voiced concern that the number of palmyra trees, which withstand severe drought and check soil erosion, is steadily falling. 'We are going to implement a long-term plan to protect the palmyra,' a Forest Department official said. Media reports say the scheme will be carried out over two years. A drive to plant one crore palmyra seeds across the State is already under way under the Green Tamil Nadu Mission.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Announced by	Tamil Nadu Forest Dept – 13 Nov 2026
Allocation	Rs 50 lakh
Scheme	Palmyra genetic conservation & development
Duration	2 years (reported)
Aim	Regional variation, trait classification, genetic improvement

Point	Details
Botanical name	Borassus flabellifer (palm family – Arecaceae)
Parallel drive	Green TN Mission – 1 crore palmyra seeds
Green TN Mission	24 Sep 2022, Vandalur; target 33% forest-tree cover

Background

- Botany: the palmyra (Borassus flabellifer) is a monocot of the palm family (Arecaceae), like the coconut and areca nut. Male and female trees are separate; since a tree takes many years to bear, genetic study can help identify male and female plants at the seedling stage. Its deep roots check soil erosion and help groundwater recharge; it grows even on dry sandy soils.
- Uses: the unfermented sweet sap tapped from the inflorescence is neera (padhaneer); boiled down it gives palm jaggery (karupatti) and palm candy. The tender seed is nungu (ice-apple); the sprouted seed's root is panang-kizhangu. Leaves, fibre and timber serve roofing and crafts. Ancient Tamil literature survived as palm-leaf manuscripts. A shortage of climbers and the quick spoilage of neera are key challenges.
- Environment policy: the Chief Minister launched the Green Tamil Nadu Mission on 24 September 2022 at the Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur; it aims to raise the State's forest and tree cover to 33% in ten years (then 23.69%). The National Forest Policy, 1988, also targets one-third (33%) of the country's area under forest/tree cover.
- Economy and GI: 'Udangudi Panangkarupatti', the palm jaggery of Udangudi in Tiruchendur taluk, Thoothukudi district, has a Geographical Indication (GI) tag; its red teri sand and dry climate are credited for its distinct taste. The 2023-24 Agriculture Budget announced a Rs 15 crore palmyra research station at Killikulam Agricultural College, Thoothukudi district; it has functioned since August 2024.

Tamil Nadu link: The palmyra is Tamil Nadu's State tree. It is most common in coastal and dry districts such as Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Cuddalore and Thanjavur. Udangudi palm jaggery (Thoothukudi) is a GI-tagged Tamil Nadu product, and a palmyra research station has been announced at Killikulam. One crore palmyra seeds are being planted under the Green Tamil Nadu Mission.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Announced by: Tamil Nadu Forest Dept – 13 Nov 2026; Allocation: Rs 50 lakh; Scheme: Palmyra genetic conservation & development; Duration: 2 years (reported).

What is the background to this news?

Botany: the palmyra (Borassus flabellifer) is a monocot of the palm family (Arecaceae), like the coconut and areca nut. Male and female trees are separate; since a tree takes many years to bear,

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Practice questions (with answers)

1. What is the botanical name of the palmyra, the State tree of Tamil Nadu?

A) Cocos nucifera

B) Areca catechu

C) Phoenix sylvestris

D) Borassus flabellifer

Answer: D – Explanation: Borassus flabellifer. Cocos nucifera – coconut; Areca catechu – areca nut; Phoenix sylvestris – wild date. All four are palms (Arecaceae).

2. 'Udangudi Panangkarupatti', a GI-tagged palm jaggery, comes from which district of Tamil Nadu?

A) Tirunelveli

B) Thoothukudi

C) Kanniyakumari

D) Ramanathapuram

Answer: B – Explanation: Thoothukudi – Udangudi, Tiruchendur taluk. Its red teri sand and dry climate are credited for its distinct taste.

3. The Green Tamil Nadu Mission, launched in 2022, aims to raise the State's forest and tree cover to what share?

A) 25%

B) 30%

C) 33%

D) 40%

Answer: C – Explanation: 33% within ten years (from 23.69% at launch). The National Forest Policy, 1988, also targets one-third of the country's area.

4. What is the unfermented sweet sap tapped from the palmyra's inflorescence called?

A) Neera

B) Toddy

C) Nungu

D) Palm jaggery

Answer: A – Explanation: Neera – once fermented it turns into toddy; boiled down it gives palm jaggery. Nungu is the palmyra's tender seed.

5. Like the coconut and grasses, the palmyra belongs to which plant group?

A) Dicotyledon

B) Gymnosperm

C) Pteridophyte

D) Monocotyledon

Answer: D – Explanation: A monocot – one seed leaf, fibrous roots and parallel venation. The palmyra also has separate male and female trees.

Sources: Dinamalar; Daily Thanthi; TN Govt press release (Green TN Mission, 24 Sep 2022); The Hindu (Udangudi GI); TN Budget 2026-27 (Palmyra Development Corporation); TNAU – Palmyrah Research Station, Killikulam (G.O. Ms. No. 168, Agriculture Dept, 28.07.2023). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.