

OTBA SECTION

Deforestation and Its Causes

A great variety of plants and animals exists on earth. They are essential for the wellbeing and survival of mankind. Today, a major threat to survival of these organisms is deforestation. Deforestation means clearing of forests and using that land for other purposes.

Trees in the forest are cut for some of the purposes mentioned below:

- Procuring land for cultivation.
- Building houses and factories.
- Making furniture or using wood as fuel.

Some natural causes of deforestation are forest fires and severe droughts.

Consequences of Deforestation

Deforestation increases the temperature and pollution level on the earth. It increases the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Ground water level also gets lowered. Deforestation disturbs the balance in nature. If cutting of trees continues, rainfall and the fertility of the soil will decrease. Moreover, there will be increased chances of natural calamities such as floods and droughts. Plants need carbon dioxide for photosynthesis. Fewer trees would mean that less carbon dioxide will be used up resulting in its increased amount in the atmosphere. This will lead to global warming as carbon dioxide traps the heat rays reflected by the earth. The increase in temperature on the earth disturbs the water cycle and may reduce rainfall. This could cause droughts.

Deforestation is a major cause which leads to the change in soil properties. Physical properties of the soil get affected by plantation and vegetation. Fewer trees result in more soil erosion. Removal of the top layer of the soil exposes the lower, hard and rocky layers. This soil has less humus and is less fertile. Gradually the fertile land gets converted into deserts. It is called desertification.

Deforestation also leads to a decrease in the water holding capacity of the soil. The movement of water from the soil surface into the ground (infiltration rate) is reduced. So, there are floods. The other properties of the soil like nutrient content, texture, etc., also change because of deforestation.

Endemic Species

Endemic species are those species of plants and animals which are found exclusively in a particular area. They are not naturally found anywhere else. A particular type of animal or plant may be endemic to a zone, a state or a country. Sal and wild mango are two examples of the endemic flora. Bison, Indian giant squirrel and flying squirrel are endemic fauna. The destruction of their habitat, increasing population and introduction of new species may affect the natural habitat of endemic species and endanger their existence.

Recycling of Paper

Paper can be recycled five to seven times for use. If each one saves at least one sheet of paper in a day, we can save many trees in a year. We should save, reuse used paper and recycle it. By this we not only save trees but also save energy and water needed for manufacturing paper. Moreover, the amount of harmful chemicals used in paper making will also be reduced. In India, we have some method of paper recycling by way of rag pickers and dealers of old and waste items. You may have observed your parents selling old newspapers to the Kabadiwala. They sell them to shopkeepers and paper bag manufacturers. Some of the papers land in paper manufacturing plants for recycling.

Reforestation

Reforestation is restocking of the destroyed forests by planting new trees. The planted trees should generally be of the same species which were found in that forest. We should plant at least as many trees as we cut. Reforestation can take place naturally also. If the deforested area is left undisturbed, it reestablishes itself. In natural reforestation there is no role of human beings. We have already made a tremendous damage to our forests. If we have to retain our green wealth for generations, plantation of more trees is the only option.
