

# Say No to “Plastic Bag”, Say Yes to “Waste Coconut Shells”: Eco-Alternative for saplings

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**Abstract:** Plastic Ban Programme launched on 5th June’ 2018, “World Environment Day” with the theme is “Beat Plastic Pollution”, to India will eliminate all single-use plastic in the country by 2022. The need to increase greenery in cities and villages is at an all-time high, and more and more concerned people are advocating for large-scale tree plantations. The Gujarat forest department of Chhota Udepur has started a new initiative – “Ditch plastics and adopt coconut shells” to grow saplings.

## I. Introduction:

Every product has a shelf life, but sadly that is not the case with plastics. The fact is that our planet cannot digest plastic. Plastics take around 500 to 1000 years to completely degrade due to the presence of complex polymers. As a result, till now whatever bit of plastic has ever been manufactured or used by us can be found in some form or the other on the planet. And now it has reached a crisis point. Currently, India generates around 56 lakh tonnes of plastic waste annually. Plastic menace is also one of the major causes that are making waste management a big task for the country.

## 1. Issues and Concern:

Be it in nurseries or gardens it is a common sight to find saplings in black plastic bags or in plastic pots, which is neither biodegradable nor safe for the ecosystem. With increasing air pollution and its adverse effects on health, more and more people are now willing to work towards building greenery in cities as well as villages along with remarkable ideas to ditch nature’s enemy-plastic bags.

While collecting garbage from the towns, the department observed that it primarily consisted of coconut shells—presumably thrown away by people after consuming coconut water at roadside stalls. District Collector, then proposed the idea that saplings be placed in coconut shells for plant saplings temporarily before they settle in the soil for good.

For Plant saplings, the shells have been chopped from the bottom so that when the saplings are planted in the ground (along with the shells), there is enough room for roots to grow.

## 2. New Concept of saplings:

In Maharashtra, “Go Green Foundation” and the “Thane Citizens Forum (TCF)” taught over 60 students from Little Flower High School in Thane to plant seeds in a coconut shell. The initiative was taken up by the president of the Maharashtra Go Green Foundation and TCF, Thanekar Kasber Augustine.

Augustine drew inspiration from an image circulated on social media which showed an environment-friendly method of planting seeds in empty coconut shells instead of plastic pots. Soon, he started teaching school children in the vicinity to plant seeds in an environment friendly manner.

In Gujarat, the ‘Green’ idea was proposed by district collector of Chhota Udepur, when he observed that the garbage coming from the towns primarily consisted of coconut shells. About the initiative, he said, “This is the first step we have taken towards making the district, plastic-free”.

## 3. Challenges:

Making a plastic free nurseries and gardening is more crucial. Because, the mindset of villagers are not set. Another, it has time consuming processing of clean whole shell and hole in bottoms so people can’t deal with that process. Measure challenge is transporting. More space is required than plastic bag sapling.

## 4. Conclusion:

However, even with a large scale pursuit of forestation, a persistent problem continues—that of the plastic bags in which small saplings are planted. People either need to bury the plastic bags along with the saplings while replanting them, or throw them away, which increases plastic wastes since these plastic bags are neither biodegradable nor a healthy element for the soil, while coconut shells are biodegradable, the plants will also not be affected. In fact, upon degradation, these shells will act as nutrients.

During the India cleanliness drive, there was an accumulation of many coconut shells; As the coconut shells will be used for saplings, waste management will also be easy, and it will also help in our goal of making a nation plastic-free.

The advantage of using biodegradable waste as a carrier of plants is obvious—and it works both ways by helping in waste disposal and adding to the nutrient value of soil.

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