

## Future plans

We believe strongly in sustaining the philosophy behind our efforts, and the following goals will allow us to remain true to our ideals while enabling the collective to grow and further its mission.

- ❖ Create a handbook, published in English and Kannada, containing all the documentation data we have collected over the past few years
- ❖ Continue networking with local government agencies, NGOs and individual communities
- ❖ Hold workshops and trainings in seed saving and preservation; packaging, labeling and marketing; food preparation; and allied activities
- ❖ Expand network of seed groups and promote decentralized seed banking
- ❖ Continue hosting melas, expanding their community education potential



## Needs

- ❖ Organic and open-pollinated seeds
- ❖ Volunteers and interns
- ❖ Our own space for an office, nursery, garden and extension outlet
- ❖ Support to run the garden and collective
- ❖ Good networking with other groups for seed and information exchange



## Contact

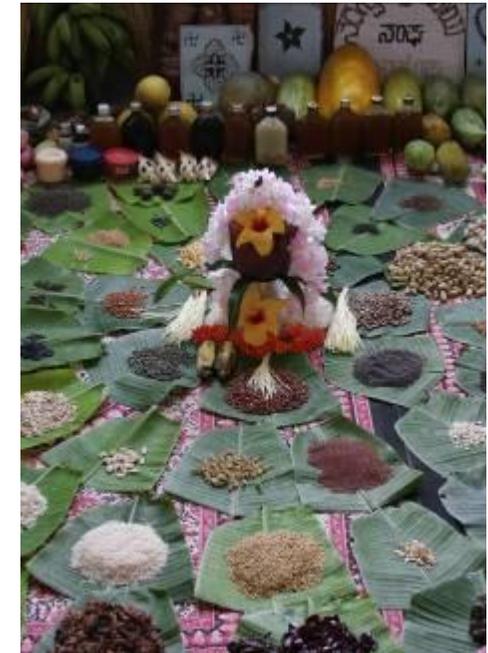
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*A few small seeds have the power within them to feed a family; a fistful of seeds, the whole community. Our future depends on saving the traditional diversity of seeds around us.*

## What is Vanastree?

Vanastree is a small collective dedicated to promoting **forest garden biodiversity** and **food/nutrition security** through the conservation of traditional seeds.

### **Our main objectives:**

- ❖ promote cultivated and wild biodiversity in farms and forest home gardens
- ❖ encourage seed saving and conservation of traditional crop varieties
- ❖ provide economic incentives for these activities through ecologically sensitive enterprises



### **Beginnings**

The Malnad Forest Garden and Seed Keepers' collective formed in 2001, and made its first appearance with a seed display at the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) *Biodiversity Mela*. Soon after, women and schoolchildren of the area joined the organization's efforts and began documenting traditional crop varieties. Having discovered what incredible biodiversity lies at their fingertips, the collective members began working actively to educate the community about biodiversity and conservation. Beginning in 2003, the collective added conservation-

oriented enterprises to its activities in order to boost women's economic standing and promote conservation. In 2008, the seed collective officially registered as a trust, calling itself Vanastree.

### **Location**

Vanastree's office is located in Sirsi town, but the collective has established seed groups throughout the Malenadu (hilly regions of the Western Ghats) as well as in the narrow coastal belt and in the eastern fringes of the Ghats.

## Philosophy

The organization's objectives arose out of concerns for the economic stability of the region and the danger of losing its small-scale, traditional food production system to the forces of globalization. We recognize the importance of forest home gardens as refuges of biodiversity, providers of nutritional food, extra sources of income, and educational tools. Vanastree, which translates as "*Women of the Forest*" in Kannada, also emphasizes the traditional role of women in conservation. We believe that any biodiversity conservation plan aimed at arresting genetic erosion must recognize the role of women as gardeners, seed savers, and sources of knowledge. The collective includes women from various communities, religions and economic classes. Forest gardens vary in size and structure; some consist of a tiny patch of land outside a house, while others may comprise an acre or more. They share in common a great diversity of plants and trees. The vegetables grown include varieties of amaranth, spinach, cucumber, squashes, lady's finger, brinjal, starchy tubers, beans and chilies.

## Accomplishments

Vanastree's efforts have been chiefly focused on seed groups and documentation, although our extension services (trainings, networking and establishing conservation-oriented enterprises) have also been successful.

### **Work completed thus far:**

- ❖ Documenting around 120 vegetable and 60 flower varieties grown in the Malnad
- ❖ Distributing over 3000 packets of organic, open-pollinated seeds
- ❖ Forming 22 seed exchange groups, reaching over 500 home gardeners
- ❖ Establishing both a decentralized regional seed bank by individual gardeners and a central seed bank in Sirsi town
- ❖ Supporting collective members in creating a variety of home-based conservation enterprises:
  - value-added food and non-food production
  - home-based camps and eco-homestays
- ❖ Building an internship program
- ❖ Participating in several annual melas, festivals and exhibitions promoting biodiversity and seed saving

