

One month of work in the landscape: March 2024 news update

The past month since I came to Chamba, it has been very eventful. To start with, I visited the nursery after a long time being away from here during the winter. Almost all the saplings had lost their leaves (dormant). The nursery and the surrounding area were looking dry. But by the end of the month as spring approached, the saplings came back to life after several months of dormancy. Everything seemed green, bursting with life, as spring should be.

Some new plants were added to the saplings by sowing seeds of native species of the Hill Neem *Melia azedarach*, Walnuts *Juglans regia*, 930 and 247 seeds, respectively. Some stubborn seeds which require special treatment to germinate, like the Ban Oak *Quercus leucotrichophora* were kept in a manure mixture for 30–40 days. The seeds, by the way, were collected in March from trails where footfall is more, and there are very rare chances of regeneration. Other species like the Himalayan Poplar *Populus ciliata* and Himalayan Mulberry *Morus serrata* were propagated by grafting stems in the bags, 310 and 161, respectively; which, by the way, are sprouting with new leaves. It is always good to see the add ons in the nursery. For more additions of the plant species, which we have yet to sow, we collected seeds of the Wild Himalayan Cherry *Prunus cerasoides*, which recently started to come up.

Moving on, we had a lot of meetings this past month – the meetings with the women's



New sapling of Horse-chestnut (*Aesculus indica*) in the nursery. © P. Kritika.



Seed collection of *Quercus leucotrichophora*. © P. Kritika.



Visit to the Forest Department nursery. © P. Kritika.



Camera trap training session with the forest department. © P. Kritika.

self-help groups where we interacted with the locals and introduced our project along with getting their opinions on the ongoing issues regarding the crop loss. In the process I also introduced myself and my work in their landscape, and asked them for their help in gathering valuable information. We met with the pradhan of Rathiyar Panchayat who we have been working with for a while now, the conservator of forests, Chamba, to discuss the project and collaborate with them for our restoration project. The team also delivered a session on operating camera traps to the forest department personnel and installed it in areas where there could be possible bear movements. We visited two forest department nurseries in Chamba, where



Camera trap set up with the forest department. © P. Kritika.



Interaction with a caretaker in the Forest Department nursery, Udaipur. © Paridhi Modi.

Sowing seeds of *Melia azedarach*. © P. Kritika.





Interaction with the Randoh school kids. © P. Kritika.

different techniques of seed germination and propagation were shared with us. And a very exciting news! The official inauguration of the Himalayan Restoration Project was conducted in Randoh School which falls in the Rathiyar Panchayat. The principal, the pradhan and the panchayat board



Planting sapling during HRP inauguration. © Trisa Bhattacharjee.

Interaction with the women in WSHG meeting. © Paridhi Modi.



members, school staff, and some people from the local communities participated and planted 12 saplings in the school. We interacted with the kids, telling them about our work. It was a fun interaction, with them being enthusiastic in the idea of helping us in the plantation work –

when it happens in June or July. That's all the news update for Chamba in March from me. More to come in the future.

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