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Bamboo Info

A quarterly newsletter of Bamboo Technical Support Group (BTSG) - KFRI

Utilization of bamboo for Land Restoration in India

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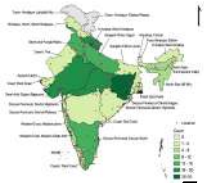

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Revitalizing watersheds with bamboo: A sustainable approach

Bamboo has emerged as a powerful, nature-based solution for watershed conservation. Its unique growth characteristics, structural resilience, and ability to improve soil and water conditions make it an excellent tool for restoring.

The Invest Kerala Global Summit 2025

The Invest 'Kerala Global Summit 2025' provided a prominent platform for the Kerala State Bamboo Mission to shine a spotlight on the versatility and artistry inherent in the state's bamboo sector.

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Tienostachyum wightii

The bamboo species primarily used for making the unique Kannadipaya mats of Kerala is *Teinostachyum wightii* (Munro) Bedd.

This particular species, locally known as 'njoonjiletta' by the tribal communities (Urali, Mannan, and Muthuvan) who are the traditional weavers of Kannadipaya, possesses specific characteristics that make it ideal for this craft.

The above click shows *Teinostachyum wightii* grown in the Sholayar forest, Thrissur, Kerala.

Editor's Desk

Dear readers,

Welcome to the second issue of Bamboo Info, your trusted source for insights, innovations, and stories from the world of bamboo!

In this edition, we highlight the expanding role of bamboo in driving ecological renewal and sustainable development across India. Bamboo is increasingly used to stabilize soil and manage water, with species chosen based on the needs of each region. Its integration into rural and restoration-based strategies offers a practical, scalable response to land degradation and water stress. The Bamboo Technical Support Group (BTSG) remains dedicated to catalysing this transformation-bridging innovation with community knowledge to bring bamboo-based solutions to the core of sustainable planning.

In this issue, we also reflect on recent national-level gatherings that brought renewed momentum to the bamboo sector. One convened thought leaders, innovators, and stakeholders from across the country to share insights, explore new opportunities, and shape strategic directions for the future of bamboo in India. The other celebrated the rich cultural diversity and craftsmanship embedded in bamboo traditions, highlighting the work of skilled artisans whose creativity continues to inspire sustainable design and enterprise.

At BTSG, we believe that through comprehensive training programs, community engagement and hands-on projects, we can transform landscapes and improve livelihoods by bringing farms to homes, creating sustainable solutions for a brighter tomorrow. By prompting local self-government institutions to cultivate bamboo, we aim to cultivate change, improve livelihoods, and foster sustainable development. We invite you to join us as we navigate the intersection of tradition and technology, seamlessly blending ancient wisdom with modern solutions.

As we launch Bamboo Info, we invite you to become an integral part of this interactive space. Use it to stay connected, share your stories, and be inspired by the groups' efforts that amplify the impact of bamboo and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient world.

Thank you for joining us on this exciting journey!

Editorial team,
Bamboo Info

Bamboo – A natural solution for a sustainable future

"In an age defined by intensifying environmental degradation and economic uncertainty, bamboo emerges as more than just a plant- it is a vital, renewable resource with immense potential to drive global sustainability. Known for its rapid growth, resilience, and wide range of applications, bamboo offers innovative and practical solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing our planet.

Bamboo offers a wide array of benefits, including carbon sequestration, biofuel production, and the transformation of urban landscapes etc. In the fight against climate change, bamboo acts as a more effective tool than the other trees, absorbing up to 35% more CO_2, making it a natural carbon sink. This makes bamboo a key player in global carbon reduction strategies. Environmental and economic stability must go hand-in-hand to ensure sustainable growth, especially for developing nations. Bamboo provides a cost-effective and scalable solution that supports both. It plays a crucial role in transforming urban environments by replacing conventional materials in construction, furniture, and infrastructure with sustainable, durable bamboo alternatives. In addition, bamboo contributes to building a bio-based economy, offering renewable resources such as bamboo-based biofuels, biochar, and biodegradable materials that reduce dependence on fossil fuels. It also holds transformative potential for rural and tribal communities by creating livelihoods through large-scale cultivation, processing, and value-added bamboo industries.

For a developing country like India, bamboo presents a strategic opportunity to emerge as a global leader in bamboo-driven sustainability, unlocking both economic and environmental benefits at scale."

VB Sreekumar
Coordinator, BTSG-KFRI

V Anitha
Associate Coordinator, BTSG-KFRI

Spotlight

Utilization of bamboo for Land Restoration in India

Land degradation is a global problem today affecting one-fourth of the ice-free land on earth (Olsson et al. 2019) and close to 1.2 billion people are exposed to it (UNCCD Data Dashboard 2022). India alone saw degradation of 30.51 million ha land (10% of its landmass between 2015 and 2019 (Zumbish 2023), exposing 251.71 million people (18.37% of the population) to land degradation (India's response to UNCCD). It has caused a decrease in land productivity, people's livelihoods, food security, water security, human migration, biodiversity loss and a decline in ecosystem services. This problem is a major hurdle in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. Restoring land and ecosystems addresses the fundamental issue i.e., capacity of the ecosystems to recover from disturbances and has become a priority globally. Therefore, International programs like the Bonn Challenge, United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (UNDER) have tried to bring this problem to a forefront, calling for concerted efforts and scaling up of projects.

Restoration at large scales comes with its own set of barriers especially in scientific research and technical capacity (Meli et al. 2023). Meanwhile, restoration science as a scientific discipline has been growing and evolving both conceptually and in terms of practical knowledge, since its conception in the 1980s (Nunez-Mir et al. 2015, Guan et al. 2019). To understand current restoration practices better, I reviewed 170 cases of restoration which used plants for restoring degraded land. These cases were located across 26 Indian states, 8 bio-geographic zones and 20 bio-geographic provinces (Figure 1). The oldest documented case being from Delhi started in 1883.

Across India, several trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses have been utilized either alone or in combination. I found 412 species of trees, crops and bamboo utilized in these restoration projects. Most common species were *Dalbergia sissoo* (45 cases), *Azadirachta indica* (28), *Albizia lebbeck* (27), *Acacia aurculiformis* (22), *Cassia siamea* (22), *Terminalia arjuna* (21), *Pongamia pinnata* (19), *Acacia nilotica* (18), *Acacia catechu* (16), *Leucaena leucocephala* (16), *Prosopis juliflora* (15), *Syzygium cumini* (14), *Gmelina arborea* (12), *Tectona grandis* (10), *Bauhinia variegate* (10) and *Dendrocalamus strictus* (10). Overall, only 28 cases of restoration planted bamboo for restoration, as a mix of bamboo species or a mix of bamboo and other timber and crop species. Two other cases used bamboo as a structural material for barricading and containing soil. Out of 412 species of plants, only 13 species were of bamboo. These were, *Dendrocalamus strictus* (10 cases), *Bambusa bambos* (6), *Bambusa tulda* (3),

Bambusa balcooa (2), *Bambusa nutans* (2), *Dendrocalamus hamiltoni* (2), *Thamnocalamus spathiflorus* (2), *Thamnocalamus falconeria* (1), *Thamnocalamus jaunsarensis* (1), *Dendrocalamus asper* (1), *Dendrocalamus longispathus* (1), *Chimonobambusa falcata* (1), and *Bambusa vulgaris* (1).

In many studies (54 cases) it is not clear why certain species or species mix was chosen for restoration. While those that mentioned the species selection criteria, cited reasons such as the local relevance of plants (22), local uses such as timber (21), economic importance (12), ability to grow in harsh conditions (10), contribution to soil nutrients (9) and fast-growing capability (8). Other less common reasons included - ability for soil stabilization and moisture retention, known success of the species in similar situations, desired mix of exotics and indigenous species, ability for bio-accumulation, endangered status of the species (for population augmentation); lack of evidence on field performance; aesthetic value; ability to act as a nurse crop or trap seeds; medicinal value; ability to prevent browsing by cattle; successional order; and appropriate for social forestry and green belts (preferred exotic species).

Among these studies, there have been specific cases where bamboo was utilized for passive restoration in Jhum fallows in Meghalaya involving *Dendrocalamus hamiltonii* (Ramakrishnan and Toky 1981). *D. hamiltonii* dominates between 10 - 20 years post abandonment of land. It heavily accumulates potassium ions up to 20 years and releases back in to soil gradually with litter fall and after it dies. Therefore, it aids

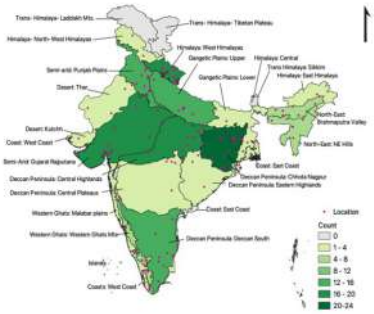

Figure 1: Location of restoration cases across biogeographic zones of India

in better nutrient cycling for potassium as compared to calcium and magnesium. Agroforestry system for post-jhum recovery & population augmentation has also been tested using clump-forming bamboo. *Dendrocalamus longispathus*, *D. hamiltonii* and *Bambusa tulda* was planted with ginger (*Zingiber officinale*). Ginger was targeted for short term benefits and bamboo for long term benefits where edible bamboo shoots and mature culms played an important role in choosing the bamboo species.

In active restoration strategies of mined lands, a combination of bamboo species has been utilized – for example, *B. tulda, B. bambos,* and *D. strictus.* Bamboo barricading and bamboo planting has been used for mine spoils, recovery of topsoil, soil profile & nutrients, bio-concentration of metal ions. In Singrauli coalfields, *D. strictus* planted on mine spoil achieved similar biomass and higher net production levels compared to a native dry forest in a short time (Singh and Singh 1999). It also contributed to a rapid development of microbial biomass showing effective

restoration. In Jharkhand coalfields, maximum accumulation of iron was observed in *Bambusa* sp., which also shows highest accumulation of chromium (Maiti 2007). Bioaccumulation coefficient of chromium and zinc was found 74 times in *Bambusa* sp. and 83 times in *Dalbergia sissoo.* In general, bamboos have contributed to high above-ground biomass & litter aiding in development of soil organic carbon post-mining.

In some locations while restoring degraded forest, bamboo's high productivity was seen as an advantage over possible limitations due to gregarious flowering induced mass mortality. A short bamboo (*Thamnocalamus spathiflorus)* was used with other plants like *Aesculus indica* (horse chestnut), *Quercus leucotrichophora* (oak) and *Juglans regia* (walnut), and medicinal herbs viz. *Aconitum heterophyllum, Angelica glauca, Picrorhiza kurroa* and *Rheum australe* to restore a degraded forest in Uttarakhand after logging and local use of the forest (Saxena et al. 2021).

In controlling bank erosion there are short-term benefits, such as being able to harvest culms for local use. Such as the case of Narmada river plantations of *B. bambos* and teak (*Tectona grandis*) (Saigal et al. 2016). To restore ravine lands, some ex- situ and in-situ experiments have been conducted using *D. strictus.* In the case from Gujarat, it was found to be economically viable, improved soil pH and organic carbon content and checked soil erosion. Similar results were achieved in Yamuna floodplains (Singh et al. 2015).

Bamboo has also been useful in soil remediation for heavy metals. Trials conducted in Maharashtra showed that *B. bambos* is a good chromium accumulator, a phytostabiliser for lead and zinc (Sawarkar et al. 2023). *B. balcooa* is a phytostabiliser for copper, zinc and nickel. *B. tulda* is a phytoextractor for chromium and zinc (Sawarkar et al. 2023). *B. bambos*, when planted with other timber trees, for phytoremediation of tannery effluent showed stunted growth (Manikandan et al. 2013).

These results suggest that the choice of bamboo species depends on the type of degradation, local availability, bamboo's efficacy as a remediator and local acceptability of bamboo. The overall picture of restoration approaches and especially of bamboo utilization in India still remains a blurry picture due to poor documentation of restoration cases in the literature. Some important issues include lack of long-term monitoring after plantation, and lack of stakeholder involvement and consultations. There is further lack of emphasis on social benefits arising out of these initiatives since very cases tried to document and discuss them. Further efforts through effective collaborations, funding mechanisms and documentation can help in filling these gaps.

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Plantation of *Ochlandra travancorica:* A view from the field of Shri. Babu Thomas, Wayanad, Kerala

Revitalizing watersheds with bamboo: A sustainable approach

A watershed is much more than a geographical area where water drains into a common source. It is a dynamic system that influences food security, social stability, and economic well-being. Healthy watersheds play a crucial role in maintaining water quality, reducing flood risks, preventing erosion, and supporting biodiversity. They also provide economic and social benefits, such as reducing infrastructure costs for water treatment and flood control, supporting industries like tourism and agriculture, and improving local livelihoods. Additionally, access to well-preserved watersheds contributes to mental and physical well-being by offering green spaces for recreation and stress relief.

Sustainable watershed management involves protecting and restoring natural ecosystems through appropriate land-use practices, soil conservation techniques, and community involvement. A major challenge in watershed conservation is soil erosion, which leads to sedimentation in water bodies, reducing water quality and storage capacity. Implementing bioengineering solutions, such as vegetative buffers, contour farming, and check dams, can help combat these issues while enhancing groundwater recharge.

Bamboo has emerged as a powerful, nature-based solution for watershed conservation. Its unique growth characteristics, structural

resilience, and ability to improve soil and water conditions make it an excellent tool for restoring degraded landscapes and promoting sustainable water management. More than just a fast-growing plant, bamboo provides exceptional environmental benefits such as soil stabilization, water retention, pollutant filtration, and climate resilience.

1. Enhancing Water Retention and Reducing Runoff

Bamboo forests are highly effective at retaining water and improving infiltration. Their dense root networks enhance soil porosity, reducing runoff and allowing water to percolate into the ground. Research has shown that bamboo plantations significantly reduce sediment loss and

improve groundwater recharge, making them an essential element in long-term watershed protection strategies.

2. Preventing Soil Erosion and Land Degradation

Bamboo's extensive rhizome and root system helps bind soil particles together, stabilizing slopes, riverbanks, and degraded lands. Studies indicate that bamboo can successfully rehabilitate ravine lands and prevent landslides. Techniques such as staggered bamboo planting, trenching, and contour bunding further help in moisture conservation and improve soil structure.

3. Improving Water Quality

Bamboo plays a vital role in maintaining water quality by acting as a natural filter. It absorbs excess nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, while trapping sediments and pollutants in riparian zones. This function is crucial for preventing water contamination and ensuring the health of aquatic ecosystems.

4. Boosting Climate Resilience

Bamboo's rapid growth, high biomass productivity, and efficient water use make it a valuable asset in climate adaptation. It helps regulate water flow, sequester carbon, and withstand extreme weather events, making it a sustainable solution for mitigating climate change impacts on watersheds.

Integrating bamboo into watershed management

To maximize bamboo's benefits, it should be integrated into agroforestry systems, soil conservation programs like river bank stabilization, and community - led initiatives. Combining bamboo plantations with techniques such as check dams, contour trenches, and rainwater harvesting can enhance hydrological efficiency and ensure long-term sustainability. Additionally, promoting sustainable bamboo-based industries can provide economic incentives for local communities, encouraging conservation efforts.

The model watershed at the Field Research Centre of Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) in Velupadam, Thrissur, serves as a living example of sustainable watershed management. This initiative integrates bamboo plantations with innovative conservation structures such as gabions, stone pitched contour bunding, brushwood check dams and rubble masonry check dams. These measures help regulate water flow, reduce soil erosion, and enhance groundwater recharge. The holistic approach taken at KFRI demonstrates the potential of bamboo-based solutions in restoring degraded landscapes and ensuring water security for future generations.

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Cephalostachyum pergracile Munro- A beautiful, medium-sized clumping bamboo is native to Southeast Asia

Bamboo Beats

Collection of news and activies from the bamboo sector.

Artisans from Kerala participated in Vividhta ka Amrit Mahotsav programme at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

The recently concluded 'Vividhta ka Amrit Mahotsav' at Amruth Udyan, Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi on 5th March 2025 was a great celebration of rich cultural tapestry of India, with bamboo artisans of Kerala playing a pivotal role. These skilled craftsmen and craftswomen showcased the versatility and beauty of bamboo through a range of traditional and contemporary creations. Their exhibits included intricate handicrafts, decorative items, and innovative utility products, each reflecting deep-rooted heritage and sustainable craftsmanship of Kerala. The event provided a valuable platform for these artisans to connect with a broader audience, promoting their unique artistry and contributing to the celebration vibrant cultural diversity of India. It not only recognized their talent but also emphasized the importance of bamboo as an eco-friendly resource and a significant part of artistic identity. Such events are crucial in preserving and promoting traditional crafts, ensuring that the rich legacy of bamboo artisans of Kerala continues to thrive and inspire future generations. The effort and leadership of Kerala State Bamboo Mission for coordinating the artisans for the participation is much appreciated. Sri. Jamshad, Smt. Ambujam, Ms. Shibina, Ms. Sabitha, Mr.Shanib, Mr.Sujith, Ms. Sheeja, and Uravu, Wayanad also represented the Kerala State Bamboo Mission Stall.

Kerala State Handicraft Awards - 2023

Shri. Bindesh P. B., an accomplished craftsman residing in Thrissur, Kerala, has achieved significant recognition for his artistic prowess by securing the State Award for Bamboo Handicrafts at the prestigious Kerala State Handicraft Awards 2023. This honour acknowledges his exceptional talent, dedication to the craft, and the high quality of his bamboo creations. The award not only celebrates his individual achievement but also highlights the importance and artistic merit of bamboo handicrafts within the vibrant cultural landscape of Kerala. His work likely demonstrates a deep understanding of the material, innovative design, and meticulous execution, setting a benchmark for excellence in the field. Congratulations Sri. Bindesh for the achievement.

The Invest Kerala Global Summit 2025

The Invest 'Kerala Global Summit 2025' provided a prominent platform for the Kerala State Bamboo Mission to shine a spotlight on the versatility and artistry inherent in the state's bamboo sector. The programme featured a stunning array of meticulously crafted bamboo products, ranging from elegant furniture and intricate handicrafts to innovative sustainable building materials and everyday utility items. The display not only highlighted the aesthetic appeal and design potential of bamboo but also emphasised its eco-friendly nature and its significant role in economy and cultural heritage of the State. By participating in this global summit, the Kerala State Bamboo Mission effectively drew attention of potential investors and collaborators, emphasizing the opportunities for growth and sustainable development within the thriving bamboo industry of Kerala. The exhibition itself highlighted not only the aesthetic appeal and design potential of bamboo – showcasing sleek contemporary chairs, delicate woven pieces steeped in tradition, and even building materials pointing towards a greener future – but also emphasized its eco-friendly nature and its integral role in economy and cultural identity of Kerala. This initiative aligns with State's broader goals of fostering innovation and investment, positioning the state as a prime destination for sustainable and responsible growth, as the summit's focus on sectors like bamboo craftsmanship demonstrates commitment to preserving its cultural heritage while promoting economic development of Kerala. Kerala State Bamboo Mission is showcased the craftsmanship of Uravu (Wayanad), Storoot (Palakkad), Bambook (Kannur), Elements (Wayanad), and Soura (Wayanad). The programme was attended by foreign representatives, major companies, industrial leaders, and innovative technology experts. The summit underscored the investment opportunities within bamboo industry of Kerala, emphasizing its eco-friendly nature and diverse applications in construction, furniture, handicrafts, and more.

Submission guidelines

We at Bamboo Info are excited to invite you to contribute full-length articles, news snippets, reports, and announcements of bamboo-related events for our upcoming issues. We welcome submissions on a wide range of topics, including but not limited to:

Spotlight: share your knowledge and expertise on any aspect of bamboo you're passionate about. You may introduce readers to a topical issue in the bamboo sector that deserves more attention.

Out of the Box: Have you stumbled upon a design concept, product novelty, or innovation that uses bamboo in a unique and creative way? We want to hear about it! Please submit an illustrated note describing the species used, dimensions, and other relevant details. The design should be original.

Species in Focus: Do you have a particular species of bamboo that you find fascinating? Share your insights on its distribution, ecology, salient features, specific uses, cultivation, and economic potential.

Roots: Bamboo has a rich cultural history and is still used in many traditional ways today. We would love to showcase time-tested bamboo products, cultural uses of bamboo, and traditional technologies from far and wide.

Chronicles: We are interested in hearing stories from the field about bamboo resource development, technology adoption, training, and other related topics.

Bamboo Quill: This section will highlight relevant books or publications about an emergent aspect of bamboo.

To submit your notes and articles, please send them to btsg@kfri.res.in or btsgkfri@gmail.com.

Bamboo Info

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Cover Image

Teinostachyum wightii (Munro) Bedd. patches from the Sholayar forest in Thrissur District, Kerala.

About Bamboo Info

Bamboo Info is a quarterly newsletter from the Bamboo Technical Support Group (BTSG)-KFRI. Contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of BTSG-KFRI. Articles may be reprinted without charge, provided BTSG-KFRI and the author are credited. All photos should be credited to BTSG-KFRI.

About BTSG-KFRI

The Bamboo Technical Support Group is hosted at KFRI and supported by the National Bamboo Mission of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare to serve as a unit providing support to the National Bamboo Cell in technical and research matters.

KFRI BTSG team has expertise in various areas relating to bamboo which includes taxonomy, propagation, germplasm conservation, plantation technology, preservative treatments, harvesting techniques, pest and disease management, Value addition and marketing of bamboo products, inventory of bamboo stocking using Remote Sensing and GIS, socio-economic and livelihood potential, training programmes, cluster development and livelihood improvement of artisans and farmers, etc.

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