



SMT. DEVAKI AMMA G



Smt. Devaki Amma G, affectionally known as 'Forest Grandma', is a forest grower from Alappuzha district, Kerala, widely respected for transforming the barren coastal land of her homestead into a thriving forest ecosystem through individual effort and dedication. Over the past four decades, she has nurtured Kollakal Thapovanam, a five-acre homestead forest that now shelters more than 3,000 trees and a rich diversity of indigenous, medicinal, and rare plant species. Her work stands as a remarkable example of citizen-led biodiversity conservation and sustainable land restoration.

2. Born on 19th August 1934, Smt. Devaki Amma was actively involved in agriculture, cultivating paddy, gingelly, coconut, and vegetables. A serious car accident in 1980 caused a severe leg injury that restricted her mobility and brought farming activities to a halt. During her recovery, she began planting saplings on the sandy land, which was used for the post-harvesting activities. What began as a personal effort gradually evolved into a lifelong commitment to afforestation and ecological care.

3. Smt. Devaki Amma relied on traditional knowledge and close observation of soil and climate conditions for growing the plant saplings. Through mulching, organic manuring from home cattle, careful retention of leaf litter and thoughtful water management, she improved the quality of coastal sandy soil. Two ponds within Thapovanam have been maintained to ensure year-round water availability, contributing to groundwater recharge, preventing saltwater intrusion and supporting aquatic life. The increasing tree cover has helped moderate the local microclimate, reduce heat intensity and improve overall environmental stability in the surrounding area. Today, Kollakal Thapovanam functions as an ex-situ conservation repository for several rare and endangered plant species native to Kerala. The forest provides habitat for numerous birds, butterflies, and small fauna, creating a balanced ecosystem within a homestead setting. Students, researchers, and nature enthusiasts visit the site to understand sustainable afforestation practices and biodiversity conservation at the grassroots level. She has encouraged schools, colleges, and households to cultivate native and medicinal plants by providing seeds and seedlings, thereby strengthening community awareness about environmental responsibility. Her message has consistently emphasized planting according to one's oxygen and food needs and nurturing nature with long-term commitment.

4. Smt. Devaki Amma has received several national honours, including the Indira Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra Award (2003). She was conferred the Nari Shakti Puraskar in 2018 in recognition of her contribution to creating a coastal forest. She has also been recognized with state-level awards such as the Vanamitra Award, Bhoomitra Award, State Biodiversity Award (Green Individual), and other environmental commendations from the Government of Kerala. She was also featured by *The Better India* in 2019 as one of the "10 Heroes Saving Us All," recognizing her four decades of dedicated environmental service.