

## Bio-fencing to ward off wild animals

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The Marayur Wildlife Sanctuary plans to plant *Agave Americana*, commonly known as maguey or century plant, on the forest fringes to prevent wild animals from entering human habitations and destroying crops.

Spines on sharp edges of the leaves deter wild animals, especially elephants.

Last year, saplings were planted on an experimental basis with the participation of local communities and it had been decided to extend it to more areas as it is accepted as an effective bio-fence in some countries, Marayur Wildlife Warden Saby Varghese told *The Hindu* on Friday.

Agave is a species of flowering plant in the family Agavaceae and is native to Mexico. It is planted the world over as an ornamental plant and dies after 20 to 30 years.

In some African countries, native communities had effectively planted it to prevent intrusion of wild animals. At the nursery of the Forest Department, 4,000 10-month old saplings were ready for re-planting, said Mr. Varghese.

### **Man-animal conflict**

He said recurring instances of man-animal conflict in the area prompted the department to take the initiative.

Mr. Varghese said the plants were available in dry forest areas of Marayur, which is a rain shadow area. "Natural fencing is cost-effective and more viable as wild elephants tend to destroy solar fencing and pass even the trenches, which become less deep with the passage of time," he said.

Munnar Wildlife Warden M.G. Vinodkumar said the tribal communities of Attappady planted the species on the trenches to effectively prevent elephants from intruding into their hamlets.