INTRODUCTION
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Assam, in the North East Frontier of India, is a natural abode of innumerable flora and fauna. The natural landscape with undulating blue hills and zigzag rivers make the scenery of Assam very beautiful. Varied types of trees grow in Assam in a natural way through the river valleys upto the top of the high hills, which is a bountiful gift of Nature. Some of these enhance the beauty while others mar the landscape character.

The state is situated between 24° and 28° north latitude and 89.42° east longitude. It is bounded by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh in the north, and by Nagaland and Manipur in the east, and by Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya in the south, and West Bengal and Bangladesh in the west. The state covers a land surface of about 78,523 sq.m with a population of 23.3 million (Mandal, 1981). There are twenty three administrative districts in the state (Plate- 1).

Assam is divided into two physiographic divisions, plains and hills. The mighty river Brahmaputra flows through Assam from east to west. The Barak river which is the second largest river flows through the southern area of the state dividing it into two distinct valleys viz., Brahmaputra valley and Barak valley. There is also a small hilly part in the state in between the two valleys (Plate- 2).
Physiographic Map of Assam Plate No. 2
Soil is broadly classified into four types viz. (a) New alluvial (b) Old alluvial (c) Red loam and (d) Lateritic. New alluvial soils are found in the riparian tracts, which are sandy loam or silty loam in texture, less acidic and moderately rich in plant nutrients. Old alluvial soils are found in high land of plain districts of Brahmaputra valley. These are more acidic and show deficiency of phosphate and potash.

Red loamy soils which are characteristic of hill slopes and hills of plain districts, are more loamy and friable in texture, rich in organic matter, deficient in phosphate and potash. However, hills in general contain lateritic soils and are mostly acidic, brick-red in colour and poor in plant nutrients (Mandal, 1981).

Flood is a recurring phenomenon in Assam. It is experienced by the state almost every year. During the pre-monsoon months, sizeable areas of Brahmaputra and Barak vallies are subjected to flood, which takes a heavy loss in terms of life, property, crops and trees.

The climate in the state is generally temperate with heavy rainfall usually from April to September. It is characterised by hot and wet summer and dry cool winter. On the basis of temperature, rainfall and humidity there are four climatic seasons, in the state viz. Pre-monsoon (March - May), Monsoon (June - August), Post-monsoon (September - November) and Winter (December - February). The average
July and January Isotherm Map of Assam
Plate No. 3
minimum temperature is about 10°C attained in December - January and maximum is about 32°C in July - August. The relative humidity on an average exceeds 80% (Plate-3).

Rainfall is an important factor which contributes amply to the climate of Assam. Assam enjoys well distributed rainfall during five months of a year viz. May to September (Plate-4).

On the basis of rainfall terrain and soil characteristics, the state is divided into six agro-climatic zones: North Bank plains - comprised of districts Lakhimpur and Darang, Upper Brahmaputra valley - comprised of districts Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Golaghat, Central Brahmaputra valley - comprised of district Nowgong, Lower Brahmaputra valley - comprised of districts Kamrup and Goalpara (Plate-5).

Trees form an integral part of the Earth's biosphere and they perform a vital role in sustaining life. Thus, the aim of landscape architecture is to create a better and comfortable environment. According to Simond (1961), "if man is a product of environment as well as of heredity, he instinctively seeks for natural beauty and harmony; he is repelled by disorder, friction and ugliness. He is a creature of the meadow, the forest; the sea and the plain. He is born with a love for the feel and smell of rich warm earth, the taste and sparkle of clear water, the refreshing coolness of foliage overhead and the spacious blue dome of the sky". But such
an environment can never be created as a whole. If once created by chance, it could never be maintained in a static form. Along with erosion, the natural landscape is greatly disturbed due to increase of population pressure, rapid industrialisation and urbanization, more specially in densely populated areas where land is paved or covered with houses, industries, roads, highways and other constructions. Thus, the space for growth and development of plants has been decreasing rapidly and ultimately resulting in an imbalance in the ecosystem. Therefore, this needs a scientific planning of plants to balance and improve the ecosystem and to create a beautiful environment for man's living. Hence, presently the man-made landscape is of considerable importance together with the changed concept of planting design in respect of varied site characters.

It has been considered that the landscape plants are mostly ornamental plants which create satisfactory environment by adding the beauty and functional values to a locality, which are different from place to place including their planting pattern. For example, some trees which may not be useful to a particular place may be useful in other places. In Assam, the existing landscape plants show a greater diversity in their characteristics, relative frequencies and aesthetic values, which needs careful consideration for landscape planning with proper scientific design. Based on different site characters, a study has been planned to assess the relative merits and
demerits of the existing landscape, so that certain changes may be made in the light of present day concept of landscaping with ornamental plants. The observations were undertaken with the following objectives:

0 To make pedagogical observations on certain ornamental plants and to prepare a comprehensive list of these plants.

0 To classify these plants based on their height and spread, flower colour and blossom period to meet the demand for a more efficient, productive and pleasure environment for man.

0 To assess the merits and demerits of various plants of the landscape in relation to the aesthetic and functional values.

0 To evaluate the style of planting design and techniques according to utility of areas.

0 To preserve and improve the positive aspects of landscape characters after comparison with modern concept of planting design.

0 To develop integration between natural and man-made landscapes.

0 To develop a model landscape by adopting suitable planting design for preserving indigenous socio-cultural characters of the region.