IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 5, Issue 5, June 2025
Impact Factor: 7.67

Smart Tree Planting Robot Using Bluetooth

Abhishek R. Pansare[1], Ashwini S. Lamkhade[2], Pranali K. Hingade[3], Ashwini T. Athave[4], Mrs. K.S. Tarwade[5]
Department of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering, [12345]
Adsul's Technical Campus, Chas

Abstract: *Afforestation has emerged as a critical strategy to combat climate change, restore degraded ecosystems, and increase global carbon sequestration. Traditional methods of tree planting are often labor-intensive, inconsistent, and unsuitable for large-scale operations. To overcome these challenges, this study presents the design and development of a Smart Tree Planting Robot that automates the sapling plantation process using embedded systems and wireless communication. The proposed system features an Arduino Uno microcontroller (ATmega328P), an L293D motor driver, SG90 servo motors for precise planting actions, and four 100 RPM DC gear motors for stable locomotion. Bluetooth-based control is achieved through the HC-05 module, enabling real-time operation via an Android mobile interface.*

The power system consists of two 3.7V 2000mAh Li-ion batteries managed by an 8.4V 20A Battery Management System (BMS), ensuring safe and efficient field deployment. The robot performs critical tasks such as soil digging, sapling placement, and coverage, significantly reducing manual labor and ensuring consistent planting depth and spacing. A custom-designed PCB reduces wiring complexity and improves reliability, supporting modular integration and future upgrades.

This project draws on developments in autonomous and semi-autonomous tree-planting robotics, as demonstrated by previous research on systems such as Treebot for climbing and planting in constrained environments [1], photovoltaic-powered planting machines [2], and 3D vision-based nursery transplant robots [3]. Comparable advancements in fully automatic machines capable of high-speed planting [4], and intelligent structural designs for terrain adaptability [5], informed the mechanical and electronic design strategies in this study.

Experimental testing across different terrain types confirmed the system's stability, scalability, and operational efficiency. The robot presents a cost-effective, portable, and user-friendly solution for afforestation, sustainable agriculture, and remote reforestation efforts.

Keywords: Smart Tree Planting Robot; Arduino Uno; Afforestation; Bluetooth Control; SG90 Servo; ATmega328P; L293D Motor Driver; Environmental Robotics; Automation in Agriculture; Reforestation Technology

I. INTRODUCTION

Tree plantation is a fundamental environmental activity that contributes to combating climate change, preventing soil erosion, and restoring ecological balance. However, manual tree planting methods are labor-intensive, time-consuming, and often inefficient when deployed on large or difficult terrains. To address these limitations, automation and robotics are being actively explored to modernize afforestation techniques.

The Smart Tree Planting Robot (STPR) using Bluetooth communication offers a cost-effective and scalable solution for remote-controlled planting operations. This robot is designed to automate the key steps of digging, placing saplings, and covering them with soil, thereby minimizing human effort and improving consistency. The Bluetooth module serves as a wireless interface between the user and the robot, allowing for real-time control, monitoring, and adjustments through a mobile application or microcontroller interface.

Several research studies have inspired and supported the development of such robotic systems. For example, Hou et al. (2022) developed a fully automatic tree planting machine capable of completing the entire plantation cycle autonomously [4]. Chen et al. (2023) proposed structural innovations in planting robots to improve efficiency and terrain adaptability

[5]. Similarly, Hu (2023) presented a tree-planting robot powered by photovoltaic energy, highlighting sustainability in robotic applications [2].

Bluetooth-enabled systems offer significant advantages in simplicity and portability. While technologies like Wi-Fi and GPS are used in advanced models for large-scale deployment, Bluetooth is especially suitable for small-scale or prototype systems due to its low power consumption, short-range communication, and easy integration with microcontrollers like Arduino or ESP32.

Earlier, robots such as the Treebot, a flexible climbing robot developed by Lam and Xu (2011), demonstrated the use of embedded systems for forest environments [1]. Likewise, transplanting robots with 3D vision [3], autonomous gardening rovers [7], and terrace farming robots [11] illustrate how various automation techniques are being customized for agriculture.

In conclusion, the Smart Tree Planting Robot using Bluetooth is a step towards accessible and practical afforestation technology. Its ability to perform essential planting operations with remote control enhances efficiency, reduces human labor, and contributes to sustainable environmental practices. With continued innovation and integration of energy-efficient and AI-driven modules, such robots can play a vital role in future forestation and smart agriculture initiatives.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reforestation and afforestation are key strategies for mitigating climate change, restoring degraded ecosystems, and promoting biodiversity. However, traditional tree-planting methods face major limitations in terms of labor intensity, time consumption, and inefficiency in large-scale applications. To overcome these challenges, significant strides have been made in integrating robotics, automation, and intelligent control systems into planting technologies.

One of the most impactful innovations is the autonomous seeding robot by **Land Life Company**, which demonstrated a remarkable increase in germination rates—up to **80% compared to traditional aerial seeding**. This robot operates by precisely embedding seeds into the ground and extending the planting window beyond seasonal constraints, thereby maximizing environmental adaptability and success rates [12].

Neousys Technology introduced a semi-autonomous planting system enhanced with **Edge AI** and **multi-sensor fusion**, including LiDAR and IMUs. This design ensures real-time perception, effective obstacle avoidance, and improved operator safety while navigating rugged and remote terrains [12].

Further innovations include the **Continental-Land Life tree-seeding robot**, capable of planting up to 60 trees per hour. Its self-contained drilling and seed deposition system tackles the problem of large-scale planting with minimal human intervention, addressing both labor shortages and scalability issues [12].

The **Trovador Alpha** showcases **GPS-guided automation** and robotic digging arms that allow it to plant over 100 trees per hour, or roughly one tree every 26 seconds. This makes it particularly useful for rapid reforestation in post-wildfire landscapes or deforested areas [12].

For arid and desert ecosystems, **A'seedbot**, designed by **Mazyar Etehadi**, introduces a **solar-powered robot** to traverse sand dunes and plant drought-resistant seeds using 3D-printed legs and embedded soil sensors [6].

The **Robotic Forester by Forsilvitech** automates soil preparation and sapling planting with minimal ecological disturbance. Its semi-autonomous operation increases sapling survival and reduces ground impact in remote areas [12].

The **AutoPlant project** developed a **fully autonomous system** for site preparation and tree planting using AI and GPS navigation. It achieved a 70% reduction in manual labor while maintaining planting precision [12].

Urban afforestation has also benefited from **IoT-based monitoring systems**, using environmental sensors for soil moisture, air quality, and light conditions to support data-driven planting decisions [8].

Multi-agent systems like the one reported by **Intelligent Living**, where one robot clears land and another plants, highlight scalable solutions that can plant thousands of trees daily [12].

Finally, low-cost semi-autonomous robots using **Arduino-based microcontrollers** and simple sensors are proving valuable for rural and under-resourced areas, providing essential functions like digging, seed placement, and watering [10].

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These studies demonstrate the growing relevance of robotics and IoT in forestry. They collectively inform the design of the **Smart Tree Planting Robot using Bluetooth**, aiming to offer a modular, cost-effective, and semi-autonomous solution inspired by advanced systems like Treebot [1], photovoltaic-powered robots [2], 3D-vision planters [3], fully automated machines [4], and intelligent planting mechanisms [5].

III. SYSTEM DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

3.1 Block Diagram

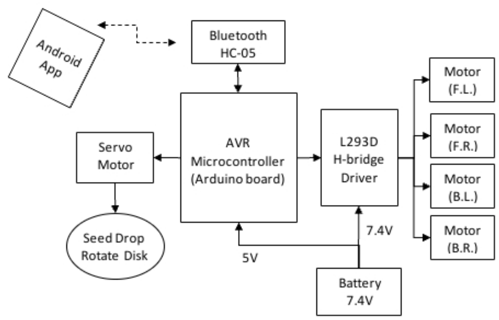

Figure 1 : Block Diagram of the Smart Tree Planting Robo1 using Bluetooth

The Smart Tree Planting Robot is organized into three primary subsystems that work in coordination to automate the planting process:

Mechanical Planting Mechanism:

This subsystem is responsible for performing the physical operations of digging, placing saplings, and covering them with soil. It includes:

- Four 100 RPM DC gear motors for robot movement.
- An SG90 servo motor attached to a digging and planting arm.
- A structural frame supporting the planting tool and motors.

Electronic Control Unit:

At the core of the robot lies the Arduino Uno (ATmega328P) microcontroller, which acts as the brain of the system. It is programmed to:

- Interpret commands received wirelessly.
- Control the motors and servo for motion and actuation.
- Sequence the planting operations with precision.
- Supporting components include:
- L293D motor driver ICs for bi-directional motor control.

Power regulation circuits powered by a 7.4V Li-ion battery pack and managed by a 20A BMS (Battery Management System).

Wireless Interface:

A Bluetooth communication link, established using the HC-05 Bluetooth module, allows the robot to be operated remotely using a smartphone application or a Bluetooth terminal. This interface supports commands such as:

- Move forward/backward
- Turn left/right
- Start or stop planting
- Trigger servo operations for digging and planting

This modular system design enhances reliability, simplifies debugging, and supports future upgrades such as GPS or IoT-based remote monitoring.

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3.2 Circuit Diagram

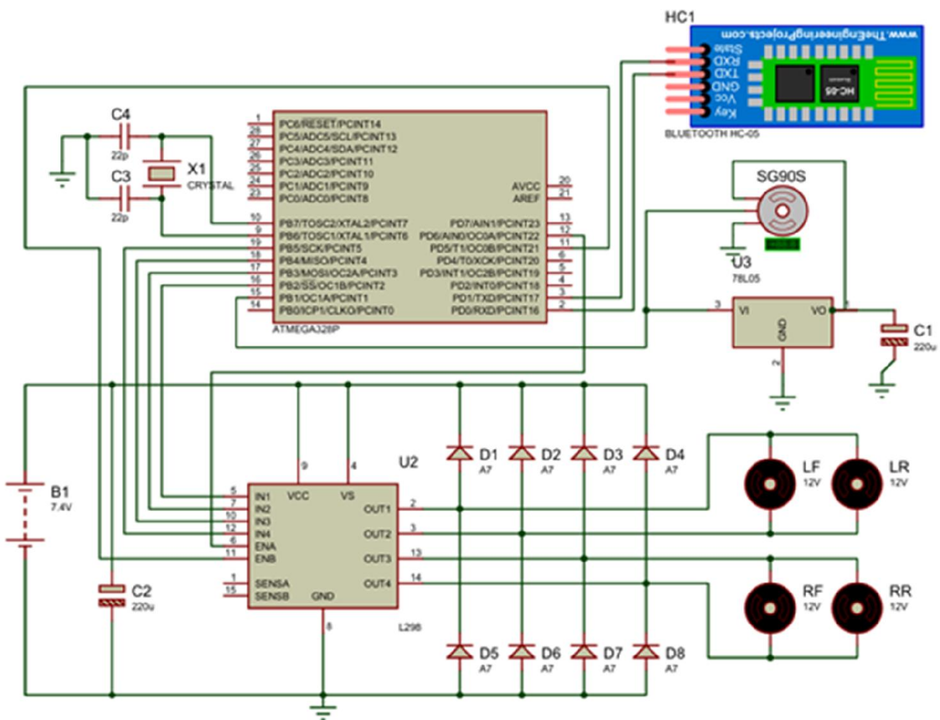

Figure 2 : Circuit Diagram of the Robot

The electrical circuit is designed to integrate all control and actuation components efficiently. Key parts of the circuit include:

Microcontroller and Interfaces:

The Arduino Uno serves as the central processor. It interfaces with:

HC-05 Bluetooth module via UART (pins TX/RX)

L293D drivers for controlling the DC motors (connected to digital pins)

Servo motor connected via PWM pin for angle control

Power Supply System:

Two 3.7V 2000mAh Li-ion batteries are connected in series to provide a 7.4V supply. A Battery Management System (BMS) ensures safe operation by protecting against overcharging and deep discharge. Voltage regulators are used to provide stable 5V for logic-level components.

Motor Control:

L293D motor drivers allow for independent control of each motor. Inputs from the Arduino determine the direction and speed (if PWM is used). The motors drive the wheels and positioning arms.

Servo Motor Integration:

The SG90 servo motor is powered via a dedicated 5V line and controlled using PWM signals from the Arduino. It performs critical functions such as digging, lifting, and placing saplings accurately.

Additional Ports:

Extra GPIO pins on the Arduino are available for adding sensors or extra actuators, making the robot easily expandable.

This circuit architecture allows smooth coordination between mechanical movements, control logic, and wireless communication, making the robot efficient and easy to operate in field conditions.

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IV. METHODOLOGY

The Smart Tree Planting Robot is built around a modular and sensor-integrated architecture to automate the core operations of navigation, planting, and user interaction. The robot performs the planting process in a sequential cycle, combining mechanical movement, electronic control, and wireless communication.

1. Navigation and Obstacle Detection

The robot begins by initializing its control system and sensors. Using an **ultrasonic sensor**, it scans the surroundings for obstacles and adjusts its direction accordingly to prevent collisions. This feature helps the robot navigate safely in dynamic or uneven terrains, ensuring it reaches the designated planting points.

2. Soil Moisture Assessment

Before planting, the robot uses a **soil moisture sensor** to measure the water content in the soil. This sensor ensures that saplings are only planted when there is adequate moisture to support initial growth. If the soil is too dry, the planting cycle is skipped or flagged to the user via the control system.

3. Digging and Sapling Placement

Upon confirming suitable soil conditions:

A **servo motor** activates the planting arm to dig a hole in the soil.

The robot then places the sapling or seed in the prepared hole using a mechanical holder or dispensing mechanism.

Finally, the arm covers the sapling with soil to complete the planting process.

This cycle is controlled precisely through time-based logic and programmed sequences on the Arduino Uno microcontroller.

4. Data Feedback and Monitoring

Although the main control is done via Bluetooth, the system may optionally include a **NodeMCU (ESP8266)** module to enable **real-time data monitoring** via a cloud dashboard (e.g., ThingSpeak). This allows tracking of:

Soil moisture levels

Number of saplings planted

Operational status of motors and battery levels

(Note: If NodeMCU is not used in your version, this step can be excluded.)

5. Wireless Remote Control

The robot receives commands through the **HC-05 Bluetooth module**, paired with an Android smartphone or compatible device. Users can:

Control movement (forward, reverse, left, right)

Start or stop the planting process

Trigger the servo motor to begin digging and planting

This Bluetooth-based interface simplifies control and is ideal for short-range field operations where internet connectivity is not available.

V. ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

Advantages:

Reduces Manual Labor in Afforestation Projects:

The robot automates the physical tasks of digging, planting, and soil covering, significantly minimizing the need for human effort. This is particularly beneficial in large-scale reforestation programs, rural afforestation drives, or terrains that are difficult for manual laborers to access.

Ensures Uniform Planting Depth and Spacing:

By using a servo-controlled planting mechanism, the robot maintains consistent depth and placement of saplings, improving germination rates and plant survival. This uniformity is difficult to achieve manually and is essential for systematic forestry or agricultural operations.

Wireless Bluetooth Control for Ease of Use:

The integration of an HC-05 Bluetooth module allows remote control of the robot via smartphones. This wireless operation enhances field usability, especially for users with limited technical experience. Commands like forward movement, turning, and initiating the planting cycle can be executed in real time.

Low-Cost and Easily Available Components:

The system is built using affordable and widely available components such as Arduino Uno, L293D motor drivers, DC gear motors, and SG90 servo motors. This makes the design economically viable for student projects, NGOs, and small-scale farmers.

Modular and Upgradeable Design:

The robot's architecture is modular, allowing future enhancements such as:

Integration of GPS for autonomous navigation

Addition of soil sensors, AI-based terrain recognition, or solar power modules

Expansion with IoT dashboards or GSM alerts

This makes the platform scalable and adaptable for more advanced use cases.

Compact and Portable System:

Its lightweight frame and battery-powered operation make the robot easy to transport and deploy in remote areas where access to electricity or heavy equipment is limited.

Limitations:

Limited Communication Range due to Bluetooth:

The Bluetooth module typically has a range of only 8–10 meters in open space. This restricts the robot's remote usability in large fields, forests, or plantations without visual access to the user.

Lacks AI-Based Autonomous Navigation:

The current version requires manual direction and control. It cannot autonomously decide paths, detect planting points, or avoid complex obstacles using artificial intelligence or vision-based systems.

Terrain Limitations and Wheel Slippage:

The robot may face challenges on muddy, rocky, or uneven terrain. Its lightweight design and wheel-based locomotion can result in poor traction or tilting, reducing reliability in off-road environments.

Battery Life and Power Constraints:

The robot operates on rechargeable Li-ion batteries. Without solar or auto-charging capability, prolonged use in the field may require frequent recharging or spare battery packs. Power drain may also increase with additional sensors or modules.

No Built-in Soil Quality or Nutrient Detection:

While a soil moisture sensor may be included, the robot lacks advanced features such as pH measurement, nutrient analysis, or real-time feedback on soil fertility, which limits precision planting in diverse soil types.

Manual Setup and Calibration Required:

Assembling, calibrating, and operating the robot requires some technical knowledge, including basic programming, circuit soldering, and mechanical alignment. This could be a barrier for completely untrained users.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Smart Tree Planting Robot presents a promising and practical solution for semi-automated afforestation, addressing the urgent need for scalable and efficient tree planting methods. Designed with a focus on affordability and accessibility, the robot utilizes a low-cost, open-source hardware architecture, making it easy for developers, researchers, and environmental organizations to adopt, modify, and improve the system according to specific needs.

The current model is capable of performing essential tree-planting functions with minimal human intervention, reducing labor costs and increasing planting efficiency in remote or challenging terrains. Furthermore, its modular design offers flexibility for future upgrades, such as the integration of GPS for precision mapping, AI-based navigation for intelligent obstacle avoidance and route optimization, and solar charging systems to enhance energy efficiency and sustainability.

With continued development and community collaboration, the Smart Tree Planting Robot has the potential to evolve into a fully autonomous tool for environmental restoration. It can contribute significantly to reforestation efforts, combatting deforestation, reducing carbon emissions, and supporting global ecological balance. Ultimately, this innovation represents a step forward in leveraging technology for the preservation and regeneration of our natural environment.

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