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The dedicated gardener

Q: Can you tell us a bit about the Federal Territory and Selangor Gardening Society?

A: The society is a non-profit organisation run by volunteers to promote gardening. Its activities include organising talks, discussions, demonstrations and excursions.

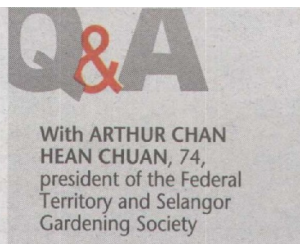
The society also publishes a quarterly newsletter called *Greenfingers* which provides gardening tips and topics of interest for gardening enthusiasts.

Q: Why did you join the society?

A: I love nature and would like to see it preserved. There is little effort to protect the environment. The public need to see that by protecting the environment, we are ensuring a way for humanity to survive. I join the society to educate the public that you can conserve the environment just by planting a small tree, flower plants or even herbs which benefit you and other living things like insects which help in the pollination process.

Q: Why do you enjoy gardening?

A: It's therapeutic and calming. I started gardening when I was young



and took up my mother's interest in gardening. Parents should encourage their children to do gardening. A knowledge in gardening can be extended to the understanding of other fields such as pharmaceutical, herbology and in the perfume making industry as the industry relies mostly on the essence of flowers. I hope the interest in gardening which our forefathers taught us when we were in the kampung can be practised in the urban areas.

Q: What do you think about the public's attitude towards preserving the environment?

A: It is obvious that the public still fails to recycle and reuse non-disposable items. This is a common problem among the younger generation as it fails to see the importance of recycling. We conduct outreach programmes in schools and teach the young how to love nature and preserve it.

Q: What other programme does the society conduct?

A: We provide our expertise to the City Hall Landscaping and Recreational Department. We also educate the public about tree planting, herbs and vegetation. We adopted the Sri Petaling secondary school two years ago and worked with the students and City Hall to spruce up the school's landscaping. We also hold major planting-pot sales in Taman Tun Dr Ismail every three months.

Q: What are the essential secrets of gardening?

A: Tender loving care. You need to have the passion and the knowledge. It won't do to just have the passion and the drive to do gardening but not

the knowledge on how to maintain and keep the plants healthy. Our society teaches the public how to care for the plants. We also teach enthusiasts about the various types of plants and how to grow them.

Q: What plants would you suggest for first-timers?

A: Herbs, as it's resilient and easy to grow. First-time gardeners can also plant vegetables such as chillies and tomatoes and other greens. Other than eating your own produce, you can also save on your grocery bill.

Q: How is the society doing?

A: We are doing well, especially with the support of our patron, Tan Sri Dr Chong Hon Nyan, and other supporters like Toh Puan Aishah Ong. We are planning to hold more talks with other professional bodies such as the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI) and the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM). We also have invited nursery operators from Sungai Buloh to share their gardening tips — *By Halim Said*



Interview Arthur Chan, President of the Selangor & Fed Territory Gardening Society. — Picture by Mokhsin Abidin