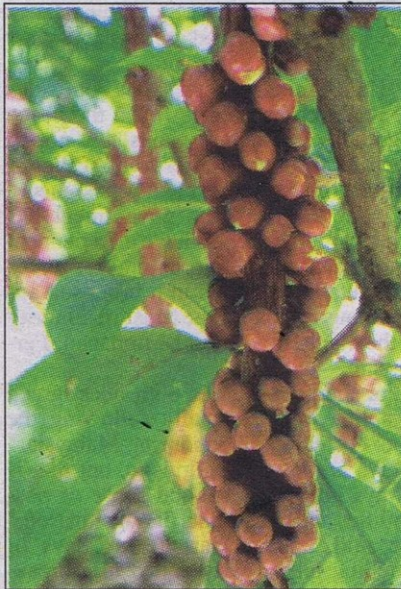


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MediaTitle	New Sabah Times English (KK)		
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Pictorial book on Malaysian fruits (Page 9)



Othaman Hasin and his wife, Zawiah Ngah who both work with the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) as general worker and research assistant respectively, have translated their deep passion and interest for trees in an enlightening pictorial book entitled '99 Spesies Buah di FRIM' (99 Fruit Species in FRIM). Some excerpts from the book TOP LEFT: The wild red durian reportedly tastier and less pungent than the regular durian; BOTTOM LEFT: The "buah putat bukit" is just one of three putat species found in FRIM. The leaves are eaten as salad but the fruits are pounded and used as fish bait.

Pictorial book showcases Malaysian fruit heritage

By WAN SHAHARA AH-MAD GHAZALI

KUALA LUMPUR: Othaman Hasin, 58, and his wife Zawiah Ngah, 43, have worked with trees and plants for much of their adult life.

Othaman a general worker with the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) has amassed a wealth of knowledge

in plants as he accompanies local and foreign botanists in conducting field work.

Zawiah has been a research assistant at FRIM's forest plantation division since her early 20s and has participated extensively in plant research.

Apart from work, plants also

have a strong influence in their personal lives. The couple has tried every part of the plant for food, medicine and even beauty care.

"We still use guava mixed with pulverised rice grain as face powder because the fruit contains skincare properties,

and drink the water boiled with guava leaves to treat diarrhea, and stomachache," noted Zawiah.

The sentul (wild mangosteen) tree bark, the skin of the rambai and the cashew nut can be made into tantalising dishes, apart from the tampo, asam payang

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(tangerine), salam (bay leaf fruit) and kemunting (rose myrtle) that all taste great when cooked.

"When the asam gelugur (malabar tamarind) tree flowers, we pick the bud and the shoots that taste sour but they are tantalizing when added with salt," she added.

THE LABOUR OF LOVE

However, the couple's labour of love culminated in an enlightening pictorial book entitled '99 Spesies Buah di FRIM' (99 Fruit Species in FRIM).

As they shared the same interest, the couple over the years has been collecting pictures and information on the different fruit species in the country.

While most Malaysians are well aware on the better known fruits like the durian, rambutan, ciku and others, the pictorial book also highlights the lesser known ones.

Apart from the fruits, the book also lists the nutritional value of the different parts of the fruit trees that can be used in healthcare, traditional medication and beauty therapy as done in the olden days including by the Orang Asli.

The book also illustrates the fruit tree's morphological aspects and its significance in the local culture, including names of places derived from the fruit, and where they can be found.

In facilitating quick reference, apart from the pictures the

book also provides a glossary and index.

VALUABLE COLLECTION

Elaborating on their pictorial book, Othaman highlighted that in fact there were more than 100 fruit species in FRIM with all of them having unique attributes and nutritional value.

However, they only chose 99 species believing that it is an auspicious number as Allah has 99 names and the fact that fruits are a gift from god for mankind.

The book, the first one for the couple, was also the first published by FRIM on indigenous fruit tree diversity.

"The book was first mooted by FRIM's Director-General Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod who persuaded us to come up with a book as he did not want to see the pictures and information

collected over the years remain in closed files," said Othaman.

The book also serves as a guide in identifying the different fruit trees, and it will certainly be very useful for the younger generation in cities that are not familiar with the fruit trees.

The book was edited by Dr Abd Latif and several other botanists. Most of the pictures in the book were taken around FRIM's ground, including in its Fruit Arboretum at the Kepong Botanical Garden and FRIM's research stations throughout the country.

They photographed in detail the trees, the leaves, flowers and fruits to help readers identify and make quick reference.

As for the seasonal fruits, the details on the flowering and fruiting season are listed as well. They monitored closely the trees to determine with greater accuracy on the flowering and fruiting time.

However, noted Othaman, the data and pictures of some of the fruits were difficult to obtain especially when they fruit only once every three to five years.

MANY INTERESTING REVELATIONS

Interestingly, in this book readers will come across many of the local fruits that they have never heard or seen before - cerapu (button mangosteen), rawa (another type of tamarind), redan, jentik-jentik.

Maybe, readers may not know that there are many ways to savour a fruit, as for example, the belinjau fruit is normally made into fritters but it tastes better when boiled.

Do you know that the young belinjau fruit could be used to soften meat while the tree's shoots taste great when cooked with coconut milk (masak lemak)?

FRUIT TREES OUTSIDE FRIM

Apart from highlighting the diversity of the fruit trees on FRIM's grounds, the couple also sampled fruit trees at FRIM's research stations in Terengganu, Pahang, Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Perlis.

For example, at the research station in Setiu the sandy soil there was perfect for the cashew nut tree, belinjau, pauh, and mango.

Trees like durian beludu, mangosteen and rambutan thrive at SPF Jengka, while the 'pokok berangan' (Malayan Chestnut) thrives at Pasoh research station.

Apart from that, fruit trees like sukun (bread fruit), pauh, mengkudu (Indian mulberry) and jackfruit were fertile at SPF Bidor, while sour fruit trees like mangoes, kedondong (umbra) and limau kasturi (lime) grew

fertile in Mata Ayer research station in Perlis.

During the visits, the couple also collected the seeds to be planted at FRIM's grounds as a safeguard against extinction.

The couple is hoping that their book will serve as a reference for the nation's plant heritage.

"If possible, we hope the book will be translated into English to allow wider outreach locally and overseas, and we are also working on the second volume on the same topic," he explained.

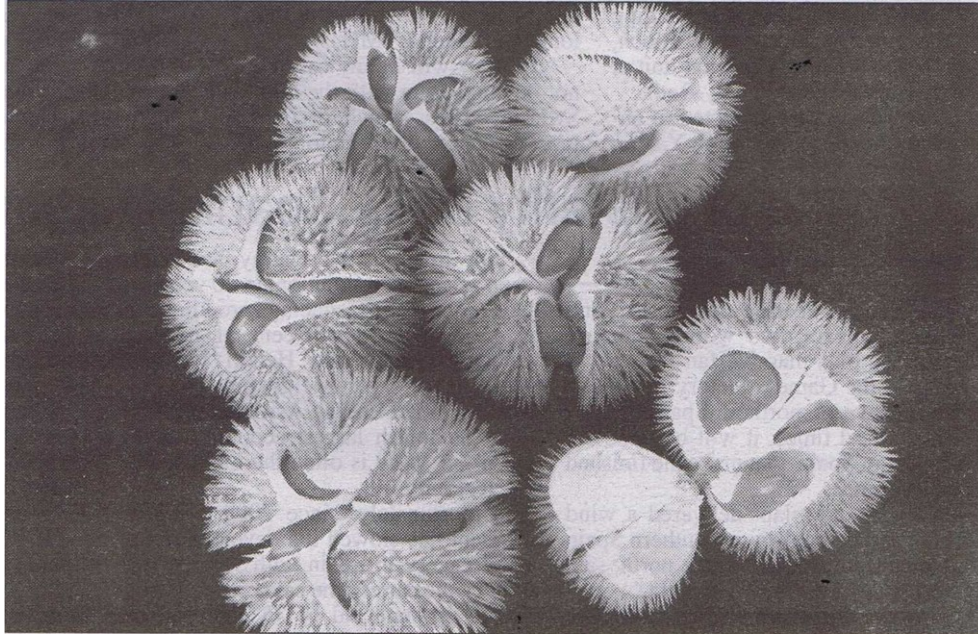
The couple's only child Nur Azirah, 13, is proud of the book, a testament on her parent's dedication on plants.

The book costing RM120 a copy is available at FRIM's bookshop in Kepong and can be ordered through FRIM_Publications@frim.gov.my or by calling 03-62797490 and 03-62797491. - Bernama



This cluster of "buah putat bukit" is just one of three putat species found in FRIM. The leaves are eaten as salad but the fruits are pounded and used as fish bait. - Bernama Photo

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The red durian is one of four wild durian species in FRIM. It differs from the regular durian because of its bright red flesh which tastes creamier but not as moist and is less pungent too. – Bernama Photo



Husband and wife, Othaman Hasin and Zawiah Ngah with their only child, Nur Azirah. They both work as a driver and research assistant respectively at FRIM. Despite their lack of high academic qualifications, the couple's deep interest and vast experience make them "experts" in identifying the different species of fruit trees and their uses. – Bernama Photo