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Grow your own mosquito repellent

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OUR gardens might often be places where mosquitoes could thrive in so it would be good to landscape the garden and choose plants for reasons other than aesthetic value, including shrubs that are natural insect repellents.

Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) eco-physiology research head Dr Ang Lai Hoe said it was good to grow plants for medicinal or cooking purposes around the house but at the same time, having shrubs that can drive off the *Aedes* mosquitoes served as a natural insect screen.

"The Selangor governments' initiative to have plants such as the *thulasi* (holy basil) as part of the soft landscape is good.

"However, more scientific studies need to be carried out to ascertain the plants' effectiveness as a mos-



As reported in StarMetro on Feb 16.

quito repelling garden shrub," he added.

Dr Ang said local plants such as *serai wangi* (*Cymbopogon nardus*) and *limau purut* (*Citrus hystrix*), which produces citronella, are widely used as an important phyto-chemical ingredient for making

mosquito repellents.

"Based on scientific tests, it has 100% repellent efficiency against *Aedes aegyti* after topical application.

"But, there is no scientific work using potted *serai* or *limau purut* to test for its mosquito

repellent efficiency.

"It should have some repellent properties when grown in the garden but again it needs further research," Dr Ang said.

On Tuesday, *StarMetro* reported that the Selangor government had consulted experts on the effectiveness of natural repellents such as holy basil in the fight against dengue.

It is understood that FRIM is interested in working with the Selangor government on the best approach to use the insect repellent plants.

MBPJ deputy Health and Environment (public health) director Dr Abdul Ghalib Sulaiman said the council was interested in the idea of using natural repellents to control dengue and would discuss the issue further with the state government.

Until Feb 16, Petaling Jaya had recorded 680 dengue cases.