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Plant parents, take note

Forest Research Institute Malaysia launches handy e-book about endangered plants in the country.

THERE is no doubt that the craze for houseplants has been one of the lockdown stories to talk about during the pandemic.

Who has the better indoor garden?

Just take a quick glance at your social media, you're bound to find a few friends who are showing off their latest indoor plants and their plans to turn their homes into a mini jungle.

However, the next time you take home a plant from your local nursery or online gardening centre to add to your indoor garden, you might want to check Forest Research Institute Malaysia's (FRIM) latest publication.

Who knows? It might just be a threatened plant species. FRIM's *Malaysia Red List: Plants Of Peninsular Malaysia Vol. 1* e-book is a great companion piece for all you plant parents out there who wish to find out more about indigenous plants in Malaysia.

Packed with pictures, distribution maps and detailed descriptions, this digital "plant bible" (860-page!) is suitable even for late bloomers. And the best part – it's totally free.

"It is not only a must reference for scientists, scholars, environmentalists, conservationist and decision makers but also to the general public, especially nature lovers and enthusiasts," says Dr Lillian Chua, FRIM forest biodiversity director.

"It forms the basis for understanding the importance and need for threatened plant conservation efforts in our country," she adds.



The *Malaysia Red List: Plants Of Peninsular Malaysia Vol. 1* e-book offers the masses a useful, well-researched study/guide surrounding the nation's plant life and the importance of conservation. – FRIM

Know your plants

In *Malaysia Red List: Plants Of Peninsular Malaysia Vol. 1*, you can spend time learning about the current conservation status of plants in Peninsular Malaysia ... all 1,293 indigenous taxa (a unit used in biological classification).

Be well-informed and know what you're getting when you make that next plant purchase.

"Some locally popular ornamental plants are at risk of extinction. Many of the plants sold in commercial nurseries are collected from its natural habitats and the over-harvesting is leading the spe-

cies to the brink of extinction," warns Chua.

The language used in the book is also accessible despite its scientific content, says Chua, who sees the publication as way of spreading awareness about endangered plant species in Malaysia.

"Although packed with scientific

information, this book was written in a user-friendly and systematic way," she assures.

The *Malaysia Red List: Plants Of Peninsular Malaysia Vol. 1* publication, put together by a team of 26 researchers and two research assistants, is divided into two parts.

It puts forward two important questions: what species and where they were found? Is the species threatened? If yes, why is it threatened?

And if you want to know where to find them, the publication includes a distribution map for each taxon so that you can have a visual guide of how common or rare a taxon is.

Chua mentions that readers will be treated to some surprising discoveries made by the researchers in preparing the book, which took shape in 2018.

For instance, a formerly thought to be extinct plant species (*Shorea kuantanensis*) was rediscovered by the Terengganu Forest Department in Lata Tembakah Recreational Forest in 2014. Prior to the discovery, it was previously known only from Bukit Goh FR, Pahang, where it was last collected in 1936.

Another fact that may surprise readers is to find out that the commonly sighted akar chempaka hutan, kangkung and Bush Morning Glory are actually non-native species.

Facebook: @FRIMKepong. Book download: tinyurl.com/MalaysiaRedListVol1.