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A growing hobby

THERE are several ways to assist the Energy and Natural Resources Ministry (KETSA) in making the 100 Million Tree-Planting Campaign 2020-2025 a success, and choosing gardening as a hobby is among the small efforts towards this green growth effort.

For those who are interested, or are just starting out with the activity, they can begin with something simple, said Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) Biotechnology Nursery Division chief Dr Siti Salwana Hashim.

She said beginners usually face problems in the selection of trees and plants and as such, they should choose plants that are easy to grow first, such as vegetables.

“As you get along and have gained more experience and skill, you can start planting shrubs and ornamental or fruit trees,” she said in a statement today.

Avoid plants that are not suitable for your home – those that are invasive and can be a bother to others, thorny plants, as well as plants that are poisonous or have sap that can be dangerous to small children and pets.

Apart from planting on landed areas, plants can be grown in limited spaces using pots and polybags, she added.

In the meantime, Siti Salwana said discarded items could also be recycled and converted into potted plant containers or planters.

“Waste materials such as mineral water bottles, cooking oil bottles and milk tins can be reused as containers to plant flowers and vegetables. Using recycled materials is considered the most suitable method for gardening especially at houses that have limited space.



You don't need a huge place to start gardening; you just need to find the right plants for your space. – Filepic

“As such, there is (no such thing as saying) you can't plant without a garden. Apart from enjoying the harvest, we can also beautify our surroundings and most importantly plants can increase oxygen level and and cool the planet,” she said.

Before starting on your journey there are gardening tips that beginners must know including the seeds to sow and quality of soil required to sustain plant growth.

According to Siti Salwana, the usual formula suitable for various types of crops including vegetables, fruits and flowers is the 3:2:1 ratio for soil, organic matter and sand.

“In looking after plants it is important to note that they must have the right amount of water, light and fertiliser. Nowadays

gardening tips are shared on social media and you can seek expert guidance online.

“FRIM is also assisting those in planting trees by providing expert advice in identifying the species, site preparation, planting techniques, nursery establishment and tree management,” she said.

She said the sight of trees and green spaces has a calming effect and can help relieve stress and anxiety.

“You will feel serene and satisfied after putting in all the effort which you had probably thought was impossible to achieve.

“Try to cultivate a love for gardening and make it a hobby. Parents too should get their children interested and make this a family activity,” she said. – Bernama