

Headline	Raising public awareness on importance of orchids		
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Raising public awareness on importance of orchids

KUALA LUMPUR: In conjunction with the International Day of Forests, experts are drawing attention to the rich diversity of orchids in Peninsular Malaysia, highlighting the importance of their conservation and unique ecological role.

A sharing session titled “Orchids of Peninsular Malaysia: The Hidden Treasures of Nature,” was held Saturday to raise public awareness of the importance of orchids in the country.

The session featured Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) Orchidologist Ong Poh Teck, who provided valuable insights into ongoing research and conservation initiatives.

“Many people are unaware of the crucial work we do, and events like this help bridge that knowledge gap,” he told Bernama.

He highlighted that Peninsular Malaysia is home to a remarkable variety of orchid species, with 20 per cent of them being endemic to the region.

Discussing the challenges facing wild orchids in Malaysia, Ong identified habitat destruction and over-collection for commercial trade as the two primary threats.

He highlighted the importance of FRIM’s foundational research, particu-



Ong (right) delivers a talk on the ‘Orchids of Peninsular Malaysia: The Hidden Treasures of Nature’ at FRIM.

larly in taxonomy, which plays a key role in assessing the conservation status of various orchid species. Such data is essential for developing effective strategies to protect these plants.

Ong also shared fascinating insights into the pollination strategies of Malaysian orchids, noting their extraordinary diversity in form, colour, and scent.

“For example, some orchids smell fruity to attract fruit flies, while others, with their foul, rotten-meat-like odour, lure blowflies. By studying these unique traits, we can predict which

insects are likely to pollinate each species,” he said.

The session also emphasised the role of the public in orchid conservation. Ong encouraged enthusiasts to educate themselves on the difference between wild-collected and artificially propagated orchids to support sustainable cultivation practices.

He shared that throughout his career, he has described nearly 40 new orchid species from Peninsular Malaysia, further showcasing the country’s incredible floral biodiversity.

Attendees at the event had the rare opportunity to visit FRIM’s herbarium and nursery - facilities not typically open to the public - allowing them to gain a deeper appreciation of the institute’s conservation efforts.

Through such events, FRIM continues to foster greater public awareness and involvement in the conservation of Malaysia’s unique orchid species, ensuring their preservation for future generations.

Today’s event was graced by FRIM Deputy Director General (Research) Dr Norwati Muhammad and its Forest Biodiversity Director Dr Wan Mohd Shukri Wan Ahmad. - Bernama