

DEVELOPING A SOFT-SCAPE STANDARD FOR IMPROVING THE LANDSCAPE QUALITY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The vision 'Towards a Garden Nation 2005' introduced by the Malaysian government in 1997 has boosted rapidly the landscape development throughout the country. The effort further continues with the vision towards 'The Most Beautiful Garden Nation' by the year 2020 mooted in 2006. The landscape industry has then grown quite significantly to cater for demands in soft-scape materials and often works without proper control lead to devastating compromise in the landscape quality. Currently, this issue is critical as there is no specific quality standard to monitor and control the quality of soft-scape materials and works in Malaysia. Therefore, this paper intends to explore the need to develop a soft-scape standard to regulate the quality of soft-scape materials and works in Malaysia. The issues and problems relating to quality standard of soft-scape in landscape construction will be analysed through literatures review, documents analysis and interviews with the local professionals and experts in landscape development. These are further supported by researcher observations at the local landscape nurseries and the landscape construction site. Finally, recommendations are given on the development of the soft-scape standard for the local landscape industry players as reference in their landscape practices. A proper enforcement of this standard will help improve the landscape quality towards sustainability in Malaysia.

Keyword: *Landscape Development, Landscape Industry, Quality Standard, Soft-scape Materials and Works, Landscape Quality*

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality standard is one of the important aspects to be looked into seriously in the landscape development as suggested by Badiru (1995) that it specifies the necessary requirement to produce a high quality product. Quality standard plays an important role in the construction industry. It serves as a communication tool between interested parties of technical requirements and procedures needed to ensure compliance (Atkinson, 1995). Besides that, Badiru and Ayeni (as cited in Badiru, 1995, p.2) stated that "quality standard provides a common basis to achieve product efficiency and compatibility". This will further enhance competition among the practitioners (Guasch et. al, 2007). Furthermore, it also protects the customer interest through specification of adequate and consistent standards of quality of materials and works (Atkinson, 1995). It may be concluded that quality standard is one of the ways to achieve quality in construction.

The landscape development can be considered as a unique form of construction which blends the inert materials with living plants, or known as hard-scape and soft-scape within the environment (Landphair and Klatt, 1999). In landscape construction particularly the soft-scape, a proper handling and care (before - during - after planting) are needed to ensure it remains in good quality. Although landscape construction is closely related to the building construction, however, this dissimilar characteristic distinguishes the two industries that require using different approach in achieving quality.

As landscape development progresses in Malaysia, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the importance of quality standard in regulating the soft-scape quality. Despite having a massive landscape development in this country, very little attention is given on the quality aspect of the soft-scape materials and works.

