

Growing a greener landscape

Volunteers for council's programme help plant 1,500 trees in Shah Alam

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Photos by YAP CHEE HONG



THE Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) began its first tree-planting event this year to create a greener urban landscape.

About 300 volunteers helped plant 1,500 trees along a 1.6km stretch that covered Section U1, U2 and Jalan Montfort for the Shah Alam Trees for Life 2015 programme.

Initiated in 2010, the project will have seven sessions this year. Thanks to a RM45,000 sponsorship by J.C. Jacobsen Foundation, three species of foreign plants that are able to weather the Malaysian climate will also be planted.

This includes the Tecoma (*Tabebuia pentaphyla*), Fern Tree (*Filicium decipiens*) and the Spiny Black Olive or Doa Tree (*Bucida molineti*).

In an effort to educate the young volunteers, Universiti Putra Malaysia senior lecturer Jean Weber provided lots of information on local forests during the event and warned them that neglect could lead to the extinction of local species of lowland plants.

Weber also carried out a small-scale experiment to help preserve indigenous plant species threatened by logging by planting three species of *Dipterocarpaceae* trees.

"Malaysia's lowland forests are currently endangered because it is easier to carry out logging activities in low-lying areas compared to highlands.

"The *Dipterocarpaceae* are lowland trees and make up about 50% of the lowland forest canopy with characteristics distinct to vegetation in the lowlands. But this species is likely to disappear if nothing is done.

"We cannot believe that we can improve on nature.

"My years of research has shown that

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— DATUK AHMAD

ZAHARIN MOHD SAAD



one cannot improve on what has had millions of years to perfect itself," he said.

He added that local plants might be difficult to maintain at first, but in the long run, would thrive and must be preserved to avoid extinction.

Volunteers who attended the event included those from NGOs such as Eco Warriors and Fraser Place Kuala Lumpur as well as educational institutions such as Sunway University College, Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, and Universiti Selangor (Unisel).

However, Shah Alam mayor Datuk Ahmad Zaharin Mohd Saad was keen to draw in volunteers from the city itself.

"Hopefully in the future, more people will join us. We also hope to inspire the younger folk to participate.

"So far, we have planted about 80,000 plants around Shah Alam with the assistance of 11,000 volunteers.

"Another six similar events will follow suit this year, according to various zones," he said.

Also present to help out were J.C. Jacobsen Foundation board of trustees member Henrik Juel Andersen and Eco Warriors founder Matthias "Green Man" Gerber.



Working together: More than 300 volunteers took part in MBSA's first planting session this year. Among them were those from Eco Warriors, Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah and J.C. Jacobsen Foundation.



Keen to contribute: One of the volunteers preparing to plant a sapling.