

Touch and Grow care for plants

New hybrid game enables 'smart planting'

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PETALING JAYA: There are days when we are too busy that we forget to water the plants or perhaps we are going on a long holiday and there is no one around to do it.

But with a new hybrid game called Togo (Touch and Grow), caring for your plants can be fun and done from anywhere on earth as long you have Wi-Fi connectivity.

The game allows players to grow virtual plant avatars that represent real plants in a smart-pot or Togo Pots (T-Pot) in their houses, offices or classrooms.

Through the avatar and the T-Pots, players can water their plants and monitor their condition via Wi-Fi.

"People just play games that don't contribute to the environment.

"With Togo they can take care of real plants and the real world as well," said Togo lead researcher and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) lecturer Dr Puteri Suhaiza

Sulaiman (pic).

"It also puts a sense of responsibility in the players," she said.

Dr Suhaiza said she was inspired by the 2010 Ford Fusion Hybrid which has a virtual plant on the car's dashboard to indicate if someone is driving efficiently.

"When a person saves more gas and electricity, the plant will grow bigger, and its presence has changed the way people drive."

She added that one family could share a T-Pot at home which would encourage better communication between members of the family and bring them closer.

"My children always play Clash of Clans and even though they are in the same room, there is no communication among them," she said of her four children.

As an idea, Togo won RM50,000 in grant money at the 2013 Intellectual Property Creators Challenge by Multimedia Develop-



ment Corporation (MDeC) and has since been in development with more than 50 of Dr Suhaiza's department students having tested it for about a year.

The UPM PhD Computer Graphics graduate said they were not able to market the T-Pot as yet, as the price would be too steep at RM250.

Her team is currently involved in trying to redesign the pot so that the cost will be lower and it can be sold at around RM100 or RM150 per piece.

"We are also trying to re-polish the gameplay to make it more interesting. And in later versions, we plan to add more sensors to the pot like light and nutrition for more interaction," she added.

Togo was presented at the innovation product launch ceremony at UPM's Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology Faculty on Friday.



Green thumb: Touch and Grow (Togo) or T-Pot offers a fun way to grow your plants.