

Rooftop edible garden a hit with employees

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ONCE a neglected space, the rooftop of Wisma MBSA on Persiaran Perbandaran in Shah Alam, Selangor, has been converted into a flourishing vegetable and fruit garden.

An assortment of leafy vegetables, medicinal plants and even roselle flowers and passion fruit vines are being grown in planter boxes and on trellises.

Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) Landscape Department agriculture officer Majidah Md Ali, 45, who was given the task to convert the rooftop on the third floor into an edible garden, said it took five months to produce the luxuriant vista and it had helped to improve the building's aesthetics.

"It was mid-2019 when the idea of constructing a rooftop edible garden was mooted by former mayor Datuk Haris Kasim.

"I was tasked with the project and it took some months to design the roof and make it appropriate for growing plants, using a geotextile membrane to ensure it would not leak.

"We decided to use planter boxes to better manage the plants as they are simple and practical, where water is drained into the roof gutter," she said, adding that



The Wisma MBSA rooftop now has an edible garden that also offers a cool respite for employees. — KK SHAM/The Star

the garden only started in mid-January this year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the beginning, Majidah said she would walk around the garden every evening to ensure each plant was growing well.

Since the plants are now thriving, her visits have reduced to weekly while the everyday maintenance is being handled by a worker.

Majidah, who majored in Horticulture and holds a Masters

in Landscape Architecture from Universiti Putra Malaysia, said vegetables were grown using various methods, including aquaponic and hydroponic.

"Our rooftop garden has long melons, red spinach, green spinach, *pak choi*, okra, black turmeric, galangal, medicinal herbs such as ginseng Java and *misai kucing*.

"We have fully utilised the space," she added.

MBSA Corporate Communications Department

employee Noorliyana Abd Rahaman said the rooftop garden next to the council's cafe offered a tranquil environment for workers to relax among the greens.

"It is beautiful as the greenery has attracted birds and the chirping sounds create a sense of happiness," she said.

Landscape Department employee Sabariah Ismail is also a big fan of the garden, saying it allowed her to relax in a quiet setting and enjoy her coffee, reenergising her during short breaks.

Majidah said the vegetables and fruits were harvested and given to employees.

"Our first harvest is this week and it goes to one department.

"We will rotate and allow all departments to get the vegetables.

"Our aim with this rooftop edible garden is to encourage Shah Alam folks to have their own gardens on their balconies," she said.

She noted that it was good to grow some fresh vegetables at home, as children would get to see where food came from.

"Where appropriate, let us transform rooftops, verandas and balconies besides vacant lots, into vegetable gardens that can provide our families with fresh, nutritious and affordable food," Majidah encouraged.