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## Between Survival and Sustenance : Plants for Recycle Edible Garden at Masjid As-Siddiq, Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

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### Abstract

Previous studies demonstrate that plants played a significant role in the edible garden plantings. Therefore, this study aims to analyse and evaluate the practicality and performance of plants selected in composing the recycle edible garden at Masjid As-Siddiq. This paper discusses the issues, challenges and imperatives of how a successful plants selection would lead towards survival and sustenance food for the community. The data derived from qualitative and quantitative method through photo and images recorded throughout the implementation period. The results will interpret relevant information about the plants potential in surviving and becoming sustenance towards the sustainable community.

*Keywords:* survival; sustenance, recycle edible garden; plants selection

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### 1.0 Introduction

The emerging concern on sustainable living has raised attention and urged the community to begin reoccupied again with subsistence farming. However, the scale and involvement with land diversified from the immediate home gardens to the extended community garden. In this context, the role of community edible gardens as repositories of biological and social diversity was acknowledged, but still, the success of it is vague. Community edible gardens, whether found in rural or urban areas, are perceived as a multifunctional space which enables the provision of various benefits towards the ecosystems and community. Previous studies demonstrate that plants played a significant role and made up of the majority components for the edible garden plantings.

Plants can be grown abundantly. However, the success or failure of plants depends on many aspects such as land suitability, climate, maintenance and negligence. Therefore, this study aims to analyse and evaluate the practicality and performance of plants selected in composing the recycle edible garden at Masjid As-Siddiq Seri Iskandar. This collaborative project which involved a group of researchers together with the industry expert, the masjid committee and the immediate community were designed and built from September 2016 to October 2017. This paper discusses the issues, challenges and imperatives of how a successful plants selection would lead towards survival and sustenance food for the community. This paper assesses the evolutionary consequences of the plant's selection that includes: (a) the selection of plant as soft capes materials; (b) the practicality and performance of selected plants; (c) the maintenance process; (d) the other external considerations; such as climate challenge. The data derived from qualitative and quantitative method through photo and images recorded during the implementation period. The results will interpret relevant information about the plants potential in surviving and becoming sustenance to behold sustainable community through subsistence living. The outcome will also discuss future constraints, and considerations

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of plants work as an important biological and economical tools that relate to agricultural practices and ecological transmitted in which community may improve their income and livelihood.

## 2.0 Plants, Food and Community Edible Garden

Plants take on a variety of roles, depending on the ecosystem. They grow either spontaneously in natural ecosystems or intentionally planted to serve humankind as food and medicine in almost all societies for generations. It is recognised that edible plants within an ecosystem are significant sources of nutrients and contributes better to health. It has been proposed that edible plants can play a significant role in enhancing the quality of diets and improving food and nutrition security. According to Kortright (2011), edible plants can provide important support for community food security. He added that food could be a way to connect with others, through reciprocal giving and as a mutual occupation that links neighbours through shared experience. Moreover, food security encompasses not only access to nutrition and culture but also happiness. Therefore, the ability to grow foods are unique as it is related to individual heritage and background that affects the preference, desire and commitment especially in community gardening (Cousins & Witkowski (2015), Anderson, 2014).

In general, community gardening can be defined as a situation in which all community members can access a safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable diet achieved sustainably and in a way which maximises community self-reliance and social justice (Ismail F. et al (2014)). The sustainability of food production and the needs of control communities have over the food system are also essential elements of long-term community food security. White (2002) highlighted, "as our society becomes technologically more sophisticated it also becomes biologically more ignorant. We no longer know what we eat or drink, or where our wastes are taken" (White 2002 in Kortright (2011)). In this context, food security is threatened by food supply systems that are not environmentally sustainable and lack of local understanding and control (at both the individual and community level) (Saffuan R. et al (2012), Mohd Hussain NH. & Byrd (2012), DeLind and Howard 2008).

The emerging concern on food security has raised the potential of community food production to support the physical, social, and environmental health of the communities. Greater understanding of community food production practices and reciprocity networks is needed to efficiently support community food gardening practices and the food security of gardeners at the individual, household, and community scale (Wan Ismail WA. (2015), Smita (2013)).

## 3.0 Plants for the Recycle Edible Garden at Masjid As-Siddiq : The Evolution

Recycle Edible garden (REG) is an innovative project that is based on the community apprehension, such as lack of integration space for community interaction, irresponsibly waste and rubbish disposal, lack of self-sufficient understanding, shortages in fresh and affordable food and underutilise resources. The concern is to accommodate the community with several activities utilising non-productive land in community areas by planting useful crops and recycling usable resources in a way that makes it as a productive garden. With aims to improve the quality of life, these projects incorporate the utilisation of recycling materials and maximisation of edible resources with the assistance of technologies.

Also, the intention is also to educationally create public awareness, especially for the next generation to be more careful about the environment. The spirit of gardening or farming in community areas has eventually spread and allows community involvement. Within one year, these REG projects have collectively been involved by about 5000 participants involving the researchers and designers from UiTM Perak, the Masjid committee, the industry experts such as MARDI Negeri Perak, Jabatan Perhutanan Negeri Perak, Pejabat Pertanian Perak Tengah and Taman Teknologi Agro MARDI, Cameron Highland, Pahang, learning institutional like university, college and school together with the business entrepreneur nearby Bandar Seri Iskandar. Through this spreading this positive spirit, REG has frequently been referred to by other scholars in developing a similar conceptual garden in their community. Therefore, these projects require comprehensive documentation for future references. This paper discusses specifically the evolution of selecting suitable plants for REG.



Fig. 1: The Recycle Edible Garden site at Masjid As-Siddiq Seri Iskandar  
(Source: Author, 2018)



Fig. 2: Surrounding of plants planted in planter box, potted and on land  
(Source: Author, 2018)

### 3.1 Selection Process: Data Collection

This paper describes an observational assessment of the plant's growth of Recycle Edible Garden at Masjid As-Siddiq Seri Iskandar. The study develops a qualitative overview of community food gardens, exploring and comparing how the plants grow, survive and benefit the community. The study areas were chosen based on the potential of community involvement, strategic location, collaborative participation and spatial consideration. The observational assessment was conducted through the recorded images that were taken during the site inspection, in which was planned on a regular basis. A systematic record of plants growth was documented within site. Selected plants species (n = 50) were selected and planted on the 14th May 2017 during a conducted 'Recycle & Reuse program and 'Gardening with the community'. About 350 participants from industries, agencies and communities were involved in grew edible plants, trees, fruits and vegetables. In general, there are 50 species of plants from 8 types or categories have been planted at the site. The numbers of plants reach about 600 nos that range in various colours, functions, heights, sizes, shapes and benefits to the community. Examples of selected pants can be referred in Table 1.

Table 1: Lists of 21 (out of 50) Species selected for REG

No	Botanic Name	Local Name	Family	Notes	Quantity
TREES (O.H: 2.5-3m)					
1	<i>Plumeria obtusa</i>	Kemboja Putih	Apocynaceae		2
2	<i>Cocos nucifera hybrid</i>	Kelapa Matag	Palmae		3
3	<i>Euodia redleyi</i>	Cabang Tiga/ Tenggek burung	Rutaceae		2
GROUNCOVERS					
4	<i>Piper sarmentosum</i>	Kaduk	Piperaceae		15
5	<i>Centella asiatica</i>	Pegaga kecil	Apiaceae (Umbelliferae)		15
6	<i>Aloe vera</i>	Lidah buaya	Asphodelaceae	additional	4
SHRUBS					
7	<i>Pandanus amaryllifolius</i>	Pandan	Pandanaceae		20
8	<i>Cosmos caudatus</i>	Ulam Raja	Asteraceae		10
9	<i>Curcuma domestica</i>	Kunyit	Zingiberaceae		15
10	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	Halia	Zingiberaceae		15
11	<i>Cymbopogon citratus</i>	Serai	Poaceae		10
12	<i>Capsicum frutescens</i>	Cili Padi	Solanaceae		15
POTTED PLANTS					
13	<i>Mentha piperita</i>	Pudina	Lamiaceae		6
14	<i>Portulaca grandiflora</i>	Japanese rose	Portulacaceae		5
15	<i>Persicaria odorata</i>	Kesum	Polygonaceae		10
CREEPERS					
16	<i>Vallis glabra</i>	Kesidang	Apocynaceae	additional	2
17	<i>Clitoria ternatea</i>	Bunga telang	Leguminaceae		10
FERTIGATION SYSTEM					
18	<i>Brassica rapa L. cv Pak Choi</i>	Sawi Tangkai Putih (Benih)	Brassicaceae	x	40
AESTHETIC PLANTS					
19	<i>Bougainvillea spectabilis</i>	Bunga kertas	Nyctaginaceae		15
20	<i>Yucca aloifolia</i>	Yucca	Asparagaceae		6
TURFING					
21	<i>Axonopus compressus</i>	Cow grass	Poaceae		230

(Source: Author (2018))

The field work and implementation were based on the design, working drawing and the hardscape works. The work begins with site clearance, footing, planter box, pedestrian walkway, gazebo, green wall, rainwater harvesting capture areas, storage and irrigation system was built to equip the site before the soft scape works start. Details on the hardscape and soft scape works are documented in Fig. 3.

After the hardscape works were completed, a specific program that requires various involvement from industries, agencies, institutions and community were conducted. The one day program was called 'Recycle & Reuse program and 'Gardening with the community', in which involved about 350 participants. All plants were planted during this day. Followed that was the maintenance and inspections duty which were held regularly within 2 – 3 weeks or once a month. All data, photographs and notes were recorded for observational and comparative analysis purposes.



Fig. 3: Field Work and Implementation  
(Source: Author, 2018)

The observation process began with exploration and documentation of the plant's species. The plant's species were recorded and photographed to document the differences in growth, infected with any diseases or having any issues or problems. The comparative analysis of images or photograph were then being conducted to investigate the reasons for failures, issues, consequences or even positive factor that allow the plants to grow well and expands. The recorded images and photographs together with the specific notes were analyzed utilizing a comparative analysis approach. Analytical categories and themes were developed through the recorded notes following each observation as well as throughout the analysis of the photographs. Analyzing the beginning of data collection helps to ensure that important elements are not overlooked during the research, as the initial analysis can then use to guide subsequent observations and discussions (Burns (2015), Abdul Malek NH et al (2015), Eisenhardt (2002)). This allows the analysis to be reliable in the analytical data scheme.

The characteristics of each species were examined, and cases were compared to look for the growth patterns, durability and yield to be consumed. Preliminary justifications were assessed for overcoming any inconsistent issues that require a plants replacement, treatment or harvesting. The multiple data collection methods used here (discussions, photographs, sketches and notes) allowed a stronger substantiation in identifying whether the plants are sufficient for a longer survival period or significant in accommodating the community with edible foods for sustenance. For example, the record of plants performance for each plant species would be remark accordingly based on the inspection visits and maintenance plan to be compared and characterised based on the coded observations, community responses and the amount of yield produced.

The evolutionary consequences of the plant's selection in this project include: (a) the selection of plant as soft capes materials; (b) the practicality and performance of selected plants; (c) the maintenance process; (d) the other external considerations.

### 3.2 The Practicality and Performance: Data Analysis

The analysis begins by developing a database recording plants species performance or growth, to compare and differentiate the plant's functions and benefits for the community. Community food gardening practices in REG were then examined through the lens of community food security, community connections and interactions, community access to healthy life and nutrition, community control over the economic system, community sustainability of food production (Shuib KB. et al (2015), Mohammad Ali H. et al (2012), Ferris et al (2001)). These practices would lead to the identification of either the plants were benefits for survival or offer the community with sustenance.

Through the analysis, this paper characterising the community edible garden with 45 out of 50 species or 90% of the overall plants in REG were edible; or food-based plants (n=50). Of those surveyed, 14% was trees, 42% was under shrubs category representing herbs, medicinal, vegetables and fruits; meanwhile, the groundcovers, creepers and aesthetics plants shared the percentage of 8% of the site planting (refer Table 2). Based on these figures, almost 80% of the observed plants showed the criteria of becoming a survival plant, in which the plants showed longer durability, take a longer time to be harvested although having slow growth of performance. Besides, about 20% remaining was categorized as a potential of plants for sustenance as the plants showed faster growth, abundant yield although only remain for a short duration of lifespan. Therefore, this study discovered that edible plants were exclusively grown either in the ground (82%) or in pots (18%).

Table 2: Analysis of plants that survive within the duration of 3 to 6 months on site

No	Plants Category	Species types	Plants that survive after 3 months	Plants that survive after 6 months	Notes/ Remarks
1	Trees	7			<i>Plumeria obtuse</i> , <i>Cocos nucifera hybrid</i> , <i>Euodia redleyi</i> , <i>Eurycoma longifolia</i> , <i>Labisia pumila</i> , <i>Phaleria macrocarpa</i> , <i>Mimusops elengi</i>
2	Shrubs	21	<i>Capsicum frutescens</i> , <i>Abelmoschus esculentus</i> ,	<i>Citrus hystrix</i> , <i>Citrus microcarpa</i> , <i>Etilingera elatior</i> ,	

		<i>Brassica oleracea L. var. capitata</i>	<i>Thaumatococcus daniellii, Alpinia galangal, Costus woodsonii, Pedilanthus tithymaloides, Pisonia alba, Pandanus amaryllifolius, Cosmos caudatus, Curcuma domestica, Zingiber officinale, Cymbopogon citratus, Murraya koeniggi, Morus alba, Orthosiphon aristatus, Ficus deltoidea</i>
3	Groundcovers	4	<i>Piper sarmentosum, Centella asiatica, Aloe vera, Lantana camara</i>
4	Potted Plants	7	<i>Mentha piperita, Rosemarynus officinalis, Portulaca grandiflora, Persicaria odorata</i>
5	Creepers	4	<i>Vallis glabra, Clitoria ternatea</i>
6	Fertigation System	2	<i>Brassica rapa L. cv group Pak Choi, Ipomoea aquatica</i>
7	Aesthetics Plants	4	<i>Bougainvillea spp., Yucca aloifolia, Heliconia psittacorum, Rhaps excelsa</i>
8	Turfing	1	<i>Axonopus compressus</i>

(Source: Author (2018))

The comparative analysis of images or photograph were initially based on their differences in quantity, growth development, colours, sizes or shapes and consistency of height. The example of this comparative analysis was as Fig. 4. The figures showed differences in quantity by leaves count, flower and as well as the ability in reproduction.



Fig. 4: Comparative Observation on plants development on site  
(Source: Author, 2018))

#### 4.0 Between Survival and Sustenance

According to Janick (1992), 'plants have a wide spectrum of uses and the most obvious is for human sustenance'. He defines plants for sustenance as plants that supply food, either directly or indirectly; to feed on human, animal and other living things. Plants for sustenance are also utilized as a source of structural support, as a construction material and as the raw material in the manufacture of fabrics and paper and other resources. Furthermore, Janick (1992) supported the agriculturists. Jack R. Harlan, in his book 'Crops and Man' that historically man begins as a hunter who searched for food to feed instant needs, before later when and the natural plant food resources could be harvested in greatest abundance with the least effort, the man begins to depends on the immediate resources surround them.

Therefore, based on these justifications, this study defines Plants for 'sustenance' to be:

#### 4.1 The Sustenance Plants

- Plants that have a short life-span; usually within three months or less
- Plants that able to grow fast
- Plants that able to produce large or abundance of production in less than three months
- Plants that are moderate fragile and easily affected by diseases
- Plants that are seasonably fertile
- Plants that are usually in small scale or categorised as shrubs
- Plants that are more sensitive and need higher attention for maintenance

Through this study, 10 out of 50 plants listed in the REG (refer Table 2) were identified to have similar criteria as above, which recognises as plants for 'sustenance'. Some of the listed species are such as *Capsicum frutescens* (Cili Padi), *Abelmoschus esculentus* (Bendi), *Brassica oleracea* L. var. *capitata* (Sawi Putih), *Coriandrum sativum* (Ketumbar), *Allium tuberosum* (Kuca), *Kaempferia galangal*, (Cekur), *Luffa acutangula* (Petola), *Vigna cylindrical* (L.)(Kacang Panjang) dan *Ipomoea Aquatica*( Kangkung). These plants have produced the abundance of fruits, vegetables and herbs. However, it needs replacement after three months reproduction (refer Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: Plants for 'Sustenance '  
(Source:Author (2018))

#### 4.2 The Survival Plants

In contrast to the plants for 'sustenance', this study defines 'Survival' plants as plants that:

- Plants that have a longer life-span; usually more than 3-6 months
- Plants that have slow growth
- Plants that able to produce large or abundance of production in more than three months
- Plants that are less fragile and hardly affected by deceases
- Plants that have high durability, bigger and stronger
- Plants that are usually in big scale like tress
- Plants that are less sensitive and need less attention to maintenance

After six months maintaining the site, this study discovered that most of the plants selected were still surviving and growing well. The late reproduction but in consistence has made the works in maintaining these plants are much easier, more economical and fewer issues. This would be a preference in considering plants for the community and home garden. Some of the species related was *Plumeria obtuse* (Kamboja), *Cocos nucifera* hybrid,(Kelapa Matag), *Euodia redleyi* (Cabang Tiga), *Phaleria macrocarpa* (mahkota Dewa), *Mimusops elengi* (Tanjung), *Curcuma domestica* (Kunyit), *Zingiber officinale* (Halia), *Cymbopogon citratus* (Serai), *Murraya koeniggi*,(Daun Kari), *Vallis glabra* (Kesidang) and *Clitoria ternatea* (Bunga Telang). These plants are still surviving and growing well at the REG site (refer Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: Plants for 'Survival '  
(Source:Author (2018))

## 5.0 Conclusion

This study provided the evidence that composing the recycle edible gardens can contribute greatly to the development of sustainable community planning. It is established community participations, interactions, cultural belongings, healthy lifestyle together with nutrition's, and economic resistance towards improving quality of life. The justifications and identifications of 'survival' plant and plants for 'sustenance' in this paper would significantly equipped the future researchers and designers in pursuit of types or plants species for community or edible-home gardening.

In conclusion, there are two considerations in selecting plants for an edible community garden, which should be highlighted as the basis for sustainable planning:

- i. Plants for sustenance; that able to accommodate frequent and abundant resources within a short period.
- ii. Survival plants; that able to survive longer with lower maintenance but need longer time to begin reproduction.

However, both considerations can generate extra income, supplying food for the community, increased social sustainability, utilizing spaces and resources in their daily routine for better living. Therefore, by adopting the criteria of edible plants as the basis in the community or home garden, it will not only enable the continuity to use sustainable planting practices parallel with the urban development but also can contribute to the food production and greeneries towards achieving self-resilience.

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