

FROM GROUND TO GARDEN

Narrating tales of transformation, from seedlings to new horizons



The plot previously covered with cardboard. (Photo: Brian)

Starting afresh

As I hacked away the weeds around the butterfly pea flowers, Patrick called to us, “The plot is ready.”

We turned to see parallel lines of tilled soil, replacing what was previously areas covered by cardboard to remove the grass beneath. As Chong Xern beckoned us to start replanting the seedlings in the new plot, I stood by, marveling at how the garden had changed since the first time I joined the Gardening IG sessions in August.

This new plot was a part of a larger plan envisioned by the Gardening IGLs, Patrick and Chong Xern, to transfigure the garden. “We are planning to grow some more vegetables. Perhaps flowers in our garden too, such as marigolds and sunflowers,” noted Patrick.



A newly transplanted okra seedling in fresh soil. (Photo: Brian)

Cultivating green thumbs

The seedlings planted in the garden were not all prepared by the IGLs - some of them were also propagated by the participants of the gardening session themselves right in their own rooms. Letting participants grow their own plants was intended as a way for amateur gardeners to learn the ropes. Participants would be asked to bring empty plastic bottles as makeshift pots to the sessions, where the IGLs would provide soil

and seeds of their selections.

When the seedlings reach maturity, they are transplanted to the garden to reap the full benefit of the sun. “It has been quite enriching to see everyone sending pictures of their plant pots and watching them grow over time,” noted Chong Xern. Patrick added, “The activity has created a sense of enthusiasm within Gardening IG!”



A view of the new plot. (Photo: Brian)

A hopeful future

Chong Xern regarded the first gardening session of this academic year as an exceptional one. “We had plans to do tasks such as clearing stones, moving plants etc which we estimated might take weeks. However, in that session alone, with the help of everyone we were able to do extraordinary things in a single session. It was quite an exercise too... It was quite an inspirational moment that reminds us of the strong spirit of gardening and community.”

I firmly believe that there would be more unforgettable events to come.” As we talked about the layout of the garden, Chong Xern showed me a quick sketch of the garden layout. He explained, “We are planning to put the flowers next to the walkway, the vegetables such as the okra, eggplant, chilli etc on the left side separated, and leave some room for the corn...” As I looked at the sketch, he enthusiastically pointed out the different sections of the garden.

Humble beginnings

When Patrick and Chong Xern first joined Gardening IG in Year 1, they were united with an ardent enthusiasm for gardening and a wish to contribute to the garden. As soon as they found a new patch of land unused in the garden, they immediately put it to good use.

“I was the one planting kangkong (water spinach) last year. Chong Xern planted lady fingers (okras) instead,” Patrick recalled, “hence our nicknames ‘Kangkong-man’ and ‘Okra-man.’” The nicknames stuck, showing up as admin labels in Gardening IG’s official Telegram group chat.

Patrick is particularly proud of the durian sapling he planted in the garden. “The durian sapling was an afterthought when I was eating durian with Chong Xern in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia,” said Patrick, “I suddenly thought of bringing the seeds back to Singapore, and I did. I never thought it would grow in the garden, so it was a pleasant surprise when I saw shoots growing.”

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Besides managing the garden, Gardening IG also has a lot more other activities planned for future sessions. They have been setting up a vermicomposting worm bin, and exploring possibilities of other events, such as a composting workshop, a watermelon growing contest, and a garden decoration event - to give the garden some extra flair.

Ultimately, the Gardening IGLs have a simple goal, as Chong Xern expresses, “I just want to turn the garden into a place everyone can freely visit and relax their minds.”

Dmitri, seen here on the left on a noni fruit tree. After the frogs, Dmitri the lizard has been the newest addition to the garden. (Photo: Patrick)



Spooky decorations made with tins and colored paper. (Photo: Alden)

Halloween with a green twist

Fancy some decorations to liven up the Halloween vibes? On the night of 24th October, PH residents got to work making their own Halloween decorations right from scratch! In the two-hour session, they unleashed their creativity by crafting spider webs using plastic sheets, trick-or-treat bags by cardboard and tapes, and even miniature spiders by bottle caps. It was a rewarding experience, with participants having the chance to unwind by crafting something that they could bring back to decorate their rooms! Some of their creations were also used to decorate the hall for PHright Night!!

Connecting with urban farming

On 14th October, our residents headed off to Little Farms, a local urban farm right in the heart of Singapore. During the trip, the participants were given the opportunity to explore the various types of farms available, from mini herb gardens to free-range egg farms, where participants got to interact in close with the chickens there. We also took the chance to join in workshops held around the farm, where they learned more about how local farmers uphold sustainability in their harvests by utilizing technology, such as aquaponics farming and biogas composting. It was indeed a Saturday morning well spent!



Participants interacting with animals in the farm. (Photo: Zih You)

Sustainability events this month

Event

Voices from Asia Podcast by CNCS

Date

3 Nov

Find out more:

[Podcast website](#)

LKCNHM Aspiring Naturalist Programme

18/25 Nov

[Sistic and information website](#)

COP28 on United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

30 Nov - 12 Dec

[COP28 Website](#)