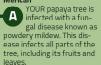
By Eats, Shoots & Roots

Dear Plant Doctor

Do you have questions about plants and gardens? Go to the website questions. eatsshootsandroots.com and fill in the form to have them answered by an expert.

I HAVE a papaya tree Q that was doing well. We managed to eat five fruits from it. But lately the skin of the papayas appear greyish and the texture of the fruit is pulpish. Could a civet cat be the problem? – Fatimah



Discard all infected parts – do not bury them or com- A powdery milder over-watering your papaya

tree, as a humid environment encourages this disease. Also, avoid wetting the upper parts of tree when watering.

To control this disease, you can use any sulfur-based fun-

gicide. You can also try spraying with a water and neem oil mixture.

I HAVE a pumpkin plant in my garden that produced two to three baby pumpkins – roughly ping pong ball size – at a time but after two weeks, the pumpkins turned yellow and dropped off. This has happened a few times. Why is this happening and what can I do about it? –

DVER-watering (as well as under-watering) your trees can cause fruit drops. You should only water it when the top soil is dry. Too much water can drown the roots and cause root rot and no fruit to form.

Another possible reason is your fertilisation. Fertilise less with nitrogen and more with potassium and phosphorus. You can even include calcium in your fertilisation programme

I HAVE a passion fruit plant in a big pot and it produced two
fruits a few months ago. Since then, there have been
no sign of fruit production. I would love to know how
often these plants bear fruits, and what can I do to
encourage healthy growth and production. – Janis Lee

ON fruit trees can be a challenge to grow as they require careful pruning and training to ensure they grow well and bear fruits. They are also susceptible to

Prune the tree once it reaches the desired height, then keep pruning off the top to encourage lateral growth. Remove excessive side growths. You do not want to have entangled, messy side growths.

The idea is to have a few main side growths that will have ample space to grow. You also have to train the branches so they will grow along

the netting or wire mesh you have set up.
Fertilise the tree four times a year. Give as much nitrogen as potassium but less phosphorus. Follow the instructions as recommended by the fertiliser bag and adjust accordingly

Avoid over-watering by watering only when the top soil is

TRIED growing a papaya tree a few times with no success. My attempts produced a tree but before fruiting, the top core leaves will distort and turn yellow, then die off after one week. Why is this happening?

s difficult to diagnose your problem without seeing the full scale of it. Your papaya trees could be infected by a virus transmitted by whiteflies that causes leaf curling (distortion), especially near the tree top. My advice is to remove the latest infected tree and discard it by burying it very deep into the soil or chopping it then burning it up. Do

Note that leaf curl treatment, which involves spraying with dangerous dimethoate and monocrotophos pesticides, can be costly especially just for one tree.

Ready, set,

The Star ePaper - Star2 - 26 Jul 2017 - Page #8

VIETNAMESE cuisine is known for its freshness and a garnish of fresh herbs is a must for most of its dishes. But what happens when ensuring that freshness means throwing away a lot of herbs?

Caren Poon, 39, is the director of the An Viet Vietnamese restaurant chain that has two outlets in the Klang Valley, in The Gardens Mall in Mid Valley City and in Sunway Pyramid shopping centre, Bandar Sunway. And, naturally, she wants to make sure what her restaurants serve is authentic

"In Vietnam, they serve their pho with a lot of fresh herbs and vegetables, so when we opened our first outlet in The Gardens Mall, we served herbs in a glass, but then we noticed that we ended the thing with basil is, after you cut the leaves,

they wilt really fast. If we don't serve them right away, and they aren't finished that day, they end up very black and yucky the next day – you eat it raw, so it's quite gross to serve basil that is not

Poon worried about the waste too: she'd seen a lot of it in the 12 years she has been in the food business, from excess sushi being dumped in a helt sushi restaurant to tables of food wasted at

food tastings when "in the name of market research, you eat two bites of each dish and throw everything else away".

She had her awareness prodded when she went on an overseas trip: "I realised how immune I had become to food waste. And I realised that I should really do something about it since I'm in the restaurant industry. I asked myself what could I do within my scope to make a difference, however small. We have to start somewhere."

In this month's Ready, Set Grow! column, Poon shares how she uses her little herb garden in her business to mitigate that waste as well as ensure How does the garden tie in to your restau-

rants' philosophy?

After doing the research and realising that one-third of the food that the world produces is thrown away, we actually wanted to use the restaurant as away, we actually wanted to be the residuation as a platform to encourage people not to waste food. (Diners are encouraged to choose portions that suit their appetites to ensure no food is wasted.)

And vet, here we are also throwing food - the hasil – away ourselves. It's not nice! So it was a few incremental steps that started with the question: What else can we do at our restaurant? The team as a whole contributed ideas for this.

What is the main purpose of having the gar-

To ensure we have fresh basil on hand and to reduce wastage of basil in the restaurant. We thought if we could have basil growing in pots placed on each table, it'll be so much fresher and we would also reduce the amount of waste because customers can harvest only what they

We also wanted to make the whole place look nicer, to have greens in the restaurant. I didn't realise this until we opened An Viet in Sunway Pyramid (which has the container garden) and spent most of our time there, and then when I



Poon (centre) with Lee Koon (left) and Menving. kitchen supervisors and honorary gardeners

Basil boost for

After watching herbs served in her restauran



Pots of Thai basil are placed at the table for customers to help themselves to



Diners are encourage their appetites to en



The pots of basil are regularly rotated the racks outside to ensure they get area in front of the restaurant before

finally went back to The Gardens branch, I thought is a whole new ball s "Wow, it looks very different – it's darker and doesn't have that much life".

I think having plants in a concrete setting really lends a hit of life and fresh air to the place What challenges did you face in getting the

garden started? garden started?

Six months ago, when we first had the idea of growing the basil, it was a bit of a challenge because we had to make sure that, operationally, it's not too much of a nightmare for the team taking care of the plants.

We had questions about how big the pots should be. If they're too big, the tables would be too crowded. And do we have enough space to grow

And what if the customers really love hasil? They could eat the entire plant! And ask for a second pot, or even run to another table to help them-

So we had to make sure that we have enough space to grow all the herbs needed, and think about how else we could replenish our stock or rotate our plants

Tell us a little bit about your edible garden.

One of the nice things about our garden is that it is integrated into the meals. It's not just a garden sitting there, it's incorporated into the whole dining

experience.

When we serve pho, we accompany it with a small bowl of clean water so that customers can small bowl of clean water so that customers can small bowl of clean water so that customers can small bowl of clean water so that customers can small bowl of clean water so that customers can be not on the table, wash the leaves in the water, and then put them into their soup.

Also, letting the customer experience the actual

plant as opposed to something prepared gives them an idea of where their food comes from. How do you choose what kind of vegetables to

One of the main things that we were throwing away, and having issues getting a fresh supply of, was the basil. It's very commonly used in Vietnamese dishes and we use about 10kg a week at each outlet, excluding what is harvested directly

What challenges did you face once the garden got going? We know how to run restaurants but taking care of plants, beyond the basic watering and trip

For example, we fit once and didn't know consulting with Eats

tables for several day turning vellow. We g have to rotate the po outdoor area to ensu light. Along the way, take care of the gard

there are any. We do

Sunway Pyramid's

supportive of this ini use the balcony to gr

inform us before the

to give us time to mo

the garden? I find the garden q

the plants brings a se

I'm not the key caret the team who take to

times when I'm here

leaves off and trin

anything else, but ju

plants looking good

It helps people to 1

when people start to they might also think

producing food - so 1

ing/thinking of star

What advice do y

Just do it! I think tl

How has your life

We also get man-r who actually discard pots! This is actually re still those that do at do that. What is your go-t

'e do everything manually. nid's management has been very is initiative. Besides allowing us to to grow our plants, they also move the plants inside. r lifestyle changed since starting

len quite cathartic. Just looking at a sense of calmness and peace aretaker, we have a few people on ke turns to care for it, but somehere at the restaurant, once in you just focus on plucking the dead imming the plants, you are focused ent, you're not stressing out about it just focusing on getting the

hink urban gardening is impor-

to reconnect with nature and to e their food comes from, and rt to grow their own vegetables, hink about wasting food less, dise how much work goes into so many months of effort and

do you have for those just startstarting an urban garden? nk the best way to learn is to stop



ant get thrown out daily, this restaurateur came up with a novel way to reduce waste.

raged to choose a portion that suits ensure no food is wasted



get enough sun. (Insert) View of the

fore the garden was set up.

along the way. And you can always stop to get advice from other people who have done it or know more about if. ated from inside the restaurant to It definitely helped to have somebody with more nowledge and experience to guide us, because in

One reason Poon started the herb

leaves to put into their soup.

Some customers were concerned about the

plants dying – for example, if they harvest so many leaves, would the plant die? We explain to them

that the plants will continue to grow more leaves.

And sometimes, the kids get really excited, so the

parents enjoy teaching their kids about the plants.
It creates a lot of interest, as people are really

curious to see what the plants are all about. When

they walk by, they actually stop to sniff the plants and see what they are, so the garden does get peo-ple more interested and curious about plants.

Some customers have even asked us if they

could take the plants home or if they could buy

them. And I have friends that say they are now growing their own basil at home!

20% to 30% at the Sunway outlet now. Anything else you'd like to add?

way to go and so much more to learn.

How much waste have you reduced so far?

We estimate that we have reduced the waste by

If you buy a big packet of herbs at the supermar

ket, you might only use a handful of leaves and the rest gets thrown away. So I'm really glad that people now think having potted herbs on their table is

ple, after eating here, will think of doing things like this at home. And, hopefully, more people will get on board with urban farming. I think we have learned a lot from the garden.

And it has been interesting hearing all types of responses from the customers. But in terms of gardening itself, the technical bits, we still have a long

Eats, Shoots & Roots is a social enterprise that champions

urban edible gardening. For more information, go to eatsshootsandroots.com or facebook.com/eatsshoot-

sandroots; if you have any enquiries or comments, e-mail them to hello@eatsshootsandroots.com.

a good idea, and I hope that more and more peo-

garden was to reduce wastage at An Viet.
— Photos: GLENN GUAN/The Star

or restaurant

the beginning, we weren't sure how many racks we should have, how big the pots need to be, or oall game for us! we found black spots on the leaves ow many pots to start off with.

Has the garden impacted your business in any know how to get rid of them. After I think it has definitely impacted the business. Eats, Shoots & Roots, we learnt to The customers get really interested in the plants, and they come here not only to eat the pho but with water infused with chilli ly left the potted herbs on the l days on end and found the leaves also to specifically get fresh herbs.

Sometimes they bring their friends the next time We gradually learnt how often we e pots from within the outlet to the ensure the plants get enough sunthey come and you can hear them excitedly explaining to their friends how to harvest the

way, we have slowly learnt how to an-made pests – there are people card their cigarette butts inside the ally a nonsmoking area but there

go-to pest control/pesticide? pesticides; we just kill the bugs if they fog (for pests) twice a month,

ch about it and just figure it ou

Green events

GROWING UP! TRICKS AND TIPS FOR BALCONY AND

A HALF-day practical introduction to growing food in high and small spaces with compost coach, Harbir Gill. The course is hands-on and will introduce you to

The course is hands-on and will introduce you to the basic principles of composting, balcony/rooftop nucroclimates, planning and layout for small-space gardens including setting up trellis, soil preparation, and smart watering systems.

Specifically, this workshop will cover the basic principles of composting (there will be a demonstration of a seven-port composting system), making your own healthy soil, and building a wicking bed;

it will also provide an introduction to home garder ing, soil nutrition and plant considerations as well

At the end of the programme, you will take home your own ready-to-grow pot, mini wicking system,

your own ready-to-grow pot, mini Wicking system, seeds, and plants.

Harbir Gill loves compost and has made it his mission and way of life. Armed with his growing experience, he now teaches a course once a month at farm-to-table organic enterprise, A Little Farm On The Hill (alittlefarmonthehill.com).

Date: Saturday, Aug 12 ration is at 8 30am) Time: 9am-noon (registration is at 8.30am) Location: Eats, Shoots & Roots HQ, Petaling Jaya (full

address upon registration)

Price (inclusive of materials, potting mix, seeds, and refreshments): RM105 / RM105 (special price if you mention StarZs Ready, Set, Grow/column)

To register: Go to the following website: workshops.

For enquiries: e-mail clarice@eatsshootsandroots.com

SECRET FRIDAY LUNCH @EATS, SHOOTS & ROOTS

A GARDEN lunch session with delicious, wholesom A OARDAN that session was the tendors, wholesomer food prepared by home cooks using fresh ingredients from the garden.

The communal meal will be served family-style, following a garden tour. Casual wear with long sleeves is recommended for the garden walkabout

There is also no set price for the meal, you pay as

Date: Friday, Aug 25

Time: 11.45am-2pm Location: Eats, Shoots & Roots HQ, Petaling Jaya (full

address upon registration)
To register (this is required as space is limited to 10 participants): Go to the following website, workshops

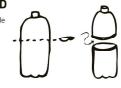


INGREDIENTS

- Nail punch
- > Masking tape > Potting soil
- · Plant cuttings/seeds Light-proof material (eg. jute, felt, thick paper)



METHOD



· O.

Make five drainage holes (about 1cm in diameter) around the neck of the bottle from he inside. Hold the piece ghtly and use the nail unch (a short metal tool sed to drive home nails: called a nail set) to make the





3 Insert the cotton wick and guide it out through the bottle's neck.

Place this into the bottom half of the bottle. Make an of the bottle below where the neck of the top half sits (separate the halves to do this, then put them back together). This will allow excess water to flow

out as too much water can rot the roots of some



Tape the two pieces together with mask ing tape to secure their

Fill the top half with pocting soil and then insert the lary action going, water from he top until water flows out bottom half of the bottle.



7 Wrap the whole container (cloth/jute/paper); this is to prevent algae from growing within the container

8 Keep the container away from direct rain. Keep the top moist and compost-fed.



Spend less time watering your plants by making this self-watering container, as the constant water supply keeps the plant happy enough for a few days at once.



