

## Plants & Gardens Subang Jaya



Join the Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SJGardens>

Everyone's got a Secret Garden somewhere in the little corner of their home. Gardening has opened up new horizons for those who want to put their green fingers to good use. Starting this month, SJ Echo will be featuring useful tips on Plants & Gardens for you. You can also follow our Facebook Group: SJGardens and share your photos and stories.

## Importance of Organic Matter

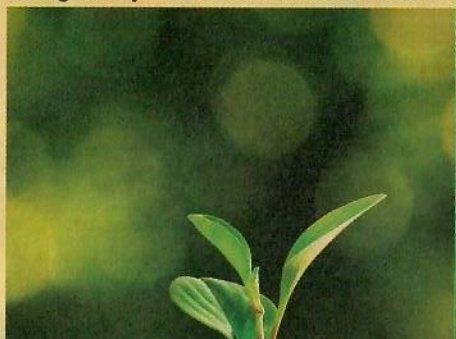
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One of the first key soil management steps in gardening is adding organic matter. This step is, unfortunately, one of the most neglected steps by gardeners, partly because the beneficial effects of organic matter are not immediately or readily apparent.

Building up organic matter content in the soil requires patience because organic matter buildup is a slow process which can take many years to reach a maximum level (usually no more than 5% soil content). And organic matter buildup also requires persistence. Gardeners would have to regularly apply organic matter to the soils (such as once every few months), failing which the soil organic matter content can rapidly decline.

Gardeners should not neglect to add organic matter to their soils because organic matter is one of the foundations of fertile soils. Organic matter is said

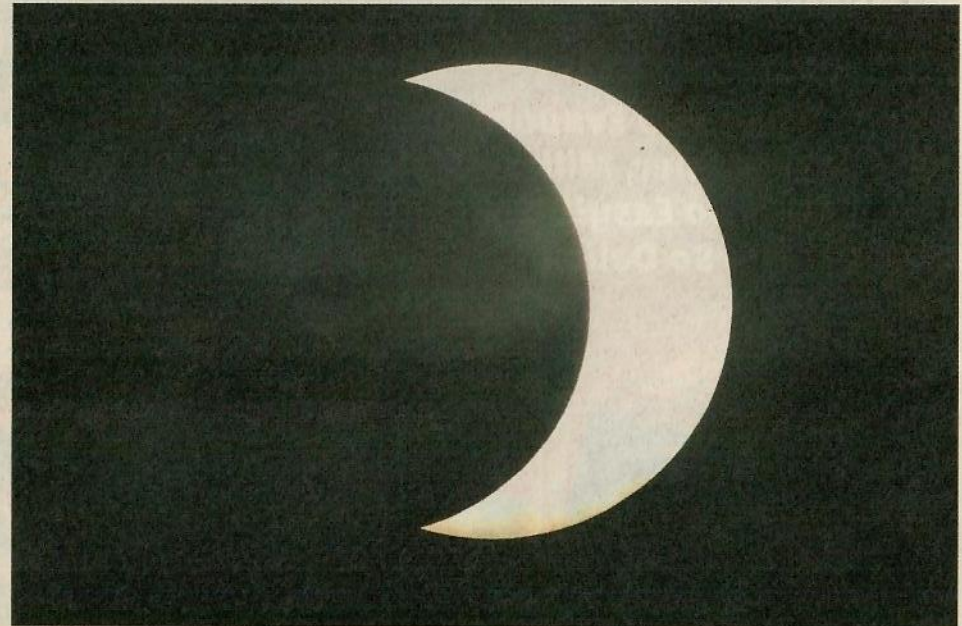
amounts of organic matter. Because of this, our soils typically cannot strongly hold onto the plant nutrients. What this means is that nutrients in our soils are easily lost and are therefore unavailable to our plants. So, do not underestimate the importance of organic matter. Do not focus only on applying fertilizers, as the nutrients from these fertilizers, without organic matter, risk being easily lost from the soils. In other



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## All Eyes on the Sky



**THE** annular solar eclipse that occurred on Boxing Day had many in Subang Jaya and others around the country looking up in the sky for almost four hours.

While many used their mobile phones to capture the occurrence, others merely looked up to the sky with their sunglasses on to catch a glimpse of the "ring of fire" when the Moon covers the Sun's centre, leaving the Sun's visible outer edges to form an annulus around the Moon.

The sky was cloudy during the period this took place, making it less strenuous on the eyes as the Sun and the Moon "came" out between the clouds.

Those who owned digital cameras had a field day especially with a long zoom lense attached for a closer look at the eclipse.

The last formation of an annular solar eclipse was on Aug 22, 1998 in Mersing, Johor.



to be the lifeblood of soils – and rightly so, because the addition of organic matter makes soils, among others, less acidic, more porous, more resistant to erosion, more able to retain water and nutrients, and ultimately, more fertile. Organic matter, as it decomposes in the soil, will also release its “stored” nutrients in a gradual manner. So, organic matter does not just protect the soil but is also a plant fertilizer.

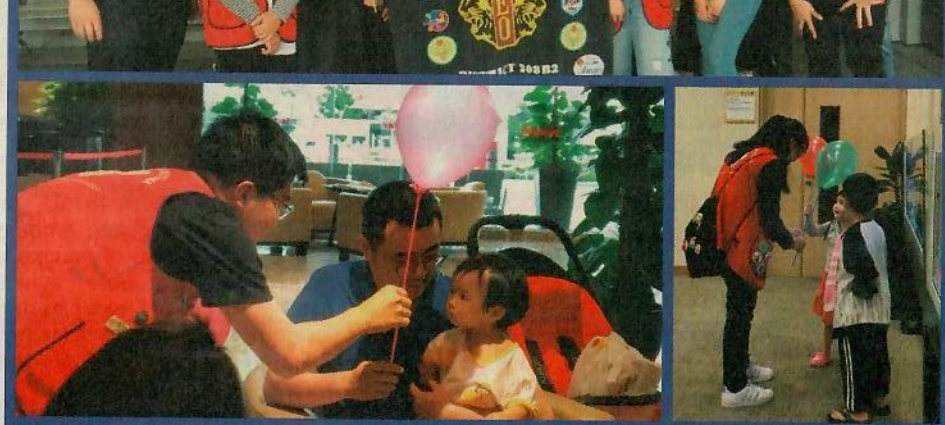


What is organic matter? Organic matter is such as plant residues, animal wastes, charcoal (like biochar), kitchen wastes, compost, and even treated industrial wastes. But not all organic matter is the same, depending on the source and type of organic matter. Poultry manure, for instance, contains different amounts of nutrients than goat manure or even leaf litter. Different types of organic matter also decompose at different rates. In general, organic matter from plant residues give more rapid but more short-lived impact on soil fertility than organic matter from animal sources. In other words, if you add leaf litter to your soil, you will reap faster but more short-lived benefits from this plant-based organic matter than if you were to add an animal-sourced organic matter such as poultry or goat manure. Organic matter from peat moss gives the slowest beneficial impact but its impact is the longest-lasting compared to plant- and animal-sourced organic matter.

Malaysian soils, in general, contain low

words, the fertilizers you put into the soil are mostly lost instead of them being taken up by your plants. Organic matter, together with a proper fertilization programme, are keys to healthy soils.

How much organic matter should you add? In general, you should add about 2 to 5 kg per one square meter of ground. Adding this much has been shown to give good yields for vegetable crops. You can apply the organic matter on just the soil surface, or better still mix it with the soil. And you should renew application when you see that mostly all of the previously added organic matter has disappeared (due to its decomposition) from, for instance, the soil surface. Do not apply too much or too frequently, as too much organic matter at any one time could cause problems such as waterlogging, anaerobic condition (i.e., too little oxygen in the soil), and pest habitat.



# Giving a New Meaning to Their Holidays

**MEMBERS** of the Leo Club of SMK Subang Utama decided to make their school break a bit different this time around. Instead of just spending their school holidays on themselves, they decided to bring cheer to children at Sunway Medical Centre.

A dozen of energetic, young Leos

huffed and puffed dozens of balloons before giving it away to delighted children visiting the hospital.

Leo Club President Qin Ru said this balloon giveaway was their way of spreading positive vibes in a meaningful way.