

A pitch to researchers

Perak boasts world's only natural nepenthes garden and welcomes all for studies

IPOH

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WITH the only natural nepenthes (tropical pitcher plant) garden in the world located in the state, the Perak Forestry Department is calling on researchers and academics to conduct scientific studies, including promoting education, awareness and conservation of the exotic plant.

There are three other similar nepenthes gardens in the world, located in Germany, Australia and England, but they are all cultivated in greenhouses.

The one in Malaysia – located inside the Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, is the only one where visitors can view the tropical plant in natural conditions.

Department director Datuk Mohamed Zin Yusop pointed out that Malaysia's suitable climate is the reason behind the only naturally cultivated nepenthes garden here.

"In greenhouses, or more like grow chambers or terrariums, the humidity, temperature and lighting can all be controlled to cater to the plants' needs.

"Under natural cultivation, researchers and academics will be able to learn and research further about every species of the carnivorous plant in their natural habitat," he told *StarMetro*.

The garden here, he said, houses over 70 species of nepenthes, more commonly known as the pitcher plants or monkey cups.

"We have 55 endemic species while the rest are hybrid, all from various countries and regions in the world, including Australia, India, Thailand, Madagascar, Sumatra and Borneo.

"We welcome any interested party to come to us for research, education and awareness purposes.



Mohamed Zin says researchers are welcome to promote education and conservation of pitcher plants.

"I am certain this will also enable more exposure and knowledge exchange between our researchers and the rest of the world," he said, adding that the nepenthes garden is also open to visitors at RM5 per person.

On another development, Mohamed Zin said that Perak had the highest percentage of permanent forest reserves in Malaysia, covering 999,351ha or 47.43% of the state's land.

"Right now, another 2,655ha of state land is waiting to be gazetted as permanent forest reserves," he said, adding that the permanent forest reserves are further categorised into protection and production forests.

"Protection forests cover 48% of the total permanent forest reserves and are forbidden to be felled. They are maintained largely for water catchment, covering 295,000ha – the largest



A visitor photographing one of the species of pitcher plants found at the Nepenthes Park inside the Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park.

in the peninsula.

"Other reasons protection forests are maintained include flood mitigation, wildlife and soil protection, as well as research and studies," he said.

The rest of the 52% of permanent forest reserves are meant for production forests, and a limit of no more than 7,744ha can be felled each year with selective felling imposed.

"Only trees measuring 55cm and above in diameter can be felled. But trees that are 150cm or more in diameter are not allowed.

"Also, only 63 cubic metres of wood can be felled per hectare. Besides, total land clearing is never allowed in per-

manent forest reserves," he said, adding that since 2000, Perak Forestry received its certification based on the Malaysia criteria and indicators (MC&I) for sustainable forest management, which is internationally recognised.

He also noted that planting of tree saplings had been ongoing since 2010, with over 18.8 million tree saplings planted as of 2016, covering over 9,522ha in Perak.

"The department set the target to plant two million tree saplings a year since 2016, and have been exceeding the target for two years now," he said.

Mohamed Zin also called on outdoor



Nepenthes bicalcarata, also known as the fanged pitcher plant is distinctive with its two fangs above the pitcher.

activities enthusiasts and hikers to apply for permits before entering any permanent forest reserves.

"The permit will be issued within three working days and RM10 is payable for each applicant.

"Applications can be submitted at the department office," he said, adding that online application for the permit will only be introduced next year.

Popular outdoor places that fall within permanent forest reserves include Gunung Korbu, Gunung Peninjau, Gunung Suku, Gunung Bujang Melaka, and Gunung Kenderong and Gunung Liang, he added.



Visitors taking turns to pose with a giant replica of a pitcher plant in front of the Nepenthes Park at Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park in Meru, Ipoh.



Children having fun with public seating design inspired by the pitcher plant at the Nepenthes Park. — RONNIE CHIN/The Star.