

SMU plants seeds for new urban farming movement

By Olivia Ho
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(From left) Imran Aljunied, 28, SMU President Professor Arnoud De Meyer, Mayor for Central Singapore District Denise Phua and urban farmer Donald Tan, 48, plant a nutmeg sapling at the Grow initiative at the Singapore Management University campus on Jan 6, 2015. -- ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



Mayor for Central Singapore District Denise Phua (left) and SMU President Professor Arnoud De Meyer (right) share a laugh as they plant a nutmeg sapling at the Grow initiative at the Singapore Management University campus on Jan 6, 2015. -- ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

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Grow, an initiative launched by Singapore Management University (SMU), focuses on green and sustainable efforts both inside and outside of the classroom. -- ST PHOTO: DANIEL

A new urban farming movement is taking root in the heart of the city at Singapore Management University (SMU).

The university launched its new Grow initiative to encourage gardening and sustainable living on Tuesday morning, when it started a new garden plot outside the School of Accountancy and Law building along Queen Street.

The garden will be sown with about 50 plant varieties, including basil, spinach, papaya and guava. It will be tended to by student and staff volunteers, and will be open to the public, who can also join in the gardening.

Produce from the garden's future harvests will be used in community service projects such as the annual SMU Challenge, in which students deliver food and household necessities to the elderly and low-income families living in Queenstown.

Under the project, 30 planter boxes containing plants such as herbs, will also be put up for adoption at \$80 a box. Staff and students can adopt and care for the boxes, which will be installed outside the library and at the administration building.

Faculty members have also been benefiting from workshops by local food movement Edible Gardens, in which they have been taught how to grow their own micro-greens. Two workshops have already been held, the last of which was attended by 100 staff members.

SMU President Professor Arnoud de Meyer said yesterday at the launch of the initiative: "Growing a garden physically and in your heart brings the community back to fundamental basics that are

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important to life. We need to produce food for our body and soul, and are responsible for a better and greener future, through our hands."

The guest-of-honour at the launch, Ms Denise Phua, the mayor for the Central Singapore District, said: "The garden is by no means large in relation to the needs of the many out there who would enjoy its produce. But it is the spirit of the effort, of bringing together people from all walks of life as 'gardeners', tending to the plants and soil so that others can be fed."

oliviaho@sph.com.sg