

SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW
AT THE OPENING OF THE 3RD HORTICULTURE
AND AQUARIUM FISH SHOW ON 17 SEP 80
AT WORLD TRADE CENTRE

Singapore has become greener and more verdant year by year. High calibre talent in the Parks & Recreation Department and in the Primary Production Department has been behind this greening of Singapore. We could not have succeeded so luxuriantly without the expertise, the organisation, and the budgetary priority given to this task.

The stage is now reached where we can afford to go for greater variety and more colour. We must import more trees, palms, shrubs, creepers from all over the equatorial and tropical regions to try out which will take under Singapore soil and climatic conditions. We have planted scented flowering shrubs along walkways. Now, let us add a few dashes of the exotic: free-flowering trees, shrubs and creepers. Can we not get tall equatorial forest trees, like the Jelutong or Teak, that grow to 30-40 metres to grow alongside the 30-50 storey buildings sprouting all over the city? They will keep their proportions against these high-rise. Such tall trees are slow growing. All the same,

experiments in America with tree hormones have proved that tree growth can be speeded up. The challenge for Parks and Recreation is to give that touch of quality and originality in maintaining a balance of flora and fauna in our city, despite the bulldozer, despite the reinforced concrete structures and tarmacked motorways. Both brain power and aesthetic sense, and more resources are the keys to success.

The time has also come for Parks & Recreation to consider floral presentations in certain prized corners of Singapore, the office or shopping areas where people foregather. Flowering orchid plants, ferns and greenery, grown and artistically displayed can give a sense of focus to these popular plazas. We have the knowledge; we have the artistic touch. We can now afford the cost. The question is: can we do it in such a way as to avoid vandalism or theft, without severe security measures, which will destroy the aesthetic impact?

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Over the last 20 years, our Primary Production officers have been outstanding. Singapore would never have been self-supporting and an exporter of pork and chickens without them. Now this highly trained ability is seeking outlets in a wide range of activities from hydroponics for vegetables and fruits, to aquarium fish and flowers. We have planted 6,000 fruits trees in SAF camps and 4,000 in the schools. We can plant more of them in community centres, police

stations, and all fenced-in areas of PUB, TAS, PSA, and even the airports. In the 1980s, as the Residents' Committees establish their authority, we should plant the sturdier fruit trees in all HDB estates. We can saturate our housing estates with enough of the hardy fruit trees that can withstand the initial vandalism and pilfering by children. Then, in the next stage, we can go for the better fruits, after higher social standards of behaviour have been the norm. Gradually, both at home and in the schools, we can nurture a generation that will have the social discipline to respect and to share the fruits of communal property.

As long as we continue to recruit high calibre trained talent for Primary Production and Parks & Recreation, we can keep improving on what we have achieved. By the 1990s, Singapore can become a green, shady city filled with fruits and flowers, a city worthy of an industrious people whose quest for progress is matched by their appreciation for the beauty of nature. The harshness of tarmac and concrete can be softened by nature's trees, flowers, and birds.

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Ministry of National Development sent me the progress reports since the second show three years ago. I have asked that the press be briefed. Singaporeans should know what Parks & Recreation and Primary Production have been doing for them. Tonight, in declaring this show open, I wish to record my appreciation for their work.

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