

Green Champions

Much has been said about conserving the earth, but a new breed of Singaporeans has married conviction and passion for the cause with a spirit of enterprise and innovation. LGT, which is driven by a spirit of entrepreneurship and philanthropy, highlights the new vanguard in the eco mission

Thanks to the efforts of former US vice-president Al Gore, international public awareness about climate change has grown over the past decade. One of the key messages in his 2006 documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, is that every single one of us is responsible for doing our part to reverse the effects of global warming.

The people featured in this series have gone one step further: They've started businesses to help individuals and corporations live and operate in a more eco-friendly, sustainable manner. These enterprises espouse solutions from green architecture and farm-to-table concepts, to environmentally-friendly packaging, new ways of recycling and even beauty products that are good for your skin and the earth.

Take, for instance, Olive Green's Aloysius Cheong, who has helped reinvent the humble disposable plate with his company's flagship product, CornWare. Compared to traditional disposable plates, which are 100-per cent petroleum-based polypropylene plastic, the now ubiquitous CornWare has only 30 per cent plastics, with the remaining 70 per cent made of cornstarch.

A rising number of entrepreneurs in Singapore are doing their part to promote the farm-to-table concept of growing your own food—ideally organically—which is healthier and better for

the environment. It also plays a small part in ensuring Singapore's food security, a pressing issue for a country that imports more than 90 per cent of its food. Edible Garden City's Bjorn Low can be credited for the increased popularity of urban gardens in recent years, while Ivy Singh-Lim has helped Kranji's farming community flourish since starting her own farm, Bollywood Veggies, in the area.

But while businesses with an environmentally-friendly slant have thrived here in recent years, thanks to an increased awareness of climate change, most of the entrepreneurs featured in this series emphasised the fact that there's a lot more work that needs to be done.

The misconception that eco-friendly options are usually more costly or inconvenient, for instance, is still one that needs to be corrected. According to green architect Jason Pomeroy and eco-packaging pioneer Susan Chong, making earth-friendly lifestyle choices will not necessarily be more expensive, nor does it require a major life overhaul.

The entrepreneurs we feature in this special section hail from all walks of life, and are from various fields in the green industry. Their efforts inspire a more mindful approach to what you eat or put on your skin, cutting food waste, making more informed choices, and consuming only what you need.



Power Builder

Multihyphenate Jason Pomeroy is an award-winning architect, master planner, academic, author and TV personality. He is the founding principal of Pomeroy Studio, an urbanism, architecture, design and research firm

"My interest in green architecture started when I completed my first wigwam tent in my mother's garden in England. Fashioning bits of branches into a frame, creating screens out of leaves, and draping my mother's bed sheets over the top was my first foray into the field that I'm still passionate about today.

I developed a deep understanding of how green architecture can address many of the major built environment challenges of our time while at the Canterbury School of Architecture and University of Cambridge.

The rate of urbanisation in the developing world, especially in Asia, has resulted in towns and cities that are, in many ways, unfit to care for their citizens. Pollution, congestion and a lack of green open spaces are a consequence of poor planning and a lack of attention to preserving culture and the environment, which exacerbate social and economic inequality.

With the world's population expected to swell to 9.7 billion by 2050, the need to house these additional people will place huge stresses on the natural environment as well as on existing infrastructure. Pomeroy Studio aims to create green cities, buildings, landscapes and interiors as a countermove.

One of my more memorable works is the Idea House in Malaysia, Asia's first carbon neutral prototype home. We reinterpreted architectural elements and passive design techniques of traditional Malay kampung houses (such as overhanging roofs, modular construction and



"How our ancestors lived gives us many clues as to how we can live sustainably in the future"

external foliage) and incorporated modern technology, resulting in a building that generates more clean power than it uses.

Pomeroy Studio also designed B House, Singapore's first targeted operational carbon negative house that is set for completion by year end. We took many of the design techniques used in the old colonial bungalows, and added in solar and water harvesting technologies. It will create more power than it consumes, and yet it's built at a price comparable to that of building a conventional bungalow in the area.

There used to be a perception that anything with the word 'sustainable' or 'green' was prohibitively expensive. Thankfully, this perception is changing, and developers and consumers are realising that sustainable buildings can be as cost-effective as 'traditional' buildings, and are actually cheaper in the long run. Passive design techniques such as orientating a building to take advantage of prevailing winds can significantly reduce the need for artificial ventilation and therefore reduce energy costs.

My hope is that when people see physical proof that green architecture works, and is accessible to private consumers, mindsets will change even further."