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# Life Storeys

LIFE IN THE HEARTLANDS



PHOTO BY PROPERTIES & LAND GROUP

## **HOLISTIC LIFESTYLE IN THE HEARTLANDS**

HDB creates infrastructure to support your physical, social and mental well-being

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ISSUE 36 Apr 2023

## Dear Readers,

For the holistic well-being of our residents, HDB goes beyond building blocks of flats to integrate into HDB towns infrastructure that supports their physical, social and mental well-being. Find some completed projects of such a nature in **Talk of the Town**.

Bukit Batok is the featured town in **Around the Block**. This issue highlights the pockets of greenery — such as Little Guilin — that it is known for. And did you know that there is a Mini Geylang Serai located within Bukit Batok? We sampled delicious halal dishes there, and review them in this issue.

High-density, high-rise living means that residents are expected to be considerate and safety-conscious. Check out **Our Life Stories** for tips on how to prevent your *barang barang* from becoming potential killer litter. Another story offers ideas on how to make safe the different areas of your flat. This section also profiles Joo Bakes' Pang Joo Soon, who makes a living baking cakes and other goodies from his apartment in Ang Mo Kio.

Want to know more about the different flat types that HDB builds? Then turn to **Living' It Up**, which also shares how HDB keeps its flats affordable. We also suggest a list of easy-growing plants should you wish to harvest some edibles right in your own flat or at the nearby community garden.

We wish you a happy and meaningful Hari Raya Puasa!



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## EDITORIAL ADVISERS

Eileen Neo, Shivvonne Wong,  
Peh Yang Yu, Low Yi Ying

## PUBLISHING AGENT

ThinkFarm Pte Ltd

## Managing Director

Christopher Tay

## Head, Editorial

Chua Kim Beng

## Head, Creative

Lee Lily

## Head, Client Relationship

Jessie Kek

## Contributors

Adaline Teo, Fiona Chen,  
Teng Yong Ping, Vernon Wong,  
Vivienne Looi



**Life Storeys** is a quarterly community publication by the Housing & Development Board, bringing you stories and happenings from your neighbourhood. Join us in creating a gracious and harmonious living environment for all! You can also access the electronic version at <https://go.gov.sg/hdb-lifestoreys> or scan the QR code below.



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# Live Well. Live Green. Live Connected



**HDB PROVIDES MORE THAN JUST A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD. THROUGH GOOD PLANNING AND CONTINUAL UPGRADING, IT CREATES INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS' PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING.**

To enable residents to lead healthy lifestyles, keep active minds, and build strong bonds with the community, HDB estates have, over the years, been built and upgraded to cater to the needs of residents of all ages.

This aim was reinforced when HDB unveiled in October 2020 its *Designing for Life* roadmap. Launched by Deputy Prime Minister Mr Heng Swee Keat, the roadmap places the holistic well-being of its residents at the centre of HDB's work over the next 10–15 years.

## **Bringing nature close to home**

New HDB estates are imbued with lush greenery. From roof gardens on multi-storey car parks to skyrise greenery that give high-rise residents a tranquil green view to lawn spaces for free play, HDB residents have nature practically at their doorstep.

In 2018, HDB launched the *Biophilic Town Framework*, which aims to promote a greater sense of place, better well-being, and enhanced quality of life for

PHOTO: BILLY GOH



Exercise stations at an HDB estate



Waterfront living



Barrier-free designs for pedestrians

residents. The results can be seen in the waterfront-living vibe of Punggol Northshore, where the framework was first piloted. From 2019, the Framework has been applied to all new BTO developments nationwide.

### Fit for life

There is no excuse to not lead a healthier and more active lifestyle when there are exercise stations and jogging tracks in HDB estates. You can find a selection of exercise equipment as well as features to get residents of all ages moving.

To encourage the adoption of an active life, the selection of fitness equipment has been fine-tuned over the years to target different muscles and for strength training. In the pipeline are new circuit training facilities covering the five fitness functions — agility, strengthening, flexibility, balancing and endurance.



Northshore Plaza

PHOTO: BILLY GOH

## Health, wellness and community bonding

Healthcare services and family-friendly amenities have always been staples in HDB towns. With renewed focus on being inclusive and accessible to residents of all ages, new developments will continue to feature Universal Design and barrier-free design principles to enable residents — especially the elderly and differently abled — to move around their neighbourhood with ease.

Through the *Neighbourhood Renewal Programme*, existing developments are also guided by the prevailing Universal Design requirements and upgraded with more senior-friendly features, such as gentler ramps and resting

points. HDB also provides support for ground-up community projects under its *Lively Places Programme*.

HDB neighbourhood centres have traditionally been the commercial heart of the estate where residents can dine and shop for necessities. With plans to turn these spaces into Social and Wellness Hubs, these enhanced facilities will offer a wide variety of wellness choices, ranging from healthy food options, community space for bonding, green spaces to relax, and fitness corners.

With practical initiatives rolled out to achieve these aims, HDB estates continue to be where we can create fond memories of childhood, build futures, and age gracefully in place.

*Designing for Life: The Future of HDB Living* features panels that contain HDB's vision to 'Live Well', 'Live Green', and 'Live Connected'. Preview the exhibition by scanning the QR code.



# PARKS & Recreation

**VISIT THE TOWN OF BUKIT BATOK IN THE WESTERN REGION FOR PLENTY OF BACK-TO-NATURE FUN AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES!**

The origins of Bukit Batok's name remain disputed, but one explanation is that it is a reference to its hilly terrain and its association with quarries. 'Bukit' means 'hill' in Malay, and 'batok' sounds like 'batu', which means 'rock' in the same language. Today, its granite mining past has undergone a beautiful transformation: Bukit Batok Town Park was created from a granite quarry. Read on to find out more about this place and two other fun spots in this town found in the west.

## **Bukit Batok Town Park** **Along Bukit Batok East Avenue 5**

Bukit Batok Town Park is also known as Little Guilin due to its resemblance to a scenic spot with similar rock formations in Guilin, China. The former granite quarry is popular not just with walkers and joggers, but also nature enthusiasts — birdwatchers have spotted the Oriental Magpie-Robin and the

Grey-Headed Fish Eagle here — and visitors snapping Instagram-worthy selfies.

Located a short stroll from Bukit Gombak MRT, Bukit Batok Town Park is also served by the Bukit Batok East Park Connector, which is linked to the Hillview Park Connector and takes you to the neighbouring Bukit Batok Nature Park.

**FUN FACT:** The former quarry was mined for a type of granite called Gombak norite, reputed to be 10 times stronger than concrete!





PHOTO COURTESY OF HOMETEAMNS

**HomeTeamNS Bukit Batok**  
 2 Bukit Batok West Avenue 7, Singapore 659003

Despite it being a recreational club dedicated to national servicemen of the Singapore Police Force and Singapore Civil Defence Force, HomeTeamNS Bukit Batok's amenities are also open to the public, particularly its recreational and dining offers. One of four HomeTeamNS clubs, the large building houses an impressive array of activities for the whole family, from the T-Play Indoor Playground, which encourages learning through play, to

an adventure centre that boasts a zipline! Other fun things to do here include lessons at the Futsal Clinic, laser tag, as well as board and console games at the PlayPen.

**BOOK THIS:** There are holiday villas available for booking. There are three types of villas, all of which come with BBQ pits and living halls — perfect for family celebrations or weekend staycations.

**Fuji Hill Park**  
 Next to Block 225, Bukit Batok Central,  
 Singapore 650225

Located within Bukit Batok Neighbourhood Park, Fuji Hill Park was opened in April 2021, and is designed for a fun day out with the family.

The young ones will have a ball of a time at its playground tower, which rewards its climbers with an exhilarating ride down the giant tube slide. They will also have a lot of fun challenging themselves on the rope obstacle courses and climbing nets.

What makes Fuji Hill Park outstanding, however, is its eye-catching boardwalk. It offers a scenic walk through lush landscaping. Above it all is the Summit Platform, which offers lovely views of the surrounding area.

**PRO TIP:** Do check out Fuji Hill Park at night, when the boardwalk gets illuminated — perfect for a romantic evening stroll!



# THE MINI *Geylang Serai* OF THE WEST

**THE BUKIT GOMBAK NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE, LOCATED WITHIN BUKIT BATOK, IS KNOWN FOR ITS MANY BUSINESSES THAT CATER TO THE MALAY-MUSLIM COMMUNITY. CHECK OUT THESE TWO RESTAURANTS THAT SERVE HALAL CHINESE DISHES, AS WELL AS A SHOP SELLING MODERN MALAY-STYLE CLOTHES.**

## **Air Pasang Eating House**

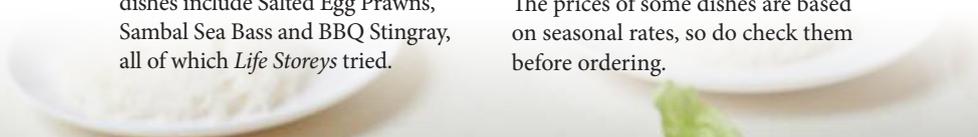
**Block 374, Bukit Batok Street 31, #01-192, Singapore 650374**

The Air Pasang stall is located in a *kopitiam* that is popular with the Malay-Muslim community, since all the stalls here serve halal food. The place was renovated about a year ago and has a clean and bright ambience.

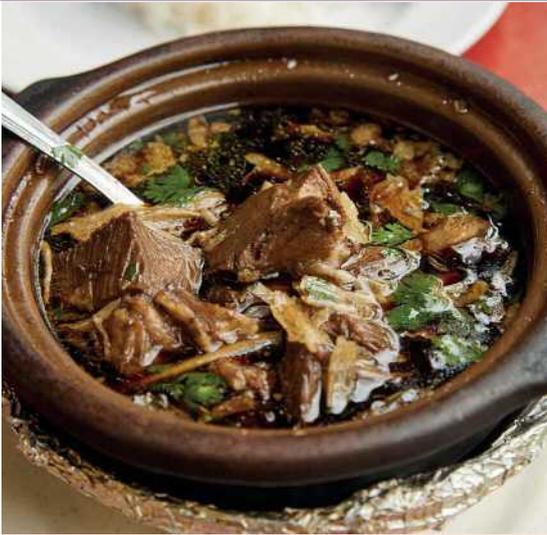
The Air Pasang stall is arguably the main draw of this diner. Specialising in halal Chinese cuisine, its signature dishes include Salted Egg Prawns, Sambal Sea Bass and BBQ Stingray, all of which *Life Storeys* tried.

The good-sized stingray came covered in a thick layer of dark, savoury *sambal* chilli that was not too spicy. The prawns were large and fresh, fried in their shells, and coated in a creamy, orange-yellow sauce that had just the right amount of salted egg flavour. The sea bass, doused in a sweet, tangy, slightly spicy red sauce and garnished with slivers of lady's finger and onion, was fried to a delightful crisp that revealed sweet, firm flesh underneath.

The prices of some dishes are based on seasonal rates, so do check them before ordering.



(clockwise, from top)  
Sambal Sea Bass,  
Salted Egg Prawns,  
and BBQ Stingray



Lamb Kut Teh

### Habib Family Restaurant

Block 374, Bukit Batok Street 31,  
#01-194, Singapore 650374

Few places serve halal *bak kut teh*, but this establishment is well-known for its version, which features beef and mutton.

Habib Mohamad, the family patriarch, set up the business in 1988 in the same location where it is still operating today — a no-frills eatery in the middle of an HDB estate. The restaurant is now managed by Habib's children, Nadya and Danial Habib, as well as Nadya's husband, Rizky Oktofajri.

In the 1990s, Habib began offering the menu that the restaurant is known for today, an extensive list that includes Chinese-style *zi char*, Thai-style dishes, and BBQ seafood. Their most unusual dishes, however, are the beef kut teh and lamb kut teh, both of which are cooked in the herbal style.

"It was a hit with the Malay-Muslim community," said Nadya of the halal *bak kut teh*. "Over the years, the recipe was modified. In the early 2000s, when Chef Ah Hong joined us, he brewed it to absolute perfection, so we decided to stick to his concoction of herbs and spices."

*Life Storeys* sampled both the beef kut teh and lamb kut teh, which arrived in claypots containing supremely tender chunks of meat in a dark, opaque soup that had a strong yet balanced herbal flavour. The mutton was not too gamey, probably because non-fatty cuts of meat were used. Be sure to dip the meat into the home-made *sambal belacan*, which adds a tangy, spicy kick.

### Pretty Sugar

Block 374, Bukit Batok Street 31,  
#01-216, Singapore 650374

This boutique is managed by founder, Shiela A Bakar, and her mother, Midah Simon. It retails modern, affordable clothes in styles that are popular with Malays such as kaftans, *baju kurung*, and *hijab* for women and kurtas for men.

Shiela sources from tailors in Malaysia and Indonesia, and designs some of the pieces herself. She first set up the business as an online shop in 2013 before opening a brick-and-mortar version in Jurong West. Shiela moved the shop to the current location, then opened another outlet in Tanjong Katong Complex. However, she will be shuttering the second outlet for good when Tanjong Katong Complex undergoes a major makeover later this year.

The Bukit Gombak Neighbourhood Centre was a natural choice for the shop's location as it is known for its many shops and restaurants that cater to the Malay-Muslim community. "They call Bukit Gombak the 'mini Geylang (Serai),'" quipped Shiela.

You can also order items from Pretty Sugar's website; check out their Instagram page @prettysuggarr.



# PREVENTING POTENTIAL **KILLER LITTER**

防止潜在的  
高楼坠物

MENCEGAH  
POTENSI SAMPAH  
**'PEMBUNUH'**

சாத்தியமான  
ஆட்கொல்லி  
குப்பைகளைத்  
தடுத்தல்

**THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF HIGH-RISE  
LIVING WHEN IT COMES TO PREVENTING  
OBJECTS FROM BECOMING POTENTIAL  
KILLER LITTER.**

Living in high-rise buildings, HDB residents have to be considerate to neighbours, visitors and passers-by. This extends to ensuring that objects in their flats are not placed haphazardly such that they pose a danger to others, e.g. the object has a chance of dropping from height. Here is a guide on how we can work towards a safer neighbourhood for all, starting from our homes and common areas.





✓ **Do place your items safely inside the flat**

请将您的物品安全地放在屋内

Simpan barangan anda dengan selamat di dalam flat

உங்கள் பொருட்களை வீட்டின் உள்ளே பாதுகாப்பாக வைத்திருங்கள்

**Penalty for placing objects in a hazardous manner**

Actions may be taken against a resident if he fails to remove objects that are placed in a hazardous manner even after receiving a written notice from HDB. If convicted, he is liable to a maximum fine of \$2,000. If the object is not removed after the conviction, he will be liable to a further fine of \$100 per day for as long as the offence continues.

**Course of action**

What should you do if you come across any potential killer litter?

1. If the potential killer litter is spotted in common areas (e.g. corridor, rooftop gardens, staircase), contact your Town Council.
2. If the potential killer litter is spotted inside HDB flats (e.g. on window ledges, balconies), contact HDB's Branch Service Line at 1800-225-5432.
3. Remind your neighbours to place things within their flats in a safe manner.



**ONESERVICE**  
MUNICIPAL SERVICES OFFICE

Have any feedback on potential killer litter? You may also share your feedback via the Municipal Services Office's OneService app.



**Don't place objects on the parapet or hang items above the parapet**

不要在矮墙上放置物品或在矮墙上方悬挂物品



Jangan letak atau gantung sebarang objek diatas parapet

கைப்பிடிச் சுவர் மீது பொருட்களை வைக்க அல்லது கைப்பிடிச் சுவருக்கு மேலே பொருட்களை தொங்க விட வேண்டாம்



**Don't place objects on the ledges of windows/balconies**

不要在窗沿/阳台边放置物品



Jangan letak sebarang objek pada belebas tingkap/balkoni

ஜன்னல்கள்/பால்கனிகளின் விளிம்புகளில் பொருட்களை வைக்க வேண்டாம்

# Steps to a SAFER HOME

**A MAN'S HOME IS HIS CASTLE, BUT EVEN A KING CAN GET INJURED WITHIN HIS HUMBLE ABODE BY TRIPPING ON LOOSE WIRES AND WATER SPILLS. LEARN ABOUT COMMON HOME HAZARDS AND HOW TO MITIGATE THEM.**

Did you know that most injuries affecting older people are from falls? With a fast-ageing population, the number of these cases is likely going to rise. This may translate into a higher chance of seniors experiencing conditions like bone fractures, and even developing a fear of falling.

As most falls occur at home, you should learn to recognise potential hazards and take steps to make your flat safer. Make these simple changes recommended by Occupational Therapists from Tan Tock Seng Hospital's (TSH) Community Health Team to reduce the risk of falls within your flat, and age confidently and gracefully!

## KITCHEN



**Some Common Hazards**  
**Oil or water spills** on the floor can cause you to slip and fall

- Ways To Mitigate Risks**
- Clean up a spill immediately
  - Apply anti-slip treatment to the floor
  - Wear non-skid footwear

**Some Common Hazards**  
**Improper stacking of items** in high places can lead to accidents such as cuts, bumps and abrasions

- Ways To Mitigate Risks**
- Rearrange items that you use frequently at lower heights
  - Store away items that are hardly used to make your kitchen more organised



## LIVING ROOM



**Some Common Hazards**  
**Clutter** is a common tripping hazard that prevents you from moving around freely and safely

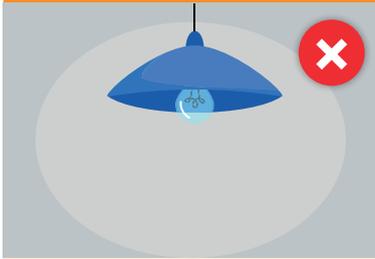
- Ways To Mitigate Risks**
- Clear obstacles and reposition furniture to create a clear path to walk through

**Some Common Hazards**  
**Loose wires** are a tripping hazard

- Ways To Mitigate Risks**
- Tape loose wires onto the floor
  - Use cable ties to neaten the wires



## BATHROOM



### Some Common Hazards

**Poor lighting** can increase your risk of stepping onto slippery areas without knowing



### Ways To Mitigate Risks

- Install fluorescent lights
- Place light switches near your bathroom entrance and at a reachable height

### Some Common Hazards

**Kerbs** can be challenging to cross if you have poor lower limb strength

### Ways To Mitigate Risks

- Install grab bars
- Paste contrasting coloured tapes to highlight the height difference from the floor



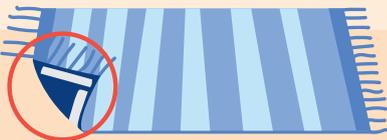
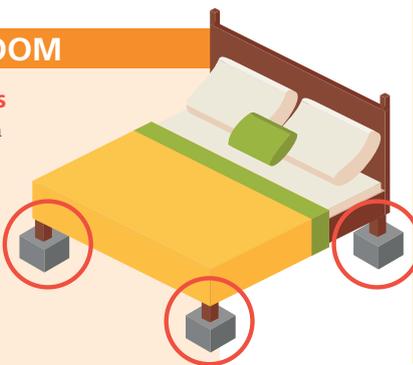
## BEDROOM

### Some Common Hazards

**Beds that are too low** can be difficult to get up from, causing you to lose balance

### Ways To Mitigate Risks

- Use blocks to increase the height of your bed
- Use a firmer mattress



### Some Common Hazards

**Carpets or rugs** can cause you to trip

### Ways To Mitigate Risks

- Use carpets or rugs with anti-skid feature
- Paste anti-skid strips on your carpets or rugs before laying them

## RESOURCES TO KICK-START YOUR HOME IMPROVEMENT

### Enhancement for Active Seniors (EASE)

EASE is a highly subsidised programme that aims to enhance the mobility and safety of senior residents within their home. Eligible residents can choose to install elderly-friendly improvement items such as grab bars, ramps and slip-resistant treatment to existing floor tiles.



### CHARGE Up! Learning Programme

Sign up for this programme to learn about home safety. Run by the Centre for Health Activation at TTSH, it aims to empower participants with the health skills and knowledge to better self-care and look out for others. Scan the QR code to register your interest.



### TTSH Health Library

This one-stop digital library has a wide variety of resources on health education. Check it out with your smart phone here.



## ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR HEALTH ACTIVATION (CHA)

Launched in 2017, TTSH's CHA was set up to focus on Activation, Research and Training — also known as the ART of CHA. Working with Central Health's network of health and social care partners, CHA's vision is to drive activation and build One Community of Carers who are equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence to self-care and care for their loved ones and others in the community.

Better with



**EVERY ITEM PRODUCED BY HOME BAKERY JOO BAKES IS MADE WITH FRENCH BUTTER, AN INGREDIENT THAT MAKES HIS PRODUCTS MORE DELICIOUS AND ADDICTIVE, INSISTS ITS PROPRIETOR, PANG JOO SOON.**

“I love French butter. I find its flavour very rich yet refined, and really fragrant when baked,” shares Pang Joo Soon, the proprietor of Joo Bakes. This ingredient is one reason why Joo Bakes’ goodies have gained a loyal following.

Joo developed a penchant for French butter after attending a Basic Pastry course in Le Cordon Bleu (LCB) in Paris, where he also gained an appreciation for French breads, such as baguettes, brioches and croissants. In fact, he decided to enrol in the Boulangerie Diploma course in the Bangkok branch of LCB. He then went back to Paris to take the Intermediate Pastry course at LCB.



It is surprising to learn how high Joo climbed in the corporate world before giving it up to set up Joo Bakes. “I have an Honours degree in Estate Management, and was working for a Real Estate Consulting firm as an Account Manager, handling the Asia Pacific Corporate Real Estate portfolios for MNCs,” he reveals.

### We heard that you learnt to bake by helping your father make butter cake.

Dad was a really good cook; his signature dishes included chicken rice, beef noodles, pork chop, and braised trotters. However, he only ever baked one cake — butter cake. He was very particular about ingredients, and his favourite brand of butter was SCS, which touts itself as “Singapore’s No. 1 Butter”.

I was never serious about baking. I’d always helped Dad with butter cakes — more for fun than anything else. In late 2017, Dad had a fall and dislocated his shoulder, then underwent surgery in mid-2018. I resigned from my job to take a break and spend more time with him. However, Dad passed shortly after the surgery.

### What inspired you to set up Joo Bakes in your HDB flat?

By the time my courses were over, the COVID-19 pandemic had begun. With no opportunity to travel, I was getting restless at home. Family and friends have been telling me that it was getting increasingly challenging to find wholesome bakes. Some even asked me to sell them my cakes, both for their own consumption and to give

“

Others have commented that they would feel hungry every time they walk past my unit.



away as presents. So, in January 2021, Joo Bakes was born.

As I’ve always been rather risk-averse, I decided to start small in a home bakery and see where it leads. I also checked whether home baking was allowed, and it is — under the Home-Based Business Scheme.

### What were some difficulties you encountered setting up this business in your flat?

My kitchen was renovated more than 10 years back, so I had to work around the existing design. The bigger challenge is the limited electrical supply compared to a commercial kitchen. I am thus limited to home appliances, which are smaller.

### How many items do you have on your menu?

I have about 15 items, including loaf cakes, cookies and cinnamon buns. However, I now have fixed bake dates with about three items each time.

### Since you have no retail front, how do you drum up business?

Initially, it was largely through word of mouth. My simple bakes are not Instagrammable, so it’s hard to attract customers via social media.

I was lucky that a few food writers liked my bakes and decided to feature Joo Bakes in their publications. The three-week stint as baker-in-residence of Baker X in August last year also gave me good exposure.

### What do you like best about your Ang Mo Kio flat?

I’ve been living in this resale flat since purchasing it in 2011. It’s conveniently located — I’m near amenities (AMK Hub, shops, wet market, sports facilities) and public transport (MRT, bus stop). Right next to my block is a park, where I sometimes go for walks. I’m pretty active, so I’m happy that my gym and a public swimming pool are within walking distance.

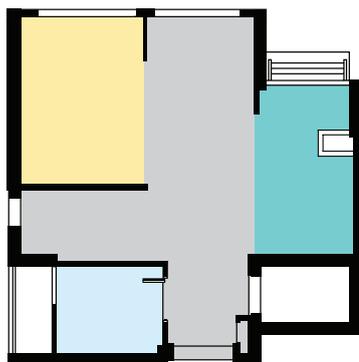
I think many neighbours know about me through their nose! My delivery guy tells me that neighbours he meets in the lift invariably exclaim how fragrant the cakes were, and would enquire where they came from. Others have commented that they would feel hungry every time they walk past my unit. Of course, I share my bakes with them once in a while.



# A FOR EVERYONE

**FROM COSY SPACES FOR SMALL FAMILIES TO A LARGER HOME FOR MULTI-GENERATIONAL LIVING, THERE IS AN HDB FLAT FOR EVERYONE!**

Did you know that about 80% of Singapore residents live in an HDB flat? That's more than three million people! While we are familiar with some flat types such as the 4-room flat, there are actually several types of Build-To-Order (BTO) and resale HDB flats in the market that are available for every budget and need.



## 2-ROOM FLEXI FLAT

With its cosy design comprising a bedroom, living room, bathroom and kitchen, the 2-room Flexi flat caters to the needs of families, singles and seniors who are looking for a place to call their own.



## 3-ROOM FLAT

With two bedrooms, including one with an en suite bathroom, the 3-room flat is the perfect starter home for young families.

## COMMUNITY CARE APARTMENT

There is also the Community Care Apartment, which is a senior-friendly housing integrated with care services that can be scaled according to needs, and social activities to support seniors to age independently in their silver years within the community.



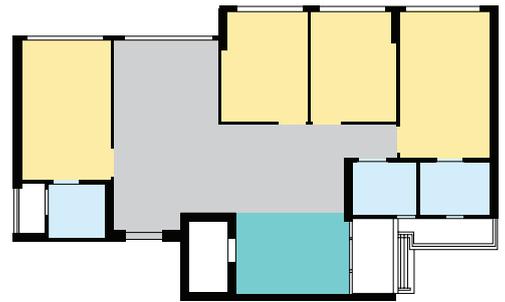
## 4-ROOM FLAT

This flat type not only comes with three bedrooms, but also a larger living and dining area — one of the reasons why the 4-room flat is generally popular among families looking for a home.



**5-ROOM FLAT**

The 5-room flat ticks all the boxes for a larger family. It comes with three bedrooms, a bigger living and dining room, and an additional nook that can be utilised as a study or home office.



**3GEN FLAT**

The 3Gen flat is the ultimate abode for multi-generational families, with its larger living area and four bedrooms, two of which come with attached bathrooms.

BEDROOM	BATHROOM
LIVING ROOM	KITCHEN

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In 2022, more than 80% of new BTO homeowners used less than 25% of their monthly income to service their HDB housing loans. This means that most homeowners could service their HDB housing loans using their monthly CPF contributions, with little or no cash outlay.

**KEEPING HDB FLATS AFFORDABLE**

On top of building various flat types to suit diverse housing needs, HDB's overriding aim is to ensure public housing remains affordable to help a broad segment of Singaporeans own their homes.

**More new flats and additional support for young families**

HDB plans to offer up to 23,000 highly subsidised BTO flats in 2023, with a total of up to 100,000 flats from 2021 to 2025. From the August 2023 BTO launch onwards, there will also be additional support for selected first-timers, including more BTO ballot chances and an enhanced priority scheme to help them secure their flat in a timelier manner.



**More housing grants for eligible first-time buyers of resale flats**

Eligible first-timer families buying a 2-room or larger resale flat can enjoy up to \$190,000 of housing grants. This comprises:

- CPF Housing Grant of up to \$80,000
- Enhanced CPF Housing Grant (EHG) of up to \$80,000
- Proximity Housing Grant of up to \$30,000

Eligible first-timer singles buying a 2- to 5-room resale flat can enjoy up to \$95,000 in housing grants.



**The Government has kept BTO prices stable to maintain affordability through increased market discounts**

HDB prices new flats with affordability in mind. Firstly, HDB establishes the market value of the new flats by considering:

- the prices of comparable resale flats nearby
- individual flat attributes
- prevailing market conditions

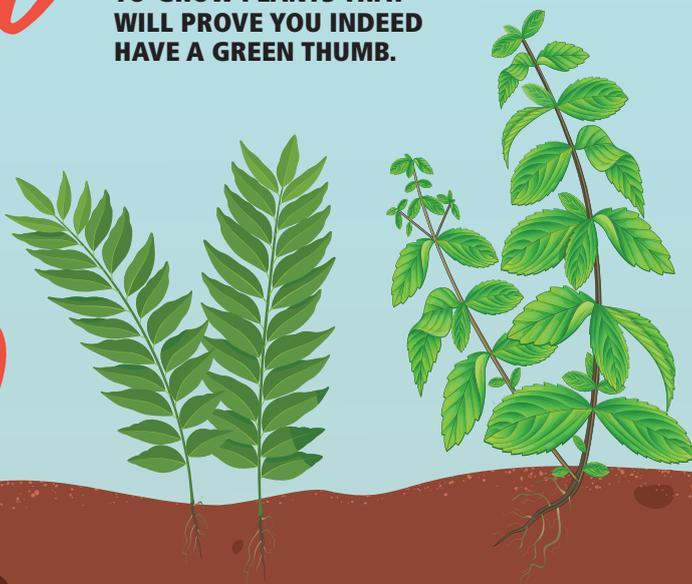


Thereafter, a significant market discount, which has been increased in recent years, is applied to the assessed market value.

This has kept BTO prices stable and affordable. Eligible first-timers buying a BTO flat can also receive an EHG of up to \$80,000 (tiered by household income).

# Grow YOUR OWN FOOD

LOVE THE IDEA OF HARVESTING YOUR OWN HERBS AND VEGETABLES BUT HAVE ALWAYS FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN FLORAE? TRY THESE EASY-TO-GROW PLANTS THAT WILL PROVE YOU INDEED HAVE A GREEN THUMB.



There are many edible plants that grow well in our tropical climate. If you enjoy the flavours that herbs and spices impart to Southeast Asian dishes, you could grow Thai basil for basil minced pork rice, mint for Vietnamese noodle soup, curry leaves for cereal prawns, as well as chives and chillies for garnishing.

Vegetables such as sweet potato leaves, *xiao bai cai*, *kang kong*, spinach and more can also add variety to your diet. They are usually easy to grow, and thus most suitable for first-time gardeners.

## Curry leaf plant

The curry leaf plant is a shrub that thrives in full sun and fertile soil that drains well. It is propagated by seeds, which can be obtained from mature seed pods.

The leaves produce a gloriously distinctive aromatic oil that is used to enhance the flavour of many dishes, from curries and dals to soups and snacks. Crushing the leaves unleashes an unrivalled fragrance that pairs well with salted egg dishes.

## Mint

In Singapore, the most commonly grown mints are spearmint and peppermint. Spearmint has light green leaves and a sweet, minty flavour that makes it ideal for cooking. Peppermint, with its darker green leaves, contains more menthol and enhances icy cool herbal tea.

Most mints grow well in fertile, well-drained soil in full sunlight or a spot slightly shaded from the sun. Add a balanced fertiliser once a fortnight and harvest the leaves regularly to stimulate growth.

“Your garden is a space where you can clear your mind and reduce stress as you become one with nature. Working productively in the garden can increase serotonin levels in the brain, causing you to be happier throughout the day.

– THE BENEFITS OF GARDENING FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH,  
NUS UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTRE,  
10 JUNE 2021



### Thai basil

Popularly used in Thai, Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian cuisines, Thai basil loves a sunlit spot and grows best in fertile, well-drained soil. Allow soil to dry slightly before re-watering, and avoid getting the leaves wet. For healthy growth, apply fish emulsion or seaweed solution about once a month.

Thai basil is vastly different from sweet basil (used in pesto and bruschetta) in flavour and appearance. While Thai basil has bold notes of licorice and spice, sweet basil is sweeter with more peppery notes.



### Sweet potato

The sweet potato plant is a creeper that can come in purple and green leaves, and produces tubers in different colours, namely orange, white, yellow, red or purple. It can be grown from seeds, tubers or stem cuttings.

The sweet potato plant thrives in full sunlight and grows best in a well-drained, fine sandy loam soil. Avoid over-watering, as a moist environment encourages rot and disease. Trim regularly for a better harvest.

The tender leaves are a good source of dietary fibre and are often blanched, boiled in soups, or stir-fried. The tubers can be eaten steamed, baked or boiled, and are delicious in desserts such as sweet potato soup and *bubur cha cha*.



### Xiao bai cai

A common vegetable dish on dinner tables in Singapore, *xiao bai cai* or *bok choy* comes in two common varieties, one with green stems and another with white.

Besides possessing a milder flavour, the green variety also boasts more tender leaves than the white type. With a fast cooking time of around five minutes and a neutral flavour that absorbs sauces well, the leaves are often eaten boiled and blanched, or simply stir-fried with garlic and oyster sauce.

This plant grows best in full sun and well-draining soil, and can be harvested 40 to 45 days after planting. Water regularly, especially during hot days. It is recommended to use an organic fertiliser at the time of planting rather than throughout its growth.



## Replace worn-out parts on your window!

Replace aluminium rivets and worn-out parts. Engage an approved window contractor to repair any damages immediately. If your window falls due to a lack of maintenance, you may be fined up to \$10,000 and/or jailed for up to a year. Falling windows can kill.

**DON'T PLAY PLAY, QUICKLY FIX OK?**



Scan to learn how to check your windows, and engage approved window contractors.



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