

# Property TRUST

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# FRIENDS OF EUPE

## A PASSION FOR LANDSCAPE & DESIGN

*Friends of Eupe highlights the work and ideas of the many talented people who collaborate with Eupe to achieve its goals and objectives. For our first Friends of Eupe article, we are very pleased to highlight the work of Mr Phua Chin Eng. Phua has been advising Eupe on landscape design for its residential projects for more than 15 years. Phua is recognised as one of Malaysia's top landscape architects. Landart, Phua's Penang-based firm of which he is the Founder and Director, is one of the leaders in its field in both Malaysia and South East Asia.*

*1. How has landscaping and landscape design changed over the past 10 to 15 years?*

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The biggest overall change is that people are demanding more in the way of innovative outdoor spaces and what they offer in terms of improving residential style and standards. In terms of concepts, landscape design 15 years ago was mainly based on what is called the Balinese concept. The gardens are filled with many plants, resembling a jungle. The evolution of the landscape design industry has slowly changed since that time to the more modern tropical garden settings of today. This type of concept focuses more on the practicality and functionality of the design as well as keeping it as low maintenance as possible.

*2. What's the most challenging landscape project, or type of project, you've worked on?*

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I would say projects located on hilly slopes are the most challenging. The challenge is balancing all the many considerations that come with this sort of terrain, such as the preservation of the existing treescape and using the landform to the best advantage.

One of the most challenging but satisfying projects I've worked on recently is Alila. Alila is a gated and guarded residential development located in Jalan Lembah Permai,



MR PHUA CHIN ENG  
DIRECTOR OF LANDART

Tanjung Bungah. The development site sits on a hill slope surrounded by tropical forest with great views overlooking the sea. So we chose a tropical landscaping design concept with our main aim to bring back all the flora and fauna which we, unfortunately, had to displace during the initial stage of the development.

With extra effort and careful planning, we managed to create an environment which attracted the birds, butterflies and dragonflies back to the area. Further, we incorporated and made use of a lot of existing natural materials from the site in our design. For example, we made use of the blasted granite that was there naturally and used it as the central feature of the walls and steps.

### ***3. What are the most inspiring landscaping projects you've seen? Why have they inspired you?***

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The most inspiring landscaping projects I have seen are the works by Geoffrey Bawa in Sri Lanka, namely the Triton Hotel and Bentota Beach Hotel. Geoffrey is both an architect and a landscape architect. He manages to blend effortlessly interior with exterior spaces, creating a very harmonious design where the landscape humbly complements the architecture without overshadowing the latter. In turn, the building itself shows respect to the landscape by not overpowering its design.

He designs buildings that reflect the culture around it and captures the unique spirit of place.

### ***4. You've worked on many projects here and overseas.***

#### ***How do you approach distinctive landscaping 'styles' in various countries?***

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We have been involved in projects in Malaysia, Indonesia, Dubai and Vietnam. Basically our approach to landscape design does not differ a great deal from place to place. No matter where the project site is, we always study in detail the local culture, the natural landscape on the existing site, weather conditions, soil types and so on prior to designing the landscape. Our philosophy in landscape design is always to create a work of harmonious art which nurtures the relationship between nature and people.

### ***5. Does Eupe have a different approach to landscaping ideas as opposed to most other developers?***

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Eupe's approach to landscaping places a large emphasis on creating green areas, or what I call 'big green lungs' within their developments. For instance, Eupe puts a lot of effort into creating comfortable landscaped spaces between the interior and exterior of its residences. We have had the opportunity to be involved in two of their projects, namely Astana Parkhomes

at Sungai Petani and Hillpark at Alma. With each of these two developments we carefully planned the landscaping to achieve lush open spaces combined with recreational facilities such as children's playgrounds, jogging paths and cycling tracks for the residents' leisure and enjoyment.

### ***6. Do you have any tips for designing a garden? What could homebuyers do to create a conducive ambience in their gardens without spending a lot of money?***

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Firstly, for landed property owners, I would suggest they plant trees and shrubs directly in the ground instead of spending unnecessarily on pots. Second, home owners should plant low maintenance plants because these plants incur low maintenance cost. My third tip is to reuse the natural materials of the site wherever possible, such as natural stones or railway sleepers. These materials also require very low maintenance. Lastly, plant trees that are able to provide shade. Shady trees reduce the heat of the internal building and this keeps the use of air-conditioners low, as well as electricity bills!