A recent study indicates that global carbon dioxide emissions have fallen as much as 17% during the peak of lockdowns across the world (Al Jazeera). Malaysia has equally seen a reduction in pollution and significant improvement in air and water quality (New Straits Times).

Concerns remain that despite these temporary reliefs with other merging issues: the rise in plastic use (estimated a 10-fold increase), clinical waste, and fears of intensified exploitation of natural resources due to decline in revenues.

This Snapshot, we highlight how Malaysians are becoming more sustainable and environmentally conscious, and other ‘green’ recovery plans globally post COVID-19.

How do we use the current positive environmental awareness as a catalyst? How do we use this momentum to create long-term solutions?

UPCYCLING & ZERO-WASTE

Local grocery food packaging - using disposable plastic food containers and polystyrene boxes to plant seedlings or as DIY craft ideas. Bubble tea cups were especially popular as gardening pots and stationary holders. Users in an active zero-waste community group shared plenty of zero-waste ideas.

VOLUNTARY TRASH CLEAN-UPS

A teenager celebrates his 18th birthday with a pledge to collect trash for 23 days straight. As part of regular clean-up runs organized by a local environmentalist group earlier this year, a man had collected up to 4,500 cigarette butts. Individuals shared experiences on how they collected trash during their regular neighbourhood walks.

MORE OPTIONS TO RECYCLE

A shopping mall accelerates its recycling efforts, by introducing two new recyclable categories – food and fabric. The organic waste collected will be bio-recycled through composting and repurposed as animal feed and organic fertiliser (Malay Mail).

SURGE IN GARDENING / COMPOSTING & HOME-GROWN FOOD

Demands and sales for compost, soil conditioners, vegetable seeds and gardening tools increased during the Movement Control Order (MCO) period, a report noted that sales for compost, soil conditioners and fertilisers increased during the Movement Control Order (MCO) period with the rise in hygiene concerns due to COVID-19.

News reports documented a growing trend of people dabbling into vegetable gardening to grow their own produce -- with some adopting it as a family activity. Other interesting stories include those from an urban farmer and first timers, a viral post of growing bean sprouts in a soda bottle and growing an edible garden in a condominium.

INTERNATIONAL

Amsterdam is embracing the ‘doughnut’ model, an economic model that balance the need of people and planet for post COVID-19 recovery.

In the United Kingdom, there are growing calls for a green recovery plan that aligns with climate goals. France’s airline bailout was reported to come with green-strings attached - to halve their overall carbon-dioxide emissions.