

Butterflies to brighten up Orchard Road soon

BY SIA LING XIN

THE latest attraction in Singapore's busiest shopping district, Orchard Road, will be a trail – not for shopping, but for butterfly viewing.

Pockets of greenery in the Orchard area will be linked to form a green corridor that spans 4km, from Singapore Botanic Gardens to Fort Canning, called the Butterfly Trail.

Plants that attract butterflies – mainly nectar plants that are a source of food and shelter for caterpillars and butterflies – will be planted along this stretch over two years.

The Nature Society (Singapore) or NSS, which is spear-

heading the \$400,000 project, aims to attract 50 species of butterflies, including the common birdwing and leopard lacewing, to move into the area, up from some 20 species that it has spotted there.

Its partners are the National Parks Board (NParks), the Singapore Tourism Board and the Orchard Road Business Association.

The presence of butterflies indicates good air quality, as they are not attracted to polluted areas, said Dr Geh Min, the NSS' immediate past president.

This trail will offer urban dwellers a chance to get closer to nature, she added.

“There are many nature trails in Singapore, but they might be

a little out of the way for people who do not specially go on them. We hope that planting a trail along a shopping belt will make appreciating nature more accessible,” Dr Geh said.

She believes that planting more shrubs and trees will also help alleviate the risk of a flood, like last week's in Orchard Road, from occurring again.

“Trees and plants, with their thickets of leaves and their roots firmly in soil, will slow down the rain and help the soil absorb it,” she said. This means that less water will flow into the drainage system, Dr Geh explained.

The NSS worked with Alexandra Hospital to create a butterfly trail there in 2001, and also with Changi Airport to create a

butterfly garden in 2007.

Yesterday, Ambassador at Large at the Foreign Affairs Ministry Tommy Koh and other guests helped plant shrubs and trees on a 170-sq m plot along the Butterfly Trail near Nassim and Tanglin roads. More than 900 shrubs and 24 trees were planted in the plot, which NParks will maintain.

Tanglin resident Nicole Shuenter, 44, a music teacher, said: “I'm really excited about seeing the butterflies. My husband and I take walks around the area every other day, and it'd be great to see some.”

lingxin@sph.com.sg

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