

The green hotel

How to apply the 3R principles - Reduce, Recycle and Re-use

IF YOU ARE looking for a sign of the times then go no further than Harbour Plaza Resort City in Tin Shui Wai. At a time of increasing awareness about the environment, the staff of the resort hotel are setting an example that Hong Kong can be proud of.

They have set up an environmental club that has grown more than 1,000 lbs of organic vegetables since it was started in February 2006. Even better, the hotel chef serves delicious dishes made from the fruits of their labour in the staff canteen.

"We started by recycling glass bottles from our food and beverage outlets and then realised we could do more for the environment," explained Stephen H. Chu, General Manager of the hotel in the northwest of the New Territories. "We are located close to the Hong Kong Wetland Park and the Mai Po Marshes so it is natural for us to be a green hotel."

The club now has more than 50 members, about a quarter of the total staff, who meet twice a month after working hours on the hotel podium where the organic garden is located. With guidance from the hotel gardener, they grow everything from Chinese kale, winter melon and choy sum to tomatoes, pumpkins and chilies. Outdoor recycling bins are used to turn guests' vegetable and fruit waste into compost, while custom-made water tanks provide irrigation.

"It all begins with a small step. If everyone helps the environment, it can make a major difference in the future,"



Food for thought: Harbour Plaza Resort City's organic garden has produced over 1,000 lbs of vegetables.



said Mr Chu. "It is a good chance for the hotel staff to get in touch with nature. The plants generate oxygen so it is good for everybody as well."

But the hotel's environmental initiatives do not end there. Newspapers, plastic bottles and aluminium are all recycled and the 1,100-room hotel also has collection bins for glass bottles, mobile phone batteries and CDs/DVDs. Some of the environmental ideas came from the hotel's overseas guests.

What's more, all serviced suites are equipped with energy-saving bulbs that use 80 per cent less energy than traditional incandescent light bulbs. In the staff areas, motion sensors ensure that lights are only on when someone is in the vicinity and hotel windows are tinted to reduce the greenhouse effect from sunlight; in summer, the air conditioning in every room is set to 24.5 degree Celsius.

These efforts not only help the hotel save money, but also set an example to hotel staff and guests to be more environmentally aware. Mr Chu said, "The team has been working on environmental initiatives since the hotel opened in 1999. We'll continue to adopt the 3R principles - Reduce, Recycle and Re-use."

Back at the podium, Ms Hing Chiu-ha from house-keeping is busy in the garden. "The company has given us the opportunity to enjoy a new hobby and learn at the same time," she said. "It is great to see the plants grow. Of course, we all love it when it is time to pick the vegetables and the chef cooks them. They really are delicious."

