

Essential Oil Research Centre, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Render.

Protect habitats. Build new ones.

Architecture, master planning and planting for the tropics, worldwide.

archigardener.com · designs@archigardener.com · Jonathan Choe, Founding Director

Archigardener

PORTFOLIO 2026

WHO WE ARE

An architecture and master planning practice for the tropics, all over the world.

Archigardener designs buildings, landscapes and master plans that keep the habitat a site already has, and build new habitat into the structure: on the ground, on the roof and up the walls.

Each design starts from the site, its culture, the client's ambitions and the brief, not from a set style. Clients come from across the tropics. Most projects start online.

HOW WE DESIGN

From the ground up

Every design works the same way at every scale, from one room to a district, and always in the same order:

First, the ground
Disturb as little as possible.

Then, the building
Let the plants shelter it.

Then, materials and people
Start with what is already there.

Then, the whole place
Keep the forest; grow more.

Soil, water, plants, buildings and people work as one system, so each part of a design is tested against the whole: where the rain goes, what gives shade, what feeds whom, how people move.

CONTENTS

Jonathan Choe, and what we do 03

Archigardener projects 04

- Essential Oil Research Centre · West Sumatra 04
- Canine Community Club · Kuching 07
- Pool Terrace for Dogs & Humans · Kuching 09
- Ngapuh Nest · Sarawak 10
- Boutique Heritage Hotel · Padang 12
- Car-free Permaculture Forest City · Costa Rica 14

Earlier, at WOHA 15

How a project runs 18

Contact 19

Keep what lives there, and grow more.

FOUNDER

Jonathan Choe

Founding Director

Born in the United States, Jonathan studied architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago and Paris. He then spent more than a decade at WOHA Architects in Singapore, latterly as an Associate, on projects such as Design Orchard and the WOHA Rooftop Urban Farm.

He draws and paints the places he travels to.



Jonathan Choe among plants.

WHAT WE DO

Architecture and master planning, with planting from the first sketch.

01 **Pre-feasibility study**
Send the site information, the brief and your requirements, then meet Jonathan for an initial design consultation. We present one round of design ideas, then develop three potential schemes, each one checked by Jonathan: layout, massing, planting and first numbers such as areas and units. Usually 4 to 6 weeks.
For landowners, developers and operators

02 **Master planning and urban design**
From a feasibility study for one plot to plans for whole districts: your brief, the constraints and the local context in one tailored, sustainable vision.
For landowners, developers and towns

03 **Architecture**
Homes, villas, resorts, F&B spaces, workplaces and research buildings. No fixed style: each design starts from the place, its culture, your ambitions and the programme.
For owners, operators and institutions

04 **Landscape and inside-outside spaces**
Landscape built into buildings and cities: roof gardens and farms, green walls, terraces, courtyards, pocket parks and greenhouses, and rooms that open straight onto them.
For homes, buildings, streets and open spaces

05 **Design Consultation**
90 minutes online with Jonathan on your site, plan or renovation, then a short written summary with sketches, designs and resources.
For professional advice, before you engage the full services of an architect or planner

06 **Any project under the sun**
An unusual brief, a strange site, a new kind of building: projects of any kind and any scale.
For anyone with an idea

Archigardener leads the design and works with a local architect of record and local engineers for permits and sign-off.

ARCHIGARDENER PROJECT · UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Essential Oil Research Centre

A research centre that becomes a hill

PLACE	West Sumatra, Indonesia
STATUS	Under construction since July 2025
TYPE	Research, production and teaching
ROLE	Design consultant: concept to construction drawings and site support
PARTNER	PT Mitra Ayu, essential-oil producer

An inhabited hill. Three storeys of planted terraces rise like contour lines. Tropical herbs grow just outside the laboratories that process them, so the crop and the research sit side by side.

Rain you can watch, then use. A light steel canopy gathers the rain and lets it fall through the middle of the building into a stepwell, then into storage.

A short rainforest trek. Planted slopes join the terraces into an amphitheatre. Stairs woven into the hill are the main way up, so every trip between floors passes through planting.



The centre on its hill: the steel canopy over the planted terraces. Render.



From above: the canopy, the terraces and the forest around them. Render.



Construction progress on site.

Renders, drawings and photo: Archigardener

Essential Oil Research Centre

Inside the planted hill

WEST SUMATRA, INDONESIA



The stepwell in the event plaza, under the rain chain. Render.



Under the canopy, between the terraces. Render.



The event plaza at dusk. Render.



The north approach at blue hour. Render.



A planted terrace outside the labs. Render.

Essential Oil Research Centre

Plans and the rain path

When the rain comes

Rain falls through the middle of the building and is used again.

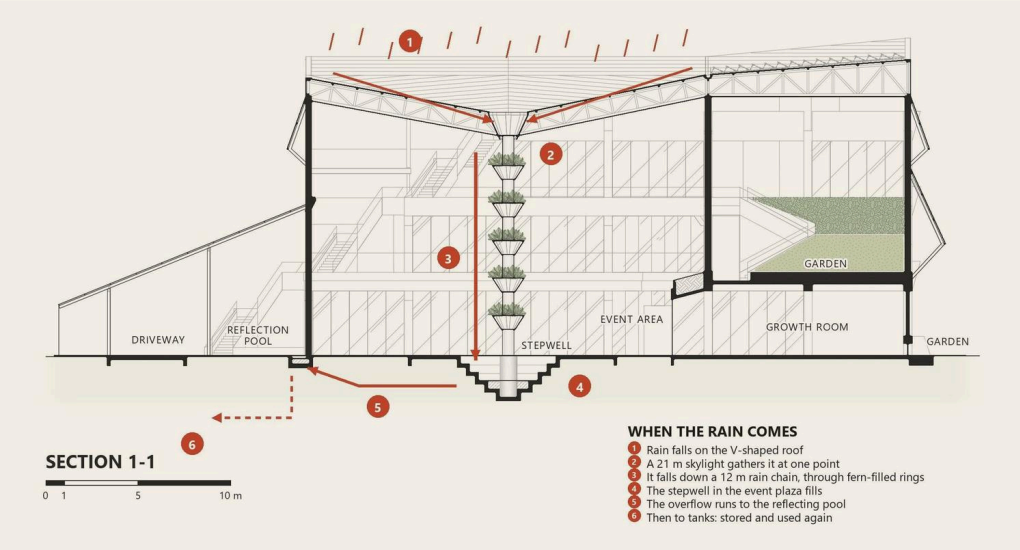
1. A 21 m skylight gathers the rain
2. A 12 m rain chain runs through fern-filled rings
3. The stepwell fills in the event plaza
4. The pool overflows to a reflecting pool
5. Tanks store the water for use again

Air and light

Every room takes daylight and air from two sides.







Ground floor plan, second floor plan, and the rain path on Section 1-1. Drawings: Archigardener.

ARCHIGARDENER PROJECT · COMPLETED

Canine Community Club

A greenhouse turned inside out

PLACE	Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia
STATUS	Completed, July 2023 to February 2026
TYPE	Dog-friendly F&B space and community club
CLIENT	Fable, beside BarkPark
SIZE	About 235 m²: an 18 × 9.8 m glasshouse and a mezzanine

In a cold climate, glass shelters plants. In the tropics the relationship reverses: the plants shelter the glass. Climbers grow up a steel frame with a trellis built in, so the building gets greener every visit.

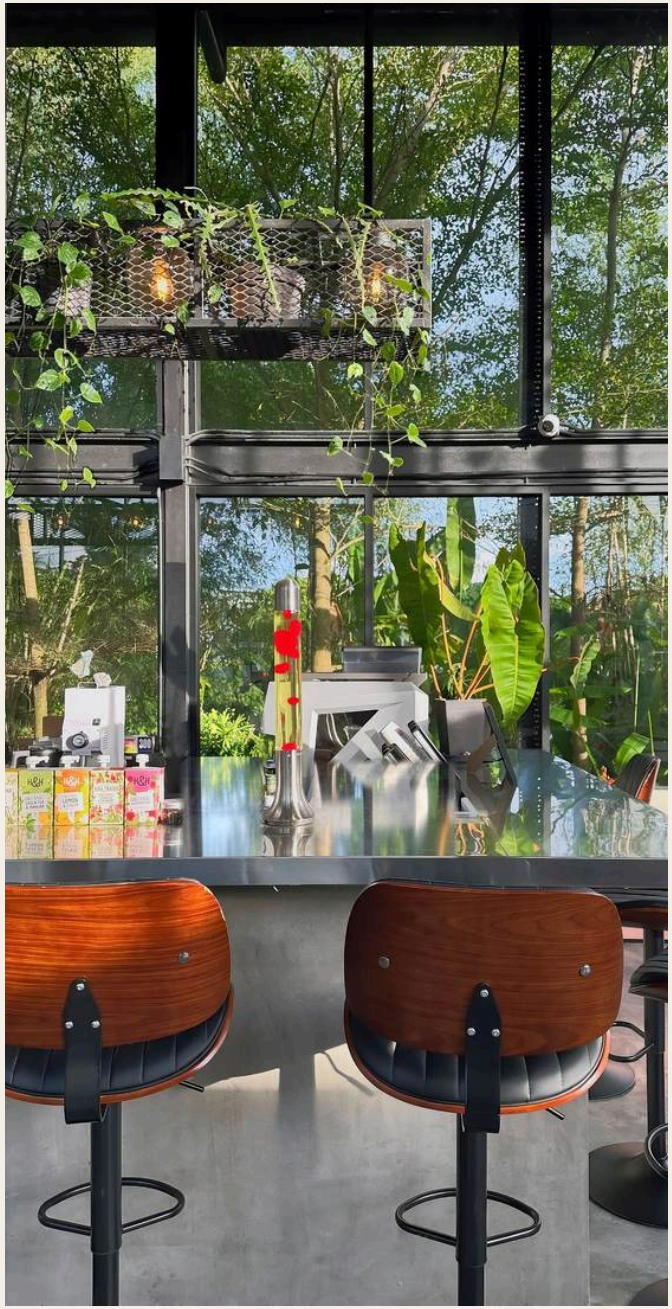
Dogs are kept out of most public spaces, so places for dogs and their people to meet are few. Fable sits beside BarkPark and gives the community a cool, shared space.

GROWS	Native climbers on a trellis built into the frame
SHADE	The plants shade the glass. People and dogs sit cool inside
LIGHT	A plant chandelier of steel mesh and greenery

Photos: Archigardener



The corner with the Fable sign, February 2026.



The bar under the plant chandelier, with the forest beyond the glass. October 2025.

Canine Community Club Growing in

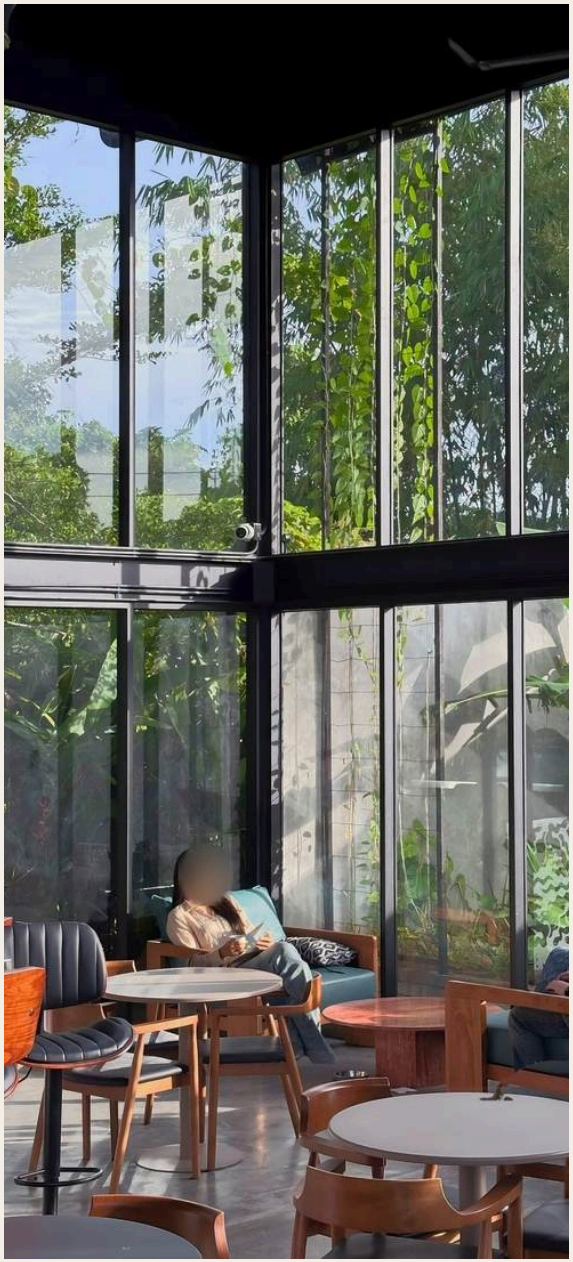
KUCHING, MALAYSIA



The front corner: planted walls beside the glasshouse.



A table among the plants, beside the glasshouse.



The lounge inside the glasshouse.

ARCHIGARDENER PROJECT · COMPLETED

Pool Terrace for Dogs & Humans

A pool where dogs climb, leap and swim

PLACE	Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia
STATUS	Completed, 2023
TYPE	Pool terrace in a private dog park
CLIENT	BarkPark Borneo

Dogs are kept out of most public spaces in Malaysia, so many never swim or run free. At BarkPark, a terraced pool gives them somewhere to climb, leap and swim.

Steps lead up to a prefabricated above-ground pool. Seat-height steps give dogs and their people a place to rest, and a small amphitheatre for events. A bench loop runs round the base, planters at both ends act as safety barriers, and shade sails keep off the sun.



The terrace and pool from above.



Seat-height steps and planters, under the shade sails.

Images: Jonathan Choe

ARCHIGARDENER PROJECT · COMPLETED

Ngapuh Nest

A shelter that leaves the ground to the forest

PLACE	Sarawak, Borneo, Malaysia
STATUS	Completed, January 2024
TYPE	Forest shelter
ROLE	Design and build
SIZE	Around 8 m²

In place of concrete, ground screws hold the shelter. They go in within minutes with little disturbance, and they can come out again. The forest floor stays as it was.

The shelter stands above the ground, so animals, insects and plants carry on below it. Local hardwood was processed on site, which cut transport, and leftover planks from other projects were used again.

ROOF	A nest-like roof shaped like the canopy



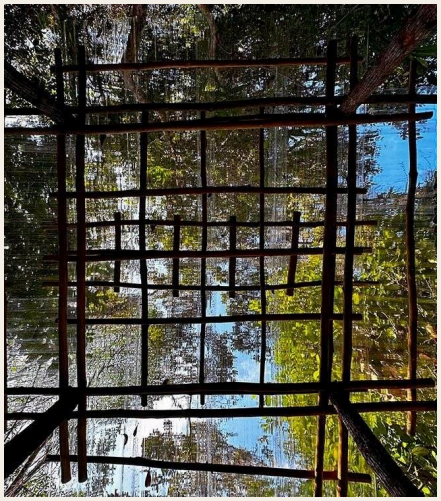
Ngapuh Nest in the rainforest canopy.



The deck on its ground screws.

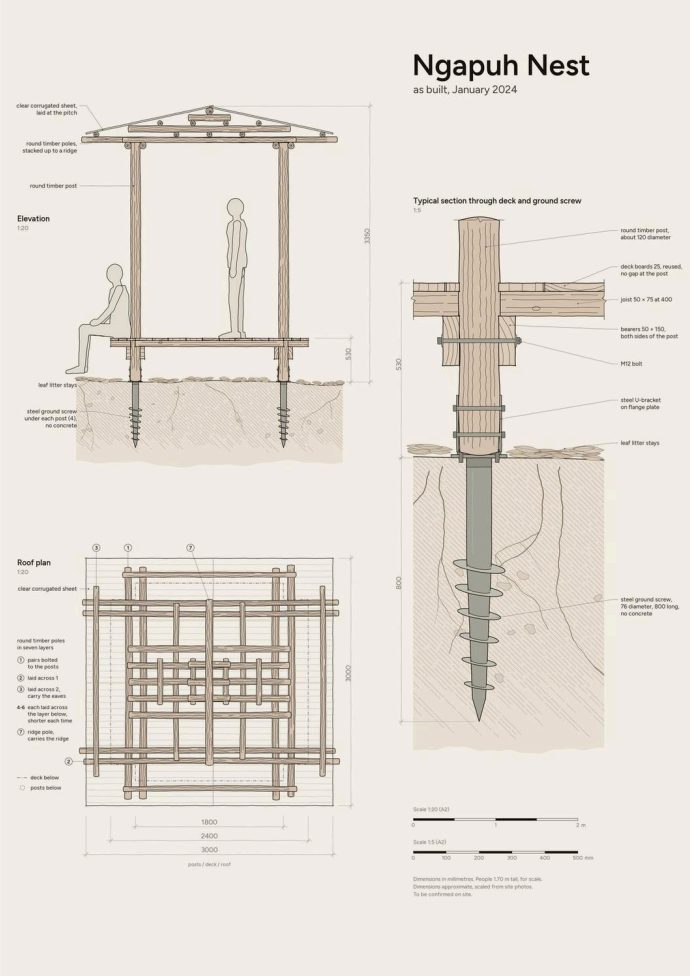


Local hardwood, processed on site.

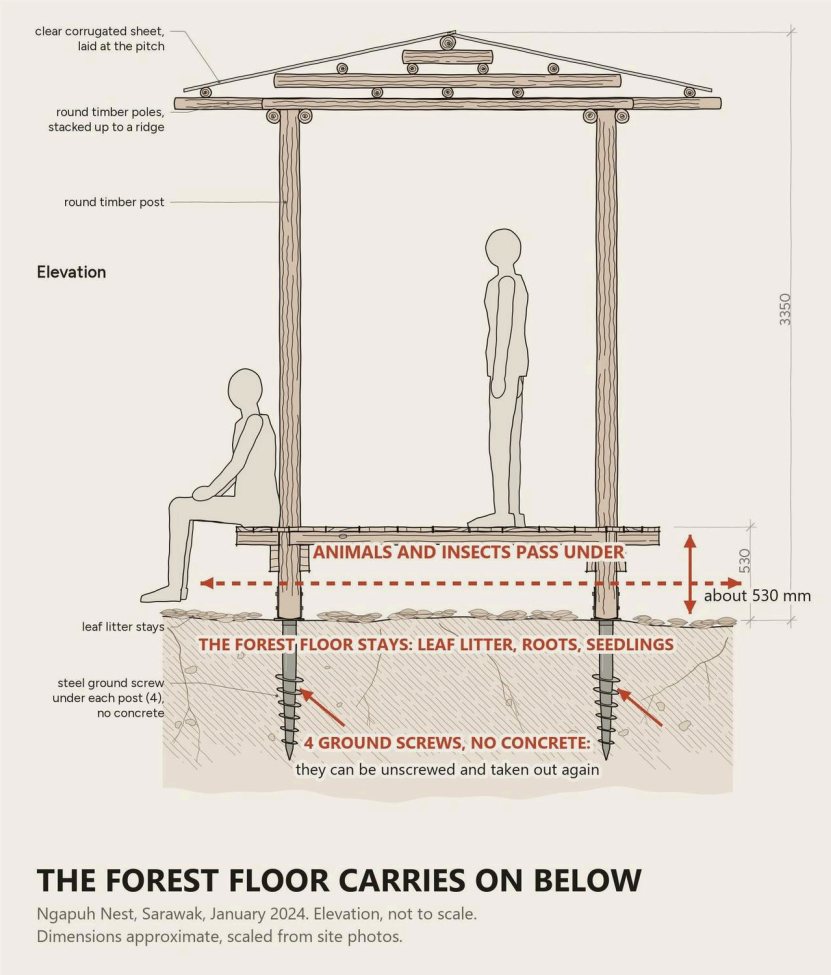


Looking up through the roof.

Photos and drawings: Archigardener



Ngapuh Nest as built, January 2024: elevation, roof plan and a section through the deck and one ground screw.



THE FOREST FLOOR CARRIES ON BELOW

Ngapuh Nest, Sarawak, January 2024. Elevation, not to scale.
Dimensions approximate, scaled from site photos.

The forest floor carries on below.

A foundation that treads lightly

Four ground screws, no concrete. They can be unscrewed and taken out again.

Raised to respect the forest

The deck stands clear of the ground, so leaf litter, roots and seedlings stay, and animals and insects pass under.

Local timber, local hands

Local hardwood, processed on site. Offcuts reused.



The roof from above, in the trees.

ARCHIGARDENER PROJECT · UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Boutique Heritage Hotel

Start with what is already there

PLACE	Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia
STATUS	Under construction
TYPE	Boutique hotel in a heritage setting

A Dutch bank of 1908 stands on the banks of the Batang Arau River in the heart of Padang. The bank survived the 2009 Sumatra earthquake and has been restored, but its modern annex was damaged beyond repair.

In the ruins of the annex, Archigardener designs a small hotel covered in plants, and the new part defers to the old building. Old walls, local earth and reclaimed timber come first.



The planted hotel beside the old bank. Render.



Planting up the new wall, beside the restored bank. Render.

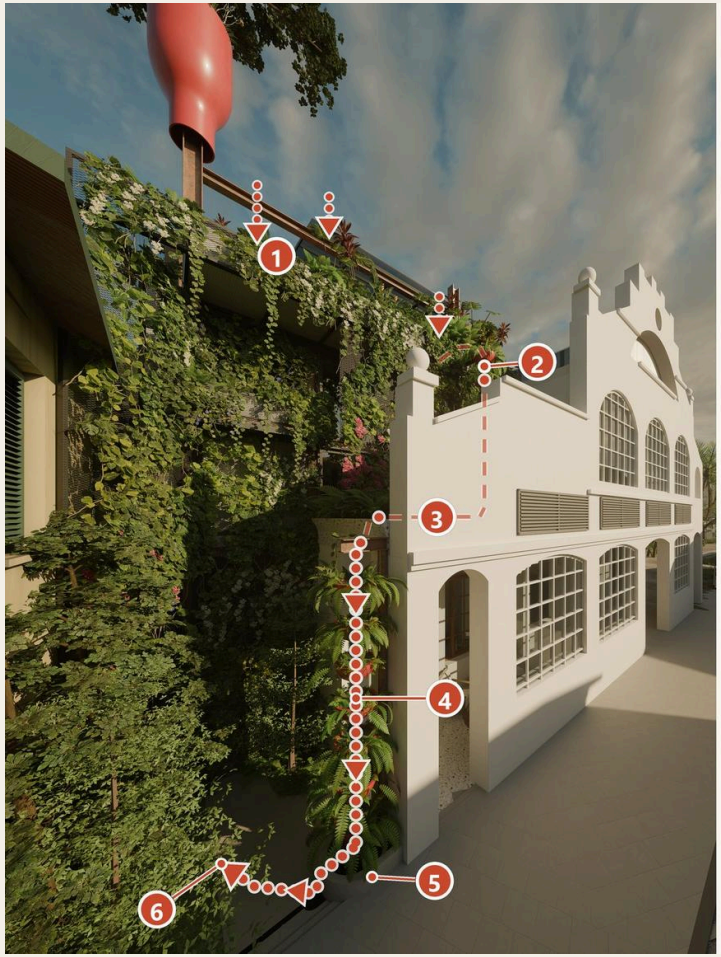
Old walls, local earth and reclaimed timber come first.

Renders and diagram: Archigardener

Boutique Heritage Hotel

Inside the hotel, and where the rain goes

PADANG, INDONESIA



WHERE THE RAIN GOES

Spaarbank hotel, Padang

1. Rain falls on the new planted roof
2. and runs into an upper rain chain behind the old bank's parapet
3. It is carried across to the courtyard
4. and runs down a rain chain of planted cups, through ferns
5. into a basin at the foot
6. and overflows into the planted ground

●●●●● the water's path

– – – hidden from view (behind a wall or a planter)

Where the rain goes: from the new planted roof, along rain chains and across the courtyard, into a basin and the planted ground. Diagram.



A penthouse room on the street side, behind the glass block wall. Render.



The penthouse bedroom, open to the terrace and the far bank of the river. Render.

ARCHIGARDENER PROJECT · MASTER PLANNING CONCEPT

Car-free Permaculture Forest City

A car-free town where the forest stays

PLACE	Costa Rica
STATUS	Concept, 2025
TYPE	Hilltop community with a permaculture farm

On a hilltop above Costa Rica's tropical coast, a car-free community puts nature before roads. Homes cluster close together, so the forest stays, and a permaculture farm sits at its heart.

Homes and villas step down the hill along terraced paths, around a car-free centre in the forest. Sheltered paths and a community plaza keep the forest around them, and each home opens to the view and the breeze.



The plan: homes and villas step down the hill along terraced paths, around a car-free centre in the forest. Food forests, sheltered paths and stepped paths to the beach. Plan by Archigardener, April 2025; base redrawn in 2026.



The hilltop above the coast. Render.



A home that looks out to sea. Render.

Images: Archigardener, in collaboration with AIMIR CG. Plan base drawn from Copernicus Sentinel-2 data (contains modified Copernicus Sentinel data 2025).

EARLIER, AT WOHA

More than a decade at WOHA Architects

Before Archigardener, Jonathan Choe spent more than a decade at WOHA Architects in Singapore, latterly as an Associate: competitions, master plans and buildings that brought nature back into the city.

2016–2019

Design Orchard

Orchard Road, Singapore · **Design team, as Associate at WOHA**

A home for local designers on Orchard Road, with a public rooftop landscape. A design shop fills the ground floor, with incubation spaces for young designers above, all under a sloped, stepped roof that works as a public hilltop park, with a stage and an amphitheatre for events. The stepped form gives 100 % of the site area back to the city as public space. Rain from the green roof runs down rain chains into lotus pond pots and is stored for irrigation. The building opened in 2019, after about two years of design and construction.

Singapore Good Design Award, Special Mention, 2019. ArchDaily Building of the Year 2020 finalist, commercial category. Featured in Architectural Digest, Singapore Architect and ArchDaily, 2019. Credited by ArchDaily, JTC and Indesign Live.

2014–2018

Punggol Digital District & SIT master plans

Punggol, Singapore · Master plan completed · **Designer, master planner and manager**

A university campus for the Singapore Institute of Technology and a business park, side by side, so education and industry work together. An existing secondary rainforest becomes a park at the heart of the district: a campus in a park, round a central forest courtyard.

On the sloping site, two public ground levels keep vehicles apart from people. They are open day and night, without fences, and link shared car parks and public spaces across the district. Rooftops carry urban farms and solar panels for a district-wide micro grid.

COMPETITIONS AND UNBUILT WORK

2014 — **Guggenheim Museum Helsinki** · Finland
Raised above Laivasillankatu, the museum joins the hilltop park, the harbour and the city.
Competition. Project manager and design lead.

2014 — **Self-Sufficient City** · Indonesia
60,000 public homes on a 730 ha forest site. Housing lifted off the ground keeps over half of the rainforest.
Master planning competition. Project manager and design lead.

2013–2014 — **Forest Courtyard Museum** · Bintan Island, Indonesia
A museum village on a forest ridge. It follows the slope to keep the trees; its walls are stone from the site.
Detailed design completed, unbuilt. Architectural designer.

2013 — **Punggol Town Hub** · Singapore
A raised layer of offices and parking shades the community uses below and carries a solar array.
Competition. Project manager and design lead.

All projects in this section are by WOHA Architects, Singapore. Jonathan Choe's role is shown for each. Project text from archigardener.com.

Design Orchard and Punggol Digital District

Built and in use. Photos: Jonathan Choe



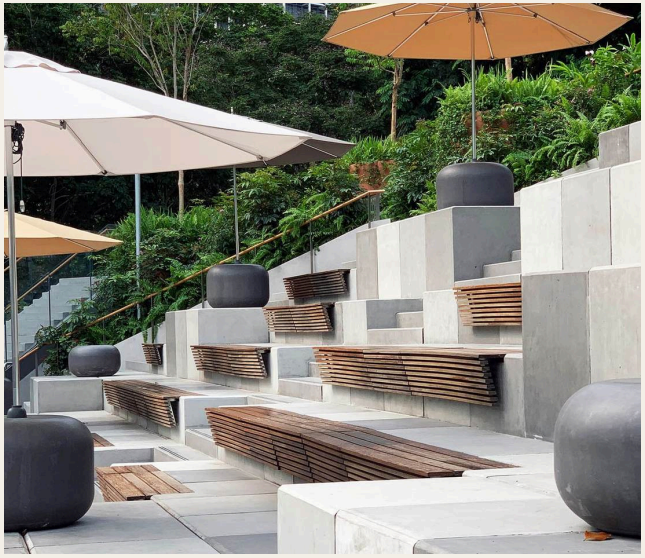
Design Orchard from across Orchard Road: the shop behind glass, the green roof stepping up above it. 2019.



Punggol Digital District as a model: blocks set in a carpet of green.



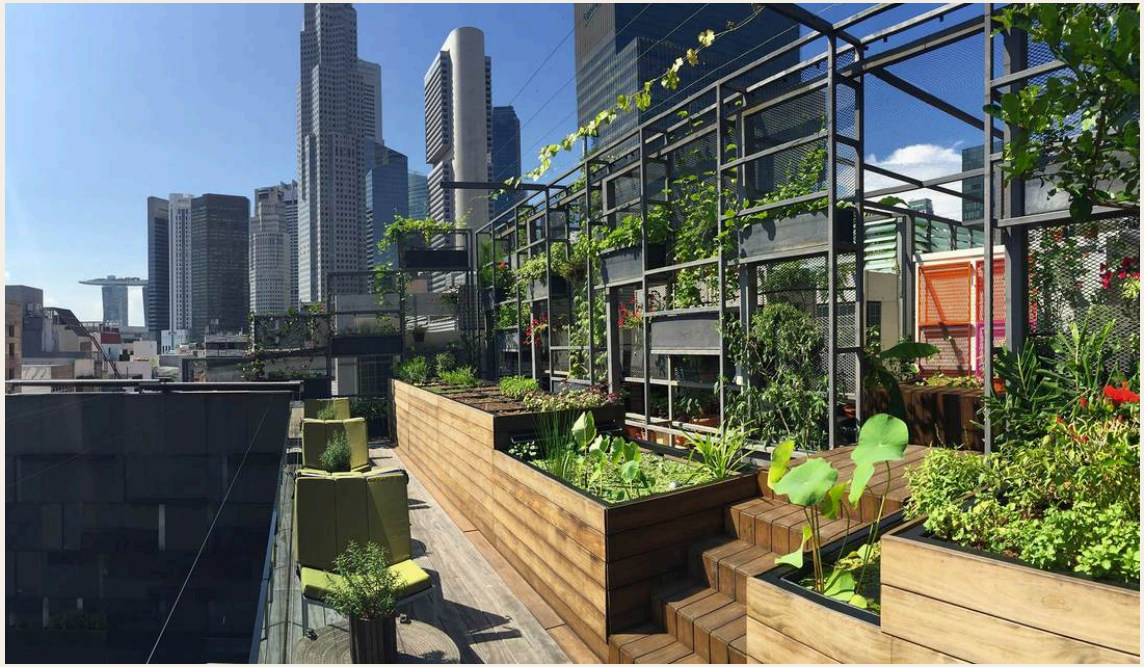
A year on: the roof from above, among the trees of Orchard Road. March 2020.



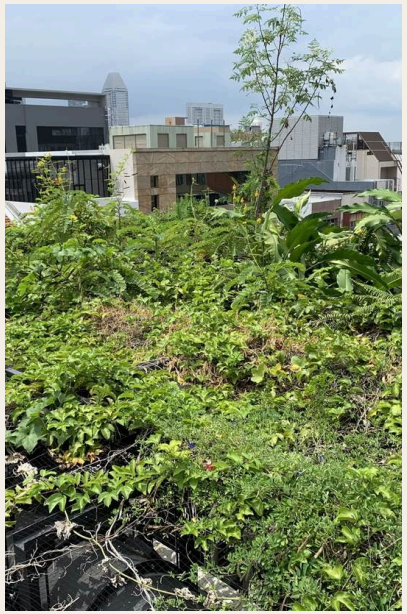
Timber and concrete seats on the amphitheatre steps. 2019.



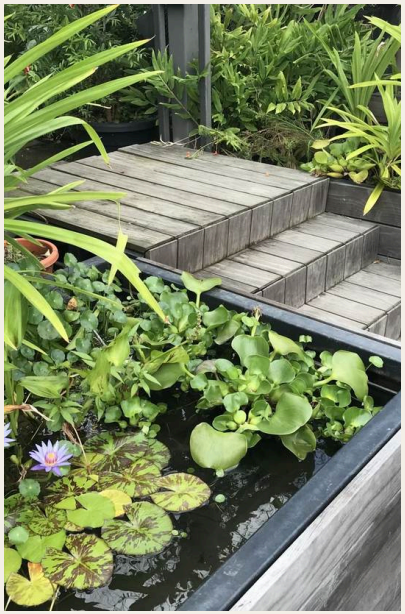
Punggol Digital District in February 2025, a few months after the first buildings opened.



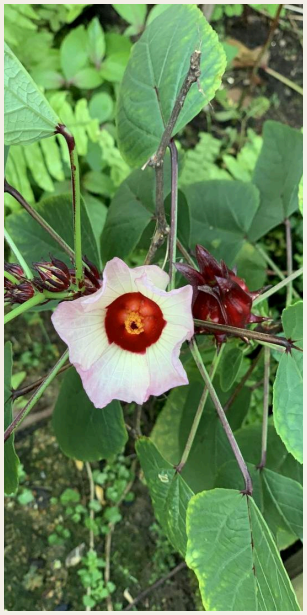
The farm on the WOHA office roof, Singapore.



The farm grown in, July 2019.



Water lilies in a planted pond, April 2018.



Roselle in flower, July 2019.

EARLIER, AT WOHA

2015–2016
Rooftop Urban Farm

Singapore · **Core design team; head of the WOHA gardening club**

Nearly 200 m² of farm on the roof of WOHA's office, with over 100 species of edible plants. An aquaponics system pairs a tilapia pond with a planted bed. Office waste becomes compost. Rainwater covers all the irrigation, even through dry spells of up to two weeks, and a 120 m² solar array supplies around 7 % of the office's power. Wild birds brought in new plants from nearby parks, and the farm grew into a small ecosystem.

Photos: Jonathan Choe

"A little green space can contribute to the overall health of natural ecosystems in the city!"

Jonathan Choe, on the Rooftop Urban Farm at WOHA in Singapore

WORKING TOGETHER

How a project runs

1 **Tell us about the project**
Book a free first call, or send photos, the location and a budget range.

2 **Pre-feasibility study**
Three schemes for the project, each one checked by Jonathan. Usually 4 to 6 weeks.

3 **Concept design**
One option, developed: what to keep, what to grow, sketches and a planting palette.

4 **Full design**
Architecture, landscape and interiors, with a local architect and engineers for permits.

5 **On site, then overgrown**
Support during construction, then planting care while the building grows in.

QUESTIONS

Where do you work?
In the tropics, all over the world, and sometimes beyond. The first steps happen online. Site visits happen when they add value.

How do the later phases work?
Every country has its own permits and sign-off. Archigardener leads the design and works with a local architect of record and local engineers.

How long does a pre-feasibility study take?
Usually 4 to 6 weeks, from the first meeting to the three schemes.

What should I send first?
Site photos, the location, a map pin and a budget range. Show the trees, the water and what lives there now.



Canine Community Club, Kuching.

CONTACT

Let’s talk

Book a free first call about your project, a Design Consultation or a pre-feasibility study.

CONTACT	Jonathan Choe, Founding Director
E-MAIL	designs@archigardener.com
BOOK A CALL	archigardener.com/lets-talk
ALL WORKS	archigardener.com/works
INSTAGRAM	@archigardener

FROM A BALCONY TO A DISTRICT

The scale changes. The rule does not: keep what lives there, and grow more.

We work in the tropics, all over the world, and sometimes beyond. The first steps happen online. Site visits happen when they add value.

More projects, the story behind them and the Archigardener Journal are on archigardener.com. New work goes up as it is built.

Archigardener

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