



DEVELOPMENT OF LANDSCAPE ECOLOGICAL
MODEL SYSTEM USING *Glossostigma elatinoides* AND
Hemianthus callitrichoides TO REMEDIATE
AQUACULTURE POND CONTAMINANTS

BY

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ABSTRACT

The aquaculture industry has contributed significantly to the economic development of Malaysia. However, the large volume of water consumption and the effluent discharged into water sources has caused significant environmental problems that require urgent management and the introduction of more effective controls. For instance, water pollution caused by excess contaminants, rapid loss of natural habitats such as mangrove lands as well as degradation of ecosystems cause innumerable damage far beyond damage to the environment. Phytoremediation, which is the application of plant-based technologies, has become more acceptable as a means to examine the problems and provide sustainable solutions for such environmental issues. Accordingly, this research explores the efficacy of a landscape ecological model system to remediate aquaculture pond contaminants specifically heavy metals using selected aquatic plant species. To achieve this aim, we examine the contaminants available in shrimp and catfish aquaculture ponds in Perak. The results revealed that nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus and heavy metals concentration varied dependent upon several factors such as the size of the farm, the quantity of food given, the chemicals added, and the cycles and periods of cultivation. In addition, the environmental condition itself like pH, salinity, conductivity, and dissolved oxygen also influence the toxicity of the heavy metals available. Through water sampling, heavy metals that exceed the limit of water quality standard for aquaculture, which are cadmium (Cd), copper (Cu), chromium (Cr), and lead (Pb) were assessed. The efficiency of potential aquatic plants which are *Glossostigma elatinoides* and *Hemianthus callitrichoides* to sequester Cd, Cu, Cr and Pb were also investigated. This model system was conducted over four different periods ranging four weeks and at the following three different concentrations: 1 mg/L, 2 mg/L, and 3 mg/L. The findings suggested that the capability to sequester different concentrations of heavy metals for certain periods varied between different species. The results indicated that *Glossostigma elatinoides* was a good phytoremediator for Cd and Cr with the bioconcentration factor (BCF) values 5436.7 ± 16.70 and 6070.4 ± 3.98 respectively, whereas *Hemianthus callitrichoides* was a good phyoremediator for Cu and Pb with the BCF values 5291.1 ± 30.19 and 1787.1 ± 27.43 respectively. This highlights that aquatic plants have different capabilities to sequester different heavy metals since various factors are involved during the phytoremediation process. The expected outcome of this research is to introduce cost-effective and eco-friendly technologies to mitigate environmental pollution from a landscape ecology perspective. The plants used as phytoremediators can enhance the visual aesthetics of underwater gardens, create new habitats, improve the soil structure, and provide ecology restoration and revitalisation. Thus, phytoremediation should be recognised as a 'tool' in landscape ecological development especially in contaminated sites. This knowledge may push the boundaries of the landscape architecture profession as well as promoting the concept of sustainability.

Keywords: Aquaculture; Phytoremediation; Landscape ecology; Heavy metals; *Glossostigma elatinoides*; *Hemianthus callitrichoides*; In vitro model system.

خلاصة البحث

لقد شاركت صناعة تربية الأحياء المائية بشكل واضح في تطوير الاقتصاد الماليزي. ومع ذلك فإن استخدام المياه بكثرة وطرح فضلاتها في مصادر المياه أدى الى حدوث مشاكل بيئية تحتاج إلى إدارة وسيطرة كبيرة. على سبيل المثال، تلوث المياه الناتج من زيادة الملوثات، مثل: النتروجين، والفسفور، والمعادن الثقيلة، والخسارة السريعة للمحرمات الطبيعية للأشجار الاستوائية، وتحطم البيئة المائية سببت دماراً شديداً للبيئة. إن استخدام علاج النباتات كعلاج لتطبيق التقنية النباتية، قد أصبح أكثر قبولاً كطريقة اختبار المشاكل، وتهيئة الحلول الملائمة لها. وفقاً لذلك، فإن هذا البحث يحاول أن يكشف نهجاً بيئياً فعالاً عن طريق تطوير نظام نموذجي لعلاج النباتات لغرض معالجة الملوثات اللاعضوية الناتجة من البحيرات. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، فقد أختبرت المعوقات من ناحية نوعية المياه، والملوثات اللاعضوية، وعلى وجه الخصوص المعادن الثقيلة. بينت النتائج أن التركيز العالي للمواد الغذائية، مثل: النتروجين، والفسفور، وكذلك كمية المعادن الثقيلة تعتمد على عوامل عدة: مساحة المزرعة، وكمية الغذاء المعطاة، وكمية المواد الكيميائية المضافة، وإعادة عمليات الحرث. فضلاً عن ذلك، فإن العوامل البيئية، مثل: درجة الحموضة، والملوحة، والأكسجين المذاب تؤثر في تسميم المعادن الثقيلة. ومن خلال أخذت عينات للنفايات السائلة، وقد تم تقدير المعادن الثقيلة التي تتجاوز الحد المسموح من مستوى جودة المياه لتربية الأحياء المائية، وهي: الكاديوم، والنحاس، والكروم، والرصاص. وتم استقصاء كفاءة النباتات المائية المرحة، وهي: الكلوسوتيكما ليتينويدس والهيميانثاسكاليترويدس (*Glossostigma elatinoides*) و (*Hemianthus callitrichoides*) لعزل النحاس، والكاديوم، والكروم، والرصاص. وتم إجراء هذا النموذج على أربعة أزمنة مختلفة بحدود أربعة أسابيع، وبالتركيز على الآتي: 1، و2، و3 مغ/لتر. اقترحت النتائج أن قابلية عزل تركيز المعادن الثقيلة المختلفة، وبأزمنة مختلفة تختلف باختلاف الفصائل. أوضحت النتائج أن الكلوسوتيكما ليتينويدس معالج جيد للكاديوم، والكروم بقيمة $BCF 5436.7 \pm 16.70$ و 6070.4 ± 3.98 على التوالي. بينما الهيميانثاسكاليترويدس معالج جيد للنحاس، والرصاص بقيمة $BCF 5291.1 \pm 30.19$ و 1787.1 ± 27.43 على التوالي. وهذا يبين أن النباتات المائية لها قابلية مختلفة لعزل المعادن الثقيلة، حيث إن العوامل العديدة تعتمد عليها في عملية المعالجة النباتية. من منظور جمال البيئة فإن المعالجة النباتية تعزز المنظور الجمالي للحدائق تحت مائة، وإيجاد محميات، وتطوير عناصر تركيب التربة، وترميم وتنشيط علم البيئة. لذلك فإن المعالجة النباتية تعد أداة لتطوير المناظر الطبيعية في المناطق الملوثة على وجه الخصوص. وهذه المعرفة قد تدفع العاملين إلى تحديد مناطق المناظر الطبيعية فضلاً عن تشجيعها لمفهوم قوة المساندة الدائمة.

APPROVAL PAGE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval Page	iv
Declaration	v
Copyright Page.....	vi
Acknowledgements	viii
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures	xiv
List of Symbols	xvii
List of Abbreviations	xviii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Issues.....	2
1.3 Problem Statements	6
1.4 Research Aims	7
1.5 Research Objectives	7
1.6 Research Significance.....	7
1.7 Research Scope.....	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 Aquaculture Development in Malaysia.....	10
2.2 Aquaculture and Contaminants	13
2.2.1 Organic Contaminants	14
2.2.2 Inorganic Contaminants	15
2.2.3 Contaminants in Aquaculture Pond.....	16
2.3 Aquaculture and Aquatic Plants	19
2.3.1 Uses and Function of Aquatic Plants.....	20
2.3.2 Application of aquatic plants as aquaculture pond treatment medium.....	21
2.3.3 Landscape ecological approach to sequester aquaculture pond contaminants.....	23
2.4 Aquaculture and Phytotechnology.....	24
2.4.1 Phytoremediation Process	25
2.4.1.1 Phytoextraction/ Phytoaccumulator	28
2.4.1.2 Rhizofiltration/ Phytofiltration	28
2.4.1.3 Phytostabilization/ Immobilization	29
2.4.1.4 Phytovolatilization	29
2.4.1.5 Phytodegradation/ Phytotransformation	29
2.4.2 Significant Benefits of Phytoremediation to Remediate Aquaculture Pond	32
2.5 Summary	32

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	34
3.1 Site Selection	34
3.1.1 Study Areas and Preliminary Information	36
3.2 Water Sampling	37
3.2.1 Sampling Apparatus	39
3.2.2 Sampling Procedures	39
3.3 Parameter Analysis	40
3.3.1 Physicochemical Analysis	40
3.3.1.1 Ammonium (NH ₄) analysis procedure	40
3.3.1.2 Nitrate (NO ₃) analysis procedure	42
3.3.1.3 Nitrite (NO ₂) analysis procedure	43
3.3.1.4 Phosphate (PO ₄) analysis procedure	44
3.3.2 Heavy Metal Analysis	45
3.3.2.1 Cadmium (Cd) analysis procedure	45
3.3.2.2 Chromium (Cr(II)) analysis procedure	46
3.3.2.3 Copper (Cu) analysis procedure	47
3.3.2.4 Iron (Fe) analysis procedure	48
3.3.2.5 Lead (Pb) analysis procedure	49
3.3.2.6 Zinc (Zn) analysis procedure	50
3.4 In Vitro Culture of <i>Glossostigma elatinoides</i> and <i>Hemianthus</i> <i>callitrichoides</i>	51
3.4.1 Medium Preparation	51
3.4.2 Aquatic Plants Germination	51
3.5 Development of Model System	55
3.5.1 In vitro Aquatic Plants Preparation	55
3.5.2 Heavy Metals Solution Preparation	55
3.5.3 Model System	56
3.5.4 Samples Harvesting	56
3.6 Statistical Analysis	58
 CHAPTER FOUR: RESULT AND DISCUSSION	 59
4.1 Result of Water Sampling	59
4.1.1 Physicochemical and Nutrient Analysis	59
4.1.2 Analysis of Heavy Metals in Aquaculture Pond	60
4.2 Discussion	67
4.2.1 Physicochemical and Heavy Metals in Aquaculture Pond	67
4.3 Result of Model System	74
4.3.1 Analysis of Heavy Metals Concentration in <i>Glossostigma</i> <i>elatinoides</i> and <i>Hemianthus callitrichoides</i>	74
4.3.2 Bioconcentration factors (BCF)	76
4.4 Discussion	79
4.4.1 Phytoremediation for Heavy Metals Pollution	79
4.4.1.1 Environmental condition	82
4.4.1.2 Plant characteristics	84
4.4.1.3 Metals characteristics	86
4.4.1.4 Microbes role	87
 CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	 89
5.1 Research Aim and Objectives	89

5.2 Aquaculture Pond	90
5.3 Phytoremediation Model System	91
5.4 Conclusion and Recommendation	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	94
APPENDIX I: MURASHIGE AND SKOOG BASAL MEDIUM (1962)	115
APPENDIX II: MARINE WATER QUALITY CRITERIA AND STANDARDS FOR MALAYSIA.....	116
APPENDIX III: NATIONAL WATER QUALITY STANDARDS FOR MALAYSIA	117
APPENDIX IV: ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA) FOR MODEL SYSTEM	119
APPENDIX V: ACHIEVEMENT.....	121

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Contaminants found in shrimp aquaculture pond	18
Table 2.2	Contaminants found in fish aquaculture pond	18
Table 2.3	Aquatic plant characteristics	20
Table 2.4	Phytoremediation of heavy metals using aquatic plant species	21
Table 2.5	Major phytotechnology processes and their significant for contaminants remediation	27
Table 3.1	Sample of data tabulation	57
Table 3.2	Brief method of the acid digestion of the sample	57
Table 4.1	Result of physicochemical and nutrient analysis of shrimp aquaculture pond	61
Table 4.2	Result of physicochemical analysis of catfish aquaculture pond	61
Table 4.3	Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of all heavy metals by 4 different aquaculture ponds	63
Table 4.4	Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of each heavy metal by 4 different aquaculture ponds	63
Table 4.5	Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of Cd	75
Table 4.6	Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of Cr	75
Table 4.7	Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of Cu	75
Table 4.8	Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of Pb	75
Table 4.9	BCF values for Cd in <i>Glossostigma elatinoides</i> and <i>Hemianthus callitrichoides</i>	77
Table 4.10	BCF values for Cr in <i>Glossostigma elatinoides</i> and <i>Hemianthus callitrichoides</i>	78
Table 4.11	BCF values for Cu in <i>Glossostigma elatinoides</i> and <i>Hemianthus callitrichoides</i>	78

Table 4.12	BCF values for Pb in <i>Glossostigma elatinoides</i> and <i>Hemianthus callitrichoides</i>	79
Table 4.13	Environmental factors that influencing the uptake of the heavy metal and toxicity of ions	84

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Plant classification; a) emergent, b) submerged, c) floating, d) free-floating	21
Figure 2.2	Heavy metals uptake through different plant mechanism	26
Figure 2.3	Energy biotransformation of phytotechnology approach	32
Figure 3.1	Location map of Hannan Shrimp Aquaculture Complex	34
Figure 3.2	Location map of Catfish aquaculture pond	35
Figure 3.3	Signage of project's site	35
Figure 3.4	View towards surrounding of Hannan Corporation Shrimp Aquaculture Complex.	36
Figure 3.5	Saltwater white shrimp, <i>Peneus Vannamei</i>	36
Figure 3.6	View towards catfish farm at Kuala Kangsar, Perak.	37
Figure 3.7	Water sampling at catfish farm where parameter measured using YSI 556 MPS	38
Figure 3.8	Water sampling at shrimp pond where parameters measured using YSI 556 MPS	38
Figure 3.9	Sample was filtered using vacuum filtration pump	40
Figure 3.10	a) NH ₄ 14752 test kit; b) The mixture was shaken vigorously to dissolved the solid substance; c) Sample cell was inserted into the DR5000 compartment; d) Blank cell (yellow color) and sample cell (green color)	41
Figure 3.11	NO ₃ 109713 test kit; b) NO ₃ -2 was added into a sample tubes; c) The sample cell was inserted into the cell compartment; d) The mixture of sample (red color)	42
Figure 3.12	a) NO ₂ 114776 test kit; b) NO ₂ -1 was added into a sample tubes; c) The mixture was vibrated to dissolved the solid substance; d) Blank cell (transparent) and sample cell (purple color)	43

Figure 3.13	a) PO4 114848 test kits; b) PO4-1 was dropped into a sample tubes; c) PO4-2 was added into sample tubes; d) Sample cell was inserted into the DR5000 compartment.	44
Figure 3.14	a) Cd 101745 reagents; b) Cd-1 was pipetted into a sample tubes; c) Cd-3 was added into a sample tubes; d) Sample cell was inserted into the DR5000 compartment; e) The result appear on the screen; f) Blank cell (yellow color) and sample cell (red color)	45
Figure 3.15	a) Cr 114758 reagents; b) Cr-1 was added into a sample tubes; c) Cr-3 was dropped into a sample tubes; d) 10 ml sample was pipetted into the tubes; e) Sample cell was inserted into the DR5000 compartment; f) The result appear on the screen; g) Blank cell (transparent) and sample cell	46
Figure 3.16	a) Cu 114767 reagent; b) 1 dosing Cu-1 was added into a sample tubes; c) Cu-2 was dropped into a sample tubes; d) Sample cell was inserted into the DR5000 compartment; e) The result appear on the screen; f) Blank cell (transparent) and sample cell (blue color)	47
Figure 3.17	a) Fe 114761 reagent; b) Fe-1 was dropped into a sample tubes; c) Sample cell was inserted into the DR5000 compartment; e) The result appear on the screen; f) Blank cell (transparent) and sample cell (purple color).	48
Figure 3.18	a) Pb 109717 reagents; b) Pb-1 was pipetted into a sample tubes; c) Pb-2 was pipetted into sample tubes; d) Sample cell was inserted into the DR5000 compartment; e) The result appears on the screen; f) Blank cell (light yellow) and sample cell (yellow color).	49
Figure 3.19	a) Zn-2 was dropped into a sample tubes; b) Zn-3 was dropped into a sample tubes; c) Zn-5 was added into a sample tubes; d) The color of the mixture change after reaction time; e) Samples was vibrated to dissolved the substances; f) The clear upper phase was aspirated and transferred into sample cell; g) Sample cell was inserted into the DR5000 compartment; h) The result appears on the screen.	50
Figure 3.20	Aquatic plants transplant was performed under laminar air flow hood	53
Figure 3.21	Development of in vitro culture of <i>Glossostigma elatinoides</i>	54
Figure 3.22	Development of in vitro culture of <i>Hemianthus callitrichoides</i>	54

Figure 3.23	Ten shoots of aquatic plants were transplanted in each of fifteen tubes	56
Figure 3.24	Model systems were placed in the incubator room	56
Figure 3.25	Samples were harvested and digested for further analysis	57
Figure 4.1a	Result of Cd analysis of shrimp aquaculture pond	64
Figure 4.1b	Result of Cr analysis of shrimp aquaculture pond	64
Figure 4.1c	Result of Cu analysis of shrimp aquaculture pond	64
Figure 4.1d	Result of Fe analysis of shrimp aquaculture pond	65
Figure 4.1e	Result of Pb analysis of shrimp aquaculture pond	65
Figure 4.1f	Result of Zn analysis of shrimp aquaculture pond	65
Figure 4.2	Result of heavy metals analysis of catfish aquaculture pond	66
Figure 4.3	Nitrogen removal process	71
Figure 4.4	Maximum BCF values of <i>Glossostigma elatinooides</i> and <i>Hemianthus callitrichoides</i> for Cd, Cr, Cu, and Pb	79

LIST OF SYMBOLS

$^{\circ}\text{C}$	degree
=	equal
>	more than
%	percent
\pm	standard deviation

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

µg/L	microgram per litre	NCIA	Northern Corridor
µmol	micromolar		Implementation Authority
Al	aluminum	NH ₃	ammonia
As	arsenic	NH ₄	ammonium
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	Ni	nickel
BCF	bioconcentration factor	NKEA	National Key Economic Area
BOD	biological oxygen demand	NGO	non-governmental organization
Cd	cadmium	NO ₂	nitrite
Co	cobalt	NO ₃	nitrate
COD	chemical oxygen demand	NWQS	National Water Quality Standards
Cr	chromium	P	Phosphorus
Cu	copper	PAHs	polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons
DO	dissolved oxygen	pH	power of hydrogen
EMS	Early Mortality Syndrome	Pb	lead
EPP6	sixth Entry Point Project	PO ₄	phosphate
FAO	Fisheries and Aquaculture Department	Pt	platinum
Fe	iron	Ra	radium
Hg	mercury	Rn	radon
IMWQS	Malaysia Interim Marine Water Quality Criteria and Standards	TOC	total organic carbon
mg/kg	milligram per kilogram	TDS	total dissolved solid
mg/L	milligram per litre	TSS	total suspended solid
Mn	manganese	U	uranium
Mo	molybdenum	ZIA	Aquaculture Industrial Zone
N	Nitrogen	Zn	zinc

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Contaminated sites are normally cleared and restored by environmental engineers and specialists. Landscape architects are only involved when there is an area that needs to be developed as a green area. Their role only begins after site remediation has completed. Phytoremediation should be recognised as a landscape design tool and approach as it may help enhance sites restoration and revitalization through appropriate plant selection in problematic areas, for example, ecological restoration in the ex-mining area, landfill area, agricultural and aquaculture areas among others. As mentioned by Slegers (2010), in the context of landscape architecture, phytoremediation is a 'green tool' that pushes the boundaries of the landscape profession.

This research focuses on the phytoremediation approach by developing a landscape ecological model system using aquatic plant species in order to remediate heavy metal contaminants produced by aquaculture ponds. To achieve the aim of this research, we first provide an overview of the aquaculture industry in Malaysia and its impacts on the environment. The poor aquaculture pond management, which led to serious environmental degradation, will be a major issue in this research. This ecological approach will be studied in order to contribute towards introducing new knowledge and technology, consequently improving the management of aquaculture pond without harming the surrounding environment. This research may also help promote the concept of sustainability in the aquaculture industry. The Messenger of

Allah, Muhammad (PBUH) said, “*There should be neither harming [darar] nor reciprocating harm [diraar]*” (Imam Nawawi, Hadith no.32, 2002).

To accomplish the goal, site sampling at aquaculture pond areas in Perak, Peninsular Malaysia will be performed. The water sample will be collected and analysed in order to identify the concentration of the heavy metals available. Then, the efficiency of potential aquatic plants to sequester identified contaminants available in the pond will be investigated. The phytoremediation model system using selected aquatic plant species will be run over several periods to remediate several heavy metals such as cadmium (Cd), copper (Cu), chromium (Cr), and lead (Pb) in different concentrations.

The research is expected to contribute to the landscape field as it introduces cost-effective and eco-friendly technology to remedy environmental pollution. Moreover, the phytoremediation approach is a scientific and technological knowledge which could be beneficial (*ilmnafi*) to the community (*Ummah*) as well as future generations.

1.2 ISSUES

Globally, almost half of total fish supplies for human consumption is contributed by the aquaculture industry (FAO, 2010) and 90% of global aquaculture production was from Asia (Thorpe, Reid, and Smith, 2014). In late 1970s, shrimp aquaculture was practiced in many ASEAN countries and it began to develop in the early 1980s through government incentives (Senarath, and Visvanathan, 2001). As reported by Integratedfarm (2009), during 1997, total global production of shrimp aquaculture was 0.95 million tons, while in 2004, the production increased to 1.8 million tons.

Although this industry contributed significantly to economic growth, however, the large volume of water consumption and the effluent discharged into the water sources caused significant environmental problems that must be properly controlled (Read and Fernandes, 2003; Akinbile and Yusoff, 2012). The aquaculture waste may decrease dissolved oxygen levels, accumulate bottom sediments, and load high nutrients that would cause water deterioration due to excessive phytoplankton growth (Tilley et al., 2002; Ghaly, Kamal, and Mahmoud, 2005). Other negative impacts of the aquaculture in relation to the environment were mentioned by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FAO, 2006) as below:

- i. Natural habitats and the related ecological destruction as a result of ecosystem functions alteration.
- ii. Water demand competition.
- iii. Health and environmental issues increase due to improper use of chemicals.
- iv. Aquatic animal diseases transmission through improper regulated translocations.

The rapid establishment of this industry has increased the attention among researchers and legislators to mitigate the environmental problems based on the principles of “Ecosystem- based Approach to Aquaculture” introduced by the FAO. The principles emphasized the holistic approach in managing ponds produced by the aquaculture industry by considering the capacity of the ecosystem to assimilate the effluent released. Many researches have focused on the aquaculture and its environmental impact (Fishery et al., 2008), as summarised below:

i. Mangrove loss;

Mangrove forest destruction is the most significant effect resulting from the aquaculture industry. Evidently, mangrove forests play an important role in terms of ecologically and socioeconomically, which should be highly recognised on conservation agendas (International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN], 1996; Baran and Hambrey, 1998; Nickerson, 1999; Islam and Wahab, 2005). However, the mangrove areas of many countries such as Sri Lanka, China, Thailand, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Ecuador, Mexico, Honduras, Panama, and Nicaragua have been cleared for aquaculture activities (Clough, 1993; Jayasinghe and De Silva, 1993; Ong, 1995; Field 1996; Macintosh, 1996; Primavera, 1997; Delgado et al., 2003).

Shrimp farming was reported as a main contributor of mangrove forest destruction over the past few decades (Delgado et al., 2003). There were reports that 1-1.5 million ha of coastal lowlands of the mentioned countries have been converted for shrimp aquaculture (Rosenberry, 1998; FAO, 1999) and globally, it is estimated that more than a third of mangrove forests have been degraded (Azad, Jensen and Lin, 2009). Specifically, in Thailand, a study reported that 16–32% of the total mangrove areas lost from 1979 to 1993 were due to shrimp aquaculture (Dierberg and Kiattisimkul, 1996). In Ecuador, Boyd (2002) reported that between 1969 and 1992, 15-20% of the total destruction was caused by the aquaculture industry. Peninsular Malaysia also suffered from the same problem where it lost 18700 ha from 1980 to 1990 (Chan et al., 1993). The destruction of the mangrove ecosystem affected from poor aquaculture management has led to several problems such as degrading the existing natural populations and habitats, expose the coastlines to storm and tidal

surges (Azad et al., 2009) a cause of soil acidification (Mitra and Bhattacharyya, 2003), and water pollution (Martin, 2011).

ii. Waterconsumption and effluent;

Since the last two decades, large scale shrimp aquaculture has boomed (Allsopp et al., 2009). Although this industry contributes significantly to the economic growth of the country, however, the large volume of water consumption and the large amount of effluent discharged into the water source cause a significant environmental problem that must be controlled (Read and Fernandes, 2003; Akinbileand Yusoff, 2012). Studies have shown that coastline areas are most affected by shrimp aquaculture ponds (Corea et al., 1995). Effluents are produced from fertilizers, uneaten feeds, faecal and other excretory wastes (Delgado et al., 2003; Nora'aini, Nurbaitiand Ahmad Jusoh, 2011) that consist of nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus which are discharged into drains without any or minimal treatment, subsequently contaminating water sources (Bernhard et al., 2004; Senarath and Visvanathan, 2001).

Consequently, the effluent would cause eutrophication and disturb aquatic life due to blooms of algal and increasing of water toxicity (Correll, 1998; Delgado et al., 2003; Singkran and Sudara, 2005). Moreover, the aquatic ecosystem is threatened by the chemicals and antibiotics used during the pond treatment process (Tendencia and de la Pena, 2001).

iii. Improper pond management;

Many approaches such as settling systems, centrifugal systems and mechanical filters have been introduced to treat wastes, however they seem ineffective because they produce large amounts of sludge deposits, consume high energy, are expensive, and need frequent maintenance (Barceló and Poschenrieder, 2003; Evans and Furlong, 2003; Nora'aini et al., 2005; Mudhoo, Garg, and Wang, 2012). The sand filtration

approach had also been practiced, but it could only remove suspended solid in aquaculture pond (Porrello et al., 2003).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENTS

As a whole, the problems regarding aquaculture industry are:

- i. Improper effluent management of aquaculture ponds which produced in large amounts.
- ii. Water pollution caused by excess contaminants such as, nitrogen, phosphorus, and heavy metals.
- iii. Rapid loss of natural habitat such as mangrove land and degradation of ecosystem.
- iv. Distract visual impact on landscape scenic and aesthetic quality.

Due to awareness about the loss of mangrove ecosystems and its environmental and societal effects, many researchers have initiated studies on rehabilitation and restoration strategies to achieve sustainable aquaculture practices and long-term conservation and management of natural resources (Paez-Osuna, 2001; Lebel et al., 2002; Allsopp et al., 2009; Azad et al., 2009; Bosire et al., 2008). As emphasised by Akinbile and Yusoff (2012), in order to sustain the development of aquaculture in Malaysia, a proper water pond treatment should be practiced.