



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

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FEATURE STORY

PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE 2016 - THE NEXT STEPS

We are proud to announce we completed the third edition of the **Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC)** course in Lebanon! The course was held from **April 24 to May 7** and took place once again in the village of **Saidoun** (Jezzine caza), thanks to the support of the **Saidoun Municipality**.

For the third consecutive year, we had the pleasure of hosting our lovely instructors *Klaudia van Gool* (UK) and *Betty Khoury* (Lebanon-Egypt) whose knowledge and good vibrations helped make the PDC an enjoyable experience for everyone despite a lot of challenges. This year we had **11 participants** of different ages and backgrounds (arts, agriculture, insurance, hotel management). A lot of them have experience in farming and gardening, and their own pieces of land, so we hope the course will help them re-design and develop their own sites. Meet the 2016 Lebanese permacultivators:

- Chirine Alayan
- Angela Al Hayek
- Zeina Hamady
- Rawad Hantouche
- Jihad Hashim
- Jamal Hassanieh

- Joslin Kehdy
- Catherine Moughalian
- Yasmina Raffoul Zahar
- Ali Saabi
- Jad Safar

LIVING PERMACULTURE-

The PDC course is more than just intensive theory and application of permaculture principles and tools in a design process. As in the last 2 years, we had the chance to live the **Permaculture Ethics (Earth Care, People Care, Fair Share)** and experience their benefits:

Earth Care: this year we had the chance to show the participants our newly established sorting center in Saidoun. This made it easier to organize the sorting of consumables during the course. We also introduced them to an easy backyard composting method (in addition to the usual big hot compost pile), and to vermi-composting, which is more suitable for urban areas. Kathy, got so excited about the worms that she collected some from *Bassam Khawand's* backyard (our local worm bank) and took them home to Beirut in a crate lined with jute. Participants also enjoyed Saidoun's landscapes and discovered local herbal lore.

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People Care: morning circles, evaluation, check ins, all were important elements that allowed the teachers to follow on the learning journey of the participants and adapt to their feedback and needs. Most participants got along well with each other, and formed supportive groups, which promises for some collective projects in the future. On the down side, roosters don't make it easy for everyone to get a good night sleep, so light sleepers became very tired after a few days. We'll try to find a solution to the rooster issue for the next PDC.

Fair Share: we were glad to be working for the third year with *Em Rabih* who prepares the meals, and *Madeleine* who offers her house for participants. It's nice to see long term relationship being established with them. And as usual most materials were sourced from the area.

FIELD VISIT

This year we visited our friends *Nadim* and *Andrea Samen* at **Samen Eco Gardens** in Fanar, a place that we love a lot. Participants observed many permaculture principles at work all over the 4,000 m² garden. There's a lot to learn from: big worm bins that currently recycle horse manure into a rich fertilizer but which have the potential to recycle kitchen scraps from around 20 neighboring households if a system is put in place; mulching to retain water; experimenting with companion planting; good use of micro-climates; creating habitats for wildlife (piles of branches, insects hotels, etc.); integrating low tech drip irrigation system with recycled plastic bottles; stopping soil erosion with plants; green roofs; and much more.

AN ENRICHING DESIGN PROCESS

This year, the participants were divided into 3 groups that worked on 2 different sites: 2 groups worked on the old stone house which will be turned into the **AFIR center** (for beekeeping and nature) and the small garden surrounding it, and 1 group worked on a house and garden located close to the SOILS headquarters and which might be turned to a guesthouse and learning garden in the future. It is always refreshing to see other people design our sites.

ADVANCED DESIGN COURSE AND THE NEXT PDC ?

Speaking of AFIR, it seems that our dream will finally come true and we'll be able to renovate the old house and establish the nature and bee-keeping center!

With funding from the **Sustainable Lush Fund (SLUSH)** we've begun the renovation work, which is a slow and demanding process. Therefore, we'll be taking some time off next year from organizing the PDC to put our efforts in launching AFIR, hoping that the next PDC in 2018 will take place in the beautiful renovated house, where the participants will be able to do the practical sessions in the garden next door (which wasn't possible in the old Saidoun school) and be closer to a natural setting.

In the meantime we'll be organizing some advanced design and teacher training courses aimed at developing the skills of PDC graduates in Lebanon. We noticed that most of the PDC graduates find it difficult to start on their own after the course, and need some extra help and guidance. It is also an opportunity to build our own capacities at SOILS and be able to cater for the rising demand in training and workshops.

We are excited to announce that the first Advanced Design course in Lebanon will be held from July 19 to 25, 2016, with permaculture designer and teacher Daniel Halsey.

Stay tuned for more details!

The Editorial Team



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UPCOMING EVENTS

"WELCOME TO TUSK" BAKERY OPENING



JUNE 14, 2016

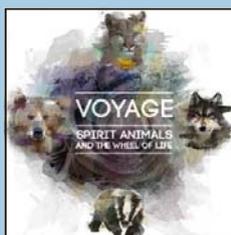
Opening at 8:00 p.m.

Badawi, Armenia Street, Beirut

Bakery offering sour-dough bread, coffee, sandwiches and more.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1697201850543476/>

"VOYAGE 2016" ECO SPIRITUAL JOURNEY



FROM JULY 1, 4:00 p.m. to JULY 3, 4:00 p.m.

Baissour Country Club, Aley

Movement, healing arts, nature workshops and more.

Fees: \$55 (until June 24, 2016)

Other options available on the event page:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/111824415892206/>

ADVANCED PERMACULTURE DESIGN WORKSHOP



JULY 19-25, 2016

1-week advanced workshop with Daniel Halsey, organized by SOILS.

Stay tuned to our page for more details coming soon

<https://www.facebook.com/SOILS.PermacultureAssociationLebanon/>

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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

BE PART OF THOSE WHO SOW SEEDS

Producing seeds is not an insignificant act in the current economic and political context. In our collective consciousness, a few companies have the **monopoly of seeds** (75% of crop seeds sold worldwide are produced by 5 multinationals); conflicts, political instability and economic interests are speeding up the disappearance of our **common seed heritage** (of the thousands of domesticated species throughout history, only 150 are used by food companies today, 20 species provide 95% of humanity's calories, with wheat, rice and corn providing 50% of our calories); not to mention questions of taste, real nutritive qualities and methods of food production. Re-appropriating the foundations of our food system is a crucial step towards food independence. Producing one's seeds is a symbolic act and a form of resistance.

Planting and harvesting seeds is not as simple as it sounds. We have to consider technical issues like the minimum number of seed heads required, possibilities of cross pollination and buffer distances to prevent that, etc. This is where we come in. We follow producers from the selection and harvesting of plants to seed conservation, passing on to them the technical knowledge and also sharing with them top quality organic grower seeds, seeds that are native, open pollinated and adaptable thanks to a rich genetic heritage.

Harvested in the **Mediterranean** zone, and therefore well adapted to its diverse climates, these seeds come from a network of citizens showing solidarity with Syrian refugees. We have collected them from amateur and professional producers during an outdoor cinema tour in France under the theme of "food sovereignty during periods of crisis". Attendees would bring with them seeds in order to support gardening projects in **Syrian refugee camps in the Bekaa**, and our network of seed producers in Lebanon. On the long term, our project aims to establish a communal seed bank in Lebanon, animated by a network of local seed producers, which would then support disadvantaged farmers, including growers in refugee camps.

In addition to creating a reliable and diverse source of seeds, we would like to share knowledge by experimenting collectively with seed reproduction in Lebanon. While looking for local partners who would be motivated by this initiative, we met **SOILS** who introduced us to a dozen of volunteers willing to sow the seeds of resistance and follow the process of multiplying them organically. Tomatoes, eggplants, pepper, carrots, onions, beans, cauliflowers and leafy greens are already growing under the Lebanese sun, from the coast to the mountains.

Preserving local seed heritage is also among our priorities. That's why we are willing to hunt down local "*baladi*" seeds - small treasures that have stood the test of time. We are also working on the development of educational material on the different aspects of seed reproduction.

That's right, there's no shortage of work. All those willing to participate in this adventure are the most welcome! Whether you'd like to support us with organic growing methods, help in transplanting seedlings and other hands-on tasks, or work on translations (French-English-Arabic), etc., please contact us via SOILS or email us directly at: lalibrecurgette@riseup.com

Together let's sow today the seeds of hope for tomorrow!

Shared by Lara, Zoé, Ferdi and Riccardo - Graines et Cinéma



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DISCOVER THE BEAUTIFUL BLUETHROAT

As its name indicates, the Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) is distinguished by its bright blue throat. Migrating bluethroats fly through Lebanon in autumn and spring, although some might choose to spend the winter here, especially in the Bekaa valley. It is not a game bird and, fortunately, hunters usually avoid shooting it, preferring instead to enjoy its sight.

It is a small passerine bird, no longer than 14 cm. Its body is brown with an orange breast and belly, and its beak and feet are black.

It prefers to stay where herbs and shrubs abound, close to water. The bluethroat is a fly-catcher; it usually feeds on insects, spiders and worms, and might also eat grains and fruit in the winter. On some rare occasions, it has been observed eating frogs and river shrimp.

Shared by Fouad Itani - Birds of Lebanon and the Middle East



© FOUAD ITANI

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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

WHY I MAKE KNIVES

I suppose it is a form of agency. I have always felt, as a child within the school system, that no task given to me was of any importance. I don't remember a single day in which I came to class with my homework ready. I put very little effort into anything (with the exception of drawing), and managed to get away with it for over 17 years. It was concluded by many that I was a lazy person, with a lot of wasted "potential". Naturally, I believed them.

In my parallel and secret life, I was a **woodcarver**. By that I mean that at the age of 7, as I was foraging through some grass, I found a tiny piece of wood. I then very purposefully foraged through my mother's drawer and kidnapped a nail file; the fancy kind. I spent hours filing away at that little piece of wood to my heart's desire, with no end result in mind. I don't think I looked up for about seven hours. Much later, at the age of 22, in the midst of all my boredom within the capitalist system, I took my first trip to Norway to visit my uncle, who knew all too well how obsessed I was with filing away at wood.

It was in **Norway**, in a little town called **Dovre** - a town I am sure secretly harbors hobbits, elves, and all sorts of mythical creatures - a beautiful man name *Boni Wiik* taught me how to make **my first knife**. 10 hours later, I looked up and realized I hadn't eaten, drunk, or spoken for the last 10 hours. In that moment I felt pure content. In retrospect, I can see that it was a pivotal moment for my radical self: I was not lazy. I, along with millions like me, are forced to learn within a system that is merely designed to create "high quality citizens" fit for a capitalistic and patriarchal existence. And if we do not comply, then we are lazy. If we do not fit in, then we are degenerates. So it is 8 years later, and I am still making knives. Why? Because they remind me that, in the midst of all this struggle to survive this decrepit system, I have agency. I have my hands, I have my imagination, and I have wood, metal, and leather. Using only these things I am able to create my dreaming knife.

Although I have made over 56 knives, I only have one; my very first knife. The rest are dreaming elsewhere, all over the world. This is a poem I once wrote for them, when they were exhibited for the first time in a group show in Portland, Oregon (2013):

*my dreaming knife is radical.
my dreaming knife is the root, the
initial
indivisible
component.
my dreaming knife destroys,
my dreaming knife can create.
To wield it
with care, with
heart, with
critical consciousness.
my dreaming knife will resist.*

I suppose this habit of mine, making knives, is my little revolution against capitalism. It is a method of self-care and empowerment which keeps me afloat when the daily grind gets overwhelming.

Shared by Zeina Hamady



Check out more of Zeina's work on her blog:

<http://zeinahamady.blogspot.com/>



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PHOTO OF THE MONTH

You sent us your submissions and you voted for your favorites. Here it is, the PHOTO OF THE MONTH:
To send us your photos, email us on contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com



Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Photo by Fouad Itani - <https://www.facebook.com/birdsoflebanon/timeline>

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GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVED

Do you enjoy reading this newsletter?

Send us your feedback and suggestions, share your news, photos, tips or thoughts, or find out more.

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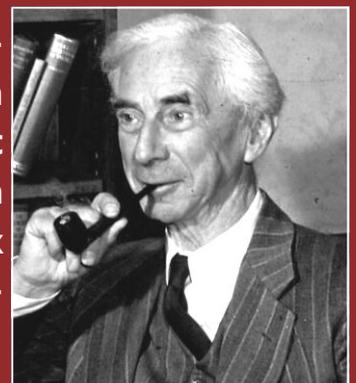
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A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

"I've made an odd discovery. Every time I talk to a savant I feel quite sure that happiness is no longer a possibility. Yet when I talk with my gardener, I'm convinced of the opposite."



–Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

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