



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

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## FEATURE STORY

### WE DID IT! THE FIRST PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE (PDC) COURSE IN LEBANON

This May, we succeeded in making the **Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC)** course a reality in Lebanon!

After months of preparations on different levels, **SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon** was ready to host the first PDC course in Lebanon from **May 18 to 31** in the village of **Saidoun** (Jezzine caza), thanks to the support of **USAID**.

We had **11 participants** of different ages and backgrounds, including 3 members of SOILS, staying together for 2 weeks and sharing their experiences. Throughout the course, they took part in the lives of the people of Saidoun who touched their hearts and considered them as their own family.

We really couldn't have hoped for better course instructors and people than **Klaudia van Gool** (UK) and **Betty Khoury** (Lebanon-Egypt) whose knowledge and kindness were invaluable in bringing the group together and communicating the teachings of permaculture.

After the theoretical part of the course and the practical demonstrations, the permaculture design process really helped us synthesize our grasp of permaculture and consolidate our team work.

Congratulations to the first class of permacultivators graduated right here in Lebanon:

- |                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| • Bassam Al Khawand (SOILS) | • Joey El-Khoury     |
| • Ghassan Al Salman         | • Dana El-Sayyed     |
| • Alexis Baghdadi (SOILS)   | • Maya Karkour       |
| • Tony Chahine              | • Salim Khalil       |
| • Jihad Chanehsaz (SOILS)   | • Sarah-Lili Yassine |

The seed of permaculture has been planted in Lebanon! Now the real work begins: to put the learning of permaculture and permaculture design into practice.

*Continued on Page 2*



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The PDC course is more than just intensive theory and application culminating in a design process. It is also about experiencing the philosophy of permaculture in all aspects of life. The core of permaculture can be summarized in 3 **Ethics: Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share**. Over the 2 weeks we spent in Saidoun, we truly incorporated these ethics on a daily basis.

## EARTH CARE

The earth - essentially only its top part, the soil - is where we live and grow our food, so **Earth Care** means we need to look after our soil. Permaculture starts with observation, so we made it a habit to really look at the landscape around us until it became second nature to us. We came to know the different types of soils and the plants that grow in them. We gradually became more involved in preserving, enriching and regenerating soils. This brings us to the necessity of understanding the composition of soil in order to better preserve it. Instead of using chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers, permaculture seeks to preserve the balance between the living components of a land by promoting effective microorganisms in soil and plants, encouraging mutually beneficial relationships between plants, insects and small animals, and using natural pesticides. Composting is one of the easiest ways to start enriching soils - and it's fun - so we talked about it right at the onset. Throughout the course, we collected all our organic waste for composting. Whenever the organic waste we collected wasn't composted, we saved it for the chickens of our fellow PDC student and member of SOILS, **Bassam Khawand**. The chicken manure produced by these chickens will eventually be used as a natural fertilizer. Participants also sorted plastic, paper, metal and glass both in the old school where we held our discussions, and in the houses they were staying in. As a side note, all the paper we used during the course came from old theater posters. In fact, a lot of the materials we used for the course came from the SOILS crafts room where we save all kinds of plastic, metal, glass and other recyclable material. The PDC participants eventually baptized our workshop space "the secret treasure room".



## PEOPLE CARE

When it comes to **People Care**, we talk about looking after ourselves, our loved ones and our community. When we all met for the first time on this PDC, we were mostly strangers in a completely new place, but all we needed was love - just like the Beatles' song - and we immediately felt at ease with our surroundings and each other. We fell in love with Saidoun's people, its houses, its trees and its animals, down to the littlest ant, and Saidoun adopted us. **Madeleine**, a lady who welcomed four of us in her home for the course was on the verge of tears on the last day and said it was hard for her to let go of all of them at once; "Why don't they leave on different days so I can enjoy their company a little longer?" she told us. Saidoun's nature itself showed us its love one day when a light rain suddenly started falling and we had the rare chance to observe not one but *two* rainbows around each other in the sky. It was almost a shame we had such a full program and didn't have more time to sit and just enjoy nature or talk with the people of Saidoun unless we skipped course sessions. Still, our instructor Klaudia was committed to holding morning circles every day to give everyone the chance to voice their concerns and say what they were grateful for; and we had several occasions to meditate together between sessions, which turned out to be an amazing first-time experience for some of us.

We would like to share with you a very touching testimonial we received from **Joey Khoury**, the co-founder of Gardens Without Borders (Canada-Lebanon) and a graduate of this 1st PDC in Lebanon:

*"[...] most of all we (participants, teachers and organizers) discovered and connected with one another like we would have never imagined! We discovered a little more of ourselves during these two weeks living as a community in the village of Saidoun. We (re)discovered what it means to take care of people and nature. [...] Thank you SOILS. Thank you Saidoun for the awakening."*



Continued on Page 3





## FAIR SHARE - - - - -

**Fair Share** is about taking only what we need and sharing the surplus. In that respect, we learned the greatest lesson in generosity from the people of Saidoun and nearby Rimat and Hidab. Living in a relatively remote area means these neighbors continually share and exchange the product of their lands. In Saidoun, **Bassam Khawand's** neighbors collect their organic waste for his chickens and he gives them fresh eggs in return. In preparation for the course, SOILS sought to buy as much as possible from local sources. We purchased the supplies for breakfast and coffee breaks from these three villages. In Saidoun, we helped **Hoda (Em Rabih)** increase her income by cooking lunch and dinner for us every day - and we insisted on her securing all she needed from Saidoun or the nearby villages. This arrangement meant that she didn't have to work hard at drying tobacco leaves - a physically taxing occupation, particularly at her advanced age - to supplement her income like she used to. Madeleine, the woman who welcomed 4 participants in her house for the entire course, happily invited everyone to a breakfast of *man'oushe* one day when her family had made too many. Our new friend **Fadi Kanso** who has just started a small organic farm in the village of Babeliyya near the city of Sidon, generously brought us 2 large crates of vegetables he grew himself when he visited us. (Em Rabih barely had to make any effort to bring out their goodness when she cooked them later on). Fair share also means sharing knowledge with others. Villagers from Saidoun, Rimat and Hidab almost outnumbered us when they joined us for the practical sessions of the course, which included raised beds, liquid natural fertilizers, composting and many more. The final lesson came with a last-minute change in the course program when our instructor Klaudia took us on a foraging walk in the village. We discovered no less than 20 edible or medicinal wild species in just under an hour and, more importantly, we learned the rules of foraging which state to never pick more than you need and only pick plants from areas where they are found in abundance so as to preserve the diversity of species.



## THE DESIGN PROCESS - - - - -

As in all PDC courses, the final stages were dedicated to the permaculture design process. This exercise involves surveying a client's property and mapping out his or her needs. We then conduct an analysis of the land or house's existing resources to start thinking about their optimal uses. Then comes the design phase when we propose solutions that respect permaculture ethics and principles. This time, we assigned a piece of land for each of three groups. Two of these lands belonged to Saidoun residents, and the third consisted of a large orchard for Elias and Marie, a couple living in Rimat. The process and designs we came up with were to the point and efficient - plus, we had a lot of fun doing them.



Shared by the Editorial team - Check out the day-to-day blog of the PDC on <http://www.soils-permaculture-lebanon.com/blog-pdc-may-2014>





## LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

### LIVE & GROW ORGANIC WORKSHOP

On **May 24, 2014** we held a great full-day workshop on **organic growing** with our friend and organic expert **Nadim Samen** at the hip **AltCity space** in Hamra - Beirut.

The workshop was a rare chance to get first-hand experience from a knowledgeable and dedicated expert. A few months ago, our friends at **SOILS** had introduced me to Nadim and his sister **Andrea** who own the **Samen Eco Gardens** in Fanar and we became great friends in no time. I was impressed with the creativity and integrity of this dynamic duo; together they have succeeded in creating a forest garden oasis just outside Beirut that easily qualifies as a natural wonder, growing a wide range of fruit trees suited to sub-tropical climates, as well as other exotic plants. And that's only a tenth of what visitors can discover there: the Samen Eco Gardens also produce jams and preserves, essential oils, organic-raised chickens, turkeys, and rabbits, compost and worm compost, and much more. Their dedication is truly an inspiration that we sought to share with others.

I had previously met **Munir El Nabti**, a shareholder at AltCity, and he mentioned his interest in promoting organic food and healthy lifestyles so we joined efforts to design this workshop. We hit the spot by specifically addressing this workshop to permaculture enthusiasts in the big city with limited access to growing space or knowhow.

The first part of the workshop included an in-depth explanation of organic growing practices, as opposed to industrial agriculture. This included a comparative overview of the health implications of both systems on the environment and our health. Afterwards, Nadim demonstrated effective soil mixtures for organic growing that help enrich soils and fight pests and diseases as part of **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** strategies. Natural pesticides are also a part of IPM, as are plants that attract natural predators of harmful insects.

We had an amazing time! To me, the essential thing was that everyone had a great time and got the most of the information shared by Nadim. Hopefully they will be equipped with all the tools to understand and advocate organic growing - and maybe start growing their own plants on their balcony or in small gardens.

Before parting at the end of the day, Nadim offered each participant a potted aloe vera from his nursery. This is a gift that is pretty, easy to look after and, more importantly, useful - an excellent choice for first-time gardeners. Aloe vera can be used to treat burns and skin conditions, or as an aftershave for men. If you drink it as an infusion, it can also be used to treat cancer.

To find out more or get involved, contact me (70-967866) or visit [www.samenecogardens.com](http://www.samenecogardens.com)

Shared by Jad Khadij



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### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### "SANDANCE THE BEACH CAMP" CONCERT BY FORESTRONIKA CREW



**JUNE 14-15, 2014**  
**11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.**  
**Beach37, Rmeileh**  
Live bands, DJs, morning and sunset Yoga sessions  
Tickets: \$25

Infoline: 78-939500

[https://www.facebook.com/events/873287879353098/?ref=2&ref\\_dashboard\\_filter=upcoming](https://www.facebook.com/events/873287879353098/?ref=2&ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming)

#### "INDIAN VEGETARIAN ROMANCE" COOKING EVENT BY BEIT EL NESSIM



**JUNE 17, 2014**  
**8:30 p.m.**  
**BEYT, Armenia Street-  
Mar Mikhael, El Nahr -  
Beirut**  
Indian vegetarian cuisine. Price: LBP 30,000

To reserve: [contact@beytquesthouse.com](mailto:contact@beytquesthouse.com)

[https://www.facebook.com/events/459176284226086/?ref=2&ref\\_dashboard\\_filter=upcoming](https://www.facebook.com/events/459176284226086/?ref=2&ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming)

#### "DISCOVER ASHRAFIEH - CAR-FREE DAY" OUTDOOR FAIR & EVENTS



**JUNE 29, 2014**  
**10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.**  
**Ashrafieh streets**

<https://www.facebook.com/events/657471614306627/>

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## LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

### SEWING WITH SCRAPS IN SAIDOUN

These past 2 months, SOILS organized **2 sewing/upcycling workshops** in **Saidoun** on April 28 and May 3 with a Spanish-born designer, Sandra Soriano Fernández, currently staying in Lebanon.

The SOILS headquarters in Saidoun were converted to a sewing space to host the first workshop. We had approached a merchant in Beirut who was happy to contribute to our efforts and gladly let us have all his old fabric samples. Working with 2 sewing machines, 6 women from Saidoun learned how to sew reversible tote bags in this first session. For this first batch of prototypes, we selected bright summer colors and let the women run free with their imagination in combining different colors and patterns. One woman even brought her 2 young children who had a great time drawing pictures and enjoying the attention from everyone.

Hoda Khawand (Em Rabih) was so grateful for the chance to be reunited with her neighbors and relatives over sewing work - like in old times - that she insisted on hosting the next workshop at her house. The second session in her living room was a little more advanced and focused on creating makeup pouches from fabric scraps. New faces joined us on that day as word of our activities was starting to spread.

This initiative was a first step in a capacity-building project for women from Saidoun and nearby villages. We aim to raise awareness about waste reduction and re-using old materials by encouraging local women to produce recycled crafts and increase their income.

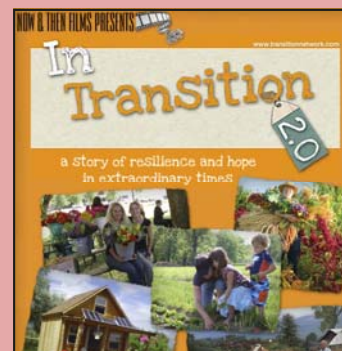
Now new women are expressing their interest in being part of this movement and asking us when the next workshop will be held. Hopefully we will soon be able to depend on one of them to organize future trainings and work sessions so we can start marketing their creations.

*Shared by the Editorial Team*



### GREEN RESOURCES

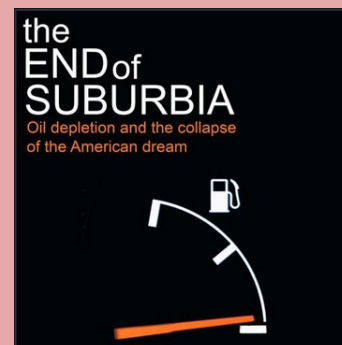
#### IN TRANSITION - DOCUMENTARY



How the Transition movement is rebuilding local communities and economies

<http://vimeo.com/8029815>

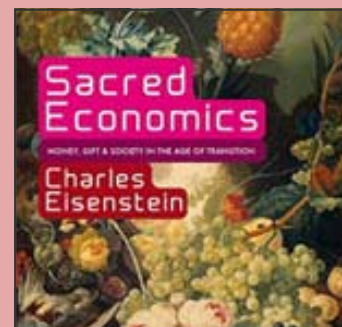
#### THE END OF SUBURBIA - DOCUMENTARY



The changes we need to make once the planet's fossil fuel reserves are depleted

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3uvzcY2Xug>

#### SACRED ECONOMICS | BOOK/DOCUMENTARY



Better alternatives to replace the current currency-based economic system

<http://sacred-economics.com/>

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## LET'S FOCUS

### BE PART OF THE L.E.T.S. INITIATIVE TOWARDS A TRANSITION TOWN

Since we launched this newsletter last summer, we have had a dream to start a **L.E.T.S.** initiative in Lebanon. Our inspiration came from friends who had experienced such systems abroad or had written or studied about them; it was why we called this newsletter L.E.T.S. Lebanon.

#### DARE TO DREAM

L.E.T.S. stands for Local Exchange Trading System or Local Energy Transfer/Trading System. It consists of a network of volunteers and experts that trade services and knowledge based on a non-monetary exchange system. The idea is to revitalize local communities and benefit individuals that have a lot to offer but little or no access to conventional economic systems. L.E.T.S. could be a first step leading towards a bigger and even more inspiring idea: **Transition Towns**.

It may still be too early to discuss this, but Transition Towns are a dream worth having. They are a social, cultural and environmental revolution on the move. The concept was started by Rob Hopkins in 2006. In brief, a Transition Town is a community, neighborhood, village, town or city inspired by permaculture that aims to achieve self-sustainability in terms of food production and energy reliance. Transition Towns have shifted from an oil-based economy to one that uses a local currency - that currency could take the form of new banknotes, time value or service exchanges. In essence, the transition movement rejects the competitive economic model and replaces it with one of cooperation.

Check out the 2 inspiring movies we listed in the [GREEN RESOURCES](#) section of this newsletter on Page 5, or go to <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>

#### PERMACULTURE IN LEBANON NEEDS YOU!

For now, let us focus on the next achievable steps and work on developing a L.E.T.S. The first thing to do is set up a structure or organization to trade between ourselves. For this to work, we would have to maintain a directory of offers and needs to help facilitate trading. This means we would then have to decide on a "currency" and keep track of all transactions to show the system works.

There is no task too small, no skill we can't benefit from. Growers, builders, communicators, artists, actors, craftspersons, civil activists and students, you can all contribute to the work ahead or show your support by helping raise awareness.

Together we can achieve more and draw strength from each other. Together we can be the positive change we want to see in the world around us.

#### SO HOW CAN YOU HELP?

We already have a large network of friends and like-minded people we can turn to. We need to keep growing this network and outlining possible areas of cooperation. Our agenda over the next period includes:

##### 1. Building a directory of volunteers, experts and suppliers

We already have the communication resources thanks to the SOILS website, mailing list and Facebook Page. What we need to do is create an interactive and updated list of the people in our network, specifying the skills and needs of each one.

##### 2. Multiplying permablitz interventions

A permablitz is basically a "permaculture flash mob". It is a spontaneous intervention of volunteers and experts over a short period of time and for a specific project. The advantage of this system is that it is easy to mobilize and organize. And the best part is that what goes around comes around. One day you could be collecting green glass bottles for a recycling project; the next day someone else could be teaching you to grow vegetables on your rooftop.

##### 3. Starting a seed bank

A seed bank is a simple enough concept but it requires organization and classification. Preserving seeds is a guarantee that we would always have the possibility to grow natural, non-genetically modified food. It also allows people to exchange seeds and enrich the "bank".



Rob Hopkins is the founder of the Transition movement, a radically hopeful and community-driven approach to creating societies independent of fossil fuel.

**"Emerging at the other end, we will not be the same as we were; we will have become more humble, more connected to the natural world, fitter, leaner, more skilled and, ultimately, wiser." - Rob Hopkins**



**If you would like to get involved in this project or have ideas on how to get it started, email us on [contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com](mailto:contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com) or send us a message on Facebook.**

Shared by the Editorial Team

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## PHOTO OF THE MONTH (NEW RUBRIC)

You shared your suggestions with us and we listened. SOILS is introducing a new **PHOTO OF THE MONTH** rubric to L.E.T.S. Lebanon. Send your submissions with a short description to [contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com](mailto:contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com) and we will select the picture with the highest number of "Likes" on our Facebook page.



*Honeybee on a prickly pear cactus (Opuntia robusta) flower. Saidoun (Jezzine, South Lebanon)*  
Photo by Jihad Chanehsaz

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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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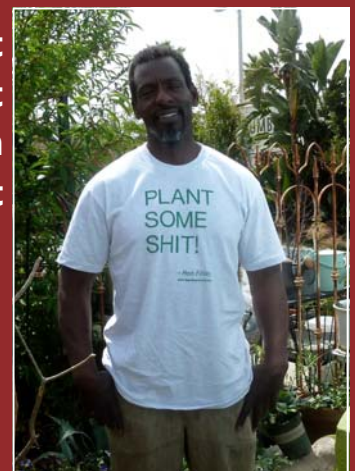
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 SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon

 +961-71-617988

## A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

**"Gardening is the most therapeutic and defiant act you can do, especially in the inner city. Plus, you get strawberries."**



**—Ron Finley**

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