



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

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FEATURE STORY

"AFIR" BY SOILS WINS FIRST PRIZE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMPETITION

SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon and the village of **Saidoun** (Jezzine caza - South Lebanon) shone at the **2014 Lebanese National Competition for Sustainable Development**.

SOILS won **first prize** for **AFIR** ("beehive" in Arabic), a permaculture project combining Saidoun's heritage and people with nature and bees! The **municipality of Saidoun** was acknowledged for its efforts to introduce sustainable solutions to improve the lives of its residents, including financing facilities for people to install **solar-powered water heaters**, **refurbishing the old abandoned school building** and converting it into a community center that hosts classes and activities, as well as accommodation for visitors, and - last but not least - its invaluable support to the activities introduced by SOILS in the village.

This idea of AFIR had been on our minds for a long time and this summer, after we successfully completed the **Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC)** course, we were finally able to find time for some serious planning. 3 of us, *Alexis Baghdadi*, *Bassam Khawand* and *Rita Khawand* put our heads together and met whenever we could in Saidoun or in Beirut to work together on this project.

AFIR involves restoring the oldest and only surviving stone house in the village by combining traditional knowhow with eco-renovation solutions. The building will be converted into a **learning center** focused on honeybees and nature, where we will welcome schools and visitors to attend our workshops, presentations, and crafts/gardening/outdoor activities. It is also conveniently close to the SOILS headquarters and demonstration site, sharing a permaculture garden. In doing so, we will have preserved this part of our heritage and given it a new life and purpose.

On the professional level, Bassam is developing an apprenticeship program to passionate farmers, villagers and entrepreneurs in the science of beekeeping over different periods of the year, with one-on-one follow-up and extended support and feedback. These AFIR graduates will emerge as fully capable beginner beekeepers and start their beekeeping journey on their own.

AFIR will involve not only our resident beekeeper Bassam and the SOILS team, but also a number of villagers who will earn extra income from producing crafts, catering to visitors, animating workshops, leading hikes and helping with the development of education and promotional material such as flyers, posters, postcards, etc.

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CLOSING 2014 WITH THE LAST BEEKEEPING WORKSHOP- - - - -

While we plan the next steps in establishing AFIR, our bee activities continue under the expert guidance of Bassam. On **October 12, 2014**, we held the last full-day workshop of the year in Saidoun before the rains and cold set in.

12 participants joined us for a day packed with information and a visit to the beehives. Once again, Em Rabih's amazing cooking skills almost stole the spotlight from our bee friends.

We will resume our workshops in **Spring 2015**, with new activities as part of AFIR.

MORE EXCITING PROJECTS FROM AROUND LEBANON- - - - -

A total of **17 projects** made it to the final selection of the Lebanese National Competition for Sustainable Development, an award founded by *Elie Aouad*, CEO of Easeit and founder of the Léba association, and co-organized with the Faculty of Engineering at the Université Saint Joseph (École Supérieure d'Ingénieurs de Beyrouth-ESIB).

There is definitely a strong synergy between AFIR and our friend *Tony El Khawand* in Saidoun who presented a project he is passionate about. His idea is to create a line of **herbal products (oils, dried herbs, etc.) from medicinal plants grown in Saidoun** without pesticides or chemicals. He selected 5 popular aromatic herbs that grow well in Saidoun and require minimal care (thyme, sage, rosemary, lavender and rose). He plans to encourage locals to plant more of those. In abandoned plots to supplement their income from product sales and also create an abundant and safe new source of food for... bees (and other pollinators)! Of course, happy bees mean happy gardens. The new herbs will attract bees to nearby agricultural plots, improving the chances of pollination and therefore increasing yields!

Other projects we liked:

2nd Prize: Reusing byproducts of olive oil extraction (by Zeina Touma)

Treating the byproducts of olive oil extraction to limit their harmful impact on the environment and reuse them in making soap or compost to boost agriculture.

3rd Prize: Eco-tourism by train (by Aziz Chbeir and Mohamad Ezzeddine)

Promoting eco-tourism in different Lebanese regions by creating eco-friendly trains that run on electricity and used cooking oil.

Sustainable roofs (by Baldati Association)

Redefining roofs along green criteria (electricity from photovoltaic systems, rooftop gardens, etc.) to reduce pollution in urban areas and make them more beautiful.

Domestic and collective compost bins in Jezzine (by Youmna El-Asmar)

It goes without saying that this initiative would reduce the costs of garbage collection, limit pollution and raise awareness of environmental issues.

Find more info on these and other projects: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/108781311868/>

The Editorial Team



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UPCOMING EVENTS

"SOUTH BIC GREEN BOOST" COMPETITION ECO-SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL ENTERPRISES



**DEADLINE FOR APPLYING:
NOVEMBER 15, 2014**

Online call for green solutions

3 LBP 15,000,000 prizes for green solutions in existing companies (Services, Manufacturing, Agriculture)

<http://www.southbic.org/greenboost/>

"GREEN GLASS RECYCLING INITIATIVE" FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN



**DONATIONS OPEN TIL
DECEMBER 9, 2014**

Online call for donations

Fundraising for a truck to collect glass for recycling at the Sarafand artisanal blown glass factory

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/green-glass-recycling-initiative-lebanon-ggri/>

"HELP PLANT TOMORROW'S FOREST" JOUZOUR LOUBNAN DONATION CAMPAIGN



**DONATIONS OPEN TIL
JANUARY 8, 2015**

Online call for donations, volunteers

Campaign to recover woodland areas by planting 50,000 trees over 1 million m²

<http://www.helpforlebanon.com/campaigns/help-plant-tomorrows-forest/>

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SAVE PAPER – Do you really need to print this newsletter?

L.E.T.S. Lebanon

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LET'S FOCUS

LIBANOTICUM FIESTA: FOCUS ON LEBANESE HERBS

On Oct 3-5, 2014 [Green Hand association](#) organized the first edition of the **Libanoticum Fiesta**, a series of talks and activities showcasing the flora of Lebanon and focusing on endemic plants (hence "Libanoticum").

The event included indoor presentations in the **Sid El Bauchrieh** municipality building where a large number of paintings and photographs of local plants were displayed alongside books from Green Hand's library. Outdoor stands hosted local NGOs and producers.

We intended not to miss out on any of the presentations because they seemed so interesting and complementary, especially for audiences with no academic background in botany - and we were right! It was a shame more people didn't attend the event though.

The common message in all the talks and presentations was "We need to understand what we have in order to know why we need to preserve it." We will highlight some of them here.

ETHNOBOTANY IN LEBANON

Dr. Marc El Beyrouthy, Head of Agriculture Sciences Department
Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences, Université Saint Esprit Kaslik - USEK

In his research on Ethnobotany (the study of relationships between plants and people) Dr. Beyrouthy visited **223 Lebanese villages** and interviewed more than **750 different people and herbalists** about their usage of local wild herbs as food, remedies, decoration, crafts, etc. In the course of his research, he noted that the names of certain plants often differ from one region to another or indicate different plants altogether, hence the importance of using the Latin names to identify plants correctly.

Dealing with medicinal plants is very delicate; one should know exactly what parts of the plant to be used for human consumption, in which way and in which dosage. The issue is all the more complex because the characteristics of medicinal plants can also change with altitude or if the plants are picked before or after flowering. Therefore, traditional knowledge alone is important but isn't enough; it should be combined with and confirmed by scientific research. Ideally, village herbal lore should be tested and, if proven true, credit should be given to the respective village. Otherwise, the information should be corrected and given back to the people. Dr. Beyrouthy hopes to be able to publish the results of his research in the future.

L'Orient-Le Jour recently talked to Dr. Beyrouthy about fraud in the medicinal plants market:

<http://www.lorientlejour.com/article/893085/les-souks-des-herboristes-un-marche-fertile-pour-la-fraude.html>

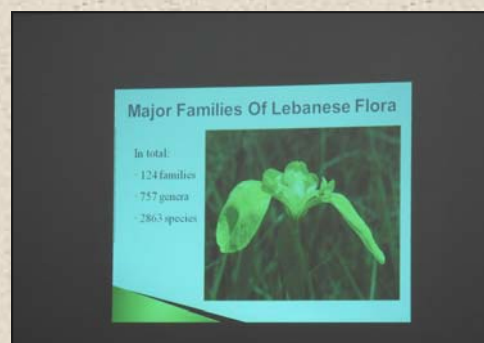
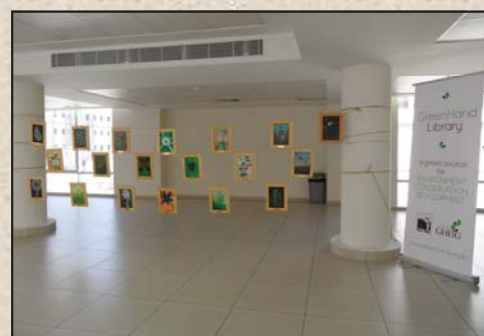
LEBANON'S RICH AND UNIQUE BIO-DIVERSITY

Dr. Rana El Zein, University Professor
Université Saint Joseph (USJ), Lebanese University, Notre Dame University

Scientists have identified **35 biodiversity hotspots** in the world: areas that are both biologically rich and highly threatened. Lebanon is located in the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot - the second largest such area in the world, home to around **10% of the Earth's plants**. Despite its relatively small size, the country has more than **2,600 types of wild plants** recorded, of which **103 are endemic**. Lebanon's bio-diversity wealth is due to its varied geography (2 mountain ranges of varying altitudes, a large central valley, a coast). This variety creates different micro-climates and habitats for a large number of animals and plants. The major threats to Lebanon's bio-diversity are **habitat destruction, invasive species, pollution and over exploitation of natural resources**. Addressing these threats requires raising awareness, building the technical capacities of local botanists, creating botanical gardens to safeguard specimens of endangered species, conserving seeds, etc. There are currently **14 natural reserves** in Lebanon and efforts are centered around establishing new **micro-reserves**.

The Faculty of Science at the USJ is active in the field of bio-diversity. They can conduct presentations on bio-diversity or help in plant identification. Some of their projects include the [Lebanon Flora Website](#) and [EcoMedPlant project](#)

For more info on hotspots, go to: <http://www.cepf.net/resources/hotspots/Europe-and-Central-Asia/Pages/Mediterranean-Basin.aspx>



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QUARRY REHABILITATION PILOT PROJECT IN CHEKKA- - - - - Holcim Cement Company

Until quarries are better regulated and a more sustainable source of construction materials is found, **quarry rehabilitation** might allow nature to re-colonize some of these sites. **Holcim** cement company implemented a pilot project in their Chekka site to try to reverse some of their old quarry's destructive effects on the environment. The project aimed to: limit soil erosion, re-integrate the area into the neighboring landscape, restore the land and educate other cement companies on the process. In collaboration with experts from the **National Council for Scientific Research-Lebanon (CNRS)** and the **Association for Forests, Development and Conservation (AFDC)** a bio-diversity study was conducted on the areas adjacent to the site to determine the plants and animals that are native to the region. Afterwards a rehabilitation design was developed to include planting some areas with native plants, adding stones and soil in others to see which plants will naturally colonize them, and creating small ponds to encourage wild animals. Holcim started the implementation started in 2013 and saw signs of returning wildlife only one year later. A monitoring and evaluation plan will ensure the replication of the results in other quarries and draw lessons for future projects. Based on its experience from this project, Holcim will conduct a complete bio-diversity study on the site of its new quarry before starting extraction operations in order to be able to better restore it afterwards.

The site is open to visitors by appointment. To find out more, go to <http://www.holcim.com.lb/en/sustainable-development/environmental-performance/quarry-rehabilitation.html>

Reported by the Editorial Team

Green Hand Association contact: info@greenhand.org.lb or +961-3-760854



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ENJOYING LIFE'S SIMPLE PLEASURES WITH HERBS

Last month my partner offered me the nicest gift ever: **an introductory course to Herbalism** with **Anabel Gravel Chabot** (Flower Power Herbalism) - a Canadian herbalist currently residing in Lebanon. As part of my "re-connecting with the natural environment" journey, I was excited to learn more about medicinal herbs and how to use them in daily life.

The course is divided into 6 sessions for groups of up to 4 people. There were only 2 of us in my group, myself and *Jihad Chanehsaz*, and we both happened to be members of **SOILS**. We attended weekly sessions at Anabel's house in Furn El Chebbak where she grows mint, holy basil and rosemary on her balcony. We would usually start with some theory around the table, then we'd move to the floor cushions for a tasting of different infusions and a discussion of their effect on our bodies. I struggled with a few infusions such as rhubarb or lavender but you can get used to the odd bitter taste, especially once you realize that it can have a positive effect on the body. From time to time we would go in to take a look at her workshop space where she prepares all her balms and tinctures. It was a very intimate and pleasant experience!

Herbalism is a very wide field and this course is just an introduction that gave us an overview of different herbs and their effect on the body. We learned about plant profiles and groups. For instance, **Nervine** herbs (such as rose), support the nervous system, **Astringent** herbs (such as plantain) tone and tighten body tissues, and **Hypnotic** herbs (such as chamomile) induce sleep. Anabel also taught us herbal preparations and supplied us with useful links and resources.

Annabel tried to refer to as many local (or locally grown) medicinal herbs as possible (such as chamomile, lavender, rosemary, mint, thyme, etc.) but the lack of published scientific research on these plants made her task difficult. Names like *zaatar* (thyme) and *malliseh* (melissa) are used in reference to many different herbs with different effects, so precision is crucial. Annabel recommended we always look for the Latin name of herbs, especially when buying from a local herb shops (although that might be hard because herbs are often incorrectly labeled).

I really enjoyed the simple things I learned in this course. I can now concoct herbal teas more efficiently, choosing the right herbs and preparing them properly. I can also make a simple skin balm with a beeswax and olive oil base, as well as some drops of essential oil. It is empowering to be able to prepare your own body products and have some power over parts of your life!

I hope more research on local wild medicinal herbs will be published so we can all learn how to reintegrate these natural remedies in a health-boosting daily routine and prevention plan.

Anabel will update and resume her courses in **January 2015**. Find out more on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/flower.power.medicinals> or <http://www.flowerpowerherbalism.com/>

Shared by Rita Khawand



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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

LIVE, LOVE PERMACULTURE IN VILCABAMBA, ECUADOR

This coming February, we are excited to invite permaculture enthusiasts to join us for **Permaculture Ecuador**, a permaculture program we organized with **Canción Del Corazón**, a holistic ecology center in **Ecuador**.

We will be spending 2 weeks, from **February 1 to February 14, 2015** in the beautiful village of **Vilcabamba** in the Andes Mountains of **Ecuador**. During this time, we will explore the many aspects of resilient living through workshops, site visits and group adventures.

We chanced upon Canción Del Corazón (Spanish for "song of the heart") this summer and immediately became good friends with the founders *Phil* and *Suzan*. The center and village are amazing examples of the interconnectedness of the principles of permaculture: eco-construction, sustainable farming, nutrition, health, intentional communities, etc. It was really encouraging to see permaculture in action so concretely, and it gave us a clearer idea of what we hope to achieve in our future demonstration site in **Niha, North Lebanon**.

Together with Phil and Suzy, we are co-organizing a holistic permaculture immersion at Canción Del Corazón for the first time (in addition to their regular visits) to give more people the chance to live and love permaculture.

This isn't your typical classroom, our classroom is LIFE! Immerse yourself in the exploration of intentional lifestyle and acquire the tools to create your own. The workshops will include:

Permaculture/Agriculture: Rainwater Harvesting | Food Forest | Earthworks | Regenerative Forestry | Animal Husbandry | Greenhouse and Plant Nursery | Seed Saving | Mushrooms Propagation | Composting Systems and Aerobic Bio-brews | Plant Guilds

Natural Building: Cob & Adobe | Rustic Wood & Rock

Renewable Energy: Solar, Microhydro & Wind | Solar Thermal Design | New Paradigm Energy

Bioremediation: Grey Water | Compost Toilets & Humanure | Rainwater Flush Toilet

Community Experience: Social Dynamics | Governance | Tropical Permaculture Farm Tours | Intentional Communities

Wholistic Wellness: Yoga | Wisdom Circles | Sound and Movement | Full Moon Drumming | Integral Awareness and Heart Coherence | Sacred Geometry | Temazcal

Conscious Eating: Probiotics & Lacto-fermented Foods | Garden to Table Living Foods Diet | Ethnic Vegetarian Cuisine & Cooking Classes

To make this adventure as affordable as possible, we've set up sliding scale costs:

\$1,500/person: Private bedroom (Couples: \$2,500)

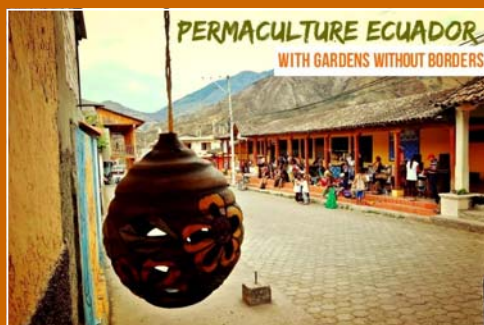
\$1,250/person + kitchen work exchange: Shared bedroom

\$1,000/person + kitchen work exchange: Tent outside (tarp site - bring your camping gear)

Prices cover food, workshops and site visits. Travel to and from Vilcabamba not included

For more details, visit our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/jardinssansfrontieres> or email us at PermacultureEcuador@gmail.com

Shared by Joey Khoury and Liza Charbel



GREEN RESOURCES

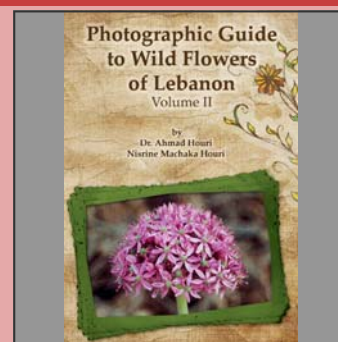
GREEN HAND ORG. LIBRARY



Public library offering books and records of Lebanese flora and agriculture

Contact: Zaher Redwan 03-760854
<http://www.greenhand.org.lb/default.aspx>

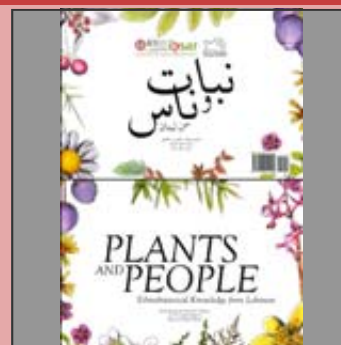
WILD FLOWERS OF LEBANON - BOOK



Well documented and easy to use pocket field companion to wild flowers

Sold at **Malik's Bookshop**, **Antoine**, **Virgin Megastore**, **NHBS (UK)**, **Koeltz (Germany)**
<http://nisrinemachaka.com/publication.html>

PLANTS AND PEOPLE - BOOK



Ethnobotanical knowledge of Lebanese local plants and their traditional uses

Sold at **American University of Beirut bookstore**
<http://www.aub.edu.lb/UNITS/NATURE/CONSERVATION/PRODUCTS/Pages/books.aspx>



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

TALKING WITH BIRDS

Walking, running, climbing, diving, swimming, jumping... we can get around using any of these means without the need for any external accessories. But, wait! We skipped flying... hmm... the only thing that man could not learn or implant in his body - yet. Flying like birds is the one physical frontier that we cannot conquer or possess. Those fuzzy little creatures that decorate our skies and gardens, and fill our forests with the magic of their voices, have been the inspiration behind mankind's earliest flying machines. For thousands of years, pioneer scientists spent lifetimes closely observing, studying and attempting to reproduce the mechanism of flight that birds naturally use to get from one place to another.

As a bird whisperer, I have a passion for raising birds, admiring them, watching them, befriending them and loving them. In my own little words I will share my experience in bird whispering with you briefly. I have had that hobby since I was a kid. I used to play with grandma's chickens, watch my aunt's bird, and count the migratory birds that flew through the sky of Lebanon. Day after day, this hobby evolved into a passion as I began to understand how to communicate with birds and started taking care of some in my own garden. With time, I started reading and learning about how to feed birds properly and how to heal the wounds of those that had been shot by hunters and left alone to die. During my university years, I learned how to take care of them more medically although I was specializing in physiotherapy. I thought, medicine is not only for humans, so why not use it to heal wounded birds as well?

As I spent more time watching and photographing birds, I became more involved in the lifestyle of different kinds of birds, and that helped me get closer and closer to them. I felt I had something in common with these amazing creatures. I developed a strong bond with them so I could sometimes talk to them, approach them, speak to them and even teach them.

One particular experience I want to share with you involves a bird that belongs to the family of Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae). On the 27th of July 2011, I saw a boy holding a nest with 3 little Bulbul chicks in his hands. I was angry about this and felt sad for these innocent birds, kidnapped from their mother's love and care. I asked him what he was going to do with them and he simply replied, "I want to raise them as pets"... So I asked him if he could give me just one of them, - and he did. When I got home with that little bird, I saw how very small he was - no more than 3 cm - and how scared he was. I fed him figs and bananas, and this is where it all started.

Time flew by, and the bird was growing stronger physically and emotionally. In my free time, I put him between my hands, warmed him up with my breath, fed him and cuddled him. I became the parents, the lover, the feeder and the main reason for him to live. Kito, as I later named him, grew to about 18-20 cm in length, and day after day, he became more and more attached to me. I had to teach him how to be strong by using his affection for me to protect him and set him apart from other birds. Usually, birds are not afraid to lose their siblings or parents; they only care about staying alive and finding their food and nightly safe shelter. But for Kito, it was different; his love for me meant he couldn't stand someone staring at me, or touching me, or even glancing at me from the corner of an eye. I taught him to whistle warnings, hellos and good mornings, and a few other things too. Kito now attacks when I tell him to, and stays on my shoulder when I ask him to. When cats or snakes or even strange people come to my house, he raises his wings and sounds his alarm whistle. When he sees me in the morning, he makes a special whistle to welcome me. With Kito, I learned bulbuls are incredibly smart and unpredictable. They are capable of more affection than any other bird. They can memorize what they are taught and, quite simply, they can speak to you, if only you know how to understand them and be one with them. I observed, raised, healed and looked after lots of birds, but I never saw a bird smarter than the Bulbul in all my life, even in other countries I visited.

Bird whispering is an amazing occupation, it lets you build sincere, loyal and eternal relationships that you cannot find elsewhere - even with humans. For me, birds are a gift from God, a grace to conserve, protect, enjoy and live with, and I hope we can appreciate this precious gift and save it from being destroyed by unethical hunters or greedy companies that destroy natural habitats. I encourage everyone, especially parents, to adopt or rescue a bird from a pet shop, and befriend it, so their kids will appreciate these creatures and grow up without the fixation of hurting birds or shooting them randomly. Birds are living spirits. Birds can talk.

Shared by Michel Sawan, with Grace Salibi



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



Autumn carpet - Pennsylvania, US
Photo by Julia Mahfouz

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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.


Email us at: contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com


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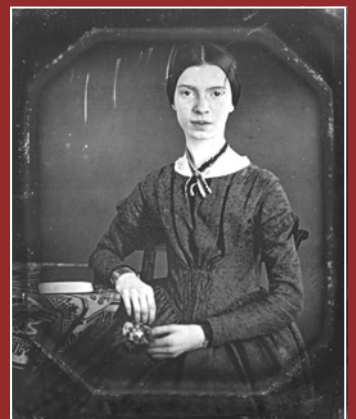
 twitter.com/SOILSLebanon

A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

**"To make a prairie it
takes a clover and one
bee,**

**One clover, and a bee,
And revry.**

**The revry alone will do,
If bees are few."**



–Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)
To make a prairie

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