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FEATURE STORY

THE PEOPLE AND BEES OF SAIDOUN UNDER A BLANKET OF SNOW

The snow is back in the village of **Saidoun**! As we write these lines, we are not yet snowed in; the roads are still open in the **Jezzine** caza from the village south towards the coast through *Wadi Al Laymoun* (the valley of orange groves). Anything at a higher altitude than us is a different story.

The snow is always a joyous occasion for us in Saidoun. Winter is not a busy month and all our summer residents are back in Beirut by then. There isn't a lot to do around the house or the garden, so we spend a lot of time reading or catching up on movies by the warmth of the stove... until it snows! That is when things get interesting. It's a little like being a kid and skipping school to have fun.

In fact, that first day turned out a lot like "playing hooky". Because schools were closed in Beirut and most of Lebanon this Friday, some of our friends and relatives were able to make the trip back to the village with their children and enjoy the snow in familiar surroundings.

Of course, it's not all just fun and games. With temperatures **below zero** almost all day, it's important to keep warm. And this goes for the **bees** too. In winter, when sources of forage (flowers) disappear, bees stay mostly inside. The queen stops laying eggs and the colony forces the male drones out to save the honey reserves for the bees that actually work inside the hive. The beekeeper's responsibility is to make sure to leave them enough honey before the winter (less ethical beekeepers who "steal" all the honey to increase their profits will resort to feeding their bees a sugar-water solution instead).

Bees move their honey cells closer to the queen and brood, then huddle in a tight cluster and devote all their time and energy to maintaining a temperature of 32°-35° Celsius. The bees closest to the center generate heat by eating honey then vibrating their flight muscles without opening their wings, thus raising their body temperature. The bees at the outer edge of the cluster insulate their sisters from outside temperatures until they grow too cold to continue, then they switch places. When it gets warmer, the cluster moves to fresh honey cells. Sometimes in extended periods of cold, the bees could be unable to move and could starve only a few centimeters from additional honey reserves.

We do not open the hives in winter but we still check on them to make sure they are not snowed in or leaking water inside. We might also make the hives' entrance smaller to help seal in the heat. It is a little stressful for us in that period, but we are rewarded in spring when the surviving bees emerge.

Shared by Silvana and Bassam Khawand



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LET'S FOCUS

BE A YEA-SAYER AND A BEAUTIFIER OF LIFE: NIETZSCHE'S 1882 NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

By Maria Popova

"I do not want to wage war with the ugly. I do not want to accuse, I do not want even to accuse the accusers... I wish to be at any time hereafter only a yea-sayer!"

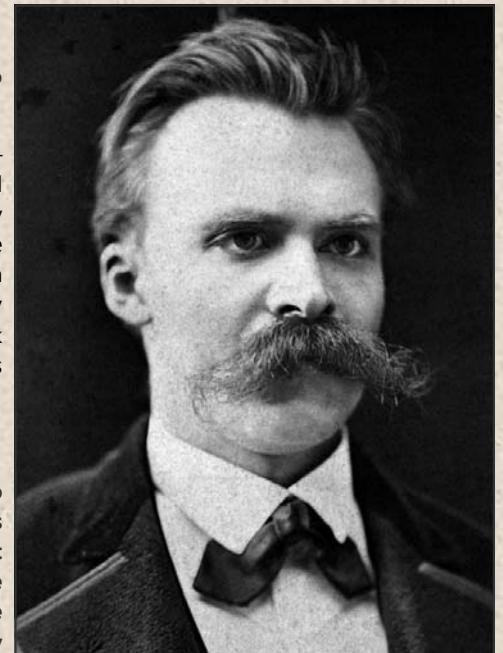
Rather than an annual ritual of promises made to be broken, the best New Year's resolutions — the ones that actually stick and transform our lives by rewiring our physical and psychological habit loops — are enduring existential aspirations of which we remind ourselves when early January makes its convenient invitation for self-transformation. Famous resolution lists — like those of Italo Calvino, Jonathan Swift, Susan Sontag, Marilyn Monroe, Woody Guthrie, and Ursula Nordstrom — certainly embody this spirit. But hardly anyone does that more beautifully than Friedrich Nietzsche in his classic 1882 treatise *The Gay Science* (public library) — the book he considered his most personal of all, in which his famous proclamation "God is dead" makes its first appearance.

In an entry from January of 1882 under the heading *Sanctus Januarius*, Nietzsche writes:

"For the New Year—I still live, I still think; I must still live, for I must still think. Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum. To-day everyone takes the liberty of expressing his wish and his favorite thought: well, I also mean to tell what I have wished for myself today, and what thought first crossed my mind this year,—a thought which ought to be the basis, the pledge and the sweetening of all my future life! I want more and more to perceive the necessary characters in things as the beautiful:—I shall thus be one of those who beautify things. Amor fati: let that henceforth be my love! I do not want to wage war with the ugly. I do not want to accuse, I do not want even to accuse the accusers. Looking aside, let that be my sole negation! And all in all, to sum up: I wish to be at any time hereafter only a yea-sayer!"

This article first appeared on the website **Brain Pickings**:

<http://www.brainpickings.org/2015/01/02/nietzsche-new-year-resolution/>



"That which is done out of love is always beyond good and evil."

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UPCOMING EVENTS

FOOD FABRICATION INTERNATIONAL FORUM IN BEIRUT



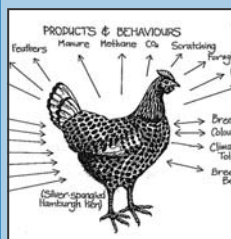
JANUARY 14-17, 2015

Goethe Institut
(Gemmayzeh) and AltCity
(Hamra)

Exhibition, talks, panels
and film screenings
about culinary practices
and food politics in the
Arab world

<https://www.facebook.com/foodfabrication>

"INTRO TO PERMACULTURE WEEKEND" 2-DAY INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP



JANUARY 17-18, 2015

**10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
(2 days)**

Hamra (apartment)

Permaculture ethics,
design and concepts

Fee: \$100 (includes 2
lunches + coffee breaks)

https://www.facebook.com/events/328862360643026/?ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming

"CREATING MY LIFE FOR 2015" LIFEINSPIRED VISION BOARD WORKSHOP



JANUARY 24, 2015

10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Eliane Mezher Clinic, Zalka—
Saideh st. Mezher bldg.

A tool to achieve actualization and align positive energy

https://www.facebook.com/events/333290646875891/?ref=2&ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming

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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

OUT TO SEA? THE STORY OF WASTE IN OUR OCEANS, AND THE SOLUTIONS

From **November 27, 2014** to **February 28, 2015**, **IndyACT**, the global league of independent environmental, cultural and social activists, is holding an exhibition titled **"Out to Sea? The Plastic Garbage Project"** funded by the **Drosos Foundation** (Switzerland) and with the support of the **Museum of Design in Zurich**. The exhibition is the first of its kind in Lebanon to feature plastic waste extracted from the sea in an effort to raise awareness about water pollution off the coast of Lebanon.

With **"Out to Sea? The Plastic Garbage Project"**, we sought to raise awareness but also to educate people and outline solutions to the problem of waste dumped irresponsibly in Lebanese waters.

Back in 2013, the **Drosos Foundation** outlined a number of NGOs in the **Euro-Mediterranean basin** that were active in the environmental field in order to replicate the concept of "Out to Sea?", an exhibition first held in the **Museum of Design in Zurich**. Other editions of the exhibition were first held in **Egypt**, **Jordan** and **Morocco**. When Drosos contacted us to spearhead this initiative in Lebanon, we saw it as a great learning opportunity and a chance to contribute to a better environment.

There's no doubt our oceans are at risk. Plastic is virtually everywhere in the world's oceans and seas. The huge floating garbage patches in the Pacific, North Atlantic and Indian oceans are only the most visible examples. And most of us know there are other types of pollutants as well, ranging from sewage to fossil fuels, chemical and industrial waste, etc. Like many of our neighbors, we were quick to recognize that not enough awareness about this issue exists on the local level.

This is the first awareness project on such a large scale we have undertaken to date at **IndyACT** (prior to that, our focus was mostly on advocacy campaigns). We targeted two different audiences for "Out to Sea": children (schools) and adults. The exhibition will welcome children from schools and refugee camps, as well as regular visitors. Throughout that period, we will hold panels and conferences, as well as activities specially designed for children, including recycled crafts workshops with professional facilitators.

Working with children for the first time has been an eye-opener for us. We saw first-hand how well children retain information and memorize it, taking it back home with them. We witnessed quite a few surprises and touching moments too. For instance, I recall one little girl leaving the recycled crafts workshop with stars in her eyes, telling us we had made both her and her family happy. She said she loved the new toys she had made on her own and couldn't wait to show the rest of her family how to make them from materials they had plenty of and would otherwise throw away; now her father would no longer feel bad that he can't afford toys for his children.

In preparation for the exhibition, we had worked with professional divers and volunteers to collect and sort waste on two locations off the coast. The sheer quantity and nature of the waste we collected was deeply disturbing. For example, in addition to "regular" plastic and organic waste, divers discovered huge amounts of **medical waste** from hospitals dumped in the sea. The head of the **Syndicate of Professional Divers** focused on this particular type of waste and received a lot of attention from local televisions and newspapers seeking to expose this scandal. For every other type of waste we identified, we sought to alert the responsible ministries or organizations.

The exhibition includes showcases of plastic and other waste material collected from our cleaning and sorting campaigns, as well artworks created from this waste. A number of photographs and detailed infographics also provide information about the nature of different waste materials found and their effect on the sea and marine wildlife.

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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

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In parallel to the exhibition, we are targeting around 7,000 students in 90 public schools all over the Lebanese territory to prepare and implement action plans for environmental activities. This will lay the foundation for future efforts towards a national campaign of cleaning up the sea or reducing, reusing and recycling waste.

Shared by Loyal Nehme, IndyACT Deputy Executive Director

The exhibition is open until February 28, 2015 at Artheum in Karantina (just before the Bourj Hammoud bridge).

For more details go to the event page on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/318555818330929/?ref=70>



GREEN RESOURCES

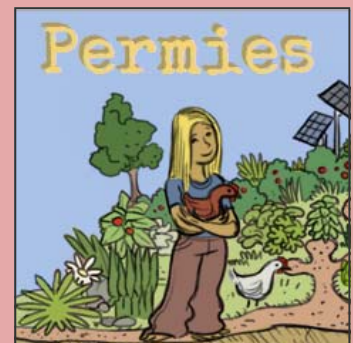
LEARNING HERBS - WEBSITE



Free herbal remedies and recipes, plus courses, kits and resources for children

<http://learningherbs.com/>

PERMIES - WEBSITE



The largest permaculture site online, featuring articles, videos and forums that bring permacultivators from around the world together

<http://www.permies.com/>

MADE WITH LOVE - WEBSITE



A labor of the heart, collecting unique and delicious recipes from people around the world, and their stories

<http://www.madewithlove.info/>



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

MAKE YOUR OWN NATURAL LIQUID FERTILIZER FROM NETTLES

When the rain season started this year, I brewed my first batch of "**nettle tea**". With just one bucket of nettles picked from my neighbors' abandoned plot, I got 10 times that amount of liquid natural fertilizer, with a lot left over to give away.

The common or stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica* - القراص) is a beneficial weed that is quite widespread so it is easy to gather. It is rich in nitrogen, which makes it a good activator for compost. Nettle tea supplements plants with **nitrogen, chlorophyll, magnesium, sulfur, iron, potassium, copper, zinc** and **calcium**. You can also find recipes for nettle soup, drinks and other culinary uses online if you're feeling adventurous.

Like many new "permies" I know, I had read about nettle tea online and in books but I had never actually gotten around to try it for some reason. I even saw it being brewed and used at the **Jlal At-Tormos** organic farm in **Joun** (Chouf caza - Lebanon). This year, I was lucky to be able to spend more time in the garden and observe the changing of the seasons, so I was ready when the first nettles started sprouting. When I found how easy it was to make this fertilizer, I decided I would make it every year and encourage more people to do so too.

Now is the right time to brew nettle tea for spring. All you need is a bucket with a lid, pruning shears or scissors, gardening gloves and some rainwater. Here's how to proceed:

1. Cut enough nettles to fill a bucket. You should choose plants that aren't carrying any seeds and cut them at the base so you don't get any roots or soil. When I gathered my second batch (Dad accidentally knocked over part of my first batch while it was brewing), I had to watch out for snails who had eaten through most of the patch and were still hanging on.

Attention: Use gardening gloves to protect your hands (stinging nettles sting!)

2. Trim the plants inside the bucket with pruning shears or scissors. You can leave the plants whole and get the same results, but it is much easier to handle the brew later (stirring and filtering) if the cuttings are trimmed short.

3. Fill the bucket with clear rainwater a little under the top and cover. As the nettle tea brews, a layer of foam might develop, so you need to leave some room for it. The tea will smell unpleasant during brewing, so you don't want it to spill and overflow.

Attention: It is better to use rainwater as it doesn't contain chlorine, fluoride or other chemicals that may inhibit the beneficial qualities of nettles.

Or: You can put the trimmings inside a cloth bag and tie it closed before adding water. This works like a tea bag and makes it easier to filter the tea later.

4. Place the covered bucket in a warm sunny place and stir every 2 days or more. I stirred mine every morning because it only took a few seconds.

Your nettle tea is ready after around **2 weeks** when it stops bubbling (in cold places with little or no sunshine, the brew might require an additional week).

5. Filter the nettle tea over a wide container using an old cloth (or, if you used the "tea bag" method, simply squeeze it dry) and use only the clear-ish liquid.

HOW TO USE YOUR NETTLE TEA

For the best results, mix **1 part nettle tea** with **10 parts water (1:10)** and pour the mixture at the base of plants where roots will absorb them more easily.

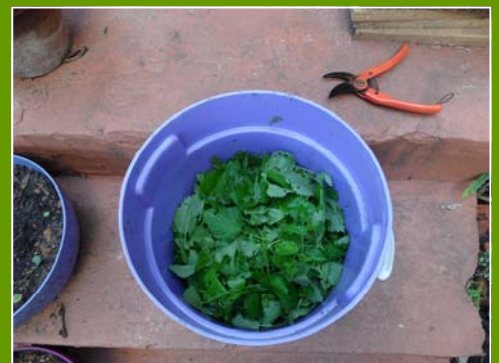
This fertilizer works best on plants that have a high demand for nourishment such as fruit trees and bushes, roses, annuals and perennial flowering plants. It works for tomatoes, leeks, brassicas, cucumbers and courgettes. However, it is not meant for beans, peas, onions, potatoes and root vegetables. Apply nettle tea to your plants **every 3 weeks** in the growing season (spring).

You will still need to add compost and mulch to adjust the soil's Nitrogen-Carbon ratio.

To apply on leaves, mix **1 part nettle tea** with **20 parts water (1:20)** and add **1/2 a teaspoon of liquid detergent** to each **4 liters** so the tea adheres to the leaves.

Undiluted nettle tea is great for making compost, as it speeds up decomposition. The leftover green mush from the tea can go into your compost heap.

Shared by Alexis Baghdadi



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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

TEACHING PERMACULTURE AT THE PARKVILLE YOUTH DETENTION CENTRE IN MELBOURNE

Since the beginning of 2013, the **Parkville Youth Detention Centre** in Melbourne - Australia has created a weekly **permaculture and gardening program** for the inmates, through the company **Living Learning** (www.livingmusic.com.au).

In order to fulfil its main objective, which is the rehabilitation of the detainees and their incorporation into a more positive way of living, the centre has created different educational programs to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to get a better job after their discharge. These programs include computer learning, sports, cooking and permaculture/gardening, on which I will focus in this article.

The safety of guards, workers, volunteers and inmates is of utmost importance for the directors of the centre so the systems designed for daily operations are implemented in a way that ensures no hostility between inmates, or against guards and facilitators:

- Eye Recognition System with the combination of a password and key to control access to different areas
- Inmates must be accompanied at all times by a guard, larger groups will have more guards
- Facilitators of the programs are accompanied by guards and security systems to inform other guards of any problems (e.g. wireless alarms activated by a button or radios, closed circuit TV)
- Induction safety programs are comprehensive and updated annually so that all employees keep a current knowledge of safety measurements

The permaculture/gardening program is taught once a week (on Thursdays) and is divided into:

- a. 30 minutes for preparation
- b. 90 minutes working with male inmates
- c. 30 minutes for preparation
- d. 90 minutes working with female inmates

The activities are in the form of **garden programs** that include **land preparation, building garden beds, composting, planting, watering, preparing automatic irrigation systems, greenhouse work, seed propagation** and any action related to **food production and sustainability**. The land used is designed under the umbrella of sustainability principles such as capturing and recycling water. We use completely organic materials and inputs, and many of the materials are recycled. We also teach techniques for the correct use of tools so body functions won't deteriorate.

To ensure the best operation and results, facilitators engage in a weekly planning session. They also inform the guard(s) accompanying them and the inmates about the details of the activities during the day to identify potential problems/hazards and thus control the situation if required. The inmates receive very clear information at the start of the session about the activities of the day and the permaculture principles to be covered. The exchange of ideas and group exercises work to ensure proper understanding of the relevant topics.

In case some inmates act inappropriately and endanger the safety of any person around them, they are separated from the group and sometimes penalized by being denied access to the program for consecutive weeks, for example, or denied the use of tools, or isolated.

Personally, I found the program very suitable for providing people with more individual skills which, if applied, will allow them to secure a better way of living for themselves in the future by engaging in a very dignified activity necessary for the survival of humans. I also noticed that since the program involves working with nature, with which we are all connected and dependent on (whether we acknowledge it or not), in many cases this connection can help people correct their attitude towards the Earth and others rather than resort to violence, depression, disease and other negative actions. They can take positive steps to live in the world and with others by doing good for everyone.

Upon completion of the rehabilitation process, a program of reintegration into society provides ex-inmates with jobs and funds, along with a chance to work in the operation and maintenance of urban community centres. Likewise, the techniques and skills learned during the program are put into practice.

Shared by Jose (Pepo) Dib



If you're interested in finding out more, please feel free to email me: pepodib@hotmail.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



Along the Merdechieh River in Zgharta, North Lebanon

Photo by Michel Sawan

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Michel-Sawans-Photography/683327678390908>

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GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVED


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A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

"I'm always astonished by a forest. It makes me realize that the fantasy of nature is much larger than my own fantasy. I still have things to learn."



–Günter Grass

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