



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

IN THIS ISSUE:

FEATURE STORY:

► **PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE IN LEBANON** [Pages 1-2](#)

► **A TRIBUTE TO PATRICK WHITEFIELD** [Page 3](#)

LET'S FOCUS: ADVENTURES IN INSECT LAND [Pages 4-5](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS [Page 2](#)

GREEN RESOURCES [Page 3](#)

LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS:

► 1-MONTH SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE TRAINING BY SOILS [Pages 6-7](#)

► THE 1ST CRAFTS CAFÉ IN LEBANON [Page 8](#)

► MAKE YOUR OWN CHOCOLATE BARS AT HOME [Pages 8-9](#)

► HOME-BAKED OAT CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES [Page 9](#)

PHOTO OF THE MONTH [Page 10](#)

FEATURE STORY

THE PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE (PDC) IN LEBANON - YEAR 2

SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon is proud to organize the Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC) course for the 2nd time in Lebanon.

2ND PDC LEBANON: MAY 21-JUNE 5, 2015 - SAIDOUN (JEZZINE)

The 72-hour intensive course will take place over 2 weeks from May 21 to June 5, 2015, in the village of Saidoun (Jezzine caza).

The PDC will enable you to develop a mutually enhancing interaction with land and community, through nature observation and agriculture/social tools to teach you the principles of sustainable design in farming, building, waste management, community building and energy conservation.

In 2014, SOILS organized the 1st PDC course in Lebanon ever. 10 participants made up the first locally graduating class in the country and are now pursuing related interests from natural farming to establishing eco-villages, empowering rural communities, reforestation and beekeeping.

The PDC is a pre-requisite to further training in permaculture design (diploma programs, teacher training courses and other advanced trainings). All PDC courses worldwide have the same format to ensure the integrity of the certification process.

The course offers an ideal opportunity to explore an exciting and meaningful life (and career) path through permaculture that will allow you to introduce positive change and make a difference in the world around you.

The course will be led by **Klaudia van Gool**, and **Betty Khoury** who both taught the 1st PDC in Lebanon. Klaudia is a teacher, trainer and environmental consultant who has taught over 20 permaculture design courses worldwide, as well as specialist courses. Betty is an outdoor environmental educator and permaculturist with a background in populations and ecosystems biology, she is also the co-founder of the Dayma social enterprise in Egypt.

See program and registration details on Page 2



تراب SOILS
للزراعة البيئية لبنان
PERMACULTURE ASSOCIATION LEBANON

PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE

دورة في تصميم البيروماكلتشر

INTERNATIONALLY ACCREDITED CERTIFICATE IN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT
شهادة معتمدة دولياً في مجال الزراعة والتنمية المستدامة

May 21 - June 5, 2015
Saidoun - Jezzine
٢١ أيار - ٥ حزيران ٢٠١٥
في بلدة سيدون - جزين

EARTH CARE - PEOPLE CARE - FAIR SHARE

To find out more / للمزيد من المعلومات
contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/SOILS.PermacultureAssociationLebanon
www.soils-permaculture-lebanon.com

► [back to contents](#)



Continued from Page 1

PDC 2015 PROGRAM - - - - -

I. Introduction

Ethics and principles of permaculture, global/local issues

II. Ecological Concepts

Elements of an ecosystem, natural cycles and interactions, human impact, agriculture and forestry systems

III. Sustainable Resource Management

Soil conservation and regeneration, water harvesting, energy conservation and waste reduction, plant growth and fertility, natural pest control strategies

IV. Social Framework

Community building tools

V. Permaculture Site Design

Site survey (climate, plant and animal species), design development and evolution

REGISTRATION AND FEES- - - - -

The deadline for registration is April 30, 2014.

Local participants (Lebanese nationals, non-Lebanese residents):

\$650 per person

(\$250 pre-registration by April 30, 2015 + \$400 on the first day of the PDC)

Early Bird Discount: \$590 for full payment by April 18, 2015

International participants:

\$1,200 per person

Early Bird Discount: \$1,000 for full payment by April 18, 2015

The cost includes participation fees, accommodation (in guest houses) and meals (lunch, dinner) during the entire course.

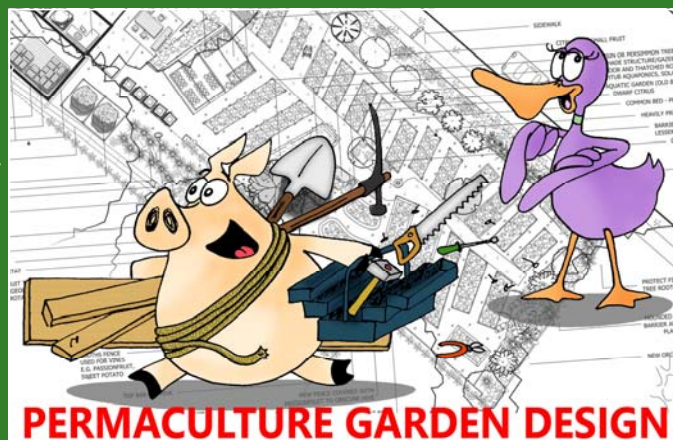
Find more details about the PDC and download the Registration Form on our website: <http://www.soils-permaculture-lebanon.com/pdc-2015.html>

We will announce an info-session on the Facebook event page between March and April 2015 to meet you one-on-one and answer your questions: <https://www.facebook.com/events/608816839254997>

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us:

Email: contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com

Tel: +961-71-617 988 (Rita)



"Perma-buddies" illustration by Alexis Baghdadi

► [back to contents](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

"MARCHÉ DU LIVRE" SPRING STREET BOOK MARKET



MARCH 21-23, 2015

10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

CLAC Municipal Cultural Center, Jbeil (Kesrouan)

Sale and exchange of used and secondhand books. Writing workshops, reading sessions.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1677341942493121/>

"PUPPET MAKING WORKSHOP WITH MAE"



MARCH 28, 2015

10:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Joon on the Moon, Gemmayzeh - Beirut

Fee: \$50 (includes all materials to make your own puppet and learn how to animate it)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/435317719960299/>
Reservation is a must: 01-569575, 76-987575

"EU LEBANON COOPERATION DAYS"



MAY 8-9, 2015

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

BIEL Pavillon Royal, Beirut sea front

Open debates, exhibitions and networking event. FREE registration: <http://eulebdays.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1535246376756774/>

► [back to contents](#)



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

L.E.T.S. Lebanon

PAGE 2/10

FEATURE STORY

A TRIBUTE TO PATRICK WHITEFIELD

On **February 27, 2015**, **Patrick Whitefield**, a renowned permaculture author and teacher passed away after 9 months of struggle with a rare bone marrow illness.

I had first gotten in touch with Patrick in February 2013 when I was checking out online permaculture courses and my friend **Sarah Pugh** (who co-taught with him) recommended his courses. I was looking for a PDC but his 4 other courses (Soil, Ecology, Organic Horticulture, Agro-forestry) quickly drew my attention and I decided to start with them.



I had just quit my job and finished writing a tedious report when I started reading through the modules eagerly. I still remember how happy I felt doing the first exercise of the Soil module. I was staying in my parents' apartment on the second floor of a residential building: I put my shoes on, grabbed a jar and a spatula and ran to the nearest wild spot, walked through piles of garbage and dug out some soil and went back home. I spent that sunny afternoon on the balcony examining the soil's color and texture (as well as the insects in it). Then I tried to figure out what type of soil it was with a simple hand test. My mother was staring at me trying to figure out how I had gone from working in theater and culture to playing with dirt.

In the beginning of March 2013, I went to my native village of Saidoun (Jezzine) for a couple of weeks, and got to observe closely the wild vegetation that was blooming in the house garden and olive orchard. The course didn't have a time limit, which meant I could take my time in processing the information and doing the projects on the land in the village.

In addition to the written modules, we had a monthly Skype conference with Patrick, where we would suggest and discuss topics that interested us. These sessions were incredibly enriching. Patrick was always concerned with whether the course was relevant to me, as I live in Lebanon and we have a different type of climate than the UK where most of the students were from, but I didn't mind much and was happy to learn the basics from him and interact with others.

Although I didn't complete all the projects, the Soil and Ecology modules in particular, and the interaction with Patrick though Skype, email and online forum, gave me good foundations and enough confidence to organize an introductory permaculture course in Lebanon in July 2013, then to co-found SOILS last year. Patrick was happy to hear about my projects in Saidoun and about permaculture emerging in Lebanon, and he gave me feedback and encouragement.

Patrick was not only generous with sharing his knowledge and experience, but he was also surprisingly humble and simple, and didn't fail to add some humor to his info. He was very objective and never took anything as dogma. I was amazed at Patrick's courage when he was diagnosed with his illness. He handed over all the courses to one of his previous students, **Caroline Aitken**, who is now carrying the torch, and spent his last months in bed writing a book on teaching permaculture. He accepted his fate and was happy to have lived a good life and to have done his best.

When I heard the news of his death some days ago, we were conducting our last week of the sustainable agriculture workshop in the South (see Pages 6-7). While making our preparations we relied a lot on Patrick's writings and videos and sought inspiration from his method of teaching. It helped us a lot and the results were obvious in the trainees' engagement.

SOILS and I will be forever grateful for you, Patrick Whitefield. You will be remembered in every new plant that grows in Saidoun and every new milestone we achieve.

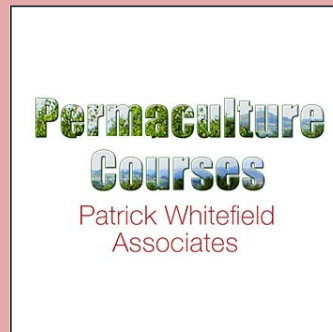
Shared by Rita Khawand

To read more about Patrick Whitefield and his teachings, go to <http://patrickwhitefield.co.uk/>

Or watch some of his videos here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/LOVEITTVclips>

GREEN RESOURCES

PERMACULTURE COURSES - WEBSITE



Online courses, tips (blog section) and books written or inspired by pioneering permaculture teacher Patrick Whitefield
<http://patrickwhitefield.co.uk/blog/>

PERMACULTURE ACTIVIST - MAGAZINE



Permaculture news website and quarterly magazine published by a team of entirely part-time members.

<http://www.permacultureactivist.net/>

WEEBLY - WEBSITE BUILDER



One of the easiest website building platforms to use (click and drag). Create a free website in a few seconds or upgrade for more options.

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

► [back to contents](#)



LET'S FOCUS

ADVENTURES IN INSECT LAND

There is an intricate and fascinating world out there just waiting for us to explore it, and it's called "**insect land**". Insects and mother nature have a lot to teach us. Finding out which insects visit your garden is the first step towards understanding the relationships between them and the different plants, birds and soil so you can better monitor life around the year.

As far as I remember, I was always fascinated by insects. Admittedly, when I was a little boy, I always tried to capture crickets, I tied green scarabs by a string and let them fly in circles. I even used to eat ants to find out how they tasted (yes, my childhood was strange and wonderful).

Today, people still see me running around in the fields chasing after butterflies and other insects - but I do it for different reasons. My dream is to become an **entomologist** (a scientist who studies insects), so I now take a scientific approach to my hobby. I collect different insects, identify them and preserve them in small framed boxes. Before you say this is cruel and accuse me of killing innocent creatures, destroying biodiversity, etc., let me put your mind at rest: I am not a killer. I am discovering life through the incredible creatures that are insects. Join me on this journey and find out what the excitement is all about.

BEFORE YOU START

The first thing you have to know is that the world of insects has a different set of rules entirely. To put it simply, insects basically live for sex. They spend the first part of their short lives eating to reach sexual maturity as fast as possible so they can mate, lay eggs and die, knowing their species will survive. For example: members of some **moth species** such as the giant peacock moth (*Saturnia pyri*) spend 3 years in a caterpillar phase during which they eat their way up to their metamorphosis stage. They then turn into a big moth and have only 2 days to mate and lay eggs before they die. Shocking, right? I was shocked too when I found that out. So these guys are bred to know how to increase their chances of mating; they are going to do it and they will survive - one entomologist collecting a specimen is not going to make any difference in that, and he/she will certainly not be shortening these moths' lives significantly.

On the other hand, some species are really endangered, such as the **stag beetles** in the **Lucanidae** family (these are large beetles with long mandibles). So I am the first to tell you that if you encounter any of these rare beetles, let them live.

CATCH AND OBSERVE

A large part of observing insects requires identifying them. For that, you will need to capture a few specimens and examine them calmly. But catching insects isn't as easy as you think. Do you remember how difficult it was as a child to try catching a small grasshopper in the daytime? It will take you even more effort to catch a field cricket at night. Luckily, there are scientific methods and techniques that help you save time and effort.

There are many kinds of traps, but here are 3 simple and affordable ones you can build on your own. These traps are a form of passive collection and should only be used for **ecology studies**.

• **Light Trap:** This trap is used to capture nocturnal insect that are attracted by light (such as moths and also flying coleoptera - beetles - like the *polyphylla fullo*), so it only works at night. You will need:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| -2 funnels of the same size (opaque) | -Black light or small 12 V lamp with battery |
| -A plastic jar with a lid | -Epoxy glue |
| -Plexiglas "x" shape | -Some metal wire |

Note: The Plexiglas piece should be at least 20 cm tall and should not be wider than the funnels

Cut a hole in the lid of the plastic jar so the first funnel's narrow base can fit snugly. Use the epoxy glue to fix the Plexiglas "X" standing up in this funnel, then fix the funnel in the jar. Insert the lamp and cable into the second funnel (the funnel's narrow end should be up). The cable should be connected to a battery and should be long enough to reach the ground (the trap will be hung on a tree or above a door). Now, insert the metal wire through the funnel to hold the lamp in place (it should not be lower than the funnel base, but also not too close to the plastic surface). You can punch 2 holes in the funnel and let the wire pass through them. The wire should be long enough to curve back upwards and form a closed circle. When this is done, stick the second funnel (with the lamp inside it) over the Plexiglas "X" (see the final trap in the picture on the right). Voila! Turn the light on at night and hang your trap.



A sample of my insect collection



Bush mantis (*Sphodromantis viridis Barbara*) and me



Homemade light trap

Continued on Page 5

[▶ back to contents](#)



LET'S FOCUS

Continued from Page 4

• **Pitfall Bait Trap:** This trap is not expensive and is very effective for catching crawling insects that are attracted by smell (such as beetles, ants, etc.). You will need:

- 2 long solid plastic cups of the same size
- Garden tools to dig a hole
- A small cardboard or plastic square
- Bait (vinegar, sugar water, beer, etc.)

Dig a hole in your garden or the field you want to monitor. Put the cups inside each other and fit them snugly in the hole. Making sure that the edge of the inside cup is at the same level as the soil around it. Place the bait into the cup. Place 4 small stones around the cup and lay the cardboard square above it (maximum 5 cm raised above soil level) with a larger stone to keep it in place. This "roof" will protect captured insects from the sun or predators.

Note: In rainy weather, it is better to use a plastic square and tilt it so water will flow off it.

Check the trap every 4 days for insects.

**Having 2 cups means that when you remove the inside one, the outer one will stay in the ground and preserve the hole shape if you want to use the trap again.*

• **Color Trap:** This trap is for catching insects attracted by color radiation (such as leafminers, ladybugs etc.). You will need:

- 2 cardboard squares (yellow and white)
- Some string
- Slow-drying latex or plastic glue (glue)

**You can mix the glue with water so it will take more time to dry out*

Pour glue on the squares then attach them with strings to a tree or pole. They will attract some beneficial insects (ladybugs, Braconidae wasps) and pests (white flies, aphids, tree bugs).

IDENTIFY YOUR CRAWLERS AND FLIERS

Now that you have your first insects, you should try to identify them. In Lebanon this is a little difficult. Unfortunately, there aren't many local experts or resources on insects. Publications about insects are limited to academic researchers in the field and there isn't a book that covers all common insects in the country (unlike books about plants and birds).

Here are some useful books available locally or online:

- Butterflies of Lebanon T. Larsen. Publisher: CNRS Lebanon (ISBN: 0 900848 73 1)
- Dragonflies of the Aammig Area, Lebanon A Rocha Lebanon*
- Butterflies of the Aammig Area, Lebanon A Rocha Lebanon*
- The Dragonflies of Europe R. R. Askew. Publisher: Harley Books (ISBN 0 946589 10 0)

*See: <http://www.arocha.org/lb-en/resources/publications.html>

The Facebook group **Plant production and protection in Lebanon** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/679096865445785/> sometimes discusses local insect pests.

To identify the insects I find, I ask university professors or use these websites:

<http://www.biolib.cz/> and <http://bugguide.net/node/view/15740>.

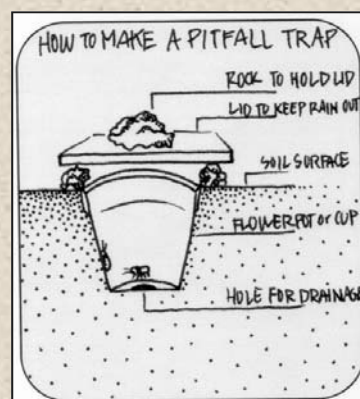
INSECTS: WHAT IS REALLY AT STAKE?

It is vital that we enhance our knowledge of insects. For example, around most of the world, butterflies are known by both their common (vernacular) name and their **binomial** (Latin) name. But in Lebanon and most of the Arab world probably, butterflies and moths are all called generically "فراشة" *farasha*. The ***Vanessa atalanta*** is a colorful butterfly that is quite common in Lebanon and easily identifiable. In French it is known as "Vulcain", in English "Red admiral", in Spanish "Numerada", in Italian "Vulcano", etc. Can you guess what it is called in Arabic?

On the local level, we urgently need to update and publicize documented species of endemic insects in our region. Unfortunately, because war has changed the geopolitical map in the past decades, there is a movement to give some species new names and our region risks losing its identity not only when it comes to entomology, but also with botany, zoology, ornithology, etc. In the bigger picture, insects are the most dominant phylum in the animal kingdom and have a huge biodiversity. One of the most sensitive issues on the agenda of the **Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO)** is identifying insect species as a new source of protein to fight famine.

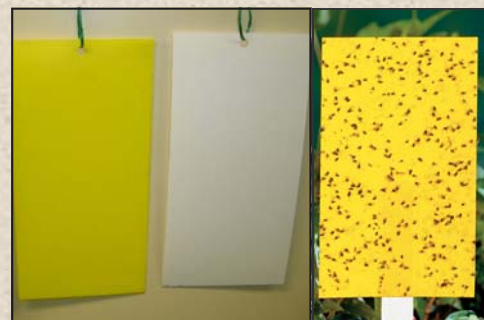
I am not an expert but I'm passionate about insects and I want more people to take an interest. If you'd like to find out more, email me and I'll be happy to point you in the right direction.

Shared by Wael Yammine - waeljeanyamine@hotmail.com



Top:
Homemade
pitfall bait
trap (top)

Left:
Internet
diagram
for a simpler
model



Homemade color trap and internet example (right)



Stick insect (*leptynia hispanica*) and me



► [back to contents](#)



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE WORKSHOP FOR FARMERS IN SOUTH LEBANON

In February 2015, SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon organized a 5-week workshop on Sustainable Agriculture for small scale farmers from 2 villages in the Nabatiye region (Qosaybe and Braykeh). The workshop was organized within the framework of the "Fostering Self-Reliance for Displaced Syrians in South Lebanon" (FORDS) project implemented by Mercy Corps and Social, Humanitarian, Economical Intervention for Local Development (SHEILD), with funding from the European Union.

The participants included 16 women and 1 man aged between 40 and 60 years old. Their agricultural experience covered a variety of crops such as citrus and olive trees, vegetables and, of course, tobacco. But their circumstance make it hard for them to earn a living from their farming. Most of them rely heavily on chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Because they don't have the ability to recognize specific pests and diseases that attack their crops, they often find themselves at the mercy of suppliers of agricultural chemicals and their greed. There is also the risk of pests developing immunity to chemicals and becoming locked in a vicious circle of continuously spraying more harmful chemicals. In some plots where they grow crops, the soil is invaded by stubborn weeds due to uncured manure or intensive plowing. Finally, they have difficulty marketing their produce and often have to resort to middlemen. So, not surprisingly, many of them prefer to focus on tobacco because the harvest is always purchased by the state-run tobacco monopoly (Régie). Surprisingly none of them raise animals, not even chickens.

It's not easy to recount the excitement of these 5 weeks in just one short article. And I certainly cannot convey the warmth we felt from working with such a great group. But I'll try to tell the story anyway.

The 2-month preparation phase was intense. Our 2 biggest challenges were a) coming up with a relevant and meaningful program before we were given the chance to meet the trainees and assess their needs, and b) finding resources in Arabic that have been written for local conditions. Surprisingly, we actually managed to find a lot of resources (some of which we might be able to share on SOILS website in the future), but not all of them were accessible to farmers or even the public. The main team we assembled consisted of 3 people from different backgrounds: Amani Dagher (chemistry, environment, sustainable agriculture), Fadi Kanso (agricultural engineering, farming), and myself (theater, cultural coordination, permaculture). We also collaborated with 3 specialists who intervened on specific topics.

The workshop was divided into 4 main modules: Soil, Water, Plant Production, Integrated Pest Management. We wanted the trainee farmers to get a global understanding of all the elements related to crop production and their interconnectedness. We had planned to have almost equal parts of practical and theoretical sessions, but a series of unforeseen logistical problems at the workshop site (a small farm) and the inclement weather (we had 2 major storms in the same month) forced us to move into the Qsaybe municipality building and stay indoors a lot of the time.

WEEK 1: SOIL

In the first week, we focused on the most essential factor in any sustainable agriculture activity: Soil! We explored with the trainees the role of all visible and invisible creatures in the soil and how they interact to create a healthy and fertile medium. We also shared ways to care for the soil and regenerate it (such as minimum tilling and composting).

WEEK 2: WATER

This week, we hosted 2 guest trainers to supplement our combined knowledge. Boghos Ghougassian, a senior environmental consultant and president of LATA (Lebanese Appropriate Technology Association), spoke about his experience in installing grey water treatment systems that could save up to 100-150 m³ per household per year. The treated water could also be used for irrigating trees and some kinds of vegetables.

Kassem Jouni, an agricultural engineer and local consultant for Conservation Agriculture (CA), explained systems that preserve the soil and reduce water run-offs and evaporation by minimizing tillage and keeping the soil covered. Kassem's valuable contribution to the workshop included giving local examples of CA trials in orchards as well as in vegetable gardens.

Continued on Page 7



[▶ back to contents](#)



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

Continued from Page 6

WEEK 3: PLANTING

This week was dedicated to planting operations. We started with **seed saving** methods and the importance of preserving heirloom varieties. Sadly, this tradition has disappeared from many parts of the world, and it is hard for a lot of people who wish to start their garden to find non-hybrid or non-GMO seeds. The participants were so moved by this issue that they promised to start keeping their own seeds and looking for old resistant varieties in their area.

We then moved to how to design a diverse orchard taking into consideration several factors such as site conditions, micro-climate, distance between trees, crop diversity, etc.

We also discussed and demonstrated **tree maintenance** through training, pruning and grafting. Finally, we talked about vegetables, covering topics such as bi-cropping, crop rotation, weed management and how to grow crops in healthy polytunnels.

WEEK 4: PEST CONTROL

This was a long and exciting week dedicated to **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** strategies. IPM includes preventive methods such as encouraging beneficial insects and crop rotation, as well as close pest monitoring before intervention. We introduced safer, more efficient ways to use chemicals when needed, and explained how to gradually start using less of those.

Our friend **Mabelle Chedid**, an agricultural engineer and founder of the Food Heritage Foundation, spoke about alternative pest control methods such as vinegar traps for fruit flies and DIY pesticides from local natural ingredients.

We took advantage of the nice weather to visit 2 gardens where the trainees would work in groups on their final design exercise, suggesting improvements based on what they learned.

WEEK 5: DESIGN AND GRADUATION

On the last day, the trainees showed us what they were capable of and how well they assimilated the concepts they were introduced to throughout the month. They presented their designs in 2 groups and suggested improvements to the landowners based on what they learned. Their designs included such ideas as integrating **nitrogen-fixing cover crops**, **grey water systems**, **crop rotation**, **mulched beds**, **habitats for beneficial insects**, **diversity in crops** and **chickens**. Both groups truly did an amazing job. In a relatively very short time, they surprised us and outdid themselves. We are so proud of every single one of them!

THE FUTURE?

The trainees' enthusiasm and commitment was the greatest reward of these past weeks. We are so grateful for the chance to have been a part of their lives for a whole month that we don't want to let go of this unique opportunity. Amani, Fadi and I decided to get together again soon and discuss possible follow-up actions. We will also complete an **Arabic booklet** containing handouts of all the sessions we covered for the participants and their neighbors.

What can I say? Despite the logistic and weather difficulties we had, it was an amazing month! I enjoyed very much the energy Amani, Fadi and I had while working together. I am also glad we collaborated with specialists and learned about their contribution to sustainable agriculture. But most of all, I was touched by the commitment of the trainees and the spirit they showed.

Shared by Rita Khawand

Check out the full photo album from the workshop on the SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.855679777832242.1073741852.608206405912915&type=3>



► [back to contents](#)



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

JOON ON THE MOON HAS LANDED - A NEW CRAFTS CAFÉ IN BEIRUT

I did it! I finally opened my own dream store! Thanks to the help and support of my friends and family, **Joon on the Moon** is now a reality and the first official "crafts café" in Lebanon!

If you're not familiar with the concept, a crafts café is a place to create handcrafts, relax and enjoy a coffee and snacks (also handmade). I grew tired of waiting for one to magically appear in Lebanon, so I went ahead and opened my own.

Several art galleries have established themselves in the past few years around the Mar Mikhael and Gemmayzeh areas, and a few co-working artists' spaces like Brut l'Atelier and ArtScape have also recently opened. But none had anything to offer for non-artists. I like to think that Joon on the Moon filled this gap. It is a place where you can create, shop and chill.

I admit, the idea started off a little selfish because Joon on the Moon is first and foremost a place where I want to be. A place for me to create and expose my work. But I also want to share it with others. What I like most about having my own place is that I'm getting to meet amazing people who bring a smile with them when they visit. In January, one visitor volunteered to write and illustrate the menu on my blackboard wall: it turned out beautiful!

The place we chose was an old pub that had gone out of business for a while. When we took it over, we were also left with most of its furnishings as a bonus. We had wooden window bars and leftover thick glass panels we didn't really need, and some other materials as well. I have a soft spot for upcycling and repurposing materials so the path ahead of us was clear to me. We put our minds together to find new uses for most of these materials, even recuperating a few more. After a lot of fiddling and a generous coat of pastel paints, we had completely transformed the space to fit our convenience and taste.

Why Joon on the Moon? Because Joon is what my little nephews used to call me, and the moon is a place outside of this world. In fact, just before our official opening in December, someone walked by my store while we were out getting supplies and left a heartwarming note saying they had seen it before... in their dream. That made my day - my year, even.

Now, 2 months after our opening, we have shifted to second gear. The place is packed with handmade crafts from my artist friends, alongside my own. We have also started hosting **knitting circles** and other **crafts workshops**. The supplies are always here for anyone who wishes to unleash their creativity and I'm happy to help whenever I'm around.

If you're feeling creative or curious, I hope you drop by to check out the place. Or visit our Facebook page to see if there is a workshop that might interest you. See you soon!

Shared by Joelle Petrakian



Joon on the Moon is located on Rue du Liban in Gemmayzeh - Beirut
Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/joononthemoon>
www.joononthemoon.com

► [back to contents](#)

A SIMPLE RECIPE TO MAKE YOUR OWN HOMEMADE CHOCOLATE BAR

For a while now, I've been trying to cut back on buying imported food items with some success, but I still can't quite give up dark chocolate (cacao trees are not grown locally). While waiting for a local option, my sister sent me a recipe for homemade chocolate bars, and I thought to give it a go since I happened to have the basic ingredients.

Here is the original recipe: <http://www.heathernicholds.com/recipes/simple-chocolate-bark-recipe>

However, I made some changes because I don't like sticking to recipes in general. I also found that the recipe required a large amount of sugar so I used less. Here's my version:

INGREDIENTS

- 6 tablespoons of coconut oil
- 3 tablespoons of brown sugar
- 5 tablespoons of organic cocoa powder
- Some almonds

Continued on Page 9



► [back to contents](#)



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

Continued from Page 8

INSTRUCTIONS - - - - -

I ground the brown sugar into finer particles so they would spread more evenly (sugar doesn't dissolve in oil). I then completely melted the coconut oil in a pan using the bain marie method.

I stirred in the cocoa, then the sugar, and mixed well. I poured the mixture in a glass tray, topped it with almonds, let it cool a while and refrigerated it for 30 minutes.

The chocolate tasted different from store-bought ones but it was really yummy, and not too sweet (I had to stop myself from eating the whole thing). Because I didn't line my tray with parchment paper, the chocolate bar was stuck in and I couldn't wait to chip it out in chunks.

This year I will try the same recipe with (local) carob powder instead of cocoa. But the (imported) coconut oil will still be difficult to replace. At least I'll be more than halfway there.

Shared by Rita Khawand



[▶ back to contents](#)

HOMEMADE OAT CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

This winter, snow was all around in many villages and a lot of people decided to stay in and skip work. But just because you're staying warm in the comfort of your home doesn't mean you have to be inactive. You can enjoy this stress-free time to do things you never tried before. Myself, I felt like enjoying a sweet treat with my milk and coffee, so I decided to bake cookies.

I picked a recipe that seemed easy enough for anyone to try, and that didn't contain too much sugar or butter. It included oat seeds (a great mate for milk) and chocolate (great with coffee). The cookies turned out really well and I decided to share the recipe with friends and readers of L.E.T.S. Lebanon. It is quite easy and I encourage anyone to try it.

INGREDIENTS - - - - -

Like cooking, baking is a matter of taste and inspiration. The ingredients below are only a reference; you can play around with the measurements for sugar, chocolate or nuts.

- 1 cup of wheat flour (optional: whole or semi-whole)
- 2 cups of oat flakes
- 2 eggs (fresh and organic are always preferable)
- 100 grams of butter
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- ½ cup of brown sugar
- 400 grams of crushed chocolate (I prefer black)
- Crushed walnuts or almonds
- ½ teaspoon of vanilla sugar
- Some whisky or rum (optional)

DIRECTIONS - - - - -

1. In a bowl, mix the eggs with a fair pinch of salt, the vanilla sugar and the whisky or rum (personal taste for the quantity, I used around 2 table spoons)
2. Melt the butter on low heat and add it to the mix.
3. Mix in the oats and flour gradually
4. Add the sugar, baking powder
5. Mix in the crushed chocolate and nuts using both hands
6. Make small ball shapes (smaller than the palm of your hand), lay them on a buttered baking tray and press them lightly, leaving sufficient room around each cookie
7. Spread a bit of butter on the tray before adding the cookies
8. Pre-heat the oven at 170°C then bake each cookie batch for around 30 minutes (check each batch regularly to make sure the cookies don't overcook and turn brown; they should be hard on the outside but soft on the inside)
9. When you take the cookies out of the oven, remove them from the tray and place them on a grill so they cool down evenly and don't stick to the tray

Don't take my word for it. Try these cookies yourself. Or go ahead and look for a recipe you like and start baking. I send all my love to my mother who helped me a lot with this recipe.

Shared by Jad Khadij



Here is my email address if you would like to share your comments or discuss the recipe with me: jadkhadij@gmail.com

[▶ back to contents](#)



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



Warm winter day at the Barouk cedars - Chouf, North Lebanon

Photo by Alexandre Dunoyer

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/alexandredunoyer.photographie>

► [back to contents](#)

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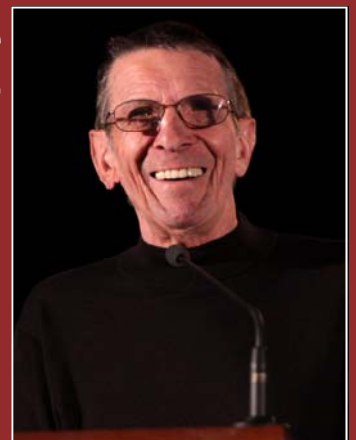
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A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

"The miracle is this... the more we share, the more we have."

"Live long and prosper."



–Leonard Nimoy (1931-2015)

► [back to contents](#)

