



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

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FEATURE STORY

#ANARA7BALESH ANTI-LITTERING VIDEO TOWARDS SOLVING LEBANON'S GARBAGE CRISIS

This summer, Lebanon's garbage crisis made international headlines. 2 months after the government's contract with the private waste management company (Sukleen) expired amid accusations of fraud and mismanagement of landfills and recycling operations, the problem is still there. But the roots of the problem are deeper than waste mismanagement, extending back to the shortcomings of civic and environmental education. For our friends Lamya and Maya Karkour, one way to address the problem was through reaching out to children and making them "environmental champions" (See [L.E.T.S. Lebanon - Issue 21](#)). The program's most recent milestone is an anti-littering animation targeting children, but also recommended for parents and educators, as well as any adult person.

Under the **#AnaRa7Balesh** (I will start) hash tag and campaign, we developed an anti-Littering animation with funding from Maya's environmental consulting firm, **EcoConsulting**, and integrated it in the Environmental Education program of the **Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA)**. The animation addresses our irresponsible behavior towards **waste**, and the unfortunate consequences derived from it. The idea behind it is to explore how to motivate children to change their attitudes toward littering, but especially make them realize that it is in each one's hands to contribute - albeit on a small scale - to the solution for littering. The choice of **#AnaRa7Balesh** for the campaign means that even one little kid counts in the equation and we can all start changing right away some of our bad habits and make a difference.

The animation is currently being used as an educational tool in all the children's activities of the LMTA, as well as in public and private schools, and during our **Environmental Champions Program** (38 kids have received their "Abtal Al Bi2a" Environmental Champions certification so far). It is important for us to initiate discussions with the kids after showing them the animation, to understand their perspectives, and to lead them towards all the possible solutions to address littering - not only by not throwing garbage, but also by reducing it from the start (through each of the 3Rs).

We are now exploring with the Ministry of Education the possibility of introducing the video in public schools' extra-curricular program under civic education, with a Q&A sheet in 3 languages for teachers so they too may open discussions with kids after showing them the animation.

We also hope to air the animation on TV channels or during movie trailers in theaters to maximize its outreach. We strongly feel that it should be viewed by the largest local public possible.



Click on the image above to watch the animation on YouTube and share it with your friends

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FEATURE STORY

Continued from Page 1

AN INTEGRATED SOLUTION FOR LEBANON'S GARBAGE CRISIS - - - - -

We had initiated the production of this animation way before the current garbage crisis, when proper waste management was not yet considered an emergency. We completed its production over 2 months ago. However we do believe it can play a part in finding a comprehensive and sustainable solution. We insist on "a part", since without continuity, the engagement of educators and parents, any awareness we raise in children's minds via this animation will only be short-lived. This is why we are soliciting the Ministry of Education's support, and aiming to show the animation on a larger scale nationally. Let's hope the plan will work!

Of course, a comprehensive solution will require facilities for recycling, on-boarding municipalities and politicians and much more so that people really feel involved in being part of the solution, and not just rely on the government or simply blame it for their problems.

One positive effect of the current garbage crisis is that individuals and the civil society are mobilizing and demanding their basic rights. Awareness is now high in terms of waste management, and recycling is definitely on the agenda. We received many calls/messages from people asking us how to start recycling at home, in their building, business, etc. and we are helping them through our network. The important thing is to finally find sustainable non-political solutions.

To watch the animation, click on the link below. Please share this with your friends and on your social media pages. "Each one of us can start doing something" #AnaRa7Balesh
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=GFWMatWnPuw&app=desktop>

The #AnaRa7Balesh anti-littering animation will be one of the main attractions at the LMTA stand during the "Ayam Al Ouloum" Science Days festival held in Horsh Beirut on October 9-11: <https://www.facebook.com/events/880195245349619/>

Join us with your children or drop by to enjoy a day in the park.

Shared by Lamy and Maya Karkour



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UPCOMING EVENTS

"AYYAM AL OULOUM" OUTDOOR SCIENCE EXHIBITION



OCTOBER 9-11, 2015

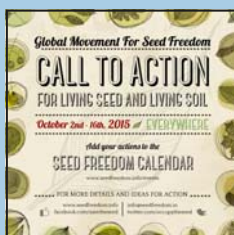
11:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Horsh Beirut, near Tayyounneh roundabout, Beirut

**Fee: LBP 5,000/person
*Children under 16 years: Free**

<https://www.facebook.com/events/880195245349619/>

"GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR SEED AND LIVING SOIL" - CALL TO ACTION



STARTING OCTOBER 16

Locations worldwide

Spread the word and create your own local actions and events to celebrate seeds, soils, land, territories and people.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/512401492126208/>

"INTRODUCTION TO BEEKEEPING" WORKSHOP



OCTOBER 25, 2015

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Saidoun, Jezzine caza

Theoretical and practical course.

**Fees: LBP50,000/person
Students LBP40,000
Couples: LBP80,000**

<https://www.facebook.com/events/902495779845372/>

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LET'S FOCUS

SOILS AT THE INTERNATIONAL PERMACULTURE CONFERENCE #IPCUK2015



IPC-UK Group photo. Credits: Segara

Thanks to the support of my family and friends I was able to attend the **12th International Permaculture Conference and Convergence (IPC)** which took place in **London** from **8 to 15 September 2015** and gathered around **600 permaculture professionals and enthusiasts from 70 countries**.

The IPC was first held in 1984 in Australia, and has become the key global meeting point for the international permaculture network. Over the years it has also been hosted in the US, New Zealand, Nepal, Scandinavia, Croatia, Brazil, Malawi, Jordan (2011) and Cuba (2013). It includes a public conference and a longer "convergence", which is used for knowledge and skill sharing, networking and strategic development.



Andy Goldring opening the IPC-UK 2015

CONFERENCE (8-9 SEPTEMBER, THE LIGHT - CENTRAL LONDON) - - - - -

DAY 1

I was staying at a youth hostel at only a 5-min walk from the conference's location. I got there early and was feeling a bit disoriented, having to find my way among hundreds of new faces. But as soon as we all gathered in the big hall, I started to feel better. I was glad to see our friend *Daniel Halsey*, a permaculture designer from the US whom we had met in Lebanon. A nice British guy called *Simon* invited me to sit next to him and - to my surprise - recited some Arabic words when he learned I was from Lebanon.

Andy Goldring, **Chief Executive of the Permaculture Association (UK)**, welcomed everyone, then *David Holmgren*, the **co-founder of permaculture**, Skyped with us from Australia. As a matter of principle, he did not want to fly over and take part in creating carbon emissions. David highlighted the idea that energy descent should be seen as an opportunity rather than a problem.

There were several interesting presentations and workshops under different themes scheduled simultaneously in different rooms but we had to make a choice. Coming from a semi-arid country I chose to go for "**Water**" and I discovered the work of 3 inspiring permacultivators:

- **Marsha Hanzi (Brazil) - Founder of Mariza Epicentre, a 7-hectare agro-ecology center**

The center's land was pure white sand in an arid region of 400-700 mm rainfall. Marsha used different strategies to remediate the land and retain water, using cactus widely (water retaining, animal and human food, added to compost, inter-planted with corn), relying on animals to decompose mulch (since it doesn't decompose in dry climates), and planting in trenches. The [Mariza Epicentre](#) center now hosts a flourishing ecosystem that saw its bird species climb from 2 to more than 60.

- **Jeremiah Kidd (USA) - Founder of San Isidro Permaculture in New Mexico**

Jeremiah spoke about drought proofing strategies in dry areas that receive as little as 35 mm rainfall. At [San Isidro Permaculture](#) he uses different strategies such as grey and black water recycling, rain water catchment, wick system, improving water retention in soil through compost and mulch, rain gardens, sunken beds, etc.

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Pandora Thomas: Pathways to Resilience



David Holmgren



Geoff Lawton

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LET'S FOCUS

Continued from Page 3

• Jay Abrahams (UK)

Fed up with energy intensive wastewater treatment solutions, Jay came up with the [Wetland Ecosystem Treatment \(WET\)](#) systems, highly energy-efficient systems that don't use any electricity or fossil fuel in the purification process; they rely on the ability of certain plants to mineralize the nutrients found in wastewater through the micro-organisms living on their root-zone. A variety of plant species is used, thus creating a habitat for a wide range of animals and insects, as well as additional products such as willow that can be used for crafts and fuel. This technique could be also used on a small village scale (50-200 residents).

In the afternoon I attended sessions under the theme "**Smallholder Farming in Africa**", which included the work of *Abigail Conrad* in Malawi ([Click here](#) for more details), and the **Garden Africa** center that combines permaculture training and organic certification to improve livelihoods of thousands of farmers in Zimbabwe (a range of resources is available on their [website](#)).

Day 1 ended with keynote speakers, namely the inspiring *Pandora Thomas* (USA) who founded [Pathways to Resilience](#), a permaculture and social entrepreneurship training program that helps ex-inmates reconnect with society and nature.

DAY 2

Day 2 of the conference started with a talk by *Geoff Lawton*, renowned Australian permaculture teacher and designer, and Rob Hopkins, founder of the **Transition Movement**.

On Day 2, I attended 2 sessions under the theme "Soil":

• Christopher Nesbitt (Belize) - Founder of the Maya Mountain Research Farm

I got to know Christopher and his wife *Celini* well, as we were staying in the same hostel, and I also got to taste Celini's strong chili paste. In the 1980s Chris moved from the US to Belize where he bought a 70-acre land and started farming organically. In 2004 he founded the [Maya Mountain Research Farm](#) where he organizes annual Permaculture design Certificate courses. The farm manages 26 acres of land with around 500 species. They help farmers **recreate rainforests** with plants that are useful to humans, by stacking cacao trees with other crops that can be used for food, timber or medicine. Chris has had success in using **biochar** for regenerating the soil: he mixes biochar with compost before mulching trees with it, which proved to help trees survive drought.

• Graham Bell (UK) - Founder of the Garden Cottage

I had read an article about Graham's garden in **Permaculture Magazine** the week before, and it was nice to hear him talk in person. It was amazing to hear how Graham's 1,000 m² forest garden produces around 1 ton of fruits and vegetables a year, using 50 m³ of homemade compost and minimal tilling, among other practices. The [Garden Cottage](#) is located in Scotland and is open to visitors.

The 2nd batch of sessions were about "**Permaculture in India**". I was interested to hear about the **Hans Foundation's** 5-year project [Uttarakhand 2020](#), using permaculture across a whole state, in collaboration with *Geoff Lawton*, to tackle education, disease prevention and reforestation.

The day ended with a hand over to India who will be hosting the next IPC in 2017, and a UK premiere of the permaculture movie [Inhabit](#) followed by a Q & A with the directors via Skype.

CONVERGENCE (11-15 SEPTEMBER, GILWELL PARK) -----

Many attendees stayed on for the **Convergence**, and some new ones joined us. There were around 400 **participants**, mostly sleeping in tents or lodges. *Rakesh Rootsman Rak*, a permaculture designer and teacher we have been in touch with, generously offered me and *Cath*, another attendee, a room at his home, not far from the site.

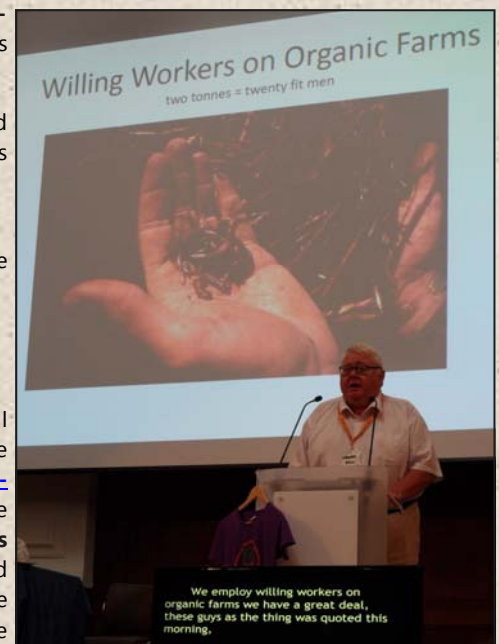
Again, I was frustrated that many sessions and workshops were held simultaneously. Fortunately, most presentations and audio recordings will be published online.

Some of my favorites included:

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Christopher Nesbitt



Graham Bell



Murad Al Khufash



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LET'S FOCUS

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• Urban permaculture

I was very happy to meet my old roommate *Sarah Pugh* after 9 years (Sarah was the one who introduced me to permaculture in Bristol in 2006), and discover the amazing work that she developed in Bristol recently. Sarah established [Shift Bristol](#) and developed a 1-year practical sustainability course (part time) which is run in collaboration with many local teachers and institutions.

It includes theory and practice revolving around different topics: **permaculture design, woodland management, green building, organic horticulture**, etc. Sarah and I discussed the possibility of establishing a similar course in Beirut, which would be customized to local needs, of course.

• Permaculture applied to dry-land small farmers

Ardhendu Chatterjee has worked with farmers in dry tropics in India to help them improve their food security through permaculture design and using low tech solutions. He gave us some examples of simple irrigation methods using clay pots and bamboo sticks, of catching water on slopes, and told us how he demonstrated that mulching tree seedlings made them grow faster. He also described briefly his participatory approach in working with farmers which starts with mapping existing resources and practices. Ardhendu also conducts training of trainers, and is associated to [Development Research Communication and Services Centre](#) (DRSCS)

• The application of permaculture in the Himalayas

Although I missed this session I was able to meet the speaker [Chris Evans](#) briefly, and learn about how he introduced permaculture in Nepal more than 20 years ago. I then realized that I had previously downloaded Chris's farmer's handbook (available for free download [here](#)) which he had compiled in collaboration with the locals, so it was nice to put a face to the name.

• Working with refugees

Teacher and author *Rosemary Morrow* (who has extensive experience in working in post-war situations in countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia), ran a series of workshops over 4 days with the aim to come up with a draft document that can be used as a framework for engaging refugees in many situations. This coincided with the migrant flow to Europe which made it very relevant to the participants. I had the chance to participate in one of the workshops and meet lovely "Rowe" (as her students call her), a very inspiring and humble woman who offered to help me with contacts and resources. [Click here](#) to read more about the workshops.

• SOILS presentation

Our friend Klaudia Van Gool, who has co-taught all the PDCs organized by SOILS in Lebanon suggested to do a presentation about SOILS and permaculture in Lebanon. At first I was nervous about public speaking (especially to a specialized audience) but after spending some days at the Convergence I became more at ease with the idea of speaking with Klaudia about how we founded SOILS, how we engage the community of Saidoun in SOILS activities, our agro-ecology workshops, etc. Around 20 people showed up, including *Alicia Grey* who works in **Palestine** and who offered further support and knowledge exchange, and *Starhawk* who works in California in a Mediterranean climate, and told me how well her medicinal herbs grow under the olive trees.

Field trip: a small group of us visited [Organiclea](#), an organic market garden. I arrived late so I missed most of the tour, but I got the chance to participate in the weeding of the rhubarb. I was happy to see how they separate the weeds in two buckets of different colors: weeds that propagate from stems and roots (like grasses and bindweed) are composted separately to achieve sterilization. I also enjoyed walking in their glass houses, and discovering their seed mix which has choir (coconut husk) instead of peat.

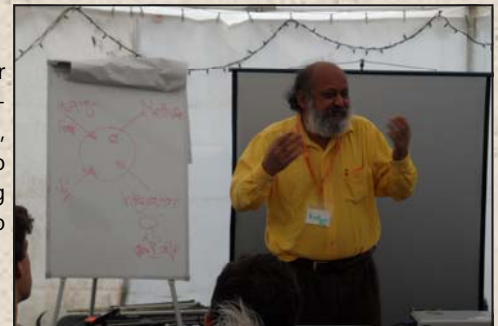
Regional networking: it was very nice to meet people from the Mediterranean region (eventhough we weren't many), namely *Murad Al Khufash* founder of [Marda Permaculture Farm](#) in **Palestine** (I was very touched by his ability to overcome the daily obstacles), *Salah Hammad* from **Permaculture Research Institute** in **Jordan** and **Australia**, *Kat Contrahueves* from **Cyprus** who works with permaculture for children, in addition to two people from **Greece** and **Turkey**.

It was indeed an incredible experience and I'm still slowly digesting what I acquired! Check out the presentations and videos from the Conference and Convergence [here](#).

Shared by Rita Khawand



Sarah Pugh



Ardhendu Chatterjee



Refugee work group with Rosemary Morrow



Rita and Klaudia: permaculture in Lebanon



Weeding rhubarb beds in Organiclea

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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 SHARE OUR NEWS

STORK LOVERS IN LEBANON AND POLAND JOIN EFFORTS

This summer, a Lebanese delegation led by the president of the environmental NGO **T.E.R.R.E. Liban**, **Paul Abi Rached**, was invited to **Poland** by the **Grupa Ecologiczna** association to help study the migratory routes of **storks**. Representatives from other environmental associations in Belarus, Spain and Poland were also present to help build a European-Asian-African network for the protection of storks through educational and awareness activities.

The Lebanese delegation also included our friend *Michel Sawan* who was the winner of a stork photography contest organized by T.E.R.R.E. Liban last spring. The competition was organized under the patronage of the Polish embassy in Lebanon, and with the support of the Green Area website and Consultants PAR company. "For me, Spring is my favorite season, Spring means new life, Spring means that the Storks are coming to visit the blue sky of Lebanon. Every time I heard a story about the Phoenix bird, I would think of these wonderful storks," *Michel wrote on the Green Area website.*

IN THE LAND OF THE STORK- - - - -

Poland includes **50,000 storks**, around **20% of the world's stork population**, according to local authorities. The delegates met the residents of the **Zivkovo** village who have a unique and beautiful relationship with storks. The residents believe that these birds bring luck and tourists - and also children, according to old legends. "They think of storks the same way we think of cedars in Lebanon. Killing a stork is like cutting down a cedar tree," wrote Michel. With the support of non-governmental organizations and European funds, villages in northern Poland, do everything they can to host storks. These villages rely on the birds to attract tourists and boost local economies so they can reduce displacement from the countryside. They mow the grass in fields, dig trenches for water, put up and maintain platforms for storks to build their nests, and even isolate high tension cables to guarantee the birds' safety. Storks have found a paradise on earth in this region that is rich in lakes and marshes, with more than 15,000 pairs of birds flocking in each year. "I got a closer view of how much such people consume time and energy just to protect these birds. I was amazed by the value they gave to this wonderful creature, and by their efforts to ensure a comfortable life for the symbol of their country," wrote Michel.

The participants began by identifying a group of 44 storks, distributed in 15 nests around the Zivkovo village, and set out to ring them in order to track their migratory routes. They learned about the birds' nesting and feeding habits, and the impact of their environment on their lives. They also got a clearer understanding of how close people are to the birds. They then discussed ideas to help stop the massacres of these birds in Lebanon, possibly by sending hunters to Poland so that they too might better understand it and develop a better appreciation of its importance. Michel even suggested a GPS Icom device linked to the storks' tracking rings. People living along the birds' migratory routes would be able to automatically access information about these birds and send updates to the ringing source.

SAFE PASSAGE FOR STORKS IN LEBANON- - - - -

Storks fly up to 4,000 km from Europe to Africa, passing through Lebanon. Those who understand its importance in preserving the balance of nature, see it as a sign of "good fortune", and many people in Europe think of this beautiful bird as a "migratory ambassador". Poland formally asked Lebanon to allow storks to cross the skies of Lebanon safely, in order to return to their nesting grounds and breed safely. Paul explained that Lebanon has a bad reputation because of some unethical hunters who shoot migratory storks and other birds, then publish their photos on their Facebook pages and social networking sites, in order to show off their skills! After a recent meeting with the **Polish Ambassador**, the **Lebanese Environment Minister** promised to follow up on this issue and on the issuance of the Environmental Public Prosecution Act to prosecute violators. The minister also proposed to establish awareness programs in protected areas such as **Bnashii** to educate the public on the importance of storks. Participating in this event gave Michel the resolve to take strong action next year and put more pressure on authorities to penalize unethical hunters who kill storks and other birds just for fun.

Reported by the Editorial Team

This story was covered on the Green Area website:

<http://www.greenarea.me/en/29156/poland-protects-migrant-ambassador-green-area-in-the-country-of-the-stork/>



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

GROWING, EATING AND SHARING ORGANIC PRODUCE

Back in 1994, Zeina and her family had started producing and selling natural olive oil at their family's olive press in Koura, North Lebanon. The quality of their product made their enterprise a success, and encouraged them to include more natural products (thyme, orange blossom water, kecheck, rose water, etc.). Our first business venture was simply called "Le Potager" (the vegetable garden).

ON PLANTING ORGANICALLY- - - - -

In 2011, we earned the organic label from the only certification organization in Lebanon, **Controllo e Certificazione Prodotti Biologici (CCPB)** [Editor's note: The CCPB merged with the Mediterranean Institute of Certification - IMC, which Lebanese consumers were more familiar with]. We added "Bio" to our name, and "**Le Potager Bio**" officially took off.

What mattered to us was going back to the earth and rediscovering our love for its bounty. Only people who grow their own food know the pleasure of coming home with natural vegetables they have grown and picked. Once you start eating naturally grown vegetables, it's impossible to go back to store-bought ones. Little by little, word spread around us and our friends and relatives became our first "customers". Rudy was interested in organic produce since we've known each other, and after we got married he began to get more involved in the business.

In 2014, we had to expand and rent an additional 50,000 m² land in **Aammiq**, in the Bekaa Valley. When we embarked on this new organic farming adventure, we knew there would be challenges in adopting an organic agriculture model. Organic farming was relatively new to us as well, and it requires a deep understanding of how the environment around us affects what we grow. Step by step, we began learning from our early mistakes and adjusting our techniques. Having a homogenous team was essential to our success. Luckily, we met one family of farmers in the Bekaa who was open to agriculture, and with them we were able to overcome many difficulties and gain precious allies.

"Organic" can mean different things to different people. But everyone agrees that it involves growing food without chemical additives or GMOs. We use goat manure as a natural fertilizer, and we also leave plant cuttings and stems in the ground to return nutrients to the soil. For now, most of our seeds are imported, but we are working on preserving seeds of species that perform well in our climate. To us, organic agriculture is grounded in respect for the land - both fauna and flora. It also means respect for the people who work the land sustainably and rationally. To bring more people closer to the land, we organize visits to our farm on weekends and allow visitors to pick their own food. When children touch the soil, smell it and taste its produce, they learn to respect and appreciate it more, and they will champion the environmental cause.

ON CONSUMING RESPONSIBLY- - - - -

Since we began growing vegetables 5 years ago, we have seen people in Lebanon become more aware of organic produce and pay more attention to their health and their family's. Demand has naturally evolved, which is why we are here today. This year, we bought the franchise for the French organic products label **La Vie Claire**, and opened 2 stores in Ashrafieh and Hazmieh. This was the next logical step for us to supplement our customers' demands for products not available in the local market. La Vie Claire has been a pioneer of organic products in France for more than 65 years. The story behind this franchise and its goals to empower small producers and suppliers were what attracted us to it, and we have effectively become part of the franchise's family of 400 collaborators (growers, suppliers, package designers, etc.). As small local producers ourselves (and also because it would not make any sense to import fresh organic produce) we are encouraged to sell our vegetables at our [2 La Vie Claire shops](#).

As Le Potager Bio, we work 6 days a week to deliver fresh organic vegetable baskets to our regular customers and subscribers, and also sell our products in a few organic produce stores.

Shared by Zeina and Rudy Khoury



Discover Le Potager Bio produce and other organic products at La Vie Claire:

- Achrafieh, Sassine Independence Street
- Hazmieh, Mar Takla, Al Saha

Follow us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/lavieclairlb/timeline>



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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



Michel Sawan's Photography

Ehden Reserve, Zgharta - North Lebanon

Photo by Michel Sawan

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

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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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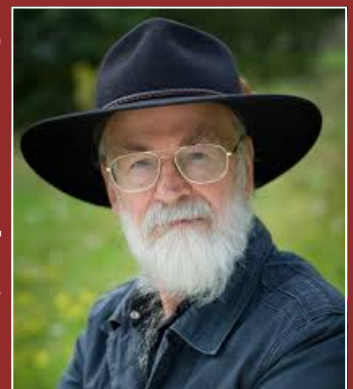
 SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon

 +961-71-617988

 twitter.com/SOILSLebanon

A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

"The phrase 'Someone ought to do something' was not, by itself, a helpful one. People who used it never added the rider 'and that someone is me'."



–Terry Pratchett (1948-2015)

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