



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

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## FEATURE STORY

### ONGOING WASTE SORTING AND A COMPOST STUDY UNDERWAY IN JEZZINE

Early this year we initiated a recycling pilot project in **Saidoun** and **8 other neighboring villages**, where we started collecting and sorting **non-organic recyclable items** (plastic, cardboard, glass, electronics, etc.) from around **250 households**.

As for the **organic waste**, we tried as much as possible to raise awareness on backyard composting, since most villagers have gardens. Around **10 houses** in Saidoun started composting during the pilot, and still do. I was very proud when at the end of the pilot one of the women who had started composting told me she had removed her first batch of mature compost and used it in her garden. Outside Saidoun, however, we didn't have much success with composting. People just didn't want to do it, and they always had a reason (lack of space, fear of foul odors, neighbors, etc).

When the pilot ended in March, the **Union of Jezzine Municipalities** accepted to help us cover the cost of the sorting center for 3 months. After the municipal elections, we contacted the new municipal councils and asked them for a small contribution as well. Unfortunately 3 municipalities dropped out of the project due to financial difficulties. It is heartbreaking to see people who had gotten into the habit of sorting stop, but there was no alternative.

This pilot prompted us to dig deeper into waste management on a more strategic level, especially when it comes to organic waste, which is more problematic to deal with, especially because there is so much of it. Once again we collaborated with **Mercy Corps** (under the **INTAJ** program funded by the **UK Department for International Development**) on a feasibility study for municipal composting in 3 areas: Jezzine, Upper and Middle Shouf. While in the Shouf we had to look at enhancing already existing facilities (in collaboration with the **Lebanese House Establishment for Environment**), in Jezzine we had to start from scratch - which might be even better. The aim of the study is to help the unions of municipalities get a clear picture of composting technologies, logistics, potential sites for the facilities, and budget needed to treat their organic waste efficiently.

We started the study in June and we should deliver the final report by end October. We hired **Craig Coker** from the US to guide us. Craig has over 30 years of experience in setting up...

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... composting facilities, and his input has been invaluable. We are also collaborating with *Antoine Abou Moussa*, co-founder of **Compost Baladi**, and we hope that this study will help Antoine conduct similar ones in other areas.

End of July Craig came to Lebanon for one week, during which we had the chance to meet the union presidents, visit potential sites in Jezzine and the existing facilities in the Shouf, and meet some municipalities to know more about their vision of waste management. He also conducted a presentation on composting to around 40 stakeholders (municipality representatives, NGOs, etc.) in the house of the **Shouf Biosphere Reserve** in **Maaser El Shouf**.

Also in July *Salim Kattar* joined the team to help us identify bulking agents (like prunings from trees, which can provide air to compost piles) and sources of carbon in the target areas. Salim teaches forestry at the **Lebanese University** and is from Jezzine initially.

So far, it seems we are going towards suggesting decentralized facilities in Jezzine, where each big town will collect and treat its own waste and that of its smaller neighbors, using low-tech and labor-intensive technology (e.g. passively aerated windrow piles).

Collecting most data from scratch was quite challenging, but we hope the study will be accurate enough to help stakeholders take responsibility for their own organic waste and treat it properly. Moreover, if sorting at source is implemented efficiently, the end-result compost will be of a good quality and can be potentially used to improve the soil in gardens or orchards. Lower grade compost can be used for erosion prevention or sediment control, for example.

Meanwhile, we are still running the sorting center in Saidoun. While we're proud that we've helped so far keep around **10 tons of recyclable material** out of dumps, managing the day-to-day logistics of the center has been energy depleting for us. So, we're hoping we can hand over the center and equipment to the Saidoun municipality in the near future, and encourage them to build a proper facility for both recyclables and organic waste on public land, as the current center is getting very crowded and the neighbors have started complaining.

What we learned so far from this experience is that, as SOILS, our aim shouldn't be to work directly in waste management for long periods but to conduct successful pilots or studies that can catalyze positive change and help other more specialized NGOs or companies run waste management projects.

*Shared by the Editorial Team*



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## LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

### THERE'S MORE TO THE BEE-EATER THAN MEETS THE EYE

**Bee-eaters** are among the most beautiful migratory birds that fly over Lebanon. 3 species of bee-eaters can be observed in the country: the **blue-cheeked bee-eater** (*Merops persicus*), the **green bee-eater** (*Merops orientalis*) and the **European bee-eater** (*Merops apiaster*). Their colors range from blue to bright green, with yellow or red coloring around the neck. Check out the **Birds of Lebanon and the Middle East website** by *Fouad Itani* for great photos. Sadly, these birds are growing increasingly scarce due to indiscriminate hunting and loss of habitat.

Bee-eaters feed primarily on insects, with a preference for bees (the genus name *Merops* is Ancient Greek for "bee-eater"), which they catch acrobatically in the air. They play an important **environmental role** by reducing the number of agricultural pests, hornets, wasps and "bee-wolves." They hunt in open plains and forests, but during the mating season they settle near beaches, lakes and rivers where they build tunnels up to three meters long to lay their eggs.

Although some local **beekeepers** consider them a nuisance, they are not a serious threat to bees because they only stay in Lebanon for a short period. In neighboring countries with warmer climates like Egypt, they stay for much longer periods and can be problematic. Lebanese beekeepers mistakenly believe that bees forage less nectar when bee-eaters are around, but studies in **Cyprus** (which has a similar climate) have disproved this: in fact, the birds' passage coincides with a period of low-nectar in flowers, hence bees barely forage anyway.

*Shared by AFIR Beekeeping and Nature Discovery Center, with Fouad Itani*



Blue-cheeked bee-eater.



Green bee-eater.

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## LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

### A SPIRITUAL LOVE STORY WITH PALO SANTO

**September 2011**, my first visit to **Peru**, I arrive at a jungle lodge, wooden bungalows and a humble beautiful setup. I enter the room and the first thing I sense as I am dropping my backpack is a scent. I look toward the bed and I see a wooden stick with a red ribbon. Immediately, my legs take me there to grab it, smell it and start asking...

They call it **Palo Santo** - the "Holy Wood" - and what a fitting name! The sticks come from the fallen branches of a tree with the same name, also known as *Bursera Graveolens*, which grows in specific coastal and inland areas of Ecuador, Peru and other South American countries.

The medicinal benefits of Palo Santo reside in the chemical process that happens after the death of a limb or a tree. In order for Palo Santo to gain its medicinal properties it must die, but not just any death: only the natural death of a wise old limb or tree. The tree lives for 80 to 90 years, and after its death, the wood must remain in its natural habitat for 4 to 10 years to complete its metamorphosis. Only then do its sacred, medicinal and mystical properties come alive.

So what are the medicinal effects of Palo Santo? Before I started reading about it, I used it; it was in my hands and I was so drawn by its soothing energy. I lit it the way I was told, and a true love story began. The scent took me to a calm and centered state. The energy of it brought lightness into my being and I was like, this is powerful stuff! Indeed.

I came back to Lebanon and after knowing that Palo Santo has been used for thousands of years by medicine men/women and healers, I started introducing it in my healing sessions. It is similar to cedar, sage, olive leaves and other herbs that our elders used in their houses and rituals.

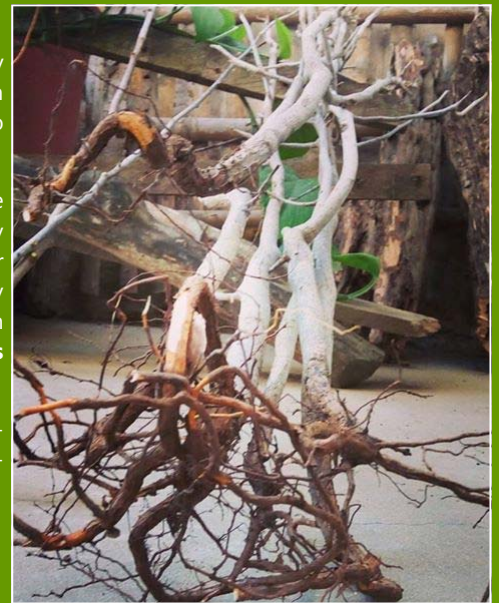
My clients loved it. They loved the smell, the lightness yet the grounding and centering that they felt in our sessions together. Some didn't like the smell at first but ended up falling in love with how it works; subtle, gentle yet so powerful. Increasingly, the healing properties of Palo Santo found their way into every aspect of my life and in people's life in Lebanon and around.

After 3 years of using Palo Santo, **Ascent** ([www.ascent.me](http://www.ascent.me), Facebook: [/ascentmedicine](https://www.facebook.com/ascentmedicine)) came into my existence in May of the year 2014. Palo Santo was Ascent's first baby and it led the way to more newbies including **smudge sticks** (sage, lavender, rosemary, etc.), **copal** and other natural healing incenses that I explore in my travels and that have been used in the old days by different cultures as part of their healing and ceremonial practices. Palo Santo is available in several selected places in Beirut and we also have a booth at **Souk El Tayeb-Beirut Souks** where we display most of Ascent's products too.

To date, I still find that Palo Santo is one of the truly great resins of Mother Earth. It has capacities in both physical and metaphysical realms and most of all, it has a lot to share and help anyone who is open to what it offers. Unconditionally!

In Love and Medicine.

Shared by Maya Abou Chedid



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### "DISCOVER HORSH BEIRUT WITH NAHNOO" PUBLIC WALK



**SEPTEMBER 17-18**  
5:00 - 6:30 p.m.

Horsh Beirut, Tayyouneh

Visit Beirut Park (Horsh Beirut) to discover its history, fauna and flora, and role in the community.

Free entrance

<http://www.lebtivity.com/event/discover-horsh-beirut-with-nahnoo>

### "HOME GROWN" URBAN GARDENING WORKSHOP



**SEPTEMBER 24, 2016**  
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

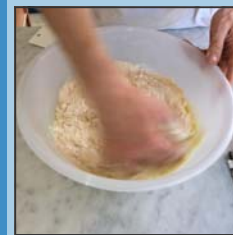
Sursock Museum, Ashrafieh

Learn to plant medicinal and herbal gardens in the city, and take a plant home with you.

Fee: \$15 per person

<http://www.lebtivity.com/event/workshop-home-grown-an-urban-gardening-workshop>

### "SOURDOUGH 101" BREAD-MAKING WORKSHOP



**OCTOBER 2, 2016**  
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Badawi, Al Nahr Street, Beirut

Learn to make naturally fermented bread at home using sourdough.

Fees: LBP 50,000 (includes lunch)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/563211870530685/>

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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](mailto:contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com)



*Common blue butterflies (Polyommatus icarus) gathering around water - Bcharre, North Lebanon*  
Photo by Wael Yammine

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## GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVED


**Do you enjoy reading this newsletter?**


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## A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

**"Autumn is a second  
spring when every leaf is a  
flower."**



**–Albert Camus (1913 – 1960)**

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