

# FIELD NOTES

Impact Report 2020



**HIGHLIGHTS**  
from 2020

New community  
garden  
Emergency  
seed appeal

*Upcycled parrot flower planter made from found objects including used tyres – Azadi Community Garden, Domiz 1 camp.*

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# A message from Stephanie Hunt

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**“As I reflect on what can only be described as a globally challenging year for everyone, I am grateful for and humbled by the continued support we have been able to provide for people who have been forcibly displaced. While Covid-19 has been a leveller in so many ways – we all learned to wear face masks and live separately from friends and loved ones, we endured food shortages and enforced lockdowns and made personal sacrifices we will remember for years to come – it also further highlighted the disparity and inequality that millions of people face every day. We found that amidst the obvious need for essential health care and food supplies, our friends and colleagues who are living in refugee and IDP (internally displaced people) camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), needed our gardening activities more than ever before.**

We pride ourselves on being a nimble and flexible organisation but our ability to pivot and adapt was really put to the test this year. One of the initiatives I am most proud of has been our emergency seed appeal – we asked our supporters to send us their surplus seed packets so that we may redistribute them to people in need of food and flowers during the pandemic. This sparked interest from people across the world, including the brilliant Erin Benzakein of Floret Farm in the USA who featured an interview with me on her blog in August 2020. The response to that post was incredible, with thousands of packets of seed sent to us over the course of the year, as well as some incredibly generous donations which allowed us to further expand our work.

Thank you to each and every person who has taken the time to send us their seeds and support our projects this year. We appreciate every letter and card we receive, which are filled with love and good wishes for the gardeners we work with. This gardener to gardener conversation we are nurturing together drives everything we do.”



**Stephanie Hunt, Founder & CEO  
Lemon Tree Trust**



“One thing that Covid-19 has highlighted is that gardening has no borders. We are all finding solace in our personal green space, wherever we are in the world.”



*Pictured: Gardener, Azadi Community Garden, Domiz 1 camp.*



# Spotlight on Bersive 1 community garden

During September to December, with funding from Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust in the UK, we created an area of green space at the SEED Foundation community centre in Bersive 1 camp in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

SEED Foundation's mission is well-aligned with our work of empowering women and improving mental health through access to gardening initiatives. The centre welcomes women, men and families who are recovering from trauma to spend time tending a garden, planting seeds and re-connecting with nature. The centre was desperate for a safe, joyful place where children could play while their parents received support, and somewhere to learn about and appreciate nature.



## BREAKING GROUND

We kicked off the project by asking people using the SEED Foundation centre about their gardening experience, their favourite plants and flowers, and what they would like to see in the garden. All wanted a mixture of food and flowers to be planted and the majority wanted the play area to be repaired.

We made several visits to the centre to prepare the garden and repair the playground. Fun novelty planters were created to encourage children to help tend the garden and colourful elements were planned through to provide some joy for those passing and using the space.

## Changes included:

- Repositioning the slide on the climbing frame to give children more room to play, as well as repairing and repainting the play equipment
- Adding a trampoline to the playground, plus foam flooring and artificial grass to provide a colourful and safe play area for children
- Building raised bed planters, filled with compost ready for use, and planting our herbal tea ingredients in the teacups to be harvested by people at the centre
- Preparing the ground for tree planting along the fence and planting an archway at the entrance to welcome visitors
- Installing a whimsical water fountain next to the seating area to provide soothing sounds in the garden

## SEED SOWING SESSIONS AT THE SEED FOUNDATION GARDEN GROUND

### Children's seed sowing:

We ran group seed planting sessions for boys and girls using the centre. They were each given part of a planter to care for and shown how to plant the seeds and water them in. Beginning with cress and other micro salads, which germinate quickly and can be easily harvested, gave the children swift results and satisfaction.

### Women's seed sowing:

Seed sowing sessions have also taken place for groups of women who are tending the raised beds. Each person has been allocated a section of a bed, with radish, parsley, rocket, broad beans and spring onion seeds gifted as first crops. The gardeners have enjoyed visiting their beds regularly to water and tend the plants.

### Next steps at the SEED Foundation community centre

We will continue to provide gardening support and instruction for the community in Bersive 1 camp and to oversee the maintenance of the garden, as well as run further gardening sessions. The creation of the garden here has also enabled us to introduce our 'Garden of the Month' initiative, which celebrates home gardens, and we plan to include the camp in our annual garden competition in 2021.





# Key projects:

The Covid-19 pandemic does not discriminate and globally we are all feeling its effects. Refugee and IDP camps are very densely populated with virtually no parks or public green space. As well as keeping our community gardens up and running one of our goals is our focus on home gardens, which continues to be more important than ever.

## Public health and safety

We worked closely with our team to regularly monitor the situation and look for ways to safely continue to celebrate and encourage home gardening in our communities. We quickly changed our working practices in line with government advice and helped to educate residents about the urgent need to stay home, practice social distancing and good hygiene by creating information leaflets and posters in Arabic. These were circulated throughout the camps in which we work and shared in our WhatsApp and Facebook gardening groups.



## Seed distribution in camps

Demand for seed and plants in camps in the KRI significantly increased while all camps were closed to help combat the outbreak of Covid-19 in the region. Thousands of people lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic and food shortages were widely experienced in most camps. We distributed food and flower seeds to people who were coping with government enforced curfews and self-isolation at their shelters.



## Azadi community garden

The garden in Domiz 1 camp remained open during the pandemic, with social distancing measures and PPE in use. Individuals who were growing essential food could continue with their efforts and distribute harvested produce to vulnerable families so that it did not go to waste.

## Emergency seed appeal

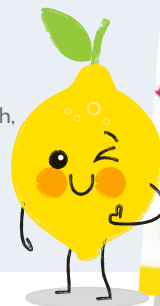
We invited gardeners around the world to donate packets of seed to us for redistribution and were moved by people's generosity upon receiving thousands of seed packets. We made connections with gardening projects and organisations in the USA and UK that support refugees and asylum seekers and redistributed seed to them.

One such organisation was the Comfrey Project in Gateshead, UK. They included our seed packets in their monthly wellbeing parcels sent out to members.



## Family gardening activity sheets

To help keep families busy at home, we created a library of children's activities in partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society in the UK. Resources include 'Lenny Lemon' gardening activities and a time capsule booklet, available in English, Arabic and Farsi. They are free to download on our website so that more people, wherever they are in the world, can join in and enjoy gardening together.



## Annual garden competitions moved online

Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to run our annual garden competitions in the usual format. So, rather than cancelling the competitions altogether, we launched a 'virtual' competition where we invited residents in seven refugee and IDP camps to share photographs of their plants and home garden spaces via WhatsApp and Facebook groups. Our garden facilitators in each camp selected a winner each week to celebrate people's gardening efforts. We set up Flickr galleries so that people around the world could also 'virtually' enjoy the beautiful pots, containers, flower beds, herbs and food being grown across the KRI.



## Garden of the Month award continued and expanded to new camps

Through the new community garden we created in partnership with SEED Foundation in Bersive 1 camp, we have been able to introduce further gardening initiatives to the wider camp population, which is a mixed community of Yazidi and Muslim faiths. Since September 2020, we have awarded a Garden of the Month prize to a gardener in Bersive 1 camp – this camp joins the six other camps in which we award a monthly prize.



## Ridgecrest community garden

We continued to maintain our community garden in Vickery Meadow, Dallas, Texas, USA. This thriving garden is used by resettled refugees. The gardeners, all US citizens now but originally from Bhutan, Burma, South Sudan and other countries, grow native plants from their beloved homes, along with classic Dallas favourites.



# Our impact in 2020



## Special thanks

Our sincere thanks go to everyone who supported us in 2020 and continues to champion our work. There are a few wonderful people and organisations we would like to extend a special thanks to:

- 🇬🇧 Zena Alkayat at Bloom magazine
- 🇬🇧 Linda Combi
- 🇬🇧 Mr Fothergill's Seeds
- 🇬🇧 Annie Guilfoyle and Noel Kingsbury at Garden Masterclass
- 🇬🇧 Andrew O'Brien at Gardens, Weeds & Words
- 🇬🇧 Harris Bugg Studio
- 🇬🇧 Bridget Elworthy and Henrietta Courtauld at The Land Gardeners
- 🇬🇧 Anna Greenland
- 🇬🇧 Leafy Couture and Casey Orr
- 🇬🇧 Tom Massey
- 🇬🇧 Iliane Ogilvie Thompson
- 🇬🇧 Plants For My Garden
- 🇬🇧 Prism the Gift Fund
- 🇬🇧 Royal Horticultural Society
- 🇬🇧 Lalage Snow
- 🇬🇧 Lucy Hutchings at She Grows Veg
- 🇬🇧 Network for Social Change, with particular thanks to Anne Robbins
- 🇬🇧 Sustainable Food Trust
- 🇬🇧 Britt Willoughby Dyer
- 🇬🇧 Where the Leaves Fall magazine
- 🇨🇦 CAF Canada
- 🇩🇪 Michael Michaud Jewellery
- 🇮🇪 Anna Rósa Skin Care
- 🇬🇧 Olivia Cuthbert at The National
- 🇬🇪 Jameel Arts Centre Dubai and the Down to Earth festival team
- 🇺🇸 The Dallas Foundation
- 🇺🇸 Floret Flower Farm team, with particular thanks to Erin Benzakein, Becky Crowley, Jill Jorgensen, Angela Strand and Nikki Boyce
- 🇺🇸 Michelle Woo
- 🇺🇸 National Philanthropic Trust
- 🇺🇸 Communities Foundation of Texas
- 🇪🇺 Herbes Folles
- 🇸🇪 SEED Foundation

## Looking forward

We are ambitious and hopeful for the future of Lemon Tree Trust. The pandemic has given us a renewed sense of purpose and confidence in our approach of keeping things simple. Gardening brings people pleasure – we don't need to ask why or how, we just need to give as many people as possible the tools to garden at home and as communities wherever they are in the world. In 2021 and beyond, we will remain focused on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, bringing our popular garden competitions and awards to more camps and communities, and working with like-minded organisations in the region to create community gardens to bring people together. And we will continue to look for new ways to distribute seeds and resources to people everywhere and seek out ways to bring gardening to forcibly displaced people in Europe and beyond.



*Pictured: Azadi Community Garden, Domiz 1 camp.*

## What we do

We support gardening initiatives in refugee camps and communities of people forcibly displaced by war and persecution as a way to restore dignity, purpose, and cultural identity. We help bring people together through the provision of seeds and plants,

garden competitions, and education projects.

**To find out more and to support our work:**  
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[www.lemontreetrust.org](http://www.lemontreetrust.org)



In the UK, the Lemon Tree Trust is a restricted fund under the auspices of Prism the Gift Fund, registered charity 1099682.

In the USA, all contributions to the Lemon Tree Trust Fund will be received, receipted and under control of Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organisation.