

LEMON TREE TRUST

FIELD NOTES

No.7

Impact Report 2021



HIGHLIGHTS
from 2021

Annual Garden
Competitions
New community
garden

Pictured: A pair of butterflies taking a short pause in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

A message from Stephanie Hunt

“When we first suggested a garden competition to the camp manager of Domiz 1 in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, back in 2015, we could never have hoped for such a legacy of gardens, communities and friendships. With just 50 entries in our first year, this much-anticipated, annual event attracted over 2,000 garden entries in a record nine camps this year. Read more inside and take a look at the winning gardens on our social media channels – they are inspiring and humbling in equal measure and continue to be the heartbeat of our organisation.



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

We were particularly proud this year to have been able to work with SEED Foundation on another trauma centre garden, this time in Bardarash refugee camp, which has so often been featured in news of the ongoing Syrian conflict. This camp is inhospitable – harshly exposed, so freezing in winter and far too hot for comfort in summer. Despite efforts by UNHCR to rehome people to other areas, the camp still houses a few thousand people and we have been trying to establish gardening activities here since 2019. The new LTT community garden is due to be completed in early 2022 and we’re all looking forward to seeing its impact on the residents of Bardarash.

It is testament to the simple power of gardens and gardening that news of our work continues to spread far and wide. I must thank each and every one of our supporters for their donations of seeds, time and money, which all help us to bring seeds, plants, hope and dignity to thousands of people living in difficult conditions having been forced to flee their homes.

My personal thanks this year goes to Annette Jennings of Mars, who, inspired by stories of gardeners living in refugee and IDP camps, suggested Lemon Tree Trust might be the recipient of Mars employee volunteering time. We worked with Annette on an innovative remote volunteering project, which has helped us shape a virtual ‘gardener to gardener’ network that we hope to develop further as we continue to grow as an organisation. Annette is herself a gardener, tending a wonderful home flower farm when she isn’t coordinating Mars community impact projects across the globe. Flowers really do bring us together, in so many inspiring ways, and I am grateful for them every day.”



“Planting and nurturing a home garden is the act of growing hope and beauty for tomorrow.”

Pictured: A beautiful home garden in Domiz 2 camp.

Where we work

For displaced people globally, the simple act of gardening is a powerful therapeutic tool, addressing issues of isolation and mental health, producing beauty, belonging, food security, and promising economic stimulation.

Since 2015, Lemon Tree Trust has supported gardening initiatives in refugee and other forced migration communities to empower people from the ground up. We predominantly work in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), which has provided refuge for an estimated 2 million people who have been forced to flee their home towns and countries since 2011.

Our focus is on bringing people together by providing seeds and plants, supporting home and community gardens and running garden competitions and education projects. Our activities are focussed on four main impact areas:

1. Improving mental health and wellbeing
2. Community building and women's empowerment
3. Improving local environments
4. Independent access to fresh food

Our long-term vision is to bring gardens and gardening initiatives to every refugee camp and community of forced migrants in the world.



Spotlight on: Annual Garden Competitions



Winners of the LTT Garden Competitions 2021 receive their certificates and prize money in camps.

Our annual garden competitions reached a record number of people in 2021.

Despite ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, our competitions took place in nine camps across the KRI (two more camps than last year) and we awarded 72 winning gardens. Winners were presented with cash prizes and gifts of seeds and plants, and all participants received certificates.

We have been running garden competitions in camps since 2016. In our first year, we received just 50 entries in Domiz 1 camp but since then, thousands of gardens have been created across the region, many thanks to our regular seed, plant and tree distributions.

In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our competitions moved online with promising results. This year we successfully trialled a hybrid of virtual and in-person competitions.

Garden competitions help us connect with people living in displaced communities. Our camp teams choose the winning gardens, awarding prizes across a range of garden types. Growing conditions in camps can be limited and often harsh, but people are creative and resourceful, repurposing containers for growing vertically and using all available space. We encourage people to swap seeds and cuttings with neighbours to increase the diversity of plants grown in camps.

Our competitions are coordinated by Aveen Ibrahim, LTT Operations Manager, who lives in Domiz 1 camp with her family. She manages a team of camp coordinators across the region who distribute seeds and plants and encourage people to create home and community gardens.

Aveen (pictured below) says: "Our competitions bring people joy and this is what makes them so successful. Life in a camp can be difficult. We are all living with memories of the past and overcoming traumatic experiences and over the past 18 months many people have lost their jobs. We encourage people to create home gardens, and support them to grow plants that remind them of home as they create a new life here. By growing trees and plants here, we are putting down roots and growing new homes for ourselves and our families."



Key projects:

Garden of the Month award

Our 'Garden of the Month' award showcases the innovation and creativity of displaced gardeners throughout the year and remains popular with residents of the camps in which we work. This year, we have introduced the monthly award to Bersive 2 camp, bringing the initiative to a total of nine refugee and IDP camps across the KRI.

In each camp, we look for creative flair, a passion for gardening, innovative planting ideas and a commitment to filling the available space with plants. Each winner receives seeds and a fruit tree, as well as a special plaque that can be displayed at their home shelter. A temporary sign is also displayed in the current month's winning garden for anyone passing to see.



Seed distribution and resources

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and their donations of flower, vegetable, herb and fruit seed, we were able to distribute thousands of seed packets to refugee garden projects in the UK.

With the help of O's Refugee Aid Team, as they followed Walk With Amal, we were also able to distribute seed to displaced people in Dunkirk, France. Onjali Rauf, founder and director of O's Refugee Aid Team, said: "It was such joy to see kids' faces light up – and have them running back to us for more seeds."

Further children's gardening activity sheets, supported by the Royal Horticultural Society, were made available in English, Arabic and Farsi, to help families in all parts of the world enjoy the therapeutic benefits of gardening.



New community garden in Bardarash camp

We have designed and are currently building a new community garden in Bardarash camp in the Duhok governorate of the KRI, in partnership with SEED Foundation, following last year's successful pilot in Bersive 1 camp.

Well aligned with our own mission and values, SEED Foundation does important work helping people to heal from trauma, cope with displacement, and start to rebuild their future. The organisation provides a range of mental health and psychosocial support services, and takes a holistic care approach – gardening and being in nature can play a significant role in the healing process.

The community garden will be a space for SEED centre clients and Bardarash camp residents to enjoy every day – Bardarash is home to more than 3,500 people, predominantly displaced from Syria.

Designed by Hamid Abdullah, LTT's horticulture and landscape consultant in the region, the new space will offer a formal garden with a lawn area. Along with the environmental benefits, the green will be a welcome burst of colour in what is a largely grey landscape. The garden will be finished in early 2022, so it won't be too long before people can start enjoying the space.



Garden activity sessions in Bersive 1 camp

We continued to run regular gardening activity sessions at the LTT x SEED Foundation centre, to help adults and children living in Bersive 1 camp grow herbs and vegetables.

During these informal gardening workshops, we explain the importance of healthy soil to ensure seeds are given the best start in life and talk through how to nurture plants from seedling to maturity.

Individuals were given part of a planter to care for and shown how to plant the seeds and water them in. Adults were given vegetable and herb seeds, and children were given cress and other micro salads, which germinate quickly and are therefore easily harvested, giving the children swift results and satisfaction.

Azadi community garden developments in Domiz 1 camp

Our flagship Azadi community garden has continued to go from strength to strength, and while Covid-19 health and safety precautions have continued, our gardeners have been busy throughout the seasons tending their beds and harvesting fresh produce.

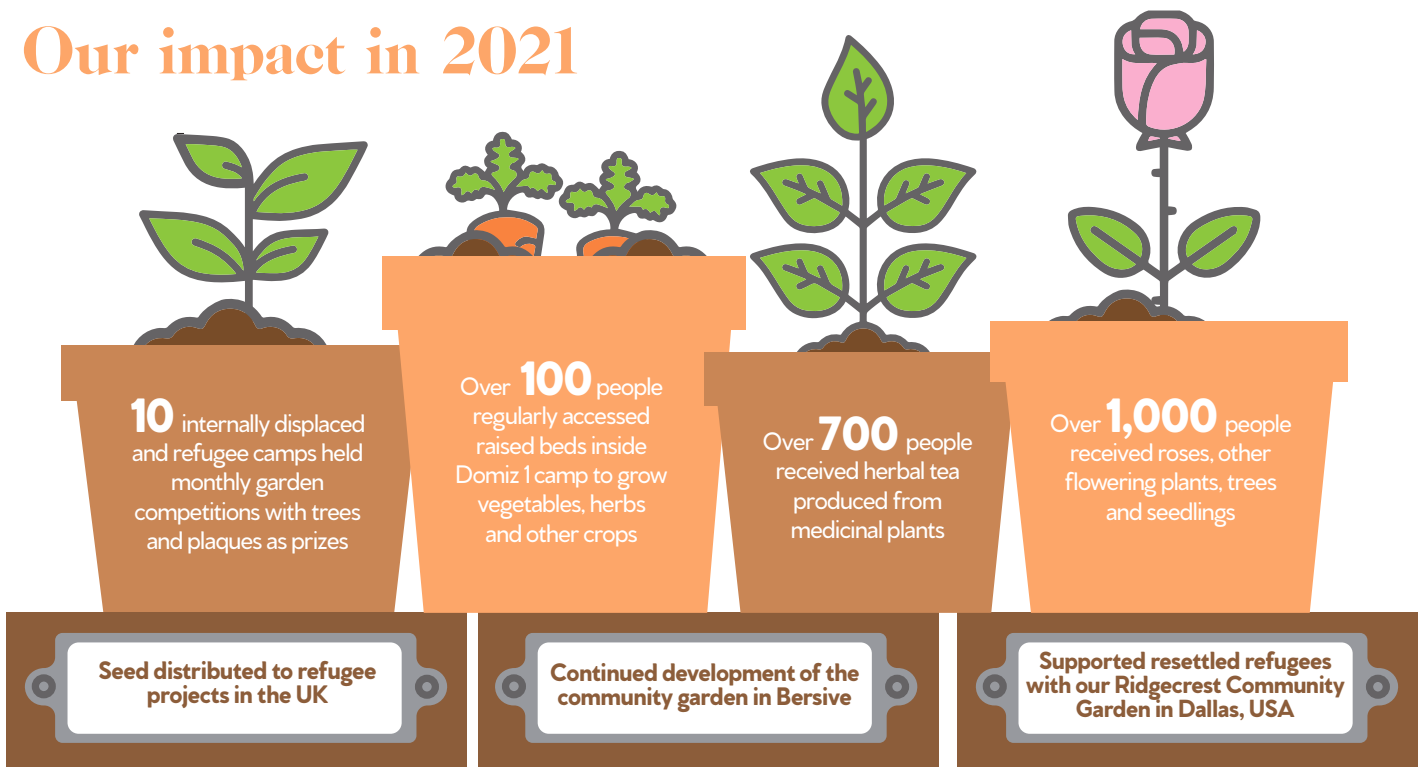
We have created a new Friendship Lounge with comfy seats and a gorgeous view over the garden to take morning tea and afternoon

coffee, and to pause for a moment and reflect, or catch up with friends in style. This area is also now available for other organisations working in Domiz 1 to gather for meetings – a collaborative space for all camp residents to enjoy.

We also installed a new bread oven in Azadi with shade for more comfortable baking whatever the weather. Residents can use the oven whenever they want and in addition to baking for their own families, they make extra bread to distribute to vulnerable families in the camp.



Our impact in 2021



Looking forward

As we head into 2022, we hope the effects of the global pandemic will continue to recede and that we will be given the opportunity to further enhance and expand our gardening initiatives in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. We have plans to expand our work in Bardarash camp, building on the success of our community garden collaboration with SEED Foundation, and we would like to add another camp to our annual garden competitions in the region. Furthermore, we are working on plans to collaborate with O's Refugee Aid Team and other partners in Northern France to relocate our 2018 RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden to a refugee project in Calais. We will continue to seek partnerships with organisations in the UK and USA who are using gardening to support people who have been forcibly displaced, offering seeds and activities for families rebuilding their lives. And we will continue to raise awareness of and fundraise for our garden based projects so that we might reach more people and inspire more growing. Together we are creating a global community, one garden at a time.

Pictured: Girls in Harsham camp take delicate flower bouquets home to their families.



Special thanks

Our sincere thanks go to everyone who supported us in 2021 and continues to champion our work. There are a few wonderful people and organisations we would like to extend a special thanks to:

- Bristol Refugee Festival
- The Communities Foundation of Texas
- Linda Combi
- The Floralistas
- FLORXLzine
- Flowers by Cosmos
- Annie Guilfoyle and Noel Kingsbury at Garden Masterclass
- The Gardeners Cottage
- Emily Garthwaite
- Geraldine R Dodge Foundation
- Grace Alexander Flowers
- Herbes Folles
- Kirriemuir Seed Gathering / Sustainable Kirriemuir
- Kulsum Karolia
- Maram Moushoush
- MARS, Inc
- Nutleys Garden Centres
- Onjali Rauf & O's Refugee Aid Team
- Prism the Gift Fund
- Royal Horticultural Society
- Sabbara Syria
- SEED Foundation, Kurdistan Region of Iraq
- Sue Stuart Smith
- Britt Willoughby Dyer
- Young Propagators Society

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:
info@lemontreetrust.org • +1(214) 978 6559
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.

