



Special Online Event for Lemon Tree Trust Supporters – 2 December 2024

Your Questions Answered

Azadî Community Garden in Domiz 1 camp

1). How do you manage water?

We have a water supply at the garden via a borewell. Irrigation pipes distribute water to the 100 raised beds in the extended Azadî garden.

We pay close attention to water usage to minimise waste. During the winter season, not much water is needed to irrigate the plants. However, in the summer, when temperatures can reach 45°C, we need to take extra care.

2). What plants and crops are people growing?

Gardeners grow crops they traditionally cultivated in their homeland of Syria – ingredients essential to their everyday lives. Since the climate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is very similar to Syria's, it is relatively easy to grow the same crops. Currently, they are growing and harvesting radishes, watercress, onions, garlic, chard, spinach, garden cress, parsley, coriander and lettuce.

3). Are the rabbits pets or food?

A little of both. The children enjoy seeing and petting the rabbits but they are also for food once they are fully grown. Rabbit is a popular ingredient in Syrian cooking.

4). Is there a waiting list at the garden?

Yes, there is always a significant waiting list for the raised garden beds. We have 100 beds at Azadî, serving a population of 32,000 people in Domiz 1 camp.

We prioritise those most in need, such as vulnerable families, widows, or families with disabilities. Once a family becomes self-sufficient, they may give up their garden bed, which



can then be reallocated. If a bed is not being properly maintained (a rare occurrence), it may also be reassigned.

Most people allocated a garden bed use it for a long time. To help more families, we aim to expand our gardening and outreach activities across different neighbourhoods in Domiz 1.

Additionally, excess produce and bread from the garden are distributed to families in the camp who do not currently have access to the Azadî Community Garden.

Hêvî Community Garden in Gawilan camp

5). Have you seen pollinators in your wildflower beds already?

We haven't yet planted the raised garden beds in Hêvî. However, we know there are many pollinators attracted to Azadî, where there is abundant growth, so we expect the same for Hêvî. In addition to the raised beds, we plan to sow wildflower seeds in February or March next year and we're confident the pollinators will thrive there.

6). Will you make your own compost?

Yes, we plan to make our own compost. For the new raised beds, we've received a supply of animal manure (cow and goat manure). The older the manure, the better! We will mix it with topsoil and add it to the raised garden beds to give our gardeners the best possible start for growing their own produce.

7). May we visit again in another year's time?

Yes, of course! We'd be delighted to show you around the garden in a few months, once the gardening beds have been planted and everything is more established. It won't be long before the garden is looking green and lush!

Other Questions

8). Are there any areas where people who are living in the camps can get out into nature?

Yes, there is beautiful nature and stunning landscapes surrounding many of the camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where people can go for picnics and spend time outdoors. (Picnicking on Fridays is a popular Kurdish tradition.)



Inside the camp, for special occasions like Newroz (the Kurdish New Year in March, marking the first day of spring), we celebrate at Azadî with food, music, dancing and lighting a torch.

9). What about Christmas and New Year in December – are they celebrated?

Even though we don't have an international community here, we do celebrate in Azadî. We put up a big Christmas tree in the centre of the garden and there's a Santa Claus who presents small gifts to our gardeners.

10). Are there any special Iraqi or Syrian foods and beverages enjoyed to celebrate New Year?

People typically enjoy cake, sweets and fruit and juices. People enjoy getting together with family and friends for treats and meals, as well as giving gifts that symbolise love and good wishes for the year ahead. Some people prefer hosting parties and cooking at home, while others celebrate with friends at restaurants or cafes.

11). How can we donate guaranteed virus free seed? Is it by financial donation?

Yes, that's correct. Donations can be made via [JustGiving](#). Other ways to donate are listed, [here](#).

12). For the people who do not have access to the community garden, how do they cook their breakfast, lunch and dinner?

People have basic kitchens in their home shelters where they can prepare meals. However, they don't have bread ovens in their shelters, which is why we provide these in our community gardens. Baking bread is central to Syrian culture.

13). Can people go to Iraq and Syria now? Or are there travel warnings?

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where many of our projects are based, is generally safer and more stable than other parts of Iraq.

Much of Syria remains unsafe due to ongoing conflict, instability and security concerns.



14). How do you access the library there? Can you digitally access the national library of Syria or Iraq?

In Domiz 1 and Gawilan camps, access to libraries is typically provided through community initiatives or educational programmes. These libraries are often modest, with resources donated by organisations or individuals. And, of course, with a stable internet connection, resources can be accessed online.

15). Do the people in Syria or Iraq cook food with figs leaves as a food wrapper?

Yes, people do! They are called dolma, which are parcels of fig or grape leaves stuffed with rice, vegetables and sometimes meat.

16). Does gardening and cooking in the camp inspire Iraqi and Syrian members to grow plants from other regions or countries?

Yes, they cultivate a variety of plants, particularly those useful for provisions and food storage, such as okra and molokhia for drying, and peppers and cucumbers for pickling. Aveen has personally tried growing broccoli and parsley and found success with them.

17). Are people interested in cooking dishes that are not traditional Iraqi or Syrian cuisine, such as Japanese, Korean, Chinese, American or Italian?

Yes, people enjoy experimenting with international cuisines. Chinese, Italian and American are popular, including pasta, hamburgers, pizza and various sweets. Some also prepare foreign drinks and desserts using recipes found online. Sushi has become popular as well.

18). Tell us about your living arrangements?

There is a significant difference between the initial conditions when the camps were established and now.

Aveen says:

“In Domiz 1, at the beginning, people lived in tented shelters and couldn’t do much with them. Now, a few years later, people can build homes with whatever financial means they have. The situation is much better than it was initially.



However, people here still feel broken because they have lost so much – family members, friends and everything they loved. Gardening helps in the healing process. If people cannot grow in the community garden, we provide seeds and plants so they can grow at home.”

Othman says:

“We didn’t leave Syria by choice – it was something we had to do. Behind every family, there will be a story. We all left our homeland, we left our relatives, we left our culture, our belongings.

My family came from agricultural and green land in Kobani in Syria, to the dry, arid landscape of Gawilan camp, which felt like the Sahara Desert. It was a huge contrast.

When we arrived in Gawilan, Lemon Tree Trust offered a helping hand. We could see how we could transform the desert landscape in a greener space and how we could all benefit from gardening.

During the last seven years, I have been working with Lemon Tree Trust and we have distributed more than 7,000 trees across the camp. So now the camp looks like a semi-forest region, rather than a desert region.

Despite these improvements, we are still refugees, living in small homes with just two rooms, raising our children and working hard to maintain some sort of normal life.”