



Growing Hope Together

An update from Lemon Tree Trust

June 2025

www.lemontreetrust.org | info@lemontreetrust.org

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Thank you for believing in the power of gardens & community

The first six months of 2025 have been transformational for the gardening projects we support, especially the Hêvî Community Garden in Gawilan refugee camp in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which we're excited to spotlight in this update.

Thanks to your continued support, we've seen remarkable growth, new infrastructure and deeper community connection take root in Hêvî, while our other gardening projects continue to flourish.

With warm wishes,



Jennie

Communications & Operations Lead
Lemon Tree Trust



Hêvî Community Garden

Major expansion

Spring 2025

- **40 new raised growing beds** constructed and assigned to beneficiaries, in addition to the 52 beds established in 2024 (a 77% increase in growing beds).
- **More families engaged in fresh food production** and community building from the Gawilan community, many of whom are displaced from the Syrian cities of Al Hasakah and Aleppo.
- **Around 600kg of fresh produce** is being harvested monthly, with this set to increase as the new growing beds become more established – green beans, courgettes, okra, molokhia, radishes, peppers, tomatoes, corn and summer greens are all in abundance.







Daily bread making at the Hêvî bakery house

The Hêvî bakery house, with two traditional tannour ovens, is now in daily use. Women gather to bake khubz (Syrian flatbreads) that they are unable to prepare in their home shelters due to lack of space and facilities.

Bread making provides more than sustenance; it holds cultural significance and offers an opportunity to strengthen social ties and build community.

The atmosphere is lively and welcoming, full of conversation as women chat and expertly shape the dough.

The smell of fresh bread drifting through the garden adds to the sense of familiarity. Extra loaves are regularly shared with vulnerable families in the camp.



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Infrastructure improvements

This spring, several upgrades improved both function and atmosphere. **A new water system**, with raised tanks and better pipe connections ensures more reliable irrigation.

Projector lighting now enables gardening during cooler evening hours, vital for families balancing childcare and the intense summer heat.

New walkways connect key areas, improving accessibility for all ages and abilities.

Beautification continues with **repainted benches, new trees and flowerbeds** by the bakery house, creating a welcoming space where the community feels proud to grow and connect.





Community building & events

In March, the garden hosted an event to mark International Women's Day, celebrating the vital role women play in the project and gathering ideas for future activities. Topics discussed included composting, natural pest control, water efficient gardening and pollinator friendly planting.

Each participant received a small gift bag with a rose and scarf, and the Lemon Tree Trust team continues to prioritise women's leadership in the garden.

We also welcomed visits from NGO partners, educators and local authorities, strengthening relationships and opening doors for future collaboration.





Springtime in the garden: a short film



This short film was created by the LTT team in Gawilan in March 2025.

You can view it on our YouTube Channel here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuwe0UhdFY0>

Thank you to Ronak Othman for this film.



Summer developments

To address the challenges of regular 45°C summer temperatures in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, we're currently working on:

- **Shaded resting area** – a shaded, canopied space with benches, nestled within the raised beds, where women can take tea together and share seeds, gardening tips and stories.
- **Polytunnel** to protect seedlings, introduce drip irrigation and boost crop production all year round.
- **Tea and light snacks** during gardening sessions to nourish bodies and create moments for connection, while also encouraging the younger generation of gardeners who regularly accompany their mothers.

And we're grateful to our friends at UNHCR in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for a generous donation of equipment they no longer require. More on that in our next update!



What's next for Hêvi ...

With additional funding, we would like to introduce the following features that have been requested by the community:

- **Wildflower meadow**, supporting pollinators and creating a welcoming, biodiverse space.
- **Community orchard**, offering fresh fruit as perennial food sources and shade.
- **Children's play area**, providing a safe, designated space for young children to have fun with their friends.

These additions will help enhance wellbeing, increase environmental resilience and ensure that the garden continues to meet a wide range of community needs.

If you are interested in helping us realise these additions, we welcome both one-off and monthly donations. Thank you.





LTT herbal tea

Our gardeners in **Azadī Community Garden** in Domiz 1 camp continue to grow, harvest, dry and blend ingredients for our herbal tea.

Sidra Tea Blend is a mix of damask rose petals, lemon balm, rosemary, lavender, santolina and mint. Each packet of tea reflects the hard work and skills of the community gardeners who produce it.

Here's how you can make Sidra tea at home:

Ingredients:

Equal parts damask rose petals, lemon balm and rosemary, with a small amount of lavender, santolina and mint.

Method:

- Add freshly picked leaves and petals to water and bring to the boil.
- Simmer for 5 minutes.
- Strain the tea, let it cool slightly and enjoy.
- For dried ingredients, steep them for 5 minutes before boiling.





Ongoing programmes

While new developments at Hêvî move forward, core LTT programmes remain active:

- **LTT annual garden and cooking competitions** foster engagement and connection in our communities. The garden competition winners will be announced in September, with the cooking competition taking place in October.
- Our **flagship community garden, Azadî**, in Domiz 1 camp, is operating smoothly with continued harvests and participation.
- **Garden of the Month awards** offer year-round recognition of home gardens, effort and creativity.
- **Seed, plant and tree distribution** to support household gardens and green neighbourhoods.

These initiatives remain central to our mission of improving wellbeing, food access, learning and community building.





Thank you

Together we are bringing beauty, dignity and opportunity to communities left ravaged by the effects of war.

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