

GREENING REFUGEE AND IDP CAMPS, ONE GARDEN AT A TIME



LEMON TREE TRUST
IMPACT 2024



A NOTE FROM OUR FOUNDER

STEPHANIE HUNT

In 2024, we have again witnessed the powerful impact that gardening can have on displaced families, particularly through the creation of the new Hêvî Community Garden in Gawilan refugee camp, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Over 50 raised gardening beds have been built so far and sown with a variety of vegetable and herb seeds. A personal highlight for me this year has been seeing the first tender green shoots of radishes, spinach, onions, lettuce and parsley. Though the garden is still very much in its early stages, these crops represent the promise of fresh food and renewed purpose for those tending them.

Our bakery house, with its two traditional tannour bread ovens, has become a space of connection and shared tradition, where women gather to bake Syrian flatbreads,

exchange stories and create something meaningful together.

Beyond Hêvî, one of the highlights of 2024 for me personally has been seeing the ongoing success of our annual garden and cooking competitions. The vibrant colours of the gardens, the variety of herbs and vegetables grown, and the way they were transformed into mouth-watering meals, alongside the joy and pride of families celebrating their achievements, were truly inspiring. Sharing tea, cake and gardening stories at the award celebrations reminds us that

these gardens are not just about food, but about connection, pride and hope.

As we reflect on 2024, we are profoundly grateful for the unwavering support we have received from our donors, partners and supporters. Your generosity makes it possible for us to continue creating spaces where displaced people can reconnect with the earth, rebuild their lives and find hope once again.

Together, we are not just growing food, we are growing futures. Thank you for being a part of this journey.

OUR STRATEGY

Our 2024-2027 strategy is centred around the following pillars:

1. CREATE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE PEOPLE, GARDENING AND NATURE CAN THRIVE
2. INSPIRE AND SUPPORT PEOPLE IN TO GARDEN
3. COLLABORATE WITH PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS TO DELIVER THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
4. GROW THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WE HELP



THE THERAPEUTIC POWER OF GARDENING

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

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, which has provided refuge for an estimated 2 million people who have been forced to flee their homes since 2011.

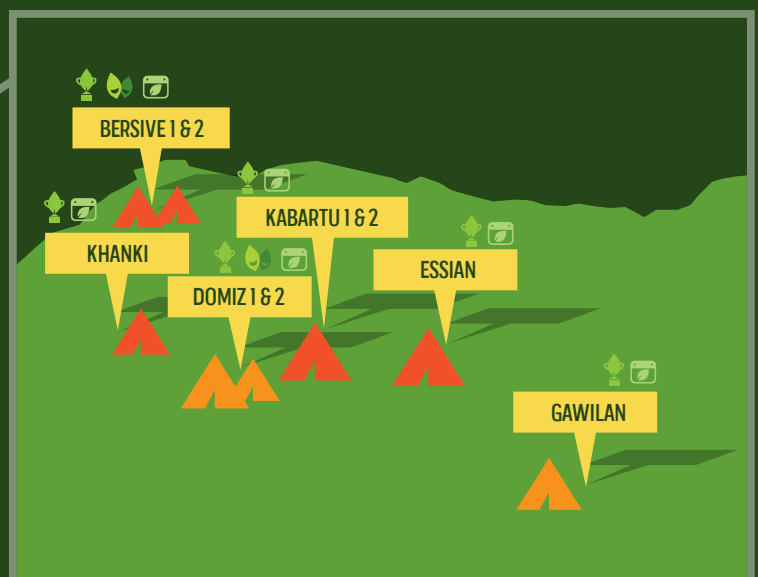
Our focus is on bringing people together by providing seeds and plants, supporting home and community gardens and running garden competitions and education projects.

WHERE WE WORK

Since 2015, most of our work has focused on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, but we also run a community garden in the United States and collaborate with organisations in the United Kingdom and beyond.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq

-  ANNUAL GARDEN COMPETITION
-  GARDEN OF THE MONTH
-  COMMUNITY GARDEN
-  REFUGEE CAMP
-  IDP CAMP



1 CREATE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE PEOPLE, GARDENING AND NATURE CAN THRIVE

HÊVÎ COMMUNITY GARDEN, KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

Thanks to the support of our donors, we have made considerable progress in Gawilan refugee camp, creating a new community garden from scratch. Over the past year, we have worked alongside residents to build a green space where families can grow their own food, connect with nature and develop a sense of community. The transformation is already clear, with gardeners planting their first crops and using the communal bakery house to bake fresh bread daily.

This project is about more than just food production; it is about rebuilding lives. The Gawilan community garden, named Hêvî (meaning 'hope' in Kurdish), provides a space for gardening, learning and socialising, offering displaced families new opportunities.



Pictured: Early in the project – Othman and Hamid build the infrastructure for the borewell to ensure the community garden has a reliable water supply.



Pictured: The raised beds have been built and allocated to Gawilan residents, who have sown them with seeds and young plants.



RIDGECREST COMMUNITY GARDEN, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

For more than a decade, Ridgcrest Community Garden in Dallas, has served as a hub of resilience. Located in the Vickery Meadow neighbourhood, home to many resettled refugees, the garden is maintained by a diverse group of experienced gardeners

from Bhutan, South Sudan and other countries.

Although their backgrounds differ, these gardeners share a strong connection to cultivating food, often growing the plants from their home country,

alongside local Dallas crops. Some grow food for their families, while others sell surplus produce within their community.

Gardening here is a familiar practice in a new land, helping make Dallas feel more like home.

AZADI COMMUNITY GARDEN, KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

In 2024, we installed two additional communal bread ovens, bringing the total to four. This increase aligns with the expansion of the garden, which doubled its number of raised

beds from 50 to 100 last year.

The ovens provide a reliable source of sustenance, enabling families to bake fresh bread independently, which is not

possible at home shelters. The ovens also act as a social space, where gardening and cooking intersect, helping to strengthen community connections and friendships.



Pictured: The addition of two new tannour bread ovens, where delicious Syrian flat breads will be baked and community grown aubergines will be roasted to make the Syrian dip Baba Ganoush.

TAKING OUR WORK TO RHS CHELSEA, UNITED KINGDOM

At the 2024 Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Chelsea Flower Show, elements from our 2018 Chelsea show garden were featured in the "Repurposed" garden, highlighting sustainable design. The garden, designed by Darryl Moore of Cityscapes, creatively reused our Islamic inspired fountain and concrete benches, six years after they were first showcased.

The original 2018 garden, designed by Tom Massey, celebrated the unexpected

beauty of refugee and IDP (internally displaced people) camps, underscoring the vital role gardens play in helping displaced people rebuild their lives. This design captured widespread attention and earned an RHS Silver-Gilt Medal.

We are deeply grateful to the RHS, Darryl Moore, Tom Massey and Landscape Associates for their continued support in bringing Lemon Tree Trust back to RHS Chelsea this year.



Pictured: Our Islamic inspired fountain features in the 'Repurposed' garden, designed by Darryl Moore of Cityscapes.

OUR IMPACT IN 2024

Provided access to raised gardening beds for over **100 families** at the Azadi Community Garden, empowering them to grow food for themselves and their families



Distributed over **2,800 kg** of flour to beneficiaries in Domiz 1 camp, enabling the production of approximately 22,000 loaves of bread



Produced over **10,000 kg** of vegetables for families through our Azadi garden

Gifted more than **1,000** packs of our Sidra Blend herbal tea, grown and produced in the Azadi garden

2 INSPIRE AND SUPPORT PEOPLE IN TO GARDENING

ANNUAL GARDEN COMPETITIONS, KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

In 2024, our annual garden competitions across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq saw record participation, with more gardeners displaying their creativity and commitment to greening their communities. This year, we awarded prizes to 162 home gardeners across nine camps, recognising the ingenuity and skill of those who transform small spaces into thriving gardens.

Held in May, our competitions are open to anyone with an interest in gardening. Winners are celebrated with a garden party, bringing communities together over tea and cake to exchange gardening tips and stories. These events create moments of connection, demonstrating how gardening unites people, even in the most challenging environments.

“The expansion of our annual garden competitions is bringing our community closer together, sparking incredible creativity, and showcasing the resilience of residents across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. It's truly amazing to see the transformative power of gardening, even in challenging circumstances.”

AVEEN IBRAHEM, LTT OPERATIONS MANAGER
AND DOMIZ 1 RESIDENT



Pictured: Saifi Abbas Khalil, 1st place winner in Essian camp at the 2024 Annual Garden Competitions.

ANNUAL COOKING COMPETITIONS, KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

Our cooking competitions returned in 2024, featuring 450 skilled home cooks. The focus was on meals made with home grown produce and from our community gardens. Participants used fresh, locally sourced ingredients to create a wide range of delicious dishes, from vibrant salads to

traditional meals from their homelands, as well as sweet treats.

Ranging in age from 11 to 65, competitors transformed these home and community grown ingredients into flavourful dishes, despite limited resources, basic equipment and makeshift kitchens.

These events celebrate culture, tradition, and the collective joy of sharing a meal, while also highlighting how gardening can empower families to become more self-sufficient, improving their daily lives through the food they grow.

“Watching participants celebrate each other's successes and enjoy the food together is a reminder of how powerful these simple, everyday activities can be in bringing people together. That's what makes these events so special.”

AVEEN IBRAHEM, LTT OPERATIONS MANAGER AND DOMIZ 1 RESIDENT



Pictured: A taster of some of the mouthwatering dishes cooked up at this year's cooking competitions. Savouries included Borek at Khanki camp and Warak Enab and Biryani at Bersive 1 camp, while sweets featured Layali Lubnan at Domiz 2 camp.

Gardening and cooking in Domiz 1 camp: Meet Nisreen

Nisreen Riyad Abdo, a 20-year-old Syrian refugee, lives in Domiz 1 camp with her parents and three brothers. Her culinary journey began in Syria, where she learned the basics of cooking from her mother, starting with simple sweets and progressing to a variety of dishes. Her passion for cooking led her to experiment with different flavours and techniques.

In 2024, Nisreen won first place in the Annual Cooking Competitions in Domiz 1 for her standout dishes, Chicken Fattah and Grape Leaves Fattah.

Life in Domiz 1 camp has changed Nisreen's cooking. With limited resources, she turned to gardening for fresh ingredients. At the Azadi Community Garden, she grows Swiss chard,

molokhia and okra, which she uses in many of her meals.

"These vegetables are very practical and versatile for many dishes," Nisreen says. "Plus, I enjoy the morning gatherings at the garden and the sense of calm it brings." Her love for food helps her stay connected to her Syrian roots while adapting to camp life.



Pictured: Nisreen in her home kitchen and at the cooking competition celebration, being awarded 1st place in Domiz 1 camp.

GARDEN OF THE MONTH AWARDS, KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

The 'Garden of the Month' award celebrates home gardens in nine camps throughout the year. Every month, our team visits home gardens, looking for creativity, resourcefulness and how people make the most of the space they have.

Winners receive a plaque for their shelter, a selection of seeds, a fruit tree and a temporary sign displayed in their garden. This initiative encourages new gardeners and helps build pride in those who grow.



Pictured: A selection of Garden of the Month winning gardens over the course of 2024 – Khanki camp in January, and Kabartu 2 camp and Domiz 1 camp in April.

SUPPORTING REFUGEE-LED GARDENING PROJECTS, UNITED KINGDOM AND UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Throughout 2024, we distributed hundreds of vegetable, herb, fruit and flower seed packets to refugee gardening projects in the UK and USA. These donations, made possible by our generous supporters, provide a starting point for those seeking to grow

their own food and engage in gardening activities.

To support these efforts further, we translated our gardening activity sheets into Pashto, Somali and Spanish, making it easier for more people to access resources.

Our activity sheets are now available in eight languages, helping more individuals to benefit from the therapeutic power of gardening.

WWW.LEMONTREETRUST.ORG/RESOURCES

3 COLLABORATE WITH PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS TO DELIVER THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

We work with individuals and organisations to improve the lives of forcibly displaced people and the communities that host them.

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, our on the ground projects are run by people who have been displaced by war and are living in the refugee and IDP camps where we have a presence. Their

experience and knowledge help ensure that our programmes are relevant and effective.

We also collaborate with host communities where possible to

engage wider audiences in our work, building awareness and support. To maintain and grow our impact, we actively fundraise to increase sustainable, voluntary income.

OUR WORK WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

This year, we strengthened partnerships with aligned organisations to expand community-led greening in displacement settings. We continue to meet with UNHCR and other partners to explore how our 'greenprint' can help integrate local and displaced communities through shared environmental initiatives, opening new opportunities for collaboration and learning.

On World Environment Day, 25 shade trees, grown from seedlings by our gardening team at the Azadi Community Garden in Domiz 1 camp, were planted in Domiz 2 camp in partnership with the Barzani Charity Foundation. Additional trees were planted throughout the year in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs at various local centres.



OUR IMPACT IN 2024

9 camps for forcibly displaced people, home to a total of 136,927 residents, held monthly garden competitions, with trees and plaques awarded as prizes.

More than **5,500** people received flowering plants, trees and seedlings to enhance their surroundings



23 garden team members, all displaced residents of the camps, were employed by LTT across nine camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, ensuring our projects are run by and for displaced communities



Distributed **100's of seed packets** to refugee projects in the UK and Kurdistan Region of Iraq, helping communities grow their own food and flowers



Provided support to resettled refugees through our Ridgcrest Community Garden in Dallas, USA, fostering connection and self-sufficiency through gardening

4 GROW THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WE HELP

SPREADING JOY WITH SIDRA TEA BLEND, KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

In August 2024, we visited Gawilan refugee camp to gift packets of our Sidra Tea Blend and introduce residents to the community garden we were building. The tea, made from herbs and flowers grown and dried in our Azadi Community Garden in Domiz 1 camp, helped us start conversations about the

new garden and how people can get involved.

Our team in Gawilan – Othman, Rûken and Hamid – spoke with residents about how the garden will offer a green space for the community to come together and cultivate food. The project sparked strong interest, with many keen to grow their own

produce and engage in gardening activities.

Building on the positive response in Gawilan, we extended our Sidra Tea gifting to other camps in the Kurdistan Region. This helped us connect with more residents and introduced them to upcoming events, such as our cooking competitions.



Pictured: Gifting our Sidra Tea Blend packs to residents in camps across the Kurdistan Region.

A thank you to our supporters|

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of our funders, donors and supporters. Your contributions have allowed us to expand our projects, distribute seeds and plants, and support displaced people on the ground in bringing gardening activities to displaced communities.

Thanks to you, more people have been able to grow their own food and flowers, connect with their neighbours and find a sense of purpose through gardening. We are incredibly grateful for your support – thank you for making a difference in 2024.

Growing together – connecting with our supporters

In December 2024, we hosted a special event for our supporters, bringing together donors and friends to share a behind the scenes tour of our two community

gardens in the Kurdistan Region – Azadi and Hêvi. It was a fantastic opportunity to connect with the people who make our work possible and following the positive response, we are looking forward to running another event in 2025.

Help us grow our impact

With your continued support, we can reach even more people in 2025 and beyond. Every donation, partnership or share of our work helps us expand our gardening programmes and bring the benefits of growing to more displaced families.

Together, we can plant seeds of change in more communities. Whether it is funding raised beds, providing seeds or supporting gardening competitions, your help ensures people can create beauty, find belonging and grow a better future.

MEET OTHMAN QEWEAS



“Damascus roses have beautiful colours and scent. They add beauty to life and their scent refreshes the soul.”

Othman Qewas is a valued member of the Lemon Tree Trust team, having worked as our Garden Coordinator in Gawilan since 2018. In 2024, Othman's role expanded to oversee the build and day to day

running of the new community garden we are building in the camp.

Othman, 52, is originally from the Syrian city of Kobani. Since fleeing the war in Syria in 2015, he has lived

in Gawilan with his wife, two daughters Ronak and Newroz, and son Lawan.

We spoke to Othman about gardening, life in Gawilan and working with Lemon Tree Trust...



GROWING HOME IN GAWILAN CAMP

Q: What do you most like about gardening?

A: When I plant, cultivate, and work the soil, and see the results of my efforts in the form of a healthy plant, I feel happy.

Q: What's your favourite flower and why?

A: Damascus roses have beautiful colours and scent. They add beauty to life and their scent refreshes the soul.

Q: What produce do you and your family love to grow and use in home cooking?

A: We enjoy cultivating parsley, radishes, cress, onions, garlic, tomatoes, cucumber, aubergine/eggplant, carrots, lettuce, rocket/arugula and pepper.

Q: What's your family's favourite meal?

A: We all love Kibbeh Nayeh with hot pepper, which is famous among us in our beloved home city of Kobani. It consists of minced raw lamb mixed with fine bulgur and spices and we serve it with mint leaves, olive oil and green onions. Syrian bread is used to scoop it up.

Q: What is your most treasured gardening memory or memories from your childhood or home and garden before Gawilan?

A: I grew up in a farming family, so I have fond memories of working out in the fields. We also had a small garden at home that brought the family together for fun evenings.

I learned a lot from my parents regarding agriculture and gardening from a young age, the most important of which is order and not neglecting work.

Q: What's the best gardening tip you've ever given or received?

A: Two things: To work hard and not to waste water.

Q: If you could only grow one crop, what would it be?

A: Wheat, because it is the basis of food for humanity.

Q: Is there anything you tried growing but found it difficult and have vowed to never grow it again?

A: There has been no specific thing that I planted and failed, but often a lack of space or the lack of financial capacity are the things that make it difficult for people to grow – two things that are particularly challenging in a refugee camp.

Pictured below: Othman lends a hand at the new Gawilan community garden site where a digger levels the ground in preparation for the fencing, raised beds and playground to be constructed.



Pictured above: Othman visits schools in Gawilan to inspire students to garden and appreciate nature

EVERYDAY LIVING IN GAWILAN CAMP



Q: What does a typical day look like for you?

A: I do not like routine. Often, I do something that takes me out of routine – I work on home repairs, or read and walk, or visit friends, or go out with my family to different places according to what we agree on. I would say my hobbies besides gardening are exercising, walking, and reading books.

Q: What do you find most challenging about living in Gawilan today?

A: Being called a refugee and experiencing different customs, a new world, and many unmentionable things.

Q: What do you miss most about your life before coming to Gawilan?

A: I miss many things, but most importantly, I miss the land where I grew up, and my family and friends.

Q: What job/career did you have in your life before Gawilan?

A: I was an employee at an electricity corporation.

Q: If you could visit anywhere in the world, where would it be? And why?

A: I would visit America because it is an entire continent; a continent that has creativity in all aspects and its language is English.

BEING A MEMBER OF LEMON TREE TRUST'S TEAM

Q: How did you find out about Lemon Tree Trust?

A: By applying to volunteer for the annual garden competitions in Gawilan camp.

Q: What is it about Lemon Tree Trust that made you want to join our team?

A: Dealing with agriculture, gardening, and aesthetics of homes, plus Lemon Tree Trust's values of honesty and sincerity being the basis for success. I thank the Lemon Tree Trust organisation for enabling me to be a part of this beautiful family, honest with its work and sincere giving.

Q: What aspect of working for Lemon Tree Trust do you most enjoy?

A: I enjoy and feel comfortable being a member of the Lemon Tree Trust team. When I advise fellow Gawilan residents, I enjoy seeing quick results in terms of their engagement with our activities and gardening successes. It is rewarding.

Q: What are you most looking forward to about the new Gawilan community garden?

A: The new community space will be a great source of support for many poor and vulnerable families and a source of comfort for residents. It also means that Lemon Tree Trust can increase its activities, which can only be a good thing in terms of helping many more people in Gawilan.

LOOKING FORWARD

As we approach 2025, we are excited to begin the next phase of development at the Hêvî Community Garden in Gawilan camp. Following the success of the first year, we will expand the garden with more raised beds, allowing even more families to grow their own produce.



Pictured: Gardeners proudly holding abundant bunches of molokhia grown at the Azadi Community Garden. Before long, our Hêvî community gardeners will be harvesting their own beautiful, fresh produce too.

Additionally, we plan to add a fruit orchard and plant wildflowers along the borders and communal areas, enhancing the garden's biodiversity. We are also working to create a playground, so the space serves not only for growing food but as a place for children to play and families to gather.

To further support this development, we are running gardening sessions and workshops in key areas such as composting, soil preparation between plants, water irrigation, natural pest and weed control, propagation and pollinator care. These sessions are designed to empower participants

with the knowledge and skills to manage their raised beds and home gardens more effectively.

We continue to welcome donations to help cover ongoing costs and fund the expansion's next stage. With your support, we can ensure Gawilan remains a thriving, green sanctuary for years to come.

SPECIAL THANKS

We are deeply grateful to everyone who supported us in 2024 and who continues to advocate for our work. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to a few exceptional individuals and organisations:

- Bristol Refugee Festival
- The Communities Foundation of Texas
- Linda Combi
- Richard Curle at Landscape Associates Ltd
- Megan Davis
- The Floralistas
- Grace Alexander Flowers
- Karin Bain and John Kukral Foundation
- Tom Massey
- Darryl Moore of Cityscapes
- Phonetic Planet
- Prism the Gift Fund
- Real Bread Campaign
- Royal Horticultural Society
- Ronak Qewas
- Trinity School, Menlo Park
- VIP Reading
- Britt Willoughby

Huge thanks to everyone else who has supported Lemon Tree Trust in some way.



OUR VISION

A world in which every person who has been forced from their home has access to a garden either at their home or in their community and has the means and knowledge to grow.

MISSION

To inspire, create, support and collaborate with people and communities who have been forced from their homes to deliver change through gardening.

MAKE A DONATION

With your support we are bringing beauty, dignity and opportunity to communities left ravaged by the effects of war. Every donation we receive directly supports gardening projects and initiatives in refugee and internally displaced people communities.

lemontreetrust.org/donate

Thank you.

TO FIND OUT MORE AND TO SUPPORT OUR WORK:

[INFO@LEMONTREETRUST.ORG](mailto:info@lemontreetrust.org)

[WWW.LEMONTREETRUST.ORG](https://www.lemontreetrust.org)



LEMON TREE TRUST
IMPACT 2024

In the UK, Lemon Tree Trust is a restricted fund under the auspices of Prism the Gift Fund, registered charity 1099682. In the USA, all contributions to Lemon Tree Trust Fund will be received, receipted and under control of Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organisation.

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