

A Man-Made Forest Has Been Planted to Revive the Beirut River

Desi S. · [Activism](#) · May 31, 2019



[Home](#) > [Activism](#)

As of this past week, a new man-made forest in the Sin El Fil district of Beirut has been planted in an effort to save the Beirut River, which has suffered greatly over the past several decades.

The Beirut River was once a place of celebration, dating back as far as the Roman occupation when it was used as an aqueduct. Even just a few decades ago, the Armenians residing in the Bourj Hammoud suburb of Beirut used to celebrate Vardarvar there, a water festival. However, those days are long gone.

Today, the river is a foul-smelling reservoir of filth and pollution, caused by factory dumping, saline groundwater, and raw sewage. Moreover, in 2015 during the garbage crisis, the river served as a dumping ground for a massive amount of trash.

Needless to say, the once-revered river has endured a great deal of hardship, and, since it flows out to the Mediterranean Sea, the effects of such pollutants in the sea has detrimental implications (think of the forever-green barrier of water that extends way past the shores of Beirut).



Environmental consciousness is a big topic these days, with the impending threat of climate change if we don't act fast to reduce and revert the damage we've caused to our planet.

And, that is exactly what the India-based organization Afforestt is trying to do on this small scale in Beirut. By holding a workshop from the 24th to 29th of this month, a mass of local strains of trees was planted in an allotted area in Sin El Fil to combat the damage that has been done to the Beirut River over the years.

The social enterprise has successfully planted several hundred man-made forests around the world, following a method by a Japanese biologist, as a means to re-establish forests that would otherwise still exist if human interaction had not interfered.

These urban forests are extremely dense, with four trees planted in each square meter of space. Moreover, Afforestt founder Shubhendu Sharma has stressed on the importance of using native species of plants, citing incidents, such as in Pakistan, where European strains of trees were imported that gave off asthma-inducing pollen for Pakistani residents.

Via [TheOtherDada](#)

“In the past, the trend was that some guy would go to Australia or Holland to get a plant, introduce it to your country, and everyone would pay premium prices,” Sharma said via *Al-Monitor*. “The local stuff would be ignored as if it were useless.”

The project is part of a larger effort by the Lebanese architecture and environmental organization TheOtherDada.

A contributing factor in the river's pollution has been the illegal wells, which have been used up and subsequently salinated as a result of the sea water filling in place of the fresh water.

By using natural fertilizer, the trees will be able to root deeply within a span of three months, holding topsoil together to prevent polluted runoff into the river. In addition, the trees will generate fresh groundwater to fill the river instead.

Furthermore, the forest will provide health benefits for residents, as well, because the trees will take in air pollution and clean it through their natural processes.



“We are not only addressing CO2 but we are also talking about scrubbing pollution and matter in the air,” TheOtherDada founder Adib Dada said via *Al-Monitor*.

This is a good first step for Lebanon to take the issue of pollution more seriously and innovate ways to combat and revive its natural resources, which have unfortunately been greatly taken for granted.

Hopefully, this will spark other organizations to join in the fight against climate change because Lebanon is as responsible for negatively impacting the environment as any other country on this earth.

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Meet our PLASTIC River aka Beirut River! Taking the eco-conscious Swiss artist duo Steiner&Lenzlinger on a tour of Beirut's environmental disaster. Don't miss their show at @sfeirsemlergallery and Follow us on @beirutriverLESS for research and proposals along the river and nearby communities
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A post shared by Adib Dada (@theotherdada) on Jan 18, 2019 at 8:45am PST

