

For Immediate Release



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AUB President Fadlo Khuri Plants a Tree to Reaffirm AUB's Stance on Nature Conservation

AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri and COO Ramin Sedehi planted an oak tree in the green island next to Assembly Hall, as part of an event organized by AUBotanic and the Neighborhood Initiative. The ceremony took place on Monday, March 27 and was attended by VP for Advancement Dr. Imad Baalbaki, senior administrators, faculty members, staff, and students.

First-grade students from six nearby schools joined President Khuri, and each planted a cedar seed in a pot to be taken home. In an interactive and unique learning experience, the students toured the campus and learned more about its flora. The schools participating were International College, American Community School, Saint Mary's Orthodox College, College Protestant Francais, the National Protestant College, and Jaber Ahmad El Sabbah public school.

During the ceremony, President Khuri highlighted the importance of teaching young people about the importance of our natural environment.

“It’s wonderful to have the next generation of AUB students here with us today; all becoming aware at a young age of how important it is to look after our green spaces and help make Beirut a beautiful green city again,” added Khuri.

Mona Hallak, director of the Neighborhood Initiative, emphasized the importance of engaging kids with nature.

“The Neighborhood Initiative’s aim is to connect the surrounding neighborhood to AUB, and one of the things we want to offer is accessibility to our biggest asset, our green campus. Ras Beirut people have the right to share the space, and the schools around the University can bring the children to be engaged with the environment. We are committed to enriching green spaces,

and following this unique experience, children can start their own initiatives, such as green walls at their homes and schools,” said Hallak.

In their classes, the students coming to AUB have had special sessions about the importance of green spaces in our congested city. According to Hallak, the six schools are just a start, and the plan is to extend to all the Ras Beirut area, betting on the young generation to be environmentally conscious and hopefully influence their families in their daily practices.

“This is an exciting and historical opportunity for the President to plant a tree to commemorate AUB’s 150th anniversary,” said Chief Operating Officer Ramin Sedehi. “AUB’s commitment to being green is witnessed throughout this magnificent campus and our botanical gardens. This tree will serve as a powerful symbol for all that is ahead for the next 150 years of AUB.”

AUBotanic is a group of committed faculty, staff, alumni, and friends who have worked together to transform the AUB campus into an arboretum and botanical garden, playing a major role in preserving the last major green space in Ras Beirut. This initiative is urgently needed to enrich the campus flora and to deal with the increased stress on plants caused by decreased water availability, poor water quality, and increased built area. AUBotanic also plays a role in extending a helping hand to initiatives and people who are looking to start botanical gardens by sharing their expertise and advice.

Chaired by Dr. Salma Talhouk, AUBotanic assumes an advisory role to the President and a supervisory and planning role in the development and implementation of projects in line with the campus master plan directives and in coordination with the COO.

Talhouk explained that a botanical garden serves not only for leisure, but also for learning. Each plant on campus has been identified, and AUBotanic is looking to open the campus as a space where people can come and enjoy the greenery.

With concrete dominating the Ras Beirut area, green spaces are a necessity for the wellbeing of the people. Green spaces play a huge role in stress reduction and performance enhancement.

“Nature is a need and not a luxury, a need to think well, and be well,” said Talhouk. “Experiencing harmony with nature is experiencing acceptance and tolerance.”

Friends and alumni around the world are invited to become guardians of this beautiful campus, in which lifetime memories have been made. The AUBotanic is starting a fundraising program where believers in, and supporters of, the AUB Botanical Garden and Campus Beautification Program have the opportunity to help build an endowment fund to secure sustainability of the

initiative. In recognition for being a “Guardian,” AUB will place a plaque on a selected tree in the donor’s name, the name/memory of a loved one, or in celebration of a life event.

You can also support the management of the campus greenery and the educational activities provided by the AUB Botanical Garden Program. For an annual gift of \$1,000, you become a “Friend of the AUB Botanical Garden.” For more information on how you can participate, please contact the Office of Development at development@aub.edu.lb.

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For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: 03427024 Office: 01374374 Ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to bachelor’s, master’s, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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