

## Project Update: April 2009

The following is a summary of the major activities of the project.

- This report marks the annual anniversary of the day (30<sup>th</sup> March) of the Palestinian land where public, farmers, national institutes including schools and universities and activists are urged to work for protection of land and nature and to conduct projects and perform actions for the benefit of the Palestinian people.
- Museum of Nature: the hall (6m by 10m) was chosen within the main building of the natural park area which belongs to Bani Naim Charitable Society. It was prepared and repainted, then furniture, wood, metal cabinets and chairs were brought.
- Plant specimens were introduced into the museum: clay pots are used to exhibit plant materials, dried spikes of natural grasses and herbarium specimens to be used for education.
- A competition on use of native biodiversity specimens was launched in Bani Naim. The idea is to collect natural specimens for exhibition and to encourage local community to appreciate the beauty of nature and how to interact with nature through developing ideas of painting and other skills. The targeted groups are students of schools and universities, families, staff of institutions and lovers of nature. Consultation with Julia Willison of BGCI on this issue was made. This allowed a more mature and well organized activity to be performed.
- A group of propagated native plants was produced at the local nursery of Bani Naim (total 26 plants) representing 4 species (2 thyme species [Labiatae], wild iris [Iridaceae] and *Achillea* [Compositae]) were given to Al-Quds University Botanic Gardens. This is a regular relation to improve conservation and to conduct research using such native plants.
- A group of master students from the Rural Development Program of Al-Quds University made a field and scientific trip to the natural site of the biodiversity and museum of nature. I gave scientific and ecotourism outline of the major activities of the project.
- Collection of wild plants that are then air dried to be used as herbs, a source of folkloric medicines and for beauty and enjoyment.
- Mixed sizes of stones from nearby valleys were brought to construct natural beds for transferred plants like the wild iris.
- An Italian group headed by a specialist in the coordination of biodiversity projects visited the project site. They showed interest and possible cooperation in future.
- Through coordination and cooperation between the project and the hosting society of Bani Naim in propagation of wild plants, priority is given to produce resistant wild

native trees due to their resistance to pathogens and adaptation to wild environment like in Palestine.

