

Artist’s Garden
by Sunoj D and Namrata Neog

Desert is a Forest



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For more information about the project please visit:
jameelartscentre.org/whats-on/artist-garden-by-sunoj-d-and-namrata-neog

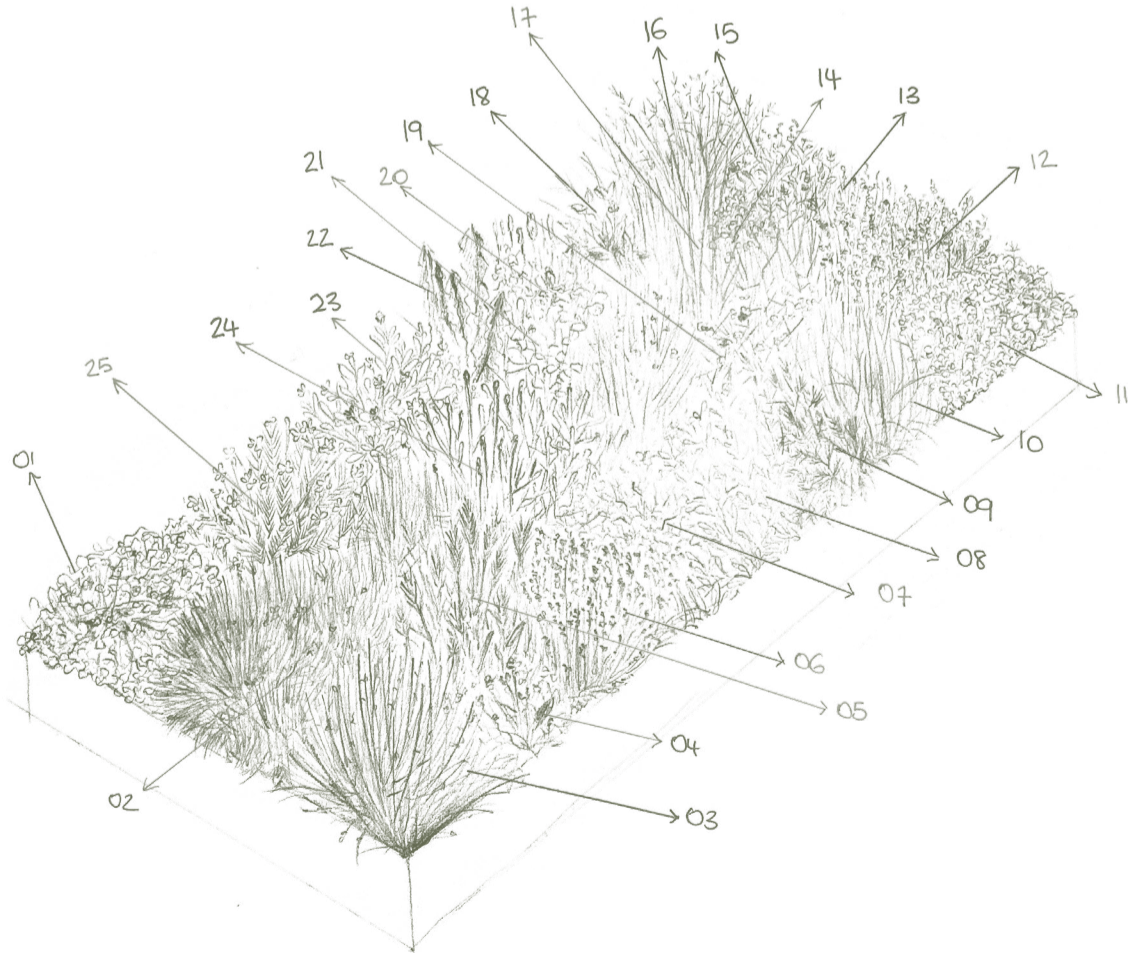
Art Jameel is an organisation
that supports artists and
creative communities.



Garden Key

The plants grown in the Artist’s Garden are all consumed by goats and used traditionally by the local community for food or medicinal purposes.

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|-------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Arfaj | 10. Shih | 19. Maqarnah |
| 2. Arta | 11. Ghoban/Sawas | 20. Markh |
| 3. Safrawi | 12. Jadaa | 21. Hommed |
| 4. Ghurayra | 13. Khobez | 22. Khansour/Yadaa |
| 5. Zaabal | 14. Seedaf | 23. Ghillih/Um Lehlah |
| 6. Thamam | 15. Rimth | 24. Thor |
| 7. Hawa | 16. Al-Raq | 25. Al-Hamra |
| 8. Harmel | 17. Felh | |
| 9. Silm | 18. Sakhbar | |



Garden Plants

Desert is a Forest by Sunoj D and Namrata Neog is the third Artist’s Garden commission at Jameel Arts Centre. The intervention begins with the prompt of how to “think like a forest”. Attempting to see through the UAE landscape, this work asks what kinds of negotiations, relationships and hierarchies emerge and submerge if we imagine the desert to be a forest.

The garden in a way translates this idea, exploring the biodiversity within the UAE landscape, and the interconnectedness of the goat, the human, the plant and the natural mineral deposits that form in the desert. The garden includes a selection of plants*, indigenous to the UAE that are/were traditionally consumed both by humans and goats or used for medicinal purposes.

A garden of complex entanglements, *Desert is a Forest* examines the politics of food, domestication, relationships between humans and non-humans, and the way we see and interpret the environment, while also telling the unique history of the UAE’s plant ecology and nutritional habits.

The information about the plants was gathered through conversations with local farmers, families, horticulturalists and botanists. Each number allocated to an illustrated plant in this guide corresponds to a plant growing in the garden at Jameel Arts Centre.

**Each plant listed in this pamphlet is represented in the garden. Some of the plants will change and be replaced over the course of the project, depending on the season and life cycle of the plants.*

Sunoj D

Sunoj D is a contemporary artist. His work reflects on the politics and fluidity of meanings in materials, stemming from a critical engagement with the landscape and the myriad relations that shape it.


Namrata Neog

Namrata Neog is trained in history, archaeology and anthropology. Her work revolves around inquisitions of human/non-human negotiations in the landscape and the politics of seeing.

Harmel

Peganum nitrariaceae

08




Known for its medicinal properties, Harmel is used in traditional medicine for muscle pains, diabetes, stomach aches, wounds and cuts. Traditionally, the leaves were also boiled in water to bathe in, which helped relieve rashes and fungus on the skin. Goats also love to eat the flowers and leaves.

Silm

Acacia ehrenbergiana

09




Common around Fujairah, Silm is considered a rare tree. The yellow flowers of Silm are very special, as they attract bees and are used to make honey. The leaves are loved by goats, and as Silm is a thorny tree, it provides the much needed protection to the homes of birds and other small animals.

Maqarnah

Monsonia nivea

19




A small shrub that mainly thrives on sandy plains, Maqarnah is often drunk as tea, prepared by drying the leaves, and taken as a cure for fevers. Goats are drawn to the plants when they start producing flowers in January.

Felh

Capparis spinosa

17




Humans and goats are drawn to Felh at sunset, when the flowers open up and start blooming. The leaves of the plant are added to salads, and the flowers are used for preparing jam. The flowers are also known to relieve tooth pain.

Shih

Artemisia

10




The Shih leaves are used to make bitter tea, which helps relieve constipation, diabetes and was traditionally used to treat fevers.

Ghillih/Um Lehlah

Dyerophytum indicum

23




Ghillih is a plant loved by humans and goats. Humans use the salty leaves as a seasoning for salads, and the fruits are eaten by goats.

Thamam

Panicum turgidum

06




Thamam seeds were once grinded and mixed with wheat to make bread. Today, goat farmers propagate the seeds and feed them to their animals. A barter economy also existed in the UAE, and the hay produced from Thamam was traded in exchange for wood and coffee.

Zaabal

Triraphis pumilio

05




Zaabal propagates by self-seeding and has a short lifespan of three months. Mostly found in the Jebel Hafit area, Zaabal is highly grazed by goats in this region, and is now considered a rare grass in the UAE.

Ghoban/Sawas

Periploca aphylla

11

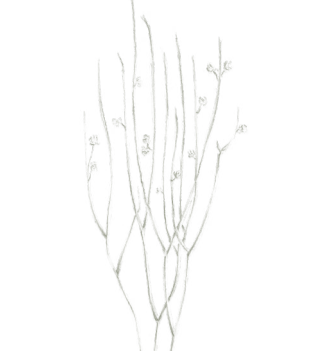


The pink flowers produced by the Ghoban/ Sawas plant are added as a garnish to salads, and the leaves are loved by grazing goats.

Markh

Leptadenia pyrotechnica

20




Commonly widespread across the UAE, the tender leaves and flowers of Markh were often used in different food preparations. Markh was also used to make rope and fishing tools. At the same time, it is a highly grazed plant by goats and other desert animals.

Al-Hamra

Arnebia hispidissima

25




Al Hamra is usually found between the sandy soil plains of Ras al Khaimah and Dubna, Fujairah. The roots of the plant were used as a dye for clothes, as well as treated fevers by boiling the roots in water, and drinking as a tea. Its flowers and leaves are also loved by grazing goats.

Al-Raq

Salvadora persica

16




The roots of Al Raq continue to be used as a natural toothbrush in some parts of the UAE. It is a very important plant for goats and camels as it helps the animals produce milk, and gives their milk a high vitamin content.

Rimth

Haloxylon salicornicum

15




People in some parts of the UAE dry and grind Rimth to add to boiling water as a tea, which is believed to be highly medicinal in nature. Goats also graze upon its spindly stems.

Hawa

Launaea arborescens

07




Hawa starts flowering in February. Goats wait eagerly for this time of the year to graze on the delicious flowers and tender branches.

Khobez

Malva parviflora

13




Growing across the rocky mountainous terrain of Fujairah and Ras Al Khaimah, Khobez is noticed in the evenings with its strong smell. It has a slight bitter taste, and is drunk as a tea to help relieve stomach pain and to cleanse the body.

Hommed

Rumex Vesicarius

21




With a tang of sourness, Hommed is a plant loved by communities living around Ras Al Khaimah and Umm Al Quwain, especially when the plant starts blooming after the rain. Mostly eaten as a salad, this plant has two varieties – one which grows in the mountain or rocky areas and the other that grows in the sandy plains, difference only in colour and shape.

Ghurayra

Eremobium aegyptiacum

04




Ghurayra is used in traditional medicine as a laxative and diuretic. This small bush is widespread across the UAE, from gravel plains to wadis, which makes it easy for goats to graze upon the plant.

Sakhbar

Cymbopogon commutatus

18




Sakhbar produces an oil that has a strong aromatic smell, and medicinal properties that protect against fever and, is used as a diuretic when consumed as a tea.

Seedaf

Pteropryum

14




Usually found across the wadis of the UAE, Seedaf grows in the winter, and the leaves are often added to salads.

Safrawi

Dipterygium glaucum

03




Widespread across the coastline of the UAE, this plant has the ability to survive in saline sandy soils, and the fruit attracts a huge diversity of migratory birds and grazing animals, including goats. The plant was also used for traditional medicinal purposes.

Khansour/Yadaa

Caralluma Arabica / Flava

22




Khansour/Yadaa is mainly found in the high mountain ranges of the UAE. It often finds its way into Al Saloona, a meal eaten with rice, and the leaves are often added to salads. The plant also has medicinal properties, believed to help with diabetes. Commonly found with red blooms, the yellow bloom variant of this plant is now considered rare.

Jadaa

Germander - Teucrium polium

12




A perennial aromatic plant, mostly thriving in the mountain regions of the UAE. Characterised by different coloured flowers, Jadaa continues to be used in tea, sometimes as a replacement for mint and as medicinal concoctions for treating stomach pain (after being dried and mixed with either milk, water or juice). Traditionally, some of the flowers were used to make pillows as they remain fluffy with a mild fragrance.

Arta

Calligonum comosum

02



There are two types of Arta, spread between two diverse geographies – the ‘giant’ plant, growing in sandy regions, and the ‘small’ plant (*arbi*), growing in rocky terrains. Once the plants start flowering in March, people living in mountainous regions of the UAE add its beautiful bright red and yellow flowers, chopped leaves and soft stems into rice as a special dish. It is also during this time of year that the young shoots of the plant are collected and added to salads. The leaves of the plant are also used as a tea to treat diarrhoea, and often dried in the sun and infused in water or fish oil for cooking.