



MY FOREST
ARMENIA

Annual Report

2022

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Our story and values

Our mission is to increase forest coverage sustainably and preserve biodiversity using numerous endemic species. We ascribe to the following values:

- **Transparency**
- **Responsibility**
- **Efficiency**
- **Care**

My Forest Armenia was founded in 2019. In our first year, we established two nurseries in Lori Province to grow forest tree seedlings. In our second year, we planted our very first trees in Shirakamut. Our goal is to have a global impact while acting locally. We involve workers from as many local communities as possible, thus having a positive impact both from an environmental and socio-economic point of view.

In all the areas where we operate, workers are hired from the local and neighboring rural communities. Our staff grew to 49 persons, and up to 200 workers participated during the last planting season.

As of autumn 2022, we have already afforested an area of about 307 hectares in Lori and Tavush regions, where over 1 million (1.042.737) trees have been planted thanks to

the support of our partners and donors. We have also hosted 525 volunteers to plant, mulch or water the newly planted trees.

Planting new forests is very important for Armenia and for the planet, even more is to preserve the existing forest ecosystems. Armenia has invaluable natural forests that we need to preserve: this is the main goal of our intervention in the Dilijan National Park, where we help the forest regain its strength and regeneration capacity.

While acting on the environment, we support young students who want to work in forestry. We have built and now operate a greenhouse on the premises of the National Agrarian University Vanadzor branch to help train future foresters.

In three years
we have
afforested
307 ha



Founder's statement

2022 has been a momentous year for My Forest Armenia. We doubled the number of trees and planted a total of 658.000 seedlings on about 202 ha of new land. Our team is now preparing to plant 800.000 trees in 2023, and if we can do this and plant more and more trees, it is thanks to the incredible donors who are with us year after year and the many who see what we do and join us. We want to say a big thank you for your trust and your active engagement on behalf of improving the planet!

The number of trees planted was not the only thing that increased this year. In 2022, our permanent staff, including nur-sery workers, grew to 49 people, while the number of tree planters reached 200. The amount of taxes paid on salaries to the Ar-

menian government reached \$140.000. So, this project which started barely three years ago, not only provides jobs or income to the government, which can use it for services like improving roads or education, but it also enhances the environment and the country's future.

But numbers are not the only thing that matters. What I am really interested in is that all people understand the crucial importance of forests. Everyone should realize that our life and that of future generations depend on healthy forests. Indeed, we depend on forests for the air we breathe or the water we drink. The next step will be to ensure that everyone participates in helping restore Nature, as we are all individually responsible for our world. We need to live in harmony with

nature; we need to live "with" the planet, not just "on" it.

If you are already helping the environment, that is great; if not, you can support My Forest Armenia; we are doing the hard work on the ground, and your donation goes directly to planting trees and creating forests.

Thank you all!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AG' or similar initials, followed by a flourish.

ANDRE GUMUCHDJIAN

Founder and Executive Director

Our Team



Andre Gumuchjian
Founder and Executive Director



Lilith Martirosyan
Deputy Director



Vahe Martirosyan
Operational Manager



Taron Aleksanyan
Chief scientist and GIS Expert



Alina Karapetyan
Corporate Relations Manager



Arpine Aleksanyan
Event Manager



Satenik Asilyan
Public Affairs and
Communications Manager



Ani Harutyunyan
Digital Communications
Specialist



Levon Mkhitarian
Nursery Supervisor



Gegham Hakobyan
Nursery Coordinator



Edvard Edaryan
Field Coordinator



Taron Ghazaryan
Field Coordinator



Mushegh Mumchyan
Field Coordinator



Sargis Petrosyan
Construction Manager



Diana Kirakosyan
Chief Accountant



Mery Mayilyan
Administrative Assistant

Forests in Armenia

Armenia is a sparsely forested country, and the percentage of forest cover is insufficient to maintain the country's natural ecological balance. Only 334,000 hectares are covered with forests, which is 11% of the territory of Armenia. Forests are spread disproportionately. Most of the forests are in the northeastern and southern parts, and the rest are scattered in the form of small islands in the central parts of the country, surrounded by mountain-steppe vegetation.

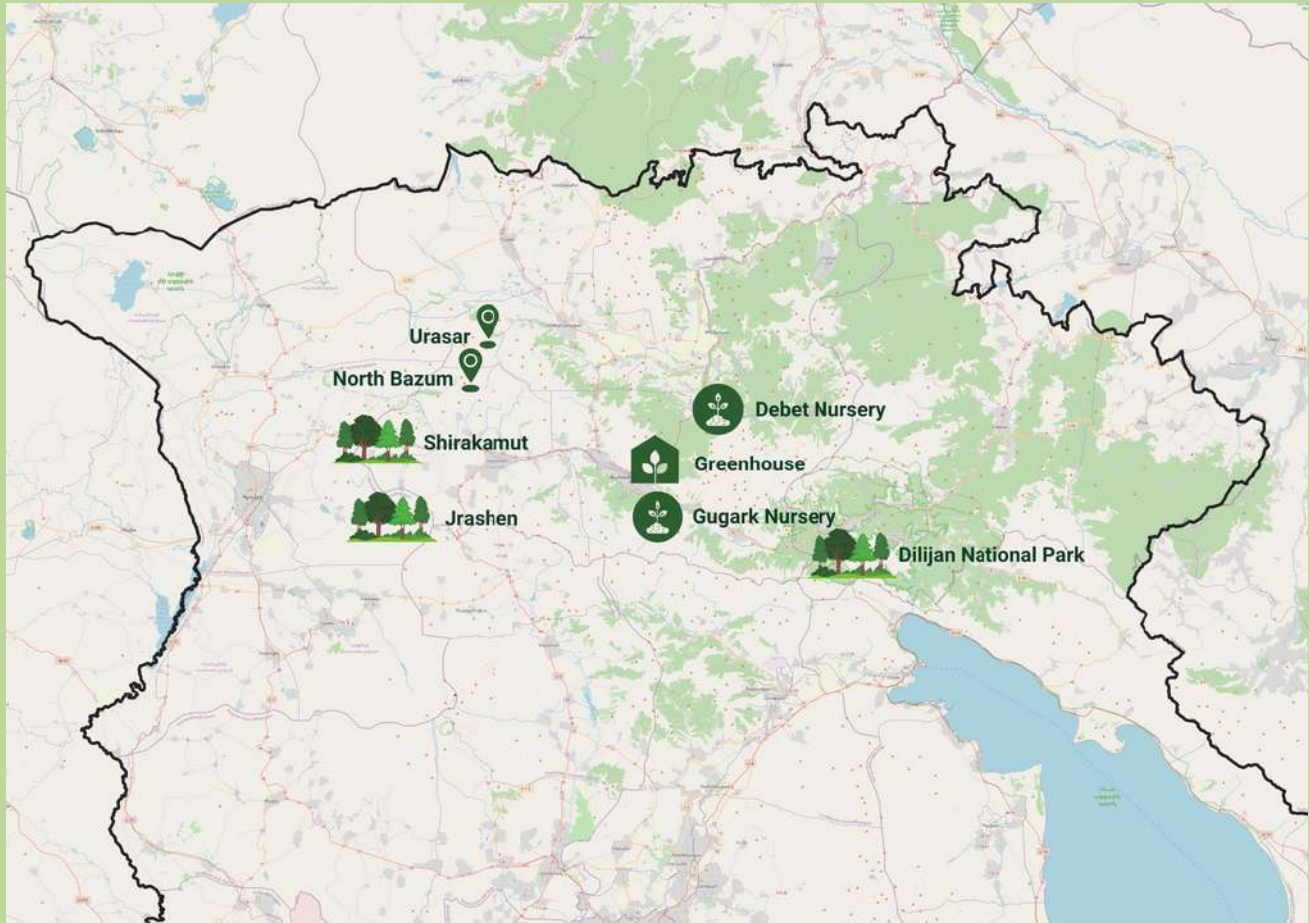
Parts of the country's forests are special protected areas, like Dilijan National Park, Arevik, Khosrov forest or Shikahogh. They represent about 20% of the forest cover and host an exceptional diversity of flora and fauna. Forests are part of Armenia's many differ-

ent ecoregions, making the country a biodiversity hotspot.

Armenia suffers from its lack of forest cover, leading to high soil erosion rates and negatively impacting local hydrology. These effects become more impactful with climate change and increasingly more extreme weather events.

Armenia has committed to double its forest cover by 2050 following its NDCs under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015 with a milestone of afforesting 50,000 ha by 2030. We aim to support the country in achieving this ambitious goal.

Our Geography



We are growing and the surfaces planted increased significantly to cover more areas which benefits many communities. In 2022, we finished planting in Jrashen I and Jrashen II areas, Shirakamut and Dilijan National Park. We also launched the EIA process for a new afforestation area: Urasar.

The Planting Year Overview



658,671
trees planted



525
volunteers




190
tree
planters



202
hectares
planted



425,835
trees mulched



2022 was an exceptional year for us. We doubled the number of trees planted in 2021, we finished planting a whole new afforestation area of 116 ha in one planting season, and we planted our first close-root seedlings grown in our Vanadzor greenhouse. In total 658,671 trees, out of which 33,280 close-root seedlings were planted: birch, beech, mountain ash, pine, oak, walnut, wild apple, wild pear, and others including bushes.

We monitor all afforestation areas annually to follow the survival rate and growth peculiarities. While talking about survival rate, it is important to mention that the numbers are not the same everywhere in the afforestation areas. In the south facing areas, the sun

dries out the soil more, and this impacts the survival rate, while in other areas where soil and climatic conditions are more favorable, the survival rate can reach 60-65%, which is a good result for our region. Already now we can see that some areas are successful. As to less successful areas, we will evaluate next year when and how many trees need to be replaced.

Our field coordinators monitored the afforestation areas regularly during the year, and organized fence repairing works in all our afforestation and reforestation areas.

Jrashen I

Area: 110 ha

Elevation: 1860 – 2290 m

We finished the planting work in Jrashen in April, and in May, we mulched 444,337 seedlings by putting straw around all seedlings planted in fall 2021 and spring 2022. Mulching helps control weed growth around newly planted seedlings and reduces water evaporation, keeping the soil moist for longer.



Jrashen II

Area: 105 ha

Elevation: 2150 – 2400 m

After a long administrative journey, we signed the contract for Jrashen II in July 2022. Then we needed to be quick for the field preparation work. All in all, our fence goes as long as 4028 m to protect the whole area. The area presented additional challenges because of road inaccessibility and very steep mountains. Workers used a donkey to bring the fencing materials up the mountain. Actually, this is a good and sustainable solution to organize logistics in the mountains.



Shirakamut

Area: 86 ha

Elevation: 1750 - 1900 m

In Shirakamut, our work this year included only replanting activities. The Shirakamut area is mostly oriented towards the south and suffers most from summer drought. The total area is 86 ha. For the moment, we have fenced and planted only 30 ha, 10 ha of which is south-facing. We planted only part of the land with the intention to continue planting the rest, which is also south-facing, only once we are satisfied with the results. In 2022, we re-planted 51.000 seedlings and watered the seedlings regularly.



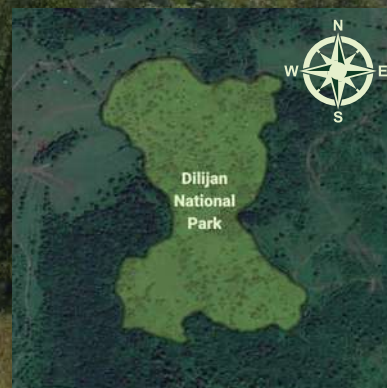
Dilijan National Park

Area: 20 ha

Elevation: 1650 m

Rehabilitating the forest ecosystem in the precious area of Dilijan National Park is extremely important, along with creating new forests.

Together with Dilijan National Park, we selected a reforestation site that covers an area of 20 ha. Reforestation activities for this site include fencing the area, sowing native seed species, and tree planting. Here we plant much less densely than in afforestation areas, as the main objective is to help the forest to recover its self-sustaining capacity. Seeds and trees represent key species of the national park's biodiversity.



Urasar

Area: 360 ha

Elevation: 1725 - 2300 m

At the beginning of December, we submitted to the Ministry of Environment of Armenia the Environmental Impact Assessment documents (EIA) report for the Urasar reforestation area. In the scope of the EIA, we held our first public hearing in the community. We got positive feedback from the people of Urasar and surrounding villages to carry out a big reforestation project. We have received a positive response from the Ministry of Environment and will soon sign a contract with the community. As soon as we finalize the documents, we will start fencing the area, hire a guard, and finally plant trees!



New areas



In April, we received the positive opinion of the Ministry of Environment to the EIA report for the afforestation areas in Sarahart, Shenavan, and Arevashogh communities for a total surface of 1500 ha. The administrative steps that are needed to secure these lands for afforestation are more complex and take a much longer time, but we hope that we will be able to plant in these fantastic areas already in fall 2023.

Nurseries

From March to November, our 30+ nursery workers at Benjamin Gumuchdjian and Debet nurseries worked hard to sow, maintain, and harvest seedlings. We continuously improve our techniques for growing and maintaining seedlings as we seek higher productivity and quality.

This year, we planted poplars, pears, pines, oaks, and shrubs along the fence at Benjamin Gumuchdjian nursery. As soon as these trees grow in size, they will serve as windbreakers and as shade for some seedlings.

We have started implementing drainage systems at the nurseries to control water flows and avoid seedling damage after heavy rains or snow melting.

We will continue this important work next year as well. A special scheme was also applied to sowing the seed in order to avoid soil runoff.

Our construction team finished the workers' house renovation at Debet nursery. Part of the existing metal house has been transformed into a warehouse.

During the year, the irrigation systems in both of our nurseries were under permanent maintenance.

And finally, we inaugurated our Alley of Honorary Guests in the Benjamin Gumuchdjian nursery, where the RA Minister of Environment and the Deputy Governor of Lori Marz planted the first birches.

Seeds

From September to the end of October, our nursery workers collected seeds like pear, apple, linden, hornbeam, and maples. We also bought a substantial number of seeds from different villagers. Our nursery workers managed to clean, dry, and sow all species on time.

A few groups of volunteers also joined us to collect wild pears. While this activity is different from planting trees, it helps people understand the whole chain of growing a tree, founding a forest, and the importance of doing quality work at each step.



Greenhouse



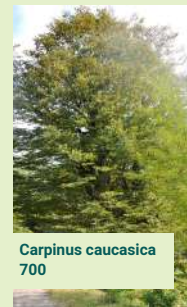
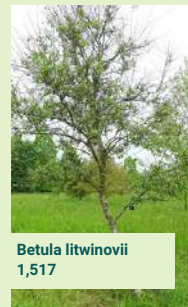
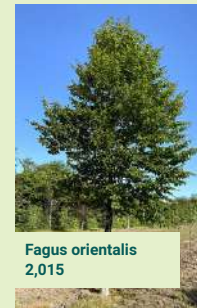
For the first time this year, we planted close-root seedlings grown in our greenhouse!

Our greenhouse has the capacity to grow 72,000 close-root seedlings per year. This offers many advantages: close-root seedlings are more viable after being planted, during the entire growth and planting process of the tree seedlings. This the root system is not disturbed, and the seedlings are not damaged during the transportation process. This offers the opportunity of having healthy and viable seedlings in a short period of time and a higher survival rate during reforestation activities. Furthermore, it allows to extend our planting window by a few weeks and thus plant more in one season.

Growing tree seedlings in containers for afforestation and reforestation programs is the preferred method in many countries. As for us, we'll have the first results of the monitoring in fall 2023 and we are very excited to see them!

Tree Species

Forests are complex ecosystems. Our aim at My Forest Armenia is to create lasting forests as close to natural as possible. To ensure biodiversity, we plant many different local species of trees and also different species of shrubs as they attract insects and birds which are essential for creating strong ecosystems. In 2022 we planted 13 different species of trees for a total number of 658,671.



Challenges

The challenges of reforestation are multiple: from global climate change that impacts the volume of precipitation and humidity in our afforestation areas to the physical difficulties that our tree planters have to overcome, not to mention the lengthy and sometimes complicated administrative steps to secure the lands for afforestation.

About 80% of the territory of Armenia is exposed to various degrees of desertification, which is not only the consequence of anthropogenic activity but is also affected by natural factors, such as water and wind erosion of soils, drought, landslides, alkalization, etc.* This situation makes our action more urgent than ever, as the window of opportunity to increase the forest cover may not be lasting long. For our forestry team, every day is a constant fight to make sure the seedlings do well and eventually become part of a forest one day.

It all starts with research based on scientific data to find suitable lands, as we cannot create natural forests anywhere. Then comes identifying and growing the required quantities of tree species that can thrive in the area selected, hiring and training the tree planters, and managing a team of 200 people.

This requires flawless organization so that our nurseries produce sufficient quantities of seedlings in time. It also requires organizing the roles of each participant well ahead of time.

One of the challenges we are facing, as our organization grows, is to make sure that the tree planters can work optimally in the very short time period available for planting. Indeed as we are planting mostly bareroot

root seedlings, we have to wait until fall when plants become dormant, then plant them as quickly as possible until winter and snow prevents us from continuing. The reverse is the case in spring. We start planting as soon and as quickly as possible, with snow still on parts of the mountains, until the plants become active. In order to maximize the number of trees planted, we need to make sure that our workers can access the planting areas as easily as possible. As they are in mountainous areas, this can be quite challenging. This means, for example, ensuring that there are enough access tracks to the afforestation fields and make sure they are well maintained. We are pretty nimble in finding original solutions. This year we used horses and don-keys to bring materials up the mountain. It turned out to be a very efficient and environmentally friendly solution!

Another challenge is to ensure the highest possible survival rate. For that, we must choose the best quality lands for reforestation. Indeed, the areas are so vast that it is impossible to water the young seedlings once planted. We have to select lands with a good amount of rainfall during the vegetation period, i.e., from May until September, with slopes mainly oriented to the north.

In 2022, we worked in the afforestation areas of the Jrashen community, which are semi-arid. A sizable area of Jrashen I is facing south and southwest, and the results in these areas were difficult. However, Jrashen II should deliver much better results.

Next year, we will plant in Urasar, which is an ideal land for reforestation with a high level of humidity and good rainfall. We are very excited about this new project and are looking forward to discovering the results.

* Fourth National Communication of Armenia on Climate Change, UNFCCC, 2020

Forest Alliance of Armenia

We are proud to announce that we actively worked to create the new "Forest Alliance of Armenia" with our colleagues "Armenia Tree Project" and "Shen" NGO.

Our three organizations, active in reforestation and afforestation in Armenia, have decided to unite to advocate for the protection and restoration of forest ecosystems and to support the increase of forest cover in Armenia. Through the Alliance, we aim to speak with one voice to government officials and public policymakers as well as raise awareness among the general public about the importance of forests, the dangers they are facing, and the possible solutions for forest conservation.

The priorities of the Forest Alliance of Armenia are:

- Designation of new lands for afforestation
- Conservation and restoration of natural forests
- Sustainable management and protection of planted forests from the soviet era
- Stopping the indiscriminate burning of grasslands.

In order to achieve its objectives and realize its mission, the Alliance will:

- Organize regular roundtables with public authorities and other stakeholders concerned with forests, such as universities, NGOs, international organizations, etc. in order to discuss and provide concrete results on various subjects.
- Participate in working groups together with public authorities to ensure the practical follow-up.
- Raise public awareness to the importance of forests and trees in general via different communication methods, such as, media, social media, exhibitions, etc.

The Alliance is open and welcomes any new reforestation or forest conservation organizations who are active in Armenia in accordance to its by-laws. The Forest Alliance of Armenia is looking forward to help achieve large-scale and lasting impact on forests of Armenia.

The PEOPLE behind

"I don't know if we'll be on this planet or not after thirty years all these seedlings will become a forest here. We'll be proud that we planted them thirty years ago. Just look at the trees! It's us! We planted them!"

Vahram, tree planter



"When you love what you do everything works out."

Anna, nursery worker



"When you plant a tree, you're giving life to it. You have to do your best. We know it and we do our work with full responsibility."

Tatevik, tree planter

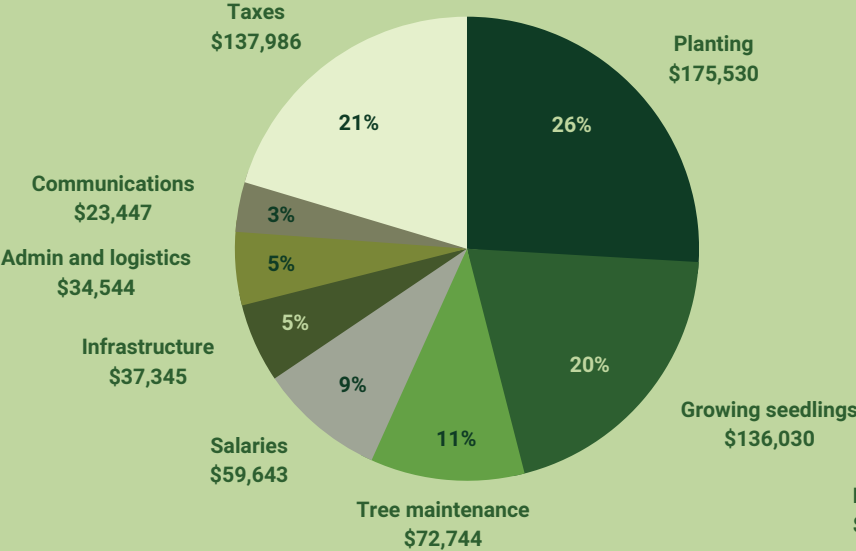




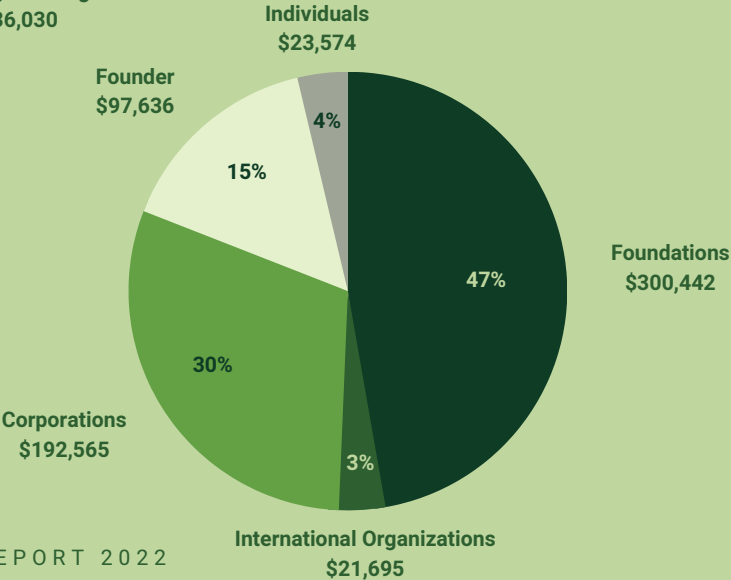
Finances

In 2022 our total expenses amounted to AMD 270,907,665 or around USD 677,000. We are very cautious to keep our logistics and administrative expenses at a minimum. While the expenses for growing seedlings, planting and maintenance of trees form the main part of our budget, a sizable share turns out to be taxes. We are in fact happy to also contribute to the budget of the Republic of Armenia.

Total budget breakdown



Total funds raised



OUR PARTNERS



Ministry of Environment



Committee of Forest



Dilijan National Park



**Lori Province
Dilijan Community
Spitak Community
Stepanavan Community**



Donor Organisations



Individual Donors

One-time Donors

Marleen Duerinckx
David and Patricia Grayson
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Armand Akilyan
Priti Flanagan
David Sassoon
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Arsen Hakobyan
Anahit Yeprikyan
Mery Mayilyan
Christian Van Den Bogaert
Ashley Morgan
Lusé Shahnazarian
Arega Shahnazarian

A big thanks also to all those who made a donation wishing to remain anonymous.

Plant trees for life!



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