

FORWARD (Edition 2014)



The National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS) has launched several initiatives aiming at preserving Lebanon's picturesque natural environment. However, the present work "Illustrated Flora of Lebanon" that the CNRS is proud and honored to sponsor and publish, is not only a scientific book but a real piece of art authored by Professors Georges and Henriette Tohmé.

Lebanon's biodiversity is one of its unique riches. By choosing to document plants of Lebanon, Professors Georges and Henriette Tohmé are directly contributing to the promotion of Lebanon by revealing one of its somewhat unknown but endangered treasures. In doing so, they also show their concern of spreading a culture of ecologically sustainable development which has become a universal concern. In this respect, the authors' driving force is to confront one of the thousands of challenges facing humanity as economies, technologies, cultures and the ways that people use natural resources change in today's rapidly evolving world. These challenges are encapsulated by the concept of 'sustainable development'. Some consider sustainable development to be the major challenge of our time, but it is difficult for concerned individuals to know what they can actually do to help make it happen.

This is indeed a challenge that merits the attention and action of us all. A crucial ingredient for sustainable development is a well-informed public. All actions that impact the environment come ultimately from individuals. It is public opinion that stimulates governments, corporations and other sectors of society to appropriate action.

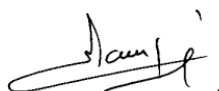
Professors Georges and Henriette Tohmé have established a reputation as the foremost chroniclers of the endangered nature of Lebanon, combining rigorous methodology with aesthetic genius. Their work has afforded a vivid presence to scarce animals and plants, many of which are threatened with extinction.

Listing the achievements of Professors Georges and Henriette Tohmé in this field would probably take us beyond the pages of this book. However, and in this regard, it is essential to mention that several articles pertaining to this fantastic compilation of the flora of Lebanon, have already been published in the Lebanese Science Journal of the CNRS.

The present volume, more like an atlas of Lebanon's plants, is the product of personal initiatives taken by the authors. It assembles 2600 plants from various parts and different ecosystems of Lebanon and required 12 years of continuous efforts and intense daily research. It is an entirely original work aiming at valorizing the natural cultural heritage of Lebanon as well as its biodiversity.

This work follows the creation by Georges and Henriette Tohmé of a herbarium donated to the National Council of Scientific Research. The herbarium presently housed by the CNRS contains some 3544 specimens and offers a database similar to that of the "Museum national d'histoire naturelle" in Paris.

This pioneering work addresses scientists as well as the public at large. We wish to encourage other scientists to continue the work already started in order to draw the attention of those who will be exposed to the sumptuousness of Lebanon's biodiversity through this volume to actively act towards its preservation.



Mouin Hamzé
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