


# Trees for Life

A Legacy That Grows





From the seeds planted by our founders to the one million trees we will plant this year, every branch of ATP's work grows from a legacy of commitment. Together, we honor the roots that came before us while planting for the generations ahead.

## *A Legacy That Grows*

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*"He was a great tree in our forest, and his loss will be felt in our ecosystem greatly."*

*- Alex Kew, Bob Mirak's granddaughter and current ATP Director of Field Operations*



*Robert Mirak and his sister Muriel Mirak Weissbach dedicate the nursery named for their parents in 2006.*

## IN MEMORY OF DR. ROBERT (BOB) MIRAK

With deep respect and gratitude, Armenia Tree Project honors the life and legacy of Dr. Robert (Bob) Mirak.

Born into a family shaped by the Armenian Genocide and driven by a deep sense of responsibility to his ancestral homeland, Bob Mirak exemplified the power of purposeful philanthropy. As one of ATP's most dedicated supporters, his belief in the importance of reforestation, sustainability, and economic opportunity laid the foundation for the work ATP continues today.

A distinguished scholar, Bob earned his PhD in History from Harvard University and turned his thesis on Armenian immigrants in America into the landmark book *Torn Between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I*. His final work, *Genocide Survivors, Community Builders*, explored the history of his own Armenian immigrant family. These publications reflected a lifelong commitment to documenting and uplifting the Armenian experience especially in America.

In addition to his early and sustained support of ATP, as Chair of the John Mirak Foundation, Bob was a very generous benefactor to a wide range of Armenian institutions and initiatives — from education and cultural preservation to genocide recognition and diaspora engagement. His leadership, intellectual rigor, and generosity of spirit left a lasting impact across generations and continents. His daughters Julia and Jennifer continue the legacy of giving through the John Mirak Foundation. Today, his granddaughter Alex carries on the family's commitment as ATP's Director of Field Operations in Armenia, helping to grow the very mission he helped establish.

Bob Mirak's dedication to his cultural heritage and identity was matched by his commitment to planting Armenia's forests. Every tree we plant is a continuation of his legacy and a testament to his hope for Armenia's future. Armenia Tree Project's John and Artemis Mirak Reforestation Nursery in Margahovit is the largest nursery of its kind in the region. Using state of the art techniques and tools, ATP's team is able to plant one million healthy trees per year in new forests in Armenia. Our forestry program would not exist without Bob's vision and support.

In remarks at his funeral, Bob's granddaughter Alex remarked on how much her grandfather and great-grandfather loved the land, both in Armenia and America. "Trees and forests are such a beautiful metaphor for community. A tree alone cannot make a forest, but it is through their interconnected roots and through the community that they build with each other on that land, that creates a great ecosystem. When forests are successful, they act as a family, with great trees protecting and watching over the young trees as they grow, before it is time for them to pass on the light of the canopy to the next generation. I know that my grandfather carried on his father's legacy proudly... and I can only hope to continue in his footsteps for my family and community."

Asdvadz hokin lusavori. May God illuminate his soul.

If you would like to honor Bob Mirak's legacy, donations in his memory may be made to Armenia Tree Project at [ArmeniaTree.org](http://ArmeniaTree.org) or by contacting us at [info@armeniatree.org](mailto:info@armeniatree.org).



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is with deep gratitude and genuine excitement that I step into the role of Executive Director of the Armenia Tree Project. I'm honored to join an organization with a powerful legacy of environmental stewardship, community empowerment, and national impact—one that has been rooted in Armenia's soil and spirit for over 30 years.

I want to express my appreciation to Jeanmarie Papelian, who has led ATP with vision and dedication over the past decade. I also want to thank our founder Carolyn Mugar and fellow Members of the Board Anthony Barsamian and Tom Garabedian for the trust placed in me. Under their leadership, ATP has grown to be Armenia's leading environmental organization.

A bit about me: prior to joining ATP, my career has focused on advancing public good through nonprofit leadership, philanthropy, and academic engagement, including roles in U.S. government, higher education, and foundations. I have long been committed to environmental sustainability and community development.

I love Armenia. I grew up in the Boston area but my family and I are now based in Yerevan, where I've lived and worked for 10 years. I travel regularly to the U.S. to stay connected with our diaspora network. I was drawn to ATP because I believe deeply in the organization's proven ability to improve lives by restoring land and helping Armenia face climate and development challenges with tangible action.

What excites me most about ATP is the extraordinary team of professionals, partners, and supporters who bring our mission to life. Whether planting trees in remote villages, restoring forests in post-conflict zones, or mentoring the next generation of environmental stewards, ATP's work is both meaningful and visible across Armenia.

As I begin this chapter, I do so with a clear sense of urgency and optimism. Climate change, land degradation, and displacement continue to challenge Armenia's ecosystems and communities. Yet we also see tremendous opportunity to build a greener, healthier, and more resilient future for Armenia and for generations to come.

In the next edition of *Trees for Life*, I'll be sharing our updated organizational priorities. I look forward to outlining ATP's next chapter and to inviting you to help shape and strengthen it.

If you would like to connect, I welcome your ideas, questions, and support. You can reach me directly at [ara@armeniatree.org](mailto:ara@armeniatree.org)



## PASSING THE TORCH: LEADERSHIP CHANGE



Armenia Tree Project Board Members (L to R):  
Anthony Barsamian, Ara Barsam, Carolyn Mugar, Jeanmarie Papelian, Tom Garabedian

# THANK YOU JEANMARIE!

## For 10 years of service and leadership to ATP!

Jeanmarie Papelian, longtime Executive Director of Armenia Tree Project, will retire effective December 31, 2025. Joining the organization in her place is Ara Barsam, who began leading ATP from its offices in Yerevan beginning July 1, 2025.

**Save the dates and stay tuned for more information to celebrate Jeanmarie's legacy and welcome new Executive Director, Ara Barsam**  
**Los Angeles (October 17) & Boston (October 23)**

Read More on our website, [ArmeniaTree.org](https://ArmeniaTree.org)

# BACKYARD NURSERY PROGRAM

## From One Backyard to a Greener Armenia

**In Margahovit, one woman turned 2,550 seedlings into a steady income for her family.**

In many rural Armenian villages, employment opportunities are scarce, but fertile land and determination abound. Armenia Tree Project's Backyard Nursery (BYN) Program taps into both, helping families turn small plots into thriving nurseries.

Each year, ATP provides 1,200-1,500 seedlings to participating families, along with training, tools, and ongoing support. Over two to three years, those seedlings grow strong enough to plant. ATP then buys them back for use in reforestation and community projects, giving families a stable income while greening Armenia.

Since its launch, over 150 families have grown more than 300,000 trees, increasing household incomes by an average of 40%. This isn't just about planting trees, it's about dignity, purpose, and economic independence in Armenia's most remote villages.

### MEET LUSINE HAKOBYAN FROM MARGAHOVIT

Lusine joined BYN in 2022. In just two years, she's cultivated and sold 2,550 trees and shrubs, earning 365,000 AMD to support her family. Her story is proof that small seeds can grow into real opportunity.



**“Every seedling I plant is a step toward a better future,” Lusine says.**

### Help a Family Grow Their Future

Sponsor a backyard nursery and be part of  
**A Legacy That Grows.**

Contact Cheryl Ourfalian Smith at [cheryl@armeniatree.org](mailto:cheryl@armeniatree.org) or visit  
[ArmeniaTree.org/Backyard-Nurseries](https://ArmeniaTree.org/Backyard-Nurseries).

# COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING

## Planting Hope, Growing Community

In Nazravan, the shade of 1,795 new trees now welcomes every visitor to St. Grigor Narekatsi Church.

From city parks to rural schoolyards, Armenia Tree Project's Community Tree Planting (CTP) Program brings people together to take climate action, one tree at a time.

Through CTP, we provide climate-resilient trees, hands-on guidance, and environmental education to help communities green their own neighborhoods. Whether revitalizing disaster-impacted areas, restoring public spaces, or creating pockets of shade and beauty, each planting becomes a shared investment in the future.

To date, CTP has transformed over 1,800 sites across every region of Armenia, turning empty spaces into symbols of resilience, healing, and pride.

### FEATURED SITE: ST. GRIGOR NAREKATSI CHURCH, NAZRVAN

Since 2015, ATP has planted 1,795 fruit, nut, and decorative trees on the sacred grounds of St. Grigor Narekatsi Church. These plantings have restored the landscape, provided shade and nourishment, and enhanced the spiritual and communal atmosphere for local residents.

Over the next year, we plan to plant 100 more trees and shrubs around the church, expanding its green footprint and reinforcing the role of faith-based spaces as anchors for environmental care and community gathering.



## Help Communities Plant for Tomorrow

Sponsor a site and contribute to  
**A Legacy That Grows.**

Contact Cheryl Ourfalian Smith at [cheryl@armeniatree.org](mailto:cheryl@armeniatree.org) or visit  
**[ArmeniaTree.org/Community](https://ArmeniaTree.org/Community).**

# RESILIENT ROOTS

## Supporting Displaced Families from Artsakh

Uprooted from their homeland overnight, fifteen displaced families — along with students of Shushi Technological University — are now growing both food and hope in their new greenhouses.

What began in 2021 as a food security project in Artsakh has evolved into a lifeline for those displaced by ethnic cleansing. When the entire Armenian population of Artsakh was forced to flee in September 2023, Armenia Tree Project acted quickly.

Through our Resilient Roots initiative, we provided emergency aid, household essentials, and greenhouse training to help families regain stability and rebuild their livelihoods. In 2024, eight greenhouses were built for families; this year, another eight were added — giving recipients the tools to generate income, achieve self-sufficiency, and nurture resilience from the ground up.

**Every greenhouse is more than a structure; it's where uprooted lives grow strong again.**



## Help Families Rebuild

**More displaced families are hoping to receive backyard greenhouses.**

Sponsor a greenhouse and be part of  
**A Legacy That Grows.**

Contact Cheryl Ourfalian Smith at [cheryl@armeniatree.org](mailto:cheryl@armeniatree.org) or visit  
**[ArmeniaTree.org/ResilientRoots](https://ArmeniaTree.org/ResilientRoots).**

# SOWING THE FUTURE

## From Loss to Leadership

In the face of war, displacement, and blockade, 120 students refused to give up on their education and planted seeds for Armenia's future.

After the 2020 war and the loss of Shushi, Shushi Technological University was forced to relocate to Stepanakert. ATP stepped in through our Backyard Greenhouse Program, providing fruit trees, a greenhouse, and training to help students and faculty grow their own food. This lifeline became critical during the nine-month blockade (December 2022–September 2023), when food shortages gripped the region.

When the entire Armenian population of Artsakh was displaced in 2023, the University again showed extraordinary resilience. Reestablishing itself in Yerevan, it re-licensed and reopened, and today, 120 students continue their studies despite immense disruption.

ATP has supported this transition by delivering emergency aid, refurbishing classrooms, and creating a stable, inspiring environment for learning. Through a new partnership, students now have internship opportunities at our tree nurseries, gaining hands-on skills in agriculture, horticulture, and environmental restoration.

Next, we're planting the seed for a dedicated university greenhouse in Ptghni village. This new facility will serve as an educational and research hub, helping students grow their expertise, and Armenia's food security for generations to come.



## Help Plant the Next Seed

Sponsor a greenhouse or help sustain  
**Shushi Technological University's revived agricultural program.**

Contact Cheryl Ourfalian Smith at [cheryl@armeniatree.org](mailto:cheryl@armeniatree.org) or visit  
**[ArmeniaTree.org/SowingTheFuture](https://ArmeniaTree.org/SowingTheFuture).**

# SEEDS OF CHANGE

## Planting a Million Trees Starts with a Single Seed

What does it take to plant a million trees every year? Not just commitment, land, or labor, but something far smaller: the seed.

At Armenia Tree Project's Mirak Reforestation Nursery, eight species of native trees are propagated each season, including oak, birch, ash, maple, and wild fruit trees. But growing a healthy forest starts long before planting. It begins with a reliable, well-managed seed supply.

Since 2006, ATP's forestry program has restored over 1,600 hectares of land with high-quality seeds collected across Armenia. Yet nature isn't always predictable. Some species only produce viable seeds every few years, and without proper storage and testing facilities, it can be difficult to meet the demands of our ambitious reforestation program.

Thanks to a generous gift from an anonymous donor, ATP is now building Armenia's first-ever seed testing and storage facility. Located on the grounds of the Mirak Nursery, this state-of-the-art lab will feature germination testing equipment, advanced processing tools, and long-term refrigeration to protect and preserve native seeds for years to come.



**“With this facility, ATP will lead Armenia to a greener, healthier future.”**  
**says Vahe Matsakyan,**  
**ATP Forestry Department Manager**

In preparation, international seed science experts Rebecca Lieberg and Karma Bou Azza visited Armenia to advise the ATP team on technical needs. “We want to ensure that we implement the latest technology and best practices,” says Aram Movsisyan, Mirak Nursery Manager. “That way, we know our forests will thrive for generations.”

## Help Us Grow the Next Million Trees

Your support ensures Armenia has the seeds it needs for tomorrow's forests.

Contact Cheryl Ourfalian Smith at [cheryl@armeniatree.org](mailto:cheryl@armeniatree.org) or visit [ArmeniaTree.org/SeedsOfChange](http://ArmeniaTree.org/SeedsOfChange).

# 30 YEARS OF GREEN LEGACY

## Celebrating Three Decades of Planting Hope, Growing Armenia

This year marks a major milestone for Armenia Tree Project: 30 years of environmental action, community resilience, and reforestation across Armenia. Since 1994, we've transformed barren hillsides into thriving forests, empowered rural families with economic opportunity, and mobilized generations to plant hope, one tree at a time.

To honor this legacy, ATP hosted a series of special gatherings across the U.S., Canada, and Armenia, bringing together the supporters, partners, and communities who helped us plant more than nine million trees over the past three decades.

### ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISING EVENTS

We were proud to celebrate with our global community through heartfelt events hosted by some of our most dedicated supporters:

- Lake Arrowhead, California | Hosted by the Hairapetian Family – July 2024
- Belmont, Massachusetts | Hosted by the Atinizian Family – August 2024
- Glendale, California | Hosted by the Tufenkian Family – September 2024
- Yerevan, Armenia | 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trip - May 2025

From lakeside forests to suburban gardens, each event brought together donors, partners, and new friends to celebrate Armenia's green future. Stories were shared, toasts were raised, and our mission resonated across every backdrop.



*Hairapetian Family  
Lake Arrowhead, CA*



*Atinizian Family  
Belmont, MA*



*Tufenkian Family  
Glendale, CA*



*30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trip  
Jivan Restaurant, Yerevan, Armenia*

# 30 YEARS OF GREEN LEGACY

## Photo Exhibition



As part of our anniversary celebrations, we launched a traveling photo exhibition highlighting three decades of transformation through ATP's Community Tree Planting (CTP) sites. Each image tells a story of resilience, renewal, and the power of collective action.

So far, the exhibit has made stops in: Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Montreal. The response has been overwhelming, and we're just getting started.

**Want to Bring "30 Years of Green Legacy" exhibit to your city?**

Contact Anahit at [AnahitG@ArmeniaTree.org](mailto:AnahitG@ArmeniaTree.org) to learn more.

## 9 Millionth Tree Planting

In May 2025, we returned to our roots for a week of celebration, education, and hands-on action, culminating in the planting of our 9 millionth tree. The week included:

- **Community Tree Plantings** in Margahovit, Jrashen, and Paruyr Sevak, uniting schoolchildren, volunteers, and local officials to green public spaces and restore village landscapes.
- **Environmental Education Workshops** for students and teachers in Lori and Ararat, emphasizing stewardship, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
- **Site Visits to ATP's Flagship Programs**, from our Backyard Nursery Program to reforestation sites and our forestry training center in Karin village.
- **9 Millionth Tree Planting Ceremony** at Semonian Park, where community members, partners, and long-time supporters gathered to celebrate this historic milestone.
- **Storytelling Sessions & Community Reflections**, where staff and beneficiaries shared the impact of ATP's work, past, present, and future.



# RETURNING TO ROOTS

## Greening Schools in Syunik

***“These trees aren’t just part of the schoolyard, they’re part of our identity.” – Principal, Goris Village School***

In Spring 2025, ATP’s Environmental Education team returned to schools in the Syunik region, places where thousands of trees had been planted through our Community Tree Planting program since 2008.

Over four days, students in villages like Vaghatur, Khndzoresk, Nerkin Khndzoresk, Goris, and Khnatsakh welcomed the Mobile Laboratory for interactive lessons on ecology, sustainability, and climate action. In total, 462 students and teachers took part.

### A Legacy of Green Schoolyards

From the first plantings in 2008 to recent additions in 2024, ATP has brought a mix of fruit, ornamental, and evergreen trees to schoolyards, transforming them into vibrant, living classrooms. These green spaces aren’t just beautiful; they foster curiosity, connection, and care for the environment.

### Beyond the View: Halidzor’s Hidden Story

Beneath the postcard-perfect view from the Wings of Tatev cable car lies a deeper impact. ATP has distributed fruit and nut trees to every household in Halidzor, supporting food resilience, while our education team has worked with local children to plant seeds of sustainability that go far beyond tourism.



VAGHATUR VILLAGE SCHOOL'S GREENED YARD THRIVING SINCE OUR FIRST PLANTING IN 2008.

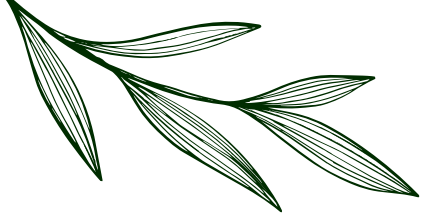


ORCHARDS FLOURISHING IN KHNDZORESK AND NERKIN KHNDZORESK VILLAGE SCHOOLS.



CTP PLANTING SITES AT GORIS VILLAGE SCHOOLS. LIVING PROOF OF LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP.





# RETURNING TO ROOTS

## Greening Schools in Syunik

### Bringing the Lab to the Classroom

Training sessions covered everything from composting and biohumus preparation to the role of insects in nature. Even in challenging conditions, like the nearby gunfire heard during our visit to Khnatsakh, students arrived eager and engaged.

### Hope Grows Here

“These children are growing up in difficult circumstances,” said ATP educators Gayane and Nvard. “But they’re curious, hopeful, and resilient. We were honored to bring something positive to their day.”

ATP’s return to these schools is more than a revisit, it’s proof that long-term environmental education and reforestation go hand in hand, planting hope as surely as we plant trees.



ATP ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TEAM  
LEADING A HANDS-ON LAB ACTIVITY IN SYUNIK.



STUDENTS IN GORIS, KHNATSAKH, AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES  
ENGAGE IN INTERACTIVE LESSONS ON ECOLOGY, BIODIVERSITY,  
AND CLIMATE ACTION

# **ATP LAUNCHES A NEW ERA OF COMMUNITY-LED FOREST STEWARDSHIP IN ARMENIA**

## **Fioletovo to Lead the Preservation of the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest**

Nearly 20 years ago, Armenia Tree Project (ATP) planted the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest to honor the life and vision of Hrant Dink, a Turkish-Armenian journalist whose work championed truth, justice, and reconciliation.

What began as young saplings has grown into a thriving ecosystem of native pines, helping control erosion, protect biodiversity, and create a living symbol of hope.



### **An Historic First for Armenia**

In 2027, ATP will hand over care of the 11-hectare forest to the village of Fioletovo, marking the first time in Armenia that a community will take long-term stewardship of a reforested area.

Home to the Malakan community, Fioletovo is known for its deep respect for nature, self-reliance, and harmony with the environment, values that make its residents natural forest guardians.

## Preparing for the Future

Over the next two years, ATP will train local residents in sustainable forest management, fire prevention, climate resilience, and eco-tourism. Women, youth, and marginalized voices will be actively included in planning the forest's future.

This effort will be guided by a 10-year management plan, ensuring the forest remains healthy, resilient, and a source of pride for generations.

## More Than Trees

The transfer of the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest is about more than environmental stewardship, it's about trust, healing, and shared responsibility. By placing this forest in the care of the people who live beside it, ATP is planting the seeds for a new model of conservation in Armenia—one where nature and community grow stronger together.



# FALL PLANTING 2025

This autumn, we're preparing for one of our biggest planting seasons yet, nearly **330,000 trees** at reforestation sites plus **35,000 more through our Community Tree Planting (CTP) program**. That will bring ATP's 2025 total to over **one million trees planted — a record year!**

Beyond restoring Armenia's landscapes, these efforts will **provide seasonal jobs for more than 100 rural workers**, supporting livelihoods where we plant.

## Reforestation Sites

We'll plant in **Koghes, Tsaghkaber, Gavar, Pemzashen, and Lernakert**:

- **Koghes & Tsaghkaber** – Up to 120,000 native oak, ash, apple, pine, and maple trees at each site, with added fencing to protect young forests. 30–40 seasonal workers per site.
- **Gavar & Lernakert** – 22,000–25,000 trees per site, plus rock removal to prepare the land. 20 seasonal workers per site.
- **Pemzashen** – 40,000 trees, 30 workers, and new fencing.
- Expanding into a **100-hectare area in Urasar**, marking a major step for future reforestation.

## Community Tree Planting (CTP)

This fall, our **CTP program will green over 110 schools, churches, parks, and cultural sites**, many in border villages where fruit trees boost food security and resilience.

Highlights include:

- **Over 30 schools and 20 kindergartens** gaining shaded, fruit-bearing green spaces.
- Plantings at **Tatev Monastery, Zvartnots Museum, Byurakan Observatory, and Sardarapat Museum** to connect environmental action with cultural heritage.

Our CTP efforts bring together embassies, international partners, municipalities, NGOs, and corporate sponsors, new and returning.

## **SUPPORTING LOCAL LIVELIHOODS**

This season is powered by rural seasonal workers and thousands of volunteer hours from Armenia and abroad.

**Help us plant one million trees in 2025 and hire more seasonal workers**

Visit our website, [ArmeniaTree.org](https://ArmeniaTree.org)

# BE PART OF ONE MILLION



We're on track to hit a historic milestone: **planting 1 million trees** this year. To get there, we need to raise **\$500,000** this fall to bring on additional seasonal workers and cover essential planting costs.

You can help us reach our goal of growing a greener more resilient Armenia.

**Every tree counts. Every gift plants hope.**

Donate Today!



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