



KKL-JNF Forests in the Western Negev

Ensuring quality of life, a sustainable environment, and resilience in the region



KKL-JNF started planting forests in Israel's Western Negev (Gaza Envelope) in the mid-20th century, providing the early communities with green lungs and a beautiful landscape and making the desert bloom. Over the years, the forests grew and flourished and with KKL-JNF's continued maintenance and preservation, they became natural habitats for local flora and fauna, focal points for tourists and visitors, improved air quality and even provided security for communities close to the Gaza border.

The Western Negev region has always been known for its warm and welcoming communities, unique beauty, forests and nature reserves, quality of life, hiking and cycling trails, local artists, wine, cuisine and more. However, it has also known hard challenging times due to its close proximity to the Gaza Strip: gun fire, rocket and missile launches, incendiary attacks and war. On October 7, 2023, the region suffered the most devastating attack in Israel's history as Hamas terrorists invaded over 30 communities, killing 1,200 men, women, and children, and leaving nothing but destruction and devastation behind them. Some of KKL-JNF's forests were also damaged during the invasion, especially Be'eri Forest which was the location of the Nova Festival massacre.

The aftermath of October 7th left a deep wound in us all – Israelis and Jews worldwide. Yet, amid the challenges and adversity, KKL-JNF has stood strongly beside the people and communities of the Western Negev. Through valiant efforts and strategic initiatives, KKL-JNF is committed to rehabilitating its forests and fostering a renewed sense of stability and faith in a bright and green future.



- 1. Gvar'am Forest
- 2. Yad Mordechai Forest
- 3. Erez Forest
- 4. Sderot Forest
- 5. Be'eri Forest
- 6. Shokeda Forest
- 7. Netivot Forest
- 8. Kissufim Forest
- 9. Nahal Asaf Forest
- 10. Nahal HaBesor Forest
- 11. Magen Forest



Life-Saving Trees

Protecting the people of the Western Negev has always been critical as these communities have continuously been living under threat of rockets, gunfire, and armed conflict. Through strategic tree-planting efforts led by KKL-JNF, rows of large and dense of trees have been planted near or surrounding communities and main roads to ensure the safety of all civilians in the area.

Over 20 km (12 miles) long, the goal of this "green curtain" is to obstruct militant activity in the line of sight and protect the population and infrastructure from rocket fire, gun fire and shrapnel. A natural buffer zone, the trees provide safe passage for residents, children on the way to school and enable farmers to access their fields without fear. Through various security planting projects, KKL-JNF aims to ensure safe passage, support livelihoods, and maintain ongoing activities despite security challenges.

- +10,000 trees planted, in 38 segments
- 18 communities protected
- Contributing to environmental conservation, combating desertification and climate change

Numerous security planting projects have been made possible by donations and contributions from friends of KKL-JNF in Israel and worldwide.



Combating Desertification

Over 60% of Israel's territory, encompassing regions like the Negev and the Arava, grapples with arid conditions, enduring prolonged periods of severe dryness throughout the year. These areas receive an annual rainfall ranging from approximately 50mm to 250mm. In contrast, cities such as London and Melbourne receive about 580mm of rain annually. while New York City receives approximately 1200mm of annual rainfall.

The demand for water, both for domestic usage and agricultural needs, poses a significant challenge for residents in these arid zones and for Israel as a whole. Recognizing this pressing issue, KKL-JNF is heavily investing in the development and implementation of systems aimed at halting desert expansion and revitalizing areas already affected by desertification.

- Operating monitoring stations across the Negev region to analyze data aimed at enhancing agricultural practices.
- Innovating arid planting techniques, including the utilization of runoff water capture to foster the growth of natural vegetation.





- desert methodologies.

head-on.

worldwide.

 Planting Limans: Earthworks designed to collect floodwater, where trees are planted in the flooded area. This method conserves water and supports tree growth, helping them survive harsh conditions.

 Collaborating with multiple Israeli and international universitie and organizations to exchange knowledge and insights on sustainable

 Constructing water reservoirs to efficiently gather rainfall and runoff water for agricultural and ecological purposes.

KKL-JNF's commitment to combat desertification predates the widespread awareness of climate change. We persistently allocate significant resources to comprehensive ecological and environmental initiatives aimed at reversing the effects of desertification. These endeavors stand as a testament to our proactive stance in preserving Israel's natural landscapes and tackling environmental challenges

Numerous projects ensuring KKL-JNF accomplishments in this field have been made possible by donations and contributions from friends of KKL-JNF in Israel and



Gvar'am Forest

First planted:	1949
Size:	528 hectares / 5,280 a
Tree species:	Eucalyptus, cedar, syc
Distance from border:	7.5 km (4.6 miles)
Surrounding communities:	Kibbutz Gvar'am, Mos Moshav Mavki'im, Kibl Kibbutz Bror Hayil
Points of interest:	Scenic route, restored wildflower sites, Kurka

acres

camore

shav Heletz, Moshav Talmei Yaffe, Moshav Ge'a, bbutz Yad Mordechai, Kibbutz Erez, Kibbutz Or HaNer,

ed 1950's amphitheater, Gvaram singletrack, kar stone hills, the annual Darom Adom festival



The Gvar'am Forest, named for the nearby kibbutz, is located southeast of Ashkelon. The popular Gvar'am bike trail winds through the forest, which is filled with handplanted pines, eucalyptuses, and carpets of wildflowers during the winter and spring. In February, the area becomes adorned with bright-red anemones, attracting visitors to the Darom Adom ("Scarlet South") festival, a national attraction that draws thousands of people to the region each year. Situated on the outskirts of the 7 km (4 miles) Gaza border zone, the forest has been fortunate to escape the atrocities of October 7th. However, its location has rendered it vulnerable to frequent rocket fire and arson attacks throughout the years.





Yad	0
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First planted:	1950s
Size:	294 hectares / 726 acr
Tree species:	Eucalyptus, tamarisk,
Distance from border:	5 km (3 miles)
Surrounding communities:	Kibbutz Yad Mordecha Kibbutz Karmia, Kibbu
Points of interest:	The Sheizaf Path, recr ridges (kurkar), Nabiał ancient orchards, well Zikim Sand Dune Rese

ordechai Forest

cres

, acacia, cedar, Jerusalem pine, jujube

hai, Moshav Netiv HaAsara, Moshav Mavki'im, utz Zikim, Ashkelon

creation areas, lookout point, calcareous sandstone ah Mar'i Camping Site, Yoram Vanunu Recreation Area, ells, Olive Recreation Area, Zikim Beach, serve



The Yad Mordechai Forest is situated immediately north of Kibbutz Yad Morchechai, named for Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Located between the city of Ashkelon and the northern Gaza Border, it is KKL-JNF's southernmost forest along the Israeli coast. Its main route, the Sheizaf (Jujube) Path, borders the forest to the west. Aside from the Jujube trees that give the route its name, the forest contains a wide variety of broadleaf and coniferous trees, including tuart, flat-topped yate, and red gum eucalyptus, Jerusalem and stone pine, sycamore fig, tamarisk, olive, and carob. The trees are interspersed with the indigenous vegetation characteristic of calcareous sandstone ridges upon which the forest stands. Spiny broom (*Calicotome villosa*), which produces a profusion of yellow flowers in February and March, is especially prominent, and its presence testifies to the area's use for grazing, as it tends to proliferate on grazing lands. Desert broom (*Retama raetam*), whose densely clustered white blossom appears in February and attracts swarms of bees, can also be seen everywhere. These, in addition to the nectar-producing trees planted by KKL-JNF, are important to Kibbutz Yad Mordechai's honey-making industry.

KKL-JNF built a 10 km (6.7 miles) accessible cycling trail, as part of its 'national cycling trail master plan' to create a cycling trail network that will connect KKL-JNF forests around Israel.







First planted:	1944
Size:	319 hectares / 788 acr
Tree species:	Eucalyptus, tamarisk, a
Distance from border:	1.7 km (1 mile)
Surrounding communities:	Kibbutz Erez, Kibbutz (Moshav Netiv HaAsara
Points of interest:	The Shikma Stream ar accessible playground lookout point, kurkar s

res

, acacia, mixed broadleaf species, conifers

z Or HaNer, Sderot, Kibbutz Yad Mordechai,

and its tributaries, recreation areas, nd, historic Deir Suneid bridges and train station, stone hills



The Erez Forest extends over the area between the Yad Mordechai Junction and the Ibim Grove on the northern outskirts of Sderot.

The forest plots are scattered throughout the mostly cultivated area, and at its heart are several open areas of low kurkar hills. Desert shrubs, such as Philistine bedstraw (endangered), white weeping broom, shaggy sparrowwort, Mediterranean wild thyme, and spiny broom abound here. Animals (honey badger, gazelle) and birds (raptors, bee-eaters and wheatears) also make their home here. Sections of the forest run along Nahal Shikma, a seasonal stream that flows from the southern hills of the Judean Lowlands until it reaches the sea near Kibbutz Zikim. At various bends of the river, KKL-JNF has planted fruitbearing trees, including mulberry, fig, almond, sycamore and carob. They join the older tamarisk trees planted here. Also along the stream are World War I heritage sites such as the Deir Suneid arched bridges and railway station.

Sadly, parts of the open area were set on fire by incendiary balloons launched in the summer of 2018 from the Gaza Strip.







Sderot Forest

First planted:	1950
Size:	124 hectares / 307 acr
Tree species:	Native scrubland, euc
Distance from border:	1.2 km (0.7 mile)
Surrounding communities:	Sderot, Kibbutz Nir An
Points of interest:	Kurkar stone hills and the Assaf Siboni Scen and the Museum of W

cres

icalyptus, mixed broadleaf species, acacia

Am, Kibbutz Mefalsim, Kibbutz Gevim, Kibbutz Ibim

d vegetation, the Sderot Community Forest, enic Lookout, Nir Am Reservoir, circular cycling trail, Water and Security

The Sderot Forest is comprised of two sprawling woodlands that flank the southern half of Sderot to its east and west.

The eastern woodland, which abuts the city's Sapirim Industrial Park and the nearby Kibbutz Gevim, consists of native scrubland combined with majestic, wooded areas – some of which suffered severe damage from incendiary kite terror in 2018. Near Gevim there is also a winter pond. Surrounded by industrial, residential, and agricultural areas, the eastern woodlands provide essential ecosystem services such as soil enrichment, biodiversity, climate regulation, air purification, and more. The western flank, abutting a main highway and Kibbutz Nir Am, also contains majestic groves with a range of tree and bird species, as well as kurkar stone ridges that are home to some unique kurkar-specific flora and fauna such as raptors and gazelles. Tourism sites, such as the Nir Am bicycle singletrack and the Assaf Siboni Lookout can also be found here, as well as heritage sites such as the Museum of Water and Security.

The Sderot Forest serves as a vital green space for a city plagued by years of rocket fire, arson attacks, and war.





Photo: Ariel Ben Zeev



Be'eri Forest

Re'im Campsite

First planted:	1946
Size:	1,150 hectares / 2,840 ac
Tree species:	Conifer, broadleaf, fruit t
Distance from border:	3.4 km (2.1 miles)
Surrounding communities:	Kibbutz Be'eri, Kibbutz A
Points of interest:	Be'eri Badlands (Crater I Water Installations Rout Memorial for the Jews o Be'eri); The Sulfur Mines

acres

trees

Alumim, Kibbutz Nahal Oz, Kibbutz Re'im, Kibbutz Kissufim

r Nature Reserve); Be'eri Singletracks network; ute; Yad ANZAC Memorial; Old Be'eri-Nahabir; of Bagdad (among the first settlers in the old Kibbutz es; Nirim Reservoir & Lookout; Maon Antiquities;





Be'eri Forest is famous for its undulating badlands, winter wildflowers, and some of Israel's best mountain biking routes. It is named for Kibbutz Be'eri, one of 11 kibbutzim established in the Western Negev overnight in October 1946, ensuring the region's inclusion in the future Jewish state. The first seeds of Be'eri Forest were planted that year by the kibbutz's founders. Like the communities in its vicinity, and with KKL-JNF's continued planting and preservation, the forest has managed to flourish and thrive, despite the harsh climate and repeated rocket and arson attacks from Gaza.

On October 7, 2023, the forest's Re'im Recreation Area the site of the Nova music festival – was transformed into a slaughtering ground when Hamas terrorists invaded the area and mowed down 364 civilians with machine guns and RPGs, wounding many more and taking 40 people as captives. The damage to the Re'im site and the surrounding woodland was so extensive that its blackened areas could be seen by satellite. In the winter of 2024, KKL-JNF initiated its inaugural rehabilitation of Be'eri forest, marking the region's initial recovery endeavor since the events of October 7.







First planted:	1957
Size:	399 hectares / 986 ac
Tree species:	Eucalyptus, pine, cası
Distance from border:	5.8 km (3.6 miles)
Surrounding communities:	Moshav Shokeda, Mos Moshav Tushiya, Mos
Points of interest:	Singletracks, flowerin

cres

suarina, tamarisk, acacia

oshav Kfar Maimon, Kibbutz Alumim, Moshav Shuva, shav Zimrat, Kibbutz Be'eri

ng anemone sites, Byzantine-era saqiyah well, walking trails, community forest, spaces for camping, picnics, barbeques



KKL-JNF began planting the trees of Shokeda Forest in 1957, creating a magnificent savannah of majestic casuarinas and eucalyptuses set against grasslands that become awash in red anemones come February, making it a popular site to visit during the Darom Adom ("Scarlet South") Festival. In the 2010s the communities of Shokeda, Kfar Maimon and Alumim worked together with KKL-JNF and the Sdot Negev Regional Council to conserve and restore the site's natural and historical

treasures. The resulting Shokeda Community Forest was inaugurated during Sukkot of 2014. Today, the forest boasts two excellent singletracks, numerous walking trails, a restored Byzantine sagiyah well, and 3 recreation areas with facilities for camping, picnicking, and community activities.

Sadly, the Shokeda Forest has been subjected to incendiary kite attacks from Gaza in recent years, beginning in 2018.







Netivot Forest First planted: 1973 Size: 357 hectares / 882 acres Tree species: common reed thicket Distance from border: 7.5 km (4.6 miles) Surrounding communities: Moshav Ma'agalim, Moshav Shibolim, Moshav Tushia Points of interest:

Sharsheret-Gerar section: Sharsheret-Gerar Singletrack, recreation areas, lookouts, scenic route, Gerar streambed (tributary of Nahal Besor), camping grounds, accessible facilities, Tel Haror (settlement remains from Middle Bronze Age), Sharsheret Community Park, Mandate-era bridge

Eucalyptus, tamarisk, mesquite, carob, olive, jujube, Jerusalem pine, stone pine,

Netivot, Moshav Shokeda, Moshav Kfar Maimon, Moshav Mlilot, Moshav Givolim,

Bohu Stream section: Bohu Stream, Bohu Lake Park, Horvat Bohu (remains of a Byzantine-era wine press, Abbasid buildings), boardwalk, wildflowers, bike path, cliffs, observation points, picnic areas, Baba Sali's Tomb



The Netivot Forest consists of two separate areas, each of them unique in their own right. The northernmost area consists of trees planted by KKL-JNF along the Bohu Stream, which flows westwards from Netivot, the city for which the forest is named. The trees play an important part in preventing the erosion of the loess soil streambanks, and in providing a habitat to a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna. Along the stream section running through Netivot itself, KKL-JNF and partners constructed the Nahal Bohu Boardwalk and bicycle trail. In the future, the trail will extend for another 12 km (7.4 miles) along the Bohu Stream, linking Netivot with the Be'eri and Shokeda forest cycling networks. The other area of Netivot Forest, planted on both banks of the Gerar Stream further south of Netivot and a cluster of moshavim, first began in 1950 with the establishment of Moshav Sharsheret – the first moshav in the Negev for new immigrants established after Israel's independence. This section of Netivot Forest is more commonly known as the Sharsheret Gerar Park, due to the beautiful recreational park created by KKL-JNF on the banks of the Gerar Stream next to Moshav Sharsheret, as well as the Sharsheret-Gerar bike singletrack that runs along the entire perimeter of the forest.

The Netivot Forest serves as a vital green space for a city plagued by years of rocket fire and war.







First planted:	1951
Size:	998 hectares / 2,467 a
Tree species:	Eucalyptus, Jerusalen
Distance from border:	1.8 km (1.1 miles)
Surrounding communities:	Kibbutz Kissufim, Kibl Kibbutz Be'eri
Points of interest:	Asaf-Kissufim Singlet

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- Carros	Station 8	C-STORE	1.18: See 1	in dia	
Cel Lor S	2				
		- Aller	(And)		Photo: Bracha S

acres

m pine, sandarac tree, native broadleaf

butz Ein Hashlosha, Kibbutz Nirim, Kibbutz Re'im,

track, wildflowers, Tel Gama, Kissufim Tower Lookout



The Kissufim Forest is a fascinating segmented landscape that abuts the fields and neighborhoods of Kibbutz Kissufim. Its western section practically touches the Gaza border fence. Crisscrossing its eastern section are the Kissufim Stream (Nahal Kissufim) and its smaller tributaries. Other key features include the Kissufim Lookout Tower - offering sweeping views of the Western Negev and the Gaza Strip, and the popular Kissufim Singletrack. The forest is best known, however, for the anemones that paint the ground red each February, making it a Darom Adom ("Scarlet South") Festival hotspot.

Kissufim forest suffered countless incessant arson attacks from across the border in recent years, leaving many parts battered and burnt. KKL-JNF replanted and rehabilitated the forest as needed, and its firefighters took part in protecting and fighting wildfires – over 600 since 2018.









Nahal Asaf Forest

Eucalyptus, Jerusalem pine, cypress, twisted acacia, mulberry, jujube, sycamore, fig, nectar-producing trees

Kibbutz Nir Oz, Kibbutz Nirim, Kibbutz Ein Hashlosha, Kibbutz Kissufim,

Asaf-Kissufim Singletrack, Nahal Asaf Recreation Area, wildflowers



Nahal Asaf Forest is a desert woodland that is rather stick insect-like in shape, due to its planting by KKL-JNF along the Asaf Stream and its tributaries in the area between Tel Gamma and the Maon Ruins. It was named in honor of Asaf Shachnai, a Palmach squad commander who fell defending the Western Negev water pipeline during Israel's War of Independence. Most people know Nahal Asaf for its fantastic Asaf-Kissufim Singletrack (which links up with Nahal Kissufim). Less known, however, is that KKL-JNF uses the streambed as a 'field laboratory' to trial different methods of preventing loess soil erosion. Its main site for visitors is the Nahal Asaf Recreation Area, which is planted with an interesting collection of experimental trees. In recent years, KKL-JNF and the

ARO - Volcani Institute have been collecting seeds from the few wild specimens of Twisted acacia remaining here, for the purpose of reforesting the area with this oncedominant species.

Part of the ANZAC Trail - a 100 km (62 miles) tourist route that retraces the "Great Outflanking" of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) during WWI - runs through here, with a stop at the Nahal Asaf Recreation Area.

In recent years the forest has been subjected to airborne arson attacks launched from Gaza, disrupting much of the nature and science taking place here.







Nahal HaBesor Forest

First planted:	1956
Size:	738 hectares / 1,825 acre
Tree species:	Eucalyptus, Jerusalem pir
Distance from border:	9.5 km (5.9 miles)
Surrounding communities:	Kibbutz Re'im, Kibbutz Ur Kibbutz Gvulot
Points of interest:	Besor Scenic Route, Shai Suspension Bridge, Pipes Einot HaBesor (springs), I Reservoirs Scenic Lookou The Large Tamarisk, Tel e

es

pine, tamarisk, various broadleaf species

Jrim, Kibbutz Ein HaBesor, Kibbutz Tze'elim,

ai Lookout, Tel Gamma, Tze'elim Tower Lookout, es Bridge, Field Road, HaBesor National Park,), Revuva Well, Reservists Forest, Tel Seruhan, out, Dekalim Well, Gemila Stream Pond, el-Far'ah (Sharuhen), Gerar Groves





"Nahal HaBesor Forest" is a general term referring to the distinct clusters of woodland, recreation areas and lookouts developed by KKL-JNF at three different points along the Besor Stream where it flows in the Western Negev. This is but one segment of the Besor Stream, whose main channel originates near Sde Boker further south, running through the Negev Mountains and the Western Negev for about 80 km (49 miles) before crossing into Gaza and flowing through to the Mediterranean Sea. The Nahal HaBesor Forest clusters are connected by a 45 km (28 miles) scenic road running along the western side of the Besor Stream. The Besor Scenic Road - a joint project of KKL-JNF and local authorities, affords cyclists and motorists the opportunity to enjoy the riverside scenery and the various nature, heritage, and agricultural sites along its banks.

Unfortunately, the Nahal HaBesor Forest clusters have suffered severe damage beginning with incendiary kite and balloon terror in 2018.





	Mage
First planted:	1969
Size:	114 hectares /
Tree species:	Acacia, jujube, desert scrub
Distance from border:	5 km (3 miles)
Surrounding communities:	Kibbutz Mager
Points of interest:	The Maon Syna HaBesor Natio Byzantine Chu

agen Forest

ctares / 282 acres

, jujube, Jerusalem pine, eucalyptus, local broadleaf species,

tz Magen, Kibbutz Nir Oz, Moshav Ein HaBesor

laon Synagogue, the White House Recreation Area, sor National Park, Einot HaBesor (springs), MOP Darom R&D Station, tine Church, Shrine of Sheikh Nuran (highest point in the area)





The Magen Forest (lit. Shied/Protective Forest) refers to a 48.5 hectare/119.9 acre woodland abutting Kibbutz Magen to its west, as well as three smaller areas scattered between the kibbutzim of Magen, Nir Oz and Nirim. The Magen Forest was planted in 1969 to serve as a green lung for Kibbutz Magen, which was founded in 1949 by Hashomair Hatzair youth members from Romania.

The main woodland consists of widely spaced trees interspersed with native desert flora. Over time, incendiary attacks from the Gaza Strip, together with the accumulative effects of drought and decay, have resulted in a sharp reduction in the forest's tree density, as well as soil quality due to erosion.



KKL-JNF is committed to the year-round maintenance and preservation of all its forests in the Western Negev, aimed at enriching the lives of the residents and the region's environment. These forests serve as vital green spaces for cities, communities, and people enduring years of adversity, including rocket fire, arson attacks, and war.

- Tree planting and reforestation initiatives
- Fire prevention and firefighting measures
- Rehabilitation and restoration projects
- Development and upkeep of recreational areas, bike trails, and parks
- Implementation of "security planting" projects to ensure safety for all
- Creation of green spaces that support local biodiversity, enhance air quality, and combat desertification and climate change
- Supporting and initiating advanced forestry research

Through these endeavors, KKL-JNF remains steadfast in its mission to safeguard the natural beauty and resilience of the Western Negev's forests while fostering the well-being of the people and communities living in the region. Amid the turmoil and devastation brought by the horrific events of October 7, 2023, and the war that followed, KKL-JNF continues with unwavering dedication and an intensified sense of purpose, looking to the future with hope and determination to rebuild and restore.

Numerous environmental, tourism, security, and community projects have been made possible by donations and contributions from friends of KKL-JNF in Israel and worldwide. In the wake of October 7 and the war, worldwide support has surged, enabling critical emergency projects, and providing steadfast aid to communities and environment impacted by devastation.





קרן קימת לישראל Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael-Jewish National Fund Resource Development and External Affairs Division Marketing Department, Jerusalem 2024

Photos: KKL-JNF Photo Archive