

# Planting a seed

PHILIP ALVES  
News

The seeds of a better world will soon sprout from a small garden on the grounds of the Lebovic Jewish Community Campus in Thornhill.

That, says Risa Alyson Strauss, is the hope and the idea behind the 15-by-25-metre Kavanah Organic Community Teaching Garden, set for a May opening.

"We're seeking to actively engage community members in *Tikkun Olam*, which is the Jewish understanding of repairing the world," the garden's program director said last week. "The name of the garden, Kavanah, is Hebrew for intention. Our goal is to get people acting with greater intention, greater awareness.

"The way that we're going to do that is by offering programs that are hands on, transformative and that are rooted in Jewish ecological and agricultural teachings."

The garden, operating in partnership with Daniel Hoffmann of the Cutting Veg Organic Farm, will be planted and tended according to teachings in the *Mishnah*, the oral Torah, Strauss said.

"It basically goes through what you're allowed to plant, when you're allowed to plant it, how you have to harvest it," she said. "For example, one of the laws that we're going to be honouring and teaching at the Kavanah Garden is the law of *peia*, which is the commandment to leave the corners of your field untouched so that those in your community who need to can come and harvest for themselves."

Because of modern considerations and the urban setting, the *peia* corner of the garden won't be open to those in need, not exactly. The food grown there will be given to a local social service organization, Strauss said.

"It's like a modern twist on a biblical teaching," she said.

The intensive work of getting the garden ready for planting will begin in earnest in the coming days, Strauss said.

"We're building a greenhouse (soon)," she said. "April will be manual labour month."

A variety of in-ground beds will consist of organic vegetables, fruits, herbs, wildflowers and different species of grains.

A couple of wheelchair-accessible planting beds, a compost demonstration site and a



**READY TO GROW:** An Organic Community Teaching Garden is set to sprout at the Lebovic Jewish Community Campus, says garden program director Risa Alyson Strauss.

rainwater catchment system will also feature in the garden's design, Strauss said.

"The intention is to start planning and hosting school groups, congregational groups, volunteer groups, youth groups, everybody, come May," she said. "We're also going to have open times: it's looking like starting in May, every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon the garden will be open for our community members to come and look and learn a little bit, see what's going on, and then the rest of the time will be more structured programs and workshops."

The garden is being supported in its first year through grants received from Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Funding Program, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Walmart – Evergreen Green Grant and the Shell Environmental Fund, she said.

Anyone interested in learning more about the garden, Strauss said, is welcome to contact her at 416-805-8382 or [risa@torathateva.org](mailto:risa@torathateva.org).

"We're open for business this spring and we're really excited to have community groups come to the site to learn with us, grow with us," she said.

**WHEN IT DOESN'T BELONG,  
IT STANDS OUT.**