

By Rachel Andrew

Risa Alyson Cooper fondly recalls growing lima beans in her Grade 3 science class at Leo Baeck.

That was 1989. Since then, she has gone on to foster both her love of nature and a much larger garden. Today she is Executive Director of Shores Jewish Environmental Programs and is proud to have established the beautiful Kavanah Garden. "For me, being Jewish means having a deep spiritual relationship with the natural world," says Risa, who oversees the popular organic educational garden.

"Kavanah Garden was set up as an outdoor learning space that could reflect Jewish teachings, ethics, and celebrations," explains Risa. She credits Leo Baeck with having taught her to ask questions and actively seek out the answers. "Outdoor education is all about asking, seeking, hypothesizing and experimenting."

She has planted seeds in more ways than one. The work of Shores has taken root and "reflects a growing demand for Jewish environmental and food initiatives in the Greater Toronto Area." Risa's former Grade 3 teacher – Gail Broudie – still teaches at Leo Baeck and brings current students to Kavanah Garden. "One of the students excitedly shared that they had just planted lima beans in class that week," laughs Risa. "Some lessons are timeless."

For information about Shores and Kavanah Garden, visit www.shores.ca

Risa Alyson Cooper

Baeck to her Roots

"Being Jewish means having a deep spiritual relationship with the natural world."



Risa planting trees with husband Mati.