



TU B'SHVAT

5776

SHORESH RESOURCE
PACKAGE



shoresh.ca



WHAT IS TU B'SHVAT?

Tu B'Shvat is the birthday of the trees. According to the Torah, fruit from trees cannot be eaten during the first three years, the fourth year's fruit is to be dedicated to G!d, and in the fifth year you can begin to enjoy the tree's fruits (*Vayikra/Leviticus 19:23-25*). In order to know how old a fruit tree is (and whether it is permitted to eat its fruits), our rabbis agreed that on Tu B'Shvat (the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shvat) all trees would turn one year older. In the 16th century, the Jewish mystics of Safed introduced a Tu B'Shvat seder as a means of celebrating the holiday. They believed that by eating specific fruits and drinking four cups of wine in a particular order while reciting the appropriate blessings would bring humans and the earth closer to spiritual perfection. In more recent times, the Jewish environmental movement has embraced Tu B'Shvat as an opportune time to reflect on and celebrate all that trees do to create and sustain a vibrant, healthy world for all.

CELEBRATING TU B'SHVAT

There are many different ways that you and your students can celebrate Tu B'Shvat! Here are just a few suggestions:

1. **Sponsor a tree.** Did you know that Shoresh is planting a 20 acre native forest at Bela Farm!?!?! Our goal is to plant 16,000 native trees by 2021 to sequester carbon, honour the memories and lifecycle events of our community, and demonstrate our long term commitment to generations to come. For more information on sponsoring a tree in our native forest, visit <http://shoresh.ca/bela-farm-native-tree-commemoration-program>.
2. **Host a Tu B'Shvat Seder.** Our friends at Hazon have made available a haggadah that can help guide you through a Tu B'Shvat Seder...or inspire you to create your own! You can find it online at <http://www.hazon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Haggadah.pdf>.
3. **Commit to an environmental action.** Encourage your students to take on one action that demonstrates a commitment to environmental sustainability. Whether it is using only recycled paper, creating a garden compost pile for lunch and snack scraps, or packing litterless lunches, every little bit honours our role as *shomrei adamah*, protectors of the earth!
4. **Get outside and explore.** It may be snowy and cold outside, but that's no reason to not give our tree friends a birthday hug! Included in this resource package is an activity write-up for Meet a Tree, an activity designed to engage students in the natural world in a unique and hands-on way.

Wishing you and your students a meaningful Tu B'Shvat celebration!

12 REASONS TO HUG A TREE TODAY!

1. **Trees combat climate change.** Excess carbon dioxide (CO₂) caused by many factors is building up in our atmosphere and contributing to global climate change. Trees absorb CO₂, removing and storing the carbon while releasing the oxygen back into the air. In one year, an acre of mature trees can absorb the same amount of CO₂ produced by a car driving almost 42,000 kilometres.
2. **Trees clean the air.** Trees absorb odors and pollutant gases (nitrogen oxides, ammonia, sulfur dioxide and ozone) and filter particulates out of the air by trapping them on their leaves and bark.
3. **Trees provide oxygen.** In one year, an acre of mature trees can provide enough oxygen for 18 people.
4. **Trees cool off streets and cities.** Trees can cool a city by up to 3-5°C, by shading our homes and streets, breaking up urban “heat islands” and releasing water vapor into the air through their leaves
5. **Trees conserve energy.** Three trees placed strategically around a single-family home can cut summer air conditioning needs by up to 50 percent. By reducing the energy demand for cooling our houses, we reduce carbon dioxide and other pollution emissions from power plants.
6. **Trees save water.** Shade from trees slows water evaporation from thirsty lawns. As trees transpire, they also increase atmospheric moisture.
7. **Trees help prevent water pollution.** Trees reduce runoff by breaking rainfall thus allowing the water to flow down the trunk and into the earth below the tree. This prevents stormwater from carrying pollutants to our lakes and oceans. When mulched, trees act like a sponge that filters this water naturally and uses it to recharge groundwater supplies
8. **Trees help prevent soil erosion.** On hillsides or stream slopes, trees slow runoff and hold soil in place.
9. **Trees provide food.** An apple tree can yield up to 15-20 bushels of fruit per year and can be planted on the tiniest urban lot. Aside from fruit for humans, trees also provide food for birds and wildlife.
10. **Trees heal.** Studies have shown that patients with views of trees out their windows heal faster and with fewer complications than those who don't. As well, children with ADHD show fewer symptoms when they have access to nature. Furthermore, exposure to trees and nature aids concentration by reducing mental fatigue.
11. **Trees provide habitat for animals.** Maple, oak, pine, and basswood are among the many urban species that provide excellent urban homes and food sources for birds, squirrels, chipmunks and bees.
12. **Trees provide beauty.** What is more majestic to look at than a tree!?!?

Inspired by our friends at treepeople.org



Have you hugged a tree today?



ACTIVITY: MEET A TREE

“If not for the trees, human life could not exist.” – Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy 20:19

Ideal for ages 6 and older

This is a great activity to do outside....even in the winter time. As long as you have access to a safe outdoor space (i.e. not too many obstacles) with a few trees, you can give your students a chance to experience a tree in a unique and powerful way. They'll never see trees the same way again!

Materials

Blindfolds (we love using old bed sheets cut into 4x30 inch strips for blindfolds)

Objective

To learn why trees are an important feature of local ecosystems and experience trees using multiple senses.

Introduction

Trees are amazing. In fact, in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy 20:19, we learn that if it were not for trees, human life could not exist! For a list of some of the ways trees make our world a healthier more beautiful place, please see our 12 Reasons to Hug a Tree Today factsheet, included in this resource package.

For many people, trees all look the same, especially in the winter time when many have lost their leaves. Meet a Tree is an activity that allows participants to engage directly with a single tree, using multiple senses, so that s/he can get to know a particular tree and better appreciate all that that tree does.

Instructions

1. Have students pair off or put students in pairs. Each pair gets one blindfold.
2. One student puts on the blindfold and the other student acts as a guide. Make sure to set ground rules around responsible guiding (i.e. give notice of things to step over, walk slowly, etc.).
3. The guide selects a tree and brings their blindfolded partner safely to that tree.
4. The blindfolded partner now has one minute to “meet” her/his tree without looking at the tree. (Feel free to give your students suggestions for how they can “meet” their tree: What does the bark feel like? Does the tree have a smell? Does the tree have needles or bare stems where leaves will grow back in the spring? How thick is the tree? Can you wrap your arms around it? Are there any identifying features on the ground by your tree, such as rocks and stump sprouts?)
5. Once the blindfolded partner has “met” the tree, the guide will leave his/her partner away from the tree, trying to disorient them slightly.
6. Once led away, the blindfolded partner removes the blindfold and tries to find their tree.
7. Have partners switch roles.

Debrief

Ask students about their experiences? Was it easier or harder than they expected? Will this experience change their perception of the tree they “met”? Of other trees? What is one thing they can do to honour all that trees do for us in celebration of Tu B'Shvat, the birthday of the trees?

Adapted from Sharing Nature: Nature Awareness Activities for All Ages by Joseph Cornell