



The Institute for Torah
and the Land of Israel

YOUR GUIDE TO THE GARDEN OF MITZVOT

Welcome to the Garden of Mitzvot

WHERE YOU CAN CONNECT TO NATURE
FEEL THE HOLY SOIL
AND SEE HOW THE MITZVOT DEPENDENT ON THE LAND OF ISRAEL
COME TO LIFE!

Pssst...

Before you begin, flip to the last page, where you'll see the garden map and our rules



WELCOME TO THE GARDEN OF MITZVOT. WE'RE SO GLAD YOU CAME!

Here you will encounter
halachot that are common
in every home garden:



Where should you purchase new trees? Look out for the tags that tell you if the tree came from a supervised nursery (the tag will also tell you when the tree's *orlah* years are over).



When you have a grapevine growing in your garden it's important to ensure that other plants (edible annuals) are not too close or under the leaves and branches.



You can certainly use the herbs growing in your garden, but don't forget to separate *terumot* and *ma'aserot*. Also, make sure you don't eat the many insects that might be on the leaves.



Do you want to discover which fruits are permissible to eat in the yard without separating *terumot* and *ma'aserot*?

Scan the QR code:



How far do you need to distance different types of plants from one another?

Note: There should be a distance of 12 cm between two annual vegetables, but no distance is required from perennials.

12 cm

You're probably reading this and looking with astonishment at the barrel with various vegetables growing inside. It doesn't look like there's much distance between any of them, does it? The answer is simple: distance is measured from the spot where the stem emerges from the soil. It's not a problem if the leaves or roots come close to each other. Check carefully: Are there at least 12 cm between the stems of each plant?

Welcome to our orchard! Remember, you need to separate *terumot* and *ma'aserot* before eating fruit.

Does it sound too complicated to tithe each time you pick a fruit? Scan the QR code to discover a unique method of separating *terumot* and *ma'aserot* in advance:



If you scan the QR codes on the signs throughout the garden, you will receive a fascinating tour on the *halachot* relating to gardening. Enjoy!





Herb Patch



HERBS ADD SPICE TO LIFE!

Who wants to eat tasteless food?

And who would want to pass up on their tea?

Some spices come from the fruits of various plants, like black pepper and paprika, while others, such as turmeric, are derived from the roots. However, most spices are made from the leaves of the plant. This has various halachic implications:

For leaves that are not eaten but used only to impart flavor, such as tea leaves or herbs that are discarded after use, most *posekim* rule that they are exempt from tithing. Only plants meant for eating are obligated in the separation of *terumot* and *ma'aserot*.

Bottom line: to account for the stringent opinions, separate *terumot* and *ma'aserot* without a blessing.

Like leafy greens, herbs are often infested with insects that are difficult to identify easily. You can extract the flavor of the leaves using a mesh strainer that lets the flavor pass through while trapping the insects inside.

Important: Say the blessings *borei atzei besamim* and *borei isvei besamim* only ONCE on the appropriate herbs, while keeping in mind all of the spices and herbs you will smell during your visit.



Family game

Ask everyone to close their eyes. One person picks a leaf from one of the herbs, rubs it on their hand, and lets everyone smell (without seeing the leaf). Who can identify the herb first?

Want to hear more?
Scan the QR code
and listen to our
virtual tour guide:



Fragrant Garden

Pick a leaf or two, rub it between your fingers, inhale deeply, and enjoy the fragrance

Wait a minute – what blessing do you say?

Enjoying fragrance is unique because it doesn't have the same tangible impact as other pleasures. Our bodies don't gain weight and the plant is not used up or destroyed when we smell it. The Sages felt that such a special pleasure calls for a special blessing: "What does the soul enjoy? ... Fragrance" (*Berachot* 43).

The Sages
instituted
three types of
blessings:



*Borei minei
besamim*



*Borei atzei
besamim*



*Borei isvei
besamim*

Which blessing do we say?

A plant is classified as a tree when its trunk lives for several years and its branches produce leaves again and again. On such plants we say the blessing, *borei atzei besamim*, "Creator of fragrant trees."



On plants that die each year and need to be planted again, or have a main trunk that withers and new stems emerges from the root, we say, *borei isvei besamim*, "Creator of fragrant grasses."



Which do we say for herbs with questionable status? *Borei minei besamim*, "Creator of fragrant species." This blessing covers both fragrant trees and fragrant grasses.



Here, too,
you can scan
the QR code
and listen to
our virtual
tour guide.



Look at the signs and see which plants are annual and which are perennial. If you look closely, you'll even find some of the herbs used for the *ketoret*, the incense offered in the Holy Temple.



Fruit or Vegetable



Look at the banana plant. Does it look like a tree or a vegetable? What about the blueberry bush? Papaya? These are not botanical research questions; they have significant halachic ramifications:

1

Blessing

Borei peri ha'eitz or borei peri ha'adamah

2

Orlah

Applies to trees only

3

Kilei zera'im

It is forbidden to plant two different vegetables near one another

4

Kilei hakerem

Vegetables must be distanced from grape vines

The Sages defined trees and vegetables as follows:

Trees: Plants with a trunk that can live for many years (perennial) and produce leaves and fruit each year.

Vegetables: Plants that grow anew from the ground each year (annual).

For instance, banana "trees" grow a new stem from the ground each year, which produces bananas. That's why bananas are considered vegetables.

Around 450 years ago, the Radbaz, Rabbi David ben Zimra, lived in Egypt. He didn't eat eggplant, not because he disliked the taste, but because the plants can survive for several years and produce eggplants. For this reason, he considered eggplants the fruit of a tree and therefore forbidden to eat due to the *orlah* prohibition!

The *posekim* who disagreed with the Radbaz suggested several other signs to identify vegetables: (1) Produce fruit within a year of being sown (2) Have a hollow, herbaceous (grass-like) trunk (3) The quality of the crop worsens from year to year (as opposed to trees, which don't produce less or lesser-quality fruit, as years go by).

The *posekim* disagree whether these additional definitions should be used. For this reason, until today, there is halachic disagreement (*machloket*) about whether certain plants are trees or vegetables. These plants are growing right here, in this plot. Examples include papaya, goji berry and passionfruit; the *posekim* disagree

whether we need to wait three *orlah* years before we can eat the fruit.

Family game

One family member quietly says the ABCs until another member says "stop." They then say the letter they stopped on. **Challenge:** See who can find a plant that starts with that letter the fastest. If no plant starts with that letter, look for one that has the letter in its name. The first one who succeeds earns a point.

Walk around the plot and discover which plants are considered trees and which ones are vegetables.

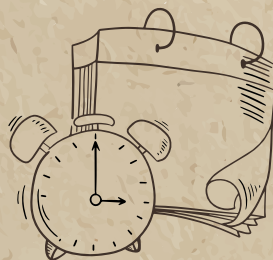
Virtual tour.



Waiting Area

Orlah and Neta Revay

THREE YEARS!



For three whole years they wait with baited breath for fruit to grow in the new orchard or garden. When the fruit finally grows, they don't eat or benefit from the fruit in any way. Finally, in the fourth year, they bring the high-quality fourth-year fruit to Jerusalem.

The word in Hebrew for waiting is **הַמְתָּנָה** (*hamtanah*), which is similar to the word **הַמֵּתָנָה** (*hamatanah*), meaning "the present." Waiting for three years reminds us to thank Hashem for the wonderful presents He gives us!

Some fun facts you can learn in this plot:

The *orlah* prohibition applies only to fruit trees, but not to trees grown for purposes other than their fruit, like the row of trees at the edge of this plot used as a fence.

Fun fact



Moringa trees are not considered fruit trees since their leaves are consumed for medicinal purposes only. Similarly, laurel leaves (a.k.a. bay leaves) are used for their flavor, but we don't actually eat the leaves.

See how the new shoots grow from under the olive tree. Branches that emerge from the ground are considered new trees, so we need to count three years before eating the fruit!

However, shoots that grow from the trunk itself are simply considered branches of the original tree.

Orlah years are counted from the time the tree is planted in the ground, not its botanical age. If you transplant a tree with its original clod of soil, it's not considered replanting the tree. That means we don't need to wait another three *orlah* years.

Plant the tree gently so that the clod of soil doesn't crumble while planting. If the soil crumbles too much, you'll have to start counting *orlah* years all over again.

Most nurseries place trees on sheets for a certain amount of time. Even if the nursery owner says that the tree is mature, that doesn't mean that you can continue the *orlah* years from the nursery when transplanting the tree at home. There are several supervised nurseries where the trees are placed directly on the soil. They bear tags that say when their *orlah* years will end.

Pomegranate trees and blueberry bushes often produce so many shoots (rootsuckers) from beneath the soil that most of the fruit often grows on these new branches. Before harvest can be certified, the Chief Rabbinate requires farmers to prune off all of the rootsuckers!

Wouldn't it be easier to buy a mature tree and enjoy the fruit right away? This is possible only if the tree has been attached to the ground the entire time it grew in the nursery; there was a 2.5 cm hole at the bottom of the pot and there wasn't a sheet detaching it from the ground (see the sheets on the ground).

Virtual tour:



For a list of supervised nurseries



THE CHERRY ON TOP!

The best of the best!

Seven Species

Here you are among the Seven Species, *shivat haminim*. When the Torah described the Land of Israel as exceptionally fruitful, it highlighted these crops. All of the food staples grow here: grains, wine, oil, and even sweet fruits that can be preserved for a long time.

To thank Hashem for the bountiful land He gave us, we are commanded to mark the first fruits (*bikkurim*) from these crops growing in our fields and on our trees and bring them to Jerusalem. This was done with great pomp and ceremony, and in large gatherings, to thank Hashem publicly and remember that it is all a precious gift from Him.

It is a *mitzvah* to bring the *bikkurim* to the *Beit Hamikdash*. Today we cannot bring *bikkurim*, but we express our gratitude through the *me'ein shalosh* after-blessing we say on Israeli fruit from *shivat haminim*, ending *al ha'aretz ve-al peiroteha*, "on the land and its produce."

Before you is a vineyard. According to *halachah*, if even 5 grapevines are planted in two parallel rows, they are considered a vineyard (*kerem*). The Torah prohibits planting vegetables or other edible annuals in or near vineyards. They need to be distanced at least 4 *amot* (about 2 m), as opposed to only 6 *tefachim* (about 48 cm), the distance necessary from a lone grapevine.

How far away are the vegetables from the vineyard and the lone grapevine?

Family game

Imagine you are heading to Jerusalem with your first fruits. Which fruits would you bring? Who would you invite to join you?

BONUS

The prohibition of *kilei hakerem*, interplanting with vineyards, applies to annuals only. There are perennial plants in this plot (like the olive tree, date palm, and rosemary), which are much closer to the vineyard than the distance mentioned above.



Grafts - Kilei Ifan

THE PERFECT MATCH: TREE GRAFTS

It's easy to tell the difference between red and yellow apples or round and oval plums. But did you know that every fruit and vegetable has many sub-varieties, each with unique qualities? Some trees bear many sweet fruits, while others produce smaller ones. Some grow in early summer, while others ripen later on. Some do well in warm climates, while others need cold weather. Some thrive in mountain soil, while others grow best in sandy soil.

Each variety has its advantages. But what if you want to combine all the benefits? Hashem created an incredible natural process that's similar to surgery. You take a shoot from one tree (a scion) and connect it to the trunk of another tree (the rootstock). This process is called grafting. The two shoots will fuse and the scion will continue to produce fruit.

For example, if you take a branch from a tree with excellent fruit but weak roots and graft it onto a branch from a tree with strong roots that bears poor-quality fruit, you'll get a tree with a hardy trunk and excellent fruit.

The Torah does not forbid all grafts. It prohibits grafting between two different species, but grafting shoots from similar species is permissible. For example, it's pretty clear that green and red apples are the same species. But what about oranges, tangerines, and pomelos?

In this plot, you will find rootstocks and scions. The rootstock, *kanah*, is the tree grown to serve as the base, the trunk used for grafting. The scion, *rochev*, is the shoot with good fruit whose branch is grafted onto a trunk.

Try to compare: Which trees are similar to one another? Look at the leaves, the shape of the tree, fruit, and more.

Family game

Orange and lemon trees are grafted here in a permissible manner. Can you find the spot where the trees were grafted? (Hint: check the base of the trunk)

Virtual tour:



In the Field

***Kilei zera'im,*
interplanting seeds**



Planting and sowing in the Land of Israel is a big *mitzvah*! However, the Torah makes a restriction: sowing two types of seeds too close to one another is considered *kilayim*, a forbidden mixture. What is the rationale for this *mitzvah*? "These laws (*chukkim*) are decrees of the King and do not have a rationale" (Rashi). Some suggest that the Torah sets limits to remind us that while we are partners with the Creator in developing the world, we are not the Creator Himself.

The necessary distance between two different vegetables is small – just 12 cm (or 15 cm, according to Chazon Ish). When the plants grow, it's hard to notice. Just look how close the rows of vegetables are at the beginning of the plot.

Here are
a few
rules
that
you can
learn
from this
plot

See how the leaves are all mixed together. This is not forbidden, since the distance is measured from where the stem connects to the ground—the spot where the vegetable was planted.

There are many details, but in general, note that the required distances vary between vegetables, grains, and legumes. For example, look at the gourds at the end of this plot. Notice how they grow differently than the vegetables at the other end, spreading out and taking over. These crops require more distance.

Kilayim are forbidden due to appearances, *marit ayin*. However, when it is clear that there are different growing areas, distance is not necessary. For this reason, it is permitted to plant on different rows of a pyramid, in patches set up in a special way (like a triangle), or when there is a partition that clearly emphasizes the separation between the different crops.

Family game

Fill a flower pot with soil and sow two different vegetables inside. Don't forget to distance them properly!

Virtual tour:



Four Species

On *Sukkot* there is a special *mitzvah* to hold and wave four species, *arbat haminim*:

produce of *hadar* trees, *etrog* - פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר
branches of date palms, *lulav* - כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים
boughs of leafy trees, *hadas* (myrtle) - עֵנַף עֵץ עֵבֶת
willows of the brook, *aravot* - עֲרָבֵי נָחַל

Jewish communities around the world have always cherished the *mitzvah* of the four species, *arba minim*. Many went to great lengths to purchase one *etrog* for the entire congregation. In past and present, people search for the most beautiful, *mehudar*, *etrog* and carefully inspect the *arba minim* to ensure no blemishes disqualify them.

Over the generations, different traditions have been established regarding these species. Here you will see several types of *etrogim* used according to the traditions of various communities.

You probably noticed the two palm trees. The one on the right is a regular date palm and is kosher according to all opinions. The one on the left, the canary palm, has inferior fruit and the *posekim* disagree whether we can use its *lulav* for the *arba minim* and if it can be considered *kapot temarim*, a "date palm."

Among the three-node myrtles, the *hadas meshulash*, look out for a special myrtle with nine leaves that emerge from each node.



We invite you to stroll through the garden as you wish, but you'll need to follow the rules:

1. **Kids, put away your mobile devices.** Breathe deeply and connect to nature.
2. **Respect the garden.** Do not litter.
3. **Please touch!** Feel free to gently touch the plants and soil. You may also pick a few leaves from the herbs and smell them, but remember to leave some for the visitors after you.
4. **Please do not pick the fruits or vegetables.** This way, everyone can see and enjoy them.
5. Feel free to drink from the water fountains!

We hope you enjoy yourself!

