



## *THE CURIOUS GARDEN*

Author: Peter Brown

Illustrator: Peter Brown

### **Jewish Value:**

Protect Nature—*Sh'mirat Ha-teva* שְׁמִרַת הַטֶּבַע

#### **Enduring Understandings**

- Preserving and protecting our world keeps it safe, healthy, and more beautiful.
- Each person can make a difference!

#### **Book Summary**

*The Curious Garden* tells the story of “one boy’s quest for a greener world.” In a drab city of concrete, a young boy unexpectedly finds plants struggling to survive. He patiently nurtures them and as the garden thrives, the boy’s world is transformed.

**Be Inspired:** Consider the ideas included as starting points, as you and your students explore, discover, and live the values. Be sure to elicit and encourage student and parent participation, consistently reinforcing the value being addressed. Allow lessons to authentically develop and change based on engagement and interests.



## For the Educator Jewish Thought, Text, and Traditions

(For more information on Jewish values, visit [www.jewishlearningmatters.com](http://www.jewishlearningmatters.com).)

“The Eternal One planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there Adam, whom G-d had formed.... The Eternal One took Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden to till it and tend it.” -Genesis 2:8, 15

The Hebrew word for nature is *teva*. It is considered a *mitzvah* to protect or guard nature—*sh'mirat ha-teva*. Judaism tries to instill within humanity the idea that people are partners with G-d in doing the work of creation. Humanity does not exist in a vacuum, but shares the Earth with other living things. There is symbiosis in existence with every element dependent in one way or another upon every other element. We are to be thankful for the bounty of the growing things of this world. This lesson is taught in the story of creation found in the Book of Genesis, but also reinforced in the writings of the rabbis. Incumbent upon this, as well, is the notion of *ba'al tashchit*—we should not be destructive, but rather work to preserve the good and useful things of this world. This, too, is our obligation.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How is our environment a blessing that we should take care of?
2. What are some ways in which you can care for the environment?
3. How does this value connect to *tikkun olam*—to repair the world?
4. How can you incorporate this value within the classroom?



## Jewish Every Day Incorporate Jewish Values

### Job Charts

Give students the opportunity to make their world more beautiful as they take care of the class / school garden project. Post related jobs for students and rotate each week.

### Blessings

Teach students the blessings for consuming different types of growing things. (Note that only the last word in each is different.) Use these blessings, as appropriate, as children enjoy eating items that come from trees or the Earth.

- *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam, Borei P'ri Ha-eitz*—Blessed are You, Adonai Our G-d, who has created the fruit of the trees. Traditional blessing said before consuming fruit or other food that comes from trees (walnuts, almonds, etc).
- *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam, Borei P'ri Ha-adamah*—Blessed are You, Adonai Our G-d, who has created the fruit of the Earth. Traditional blessing said before consuming food that comes from the Earth (carrots, potatoes, etc.).



## Materials and Resources

### MATERIALS

- Copy of *The Curious Garden*
- Introducing the Story: two plants—one that has been watered and is thriving and another that needs water and light and is wilting
- After the Story: soil and pots / garden area, as well as seeds and plants, for creating a garden
- Teacher resource: Gabe Goldman's "Guide for Making Indoor Gardens with Young Jewish Gardeners": <http://goo.gl/btAIH8>

### TECHNOLOGY

- Sesame Street, Street Garden Cooperation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR34PJ0I3K8>
- Read-aloud of the story: <http://vimeo.com/53757320>
- Peter Rabbit Garden: <http://urbangardencasual.com/2012/07/03/gardening-with-children-create-a-peter-rabbit-garden/>



## Sharing the Story

### INTRODUCING THE STORY

*For strategies for teaching vocabulary, see Appendix, Vocabulary Strategies.*

Display the two plants, the one that is thriving and the one that is wilting. Ask students to compare them. How are they the same? How are they different? (Elicit comments related to the health of the plants, noting that one plant is healthy because it was cared for and the other plant needs someone to take care of it.) Make a chart that compares the plants.

Start to take care of the wilted plant and take a picture of it each week so that students can carefully monitor its improvement.

Show the cover of the book *The Curious Garden*, and explain that this is a book about a boy who was taking a walk one day and was surprised to find some plants trying to grow in a very strange place.

### READING THE STORY

*Read the story aloud, stopping when appropriate to explore illustrations, address comments, clarify, predict, and guide students' understanding of the story and the value **protect nature—sh'mirat ha-teva**.*

Read the first page of the story and stop where it says, "It was a very dreary place." Elicit answers to the question, "What does *dreary* mean?" Encourage students to look at the pictures to help them understand what *dreary* might look like. Show them examples of *dreary*, such as the sky on a stormy day.

As you read the rest of the book, stop briefly at different points to discuss the story and illustrations. For example, toward the end of the story, the boy is surrounded by the beauty of the flowers and plants he cared for and saved. Ask, "How do you think he feels? What makes you say that?"

When reading the last page of the book with the illustrations of the colorful, healthy gardens growing all over the city, ask students to describe what they see. Refer back to the illustration on page 1 that shows the "dreary" town and ask, "Which city would you rather live in? How does each city make you feel?" Explain that the little boy was doing a, protecting or guarding nature—*sh'mirat ha-teva*.



## Sharing the Story

continued

### AFTER THE STORY

Ask the following questions:

- What do you think would have happened to the plants if the boy hadn't taken care of them?
- Why was it hard for the boy to take care of the plants? Did the boy give up when it was hard to take care of the plants?
- What did the plants need in order to grow?
- What happened when the people of the city saw how beautiful the garden was?
- Can only grown-ups take care of things? What things do you help to take care of or protect?

Involve students in a service learning project to help beautify their school. Take a “field trip” around the school and look for things students can do together to make the world around them (their school community, their classroom, etc.) more healthy, safe, and beautiful—to protect or guard nature—*sh'mirat ha-teva*. For example, students may wish to create a butterfly garden or adopt a specific area on the school grounds and plant a garden. Make a list of student suggestions based on their “field trip.” Share the following and have them add ideas to their class list:

- After reading the story *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, students might even wish to create a Peter Rabbit Garden: <http://urbangardencasual.com/2012/07/03/gardening-with-children-create-a-peter-rabbit-garden/>.
- Gabe Goldman's “Guide for Making Indoor Gardens with Young Jewish Gardeners” is the perfect manual for Jewish early childhood educators who want to make indoor gardens and green plants a part of their classrooms: <http://goo.gl/btAIH8>.

Have students vote on one of these ideas. Take pictures of the children working together on their project throughout the year and post them on a bulletin board entitled “*Sh'mirat Ha-teva*”.



# Explore, Discover, and More

## Extension and Reinforcement Activities

### PLANT LAB

SCIENCE, NATURE

Involve students in an experiment to help them understand how plants absorb water, and therefore why we must water plants to protect them. Place celery sticks in a glass with water and food coloring. Have them observe and chart the way the water is carried up the stalk. As an alternative, demonstrate absorption using items that absorb water (for example, a sponge, a tissue, a paper towel, or soil), as well as items that do not (for example, a plastic plate, a piece of aluminum foil). Drop water on the items. What happens?

### “MAH ZEH?” OR “WHAT’S THIS?”

HEBREW

What are the Hebrew names for some of the common plants and trees that we see every day? Make names cards in Hebrew to post on the trees along with an explanation of what students like best about them. Learn Hebrew nature words here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWjzGflmEEk>.

### HERB GARDEN

NATURE, COOKING

Create an herb garden. Using an egg carton filled with soil, help children plant one or two different herbs into the various sections. When the herbs have grown, students can help prepare a special food dish using the herbs to spice it up! Share the dish with students in other classes, school staff, and parents. (Plant a parsley garden by *Tu B’shevat* so students can grow and care for plants they will later use at their Seders.)

### SESAME STREET: STREET GARDEN COOPERATION

TECHNOLOGY

Sesame Street characters plant an urban garden—right in the middle of the street! Play the video several times, having students join in the chorus “Cooperation makes it happen, cooperation working together...”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR34PJOI3K8>. Discuss what it takes to create a garden (for example, first you dig a hole, then plant a seed, water the seed, pull the weeds, work together, etc.).



## Music

(Access all songs at [www.jewishlearningmatters.com/music](http://www.jewishlearningmatters.com/music).)

### **“It Is Me” by “Miss” Emily Aronoff Teck Track # 2 from *Good Choices, Volume 1***

#### **INSPIRATION TEXT**

“Creator of light and darkness, who makes peace and fashions all things. In mercy, You illuminate the world and those who live upon it. In Your goodness, You daily renew creation. How numerous are Your works, G-d! In wisdom, You formed them all, filling the Earth with Your creatures.” -*Yotser Or*, Liturgy

#### **“IT IS ME” ACTIVITY**

Collect images of beautiful things in nature by bringing a camera outside and looking very carefully at your natural environment. Alternatively, search for images on the internet and save or print the students’ favorites. Create an art gallery of nature’s beauty in your classroom, and make frequent updates and additions to reflect the students’ interests or the seasons.

Create a log for each student to keep in the classroom and add to the log each time the student does something kind for the environment.

#### **LYRICS**

I’ve got a family who takes care of me  
They like and they love me and keep me healthy  
If I need help, I ask and they’ll give me a hand  
And sometimes I wonder who does this for the land

#### **CHORUS**

It is me! It is me!  
I help keep nature safe and healthy.  
It is me! It is me!  
I can care for the flowers and trees  
I can protect the skies and the seas  
I love all of creation, will keep us healthy ... It is me

Look around the world and you will see  
Many different types of nature’s beauty  
Mountains and oceans, G-d’s work is grand  
So, let’s protect this world, for it we will stand

#### **CHORUS**



## Music

continued

For the people, plants, and animals that share the Earth,  
We all need clean air and water from the time of our birth  
We all need a safe place to grow and be strong  
We'll all reduce, reuse, recycle, and remember this song

CHORUS

### **ADDITIONAL MUSIC CONNECTIONS**

To access additional Jewish and secular songs from a variety of traditional and contemporary artists that reinforce and teach this value, visit [www.jewishlearningmatters.com/music](http://www.jewishlearningmatters.com/music).





## Evidence of Learning

Observe student involvement in their gardening project to help protect or guard nature.



## Home and Community Connections

*Encourage families to learn more about the values and reinforce the concepts with their children through video and song by visiting [www.jewishlearningmatters.com](http://www.jewishlearningmatters.com).*

### PLANTING PROJECT

Grow plants and then share them with children, adults, and / or seniors living in a selected community agency. Invite a local landscaper to help guide you with the project. Ask him or her questions, such as what types of plants or seeds are needed, and what is the best location for receiving sufficient sun? Ask your guest to demonstrate how to plant seeds or plants and what students can do to protect them so they can grow strong and healthy. (Be sure plants are taken home on long holidays.) For help in locating an agency, you may wish to contact the following:

- AJFCA, the membership association for approximately 125 Jewish family service agencies across the United States and Canada: <http://www.ajfca.org/about>
- JAFCO, Jewish Adoption and Foster Care Options, which provides services to abused and neglected children: <http://www.jafco.org/>
- The Jewish Federation in your area

Encourage parents to create a “Jewish Backyard” with the help from blogger Bible Belt Balabusta! This and other creative family projects can be found at the following website: <http://biblebeltbalabusta.com/2012/07/10/easy-family-project-a-jewish-backyard/#more-4212>.



## Literature Connections

Title	Author(s) and Illustrator(s)	Summary
<i>Just a Dream</i>	Chris Van Allsburg	Walter has a dream about the future when the Earth is destroyed by pollution. He now understands why it is important to take care of the environment.
<i>Poppy Bear: The Garden That Overslept</i>	Ruth E. Saltzman	Springtime is late and two children venture to find out why. They find Poppy Bear sleeping in a barren garden. They work together to bring the garden back to life.
<i>Be a Friend to Trees</i>	Patricia Lauber Holly Keller	Young children learn how important trees are and how both humans and animals depend on trees for life, food, and products.
<i>A Tree Is Nice</i>	Janice May Udry Marc Simont	This book gives the reader an appreciation for all the ways in which trees not only beautify our world but provide food, shelter, and more.
<i>Dear Tree*</i>	Doba Rivka Weber Phyllis Saroff	<i>Dear Tree</i> is a beautiful look at the unique relationship between a little boy and his favorite tree. By thinking of what every tree needs in order to thrive and grow, the boy figures out exactly what to wish for his own special tree in the coming year. And so begin his hopeful words, <i>Dear Tree</i> .

\*PJ Library Book



# Thematic Connections

*Tu B'Shevat*

*Sukkot*

Earth Day

Gardening

## **LESSON CONTRIBUTOR**

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