



JFS Jewish Journal

Engaging Your Jewish Residents



Tu B'Shvat

Tu B'Shvat: Celebration

Tu B'Shvat: Jewish Arbor Day

Tu B'Shvat is an annual, Jewish holiday celebrating trees, nature, and the earth. Much like the American Arbor Day or Earth Day, Tu B'Shvat is often used to bring awareness to ecological issues.

What Does "Tu B'Shvat" Mean?

While Tu B'Shvat celebrates trees and nature, the name itself is actually just the date on which the holiday falls, much like how American Independence Day is called Fourth of July. **Shvat** is the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar. **Tu** stands for the Hebrew letters *tet* and *vav*, which in Hebrew numerology have a joined value of fifteen. So, the holiday literally translates to the fifteenth of *Shvat*. The holiday is sometimes also called **Chag Ha'llanot** (the festival of trees) or **Rosh Hashanah La'llanot** (the new year of the trees).

JFS is Here & This is How We Help

Jewish Family Services (JFS) enriches lives and strengthens the community by providing compassionate support and resources to individuals and families from all backgrounds. Guided by Jewish values, JFS specializes in supporting older adults' safety and independence, assisting families with resources and guidance, providing private transportation to appointments, offering expert counseling and care management, and more. You can learn more about JFS and our chaplaincy program on *page 6*.



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How to Celebrate Tu B'Shvat with Your Residents

Host a Tu B'Shvat Seder

Tu B'Shvat is a wonderful opportunity to engage in a meaningful and sensory-rich experience. A Tu B'Shvat seder is a structured yet flexible celebration where participants enjoy tastes of the seven species (see page 3), and reflect on nature's beauty and renewal. This can be a special event that fosters discussion, connection, and appreciation for the natural world. You can [learn more about hosting a seder here](#).



Provide a variety of fruits that symbolize different aspects of life:

- Fruits with tough peels (pomegranates, figs): Represent protection and resilience.
- Fruits with pits (dates, olives): Symbolize inner potential and growth.
- Fully edible fruits (grapes, berries): Reflect wholeness and unity.



Serve four small cups of grape juice, each representing a season:

- White juice: Winter, a time of rest and preparation.
- Light pink (white mixed with a little red): Early spring, symbolizing renewal.
- Deep pink: Full spring, growth and blossoming.
- Red juice: Summer, a time of abundance and warmth.



Read short passages or poems about nature and trees. Ask residents:

- "What tree or plant has special meaning in your life?"
- "What lessons can we learn from trees about patience and strength?"

Sing Songs

Music is an important part of any holiday, and Tu B'Shvat is no exception. Play these cultural (not religious) songs to set the mood, and ask residents if they have favorites to add!



Hashkediyyah Porachat

This song title translates to "the almond tree is blooming", a celebration of the spring foliage. The lyrics include the line "Tu B'Shvat is coming, the holiday of the trees!" making it the consummate Tu B'Shvat song. [You can find the music here](#) and [English transliteration of the lyrics here](#).



Kach Holchim Hashotlim

This song is about gathering gardening tools and going to plant trees! Enjoy this catchy call-to-action song by [clicking here](#).

Plant a Tree or Donate to an Organization

Often, planting a tree or donating to an organization that plants trees is an important part of Tu B'Shvat celebrations. By giving residents small flower pots and letting them plant a seed, you can help them participate in the tradition of renewing the earth. To extend the impact, consider donating to organizations like the [Jewish National Fund \(JNF\)](#) to plant trees on their behalf.

Tu B'Shvat Foods: The Seven Species

Like most Jewish holidays, Tu B'Shvat celebrations center heavily around foods with symbolic meanings. This holiday features **Shivat HaMinim**, or the Seven Species mentioned in the Torah. The reason usually given for eating foods from this group, especially its fruits, is that they are symbols of G-d's creation, and that by eating them we give thanks to Him and reaffirm our ties to the Land of Israel. Each food is said to represent a holy attribute or personality trait we should aspire to.



Wheat

Wheat can be eaten in the form of bread, crackers, anything! It symbolizes material success.



Barley

At a Tu B'Shvat meal, barley can usually be found as crackers. It may represent *Shalom Bayit*, or in English, a peaceful home.



Grapes

Grape juice and wine are staples in Jewish feasts and Tu B'Shvat is no different. Raisins can also fill the grape role, which can symbolize finding romantic love.



Figs

Figs on Tu B'Shvat are often seen as symbols of patience. Enjoy them fresh or dried.



Pomegranate

Pomegranate is an important food in Jewish culture, as the number of seeds in each fruit are said to equal with the number of commandments in the Torah (613). On Tu B'Shvat, they can also help us ward off gossip.



Olives

Green, black, or oil-cured olives are another staple of Jewish foods. They can represent righteousness and good deeds.



Dates

Dates, delicious and sweet, are nature's candy. They naturally represent health at Tu B'Shvat.

Hebrew ...	It is pronounced ...	It means ...
<i>Tu B'Shvat</i>	Too beesh-vaht	The fifteenth of Shvat
<i>Ilanot</i>	Ee-lah-note	Young trees
<i>Eitz/Eitzim</i>	Aytz/aytz-eem	Tree/trees
<i>Chag Ha'Ilanot</i>	Hag ha ee-lah-note	The festival of trees
<i>Shivat HaMinim</i>	Sheev-aht ha-mee-neem	The seven species
<i>Seder</i>	Say-der	A Jewish dinner or feast
<i>Boreh Pri Ha'Eitz</i>	Bore-ay peh-ri ha'aytz	Blessing the fruit of the trees

Bubbe's Corner



You can always count on Bubbe (Yiddish for “grandmother” for her wisdom, stories and Tu B’shvat traditions. Whether you are a Bubbe or have a Bubbe figure in your life, spend time learning about the Festival of Trees. Be sure to ask your residents about what special things their families do to celebrate, and try to make them feel as at home as possible!

If you’ve had a child or grandchild in the last year, it’s traditional to plant a tree in their honor—a Cedar tree for boys, and a Cypress tree for girls.

JNF, the [Jewish National Fund](#), raises money to plant an average of three million trees.

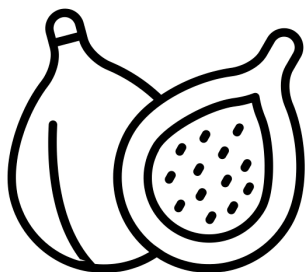
In the famous Tu B’Shvat story, a man found a world full of carob trees, and just as his ancestors planted for him, he too, plants for his descendants.

Tu B’Shvat is the designated birthday of the trees!

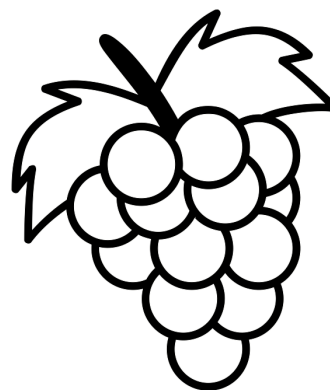
Tu B’Shvat was originally created to help farmers determine the best time to harvest fruit from their trees. The date was chosen to reflect the climate in Israel.

The Seven Species

Of Israel



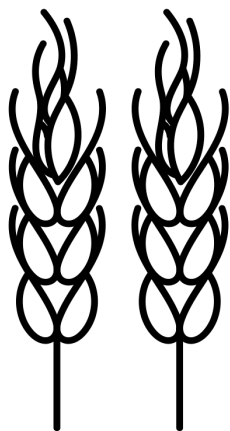
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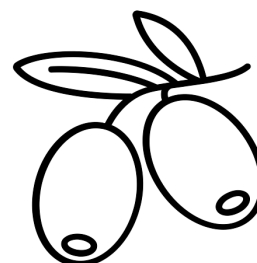
Grapes



Wheat



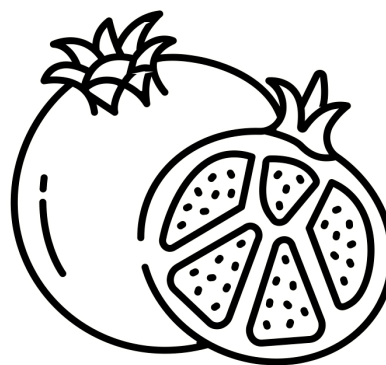
Barley



Olives



Date



Pomegranate

About JFS

Jewish Family Services of Northeastern NY provides counseling, promotes independence, aging well, and access to basic needs, mitigates food insecurity and social isolation.

Our mission is to enrich the lives of individuals and families from all backgrounds and strengthen the community by providing compassionate, collaborative human services, guided by Jewish values. This is amplified by volunteers and sustained by donors to ensure support for our community is within reach.

Our staff has expertise in:

- Helping older adults maintain their safety and independence
- Providing resources and guidance to older adults and their families
- Offering private transportation to medical appointments and synagogue services
- Counseling and care management (JFS is part of major insurance networks, including Medicare)

Support Our Chaplaincy Program

JFS provides spiritual connection and support for Jewish residents in long-term and elder care in the Capital Region.

Online: jfsneny.org/donations

Call: (518) 516-1102

Thank you!

For all Jewish Journals and this year's holiday dates, visit jfsneny.org/chaplaincy-support.



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