



TORAH VEHA'ARETZ

INSTITUTE

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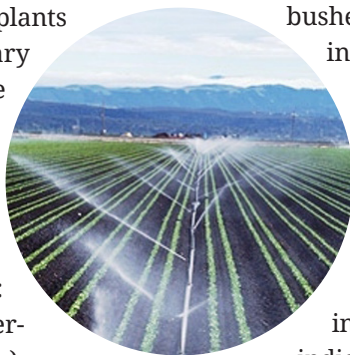
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Irrigation

Irrigation during shemittah is a rabbinic prohibition, but is permitted for *ukmei ilana*, sustaining plants (see mishna shevi'it 2,4 that prohibits vs. mishnah moed katan 1,1 that permits). For practical guidelines on when and how much it is permitted to water plants, the definitions provided by the *posekim* are somewhat unclear. There are three main practical opinions:

1. It is permitted to water plants with the minimal necessary amount, so there won't be discernible damage to the quality and quantity of the produce.
2. Increase intervals between watering (or: decrease the time of watering you give on each time), so that plants are watered only when it is vital for their immediate survival. The significance of this is that one can use an unlimited amount of water when watering.
3. There is no limit in the amount of water used when watering a home garden, since it is considered a *beit shelichin*. We are stringent, and follow the first and



second opinions. However, many are lenient and allow watering garden plants with the same amount of water as usual during non-shemittah years.

Practical Guidelines for Gardens:

It is permitted to irrigate to keep plants alive. One should avoid irrigation meant to encourage extra growth. One should reduce the amount of irrigation in comparison to regular years or increase the intervals between irrigating times.

One should irrigate immediately when bushes and trees show signs of initial dehydration; there is no need to wait for signs of actual shriveling (when real damage occurs to the plants).

Signs of initial dehydration include leaves curling in the later afternoon, which indicate a lack of water. However temporary wilting during hot hours of the day is not necessarily a sign of true dehydration, rather it is temporary. In such cases, there is no need to irrigate.

If one wants to rely on more lenient opinions and water garden plants the same way (amount and frequency) as usual during non-shemittah years, he is allowed to do so. ■