



TORAH VEHA'ARETZ

INSTITUTE

BY RABBI MOSHE BLOOM

en.toraland.org.il



Educational & Community Gardens During *Shemittah*

Question: Over the past few years, I have had the privilege to be involved in gardening as part of a community project and as part of a school project as a teacher of agriculture. What do I do next year during the *shemittah* year?!?! I planned on planting on a detached platform, but I saw on your website that it is only permissible for a major need and for educational purposes. I will explain about two of the projects I'm involved in:

The community garden in a neighborhood in crisis. We have tried to set up a community garden for several years. Finally, this year, the project took off. It is an educational community project, which gives hope to the neighbors and solves many neighborhood problems.

I am a teacher of agriculture. I teach various grades in a mixed religious and secular elementary school. We mostly plant seasonal

vegetables, hoe, and cultivate many areas on the school grounds. We also have a hot-house. Is it permissible to do anything in this situation?

The first case is a project that would otherwise be buried and will be very difficult to resuscitate if temporarily discontinued. The second gives to and educates children.

Answer: A community garden set up for therapeutic and social welfare purposes is considered a major need. For this reason, it is possible to be lenient as we are with agricultural cultivation whose purpose is to provide food for the general population and a livelihood for farmers.

On the practical level, you can sow, sprout, and plant vegetables ahead of *shemittah*. These vegetables will have *kedushat shevi'it* (*shemittah* sanctity).

Furthermore, you can prepare a hothouse with platforms detached from the ground. There you will be able to perform various agricultural activities throughout the *shemittah* year, including planting and sowing.

In terms of general gardening during the *shemittah* year itself, it is forbidden to hoe the ground to enhance it. It is preferable to spray or mow the weeds. If needed, it is possible to teach children how to perform various types of mowing with a weed whacker, and the like, but not with a hoe. ■