

# TREES – A TU B’SHEVAT BOOK LIST

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Updated January 2023

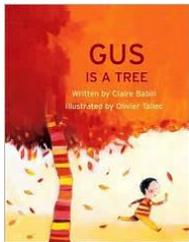
*Tu B'Shevat has become known as “Jewish Arbor Day” or expanded as a “Jewish Earth Day” to recognize ecological and environmental concerns. Although it is the middle of winter, the original intent of the fifteenth of Shevat was to mark the day that sap began to flow in the trees – the resurrection of plant life.*

*The Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1) marks the day for determining the status of agricultural products for the purposes of shemittah (sabbatical year), yovel (jubilee year), and planting and harvesting.*

*Some make a Seder using the seven products of the land of Israel. Kabbalists made a Seder using 15 or 30 fruits and vegetables with peels, with a pit inside them, or from which the seed is eaten (i.e., pomegranates) that is considered a tikkun (rectification) for Adam’s eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.*

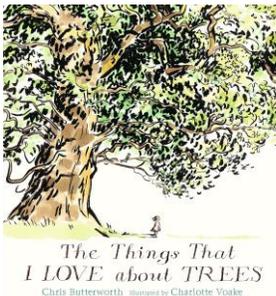
*There are many references to trees in biblical literature, which compare the Torah to a tree (“It is a tree of life for those who grasp it” – Proverbs 3:18), and good people to trees (“A righteous man will flourish like a date palm” – Psalms 92:13).*

**Here is a selected bibliography of secular books that recognize the intrinsic value and beauty of trees:**

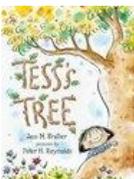


Babin, Claire. **Gus Is a Tree**. Illustrated by Olivier Tallec. (Enchanted Lion Books, 2008). Gus loves trees. As he sits under one and dozes off, he dreams of walking in the woods with his father and that he is a tree, surrounded by many different kinds of trees. He feels the wind blow through his leaves, smells moss, and sees animals in the forest. Gus feels the rain, and wakes up to find his classmates urging him to go inside. Creative illustrations show Gus’s transformation – his orange and yellow striped shirt become vibrant leaves.

Forest words about the types of trees and the parts of a tree are included. (ages 5-10)



Butterworth, Chris. **The Things That I Love About Trees**. Illustrated by Charlotte Voake. (Candlewick, 2018). "From brand-new buds in spring to the sound of the wind whooshing through the leaves in summer, from the fall colors to the feel of winter’s rough bark and the promise of spring returning again — no matter what time of year, there’s always something extraordinary to notice about the trees around your neighborhood." (ages 5-10)



Brallier, Jess M. **Tess’s Tree**. Pictures by Peter H. Reynolds. (Harper, 2009). After a storm falls the old oak in the yard, Tess is heartbroken. She invites friends, family and

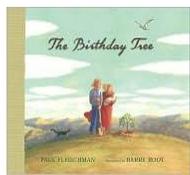
neighbors to celebrate the tree, and she learns how many people loved and benefitted from it. (ages 5-10)



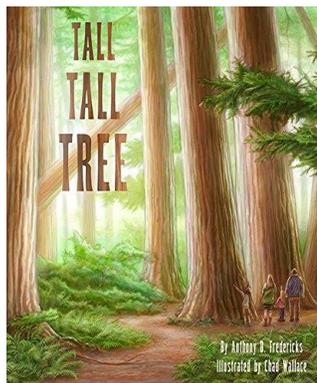
Colvin C.S. ***Tea-Sipping Trees***. Illustrated by Bethany Evelyn (Independently Published, 2022). An endearing tale of saving one of the last endangered Chestnut Trees, an American icon all but gone from our precious landscape.



DePalma, Mary Newell. ***A Grand Old Tree***. (Arthur A. Levine Books (Scholastic), 2005). The life cycle of a tree is presented with simple text and illustrations. The story emphasizes the tree's contribution to the environment around it, by providing a home and food for animals, and providing more trees through its seeds. Even after it dies, its trunk shelters plants and animals, and its decomposition enriches the soil. (ages 4-8)



Fleischman, Paul. ***The Birthday Tree***. Illustrated by Barry Root. (Candlewick Press, 2008). When Jack is born, his parents plant an apple tree. As Jack grows, so does the tree, as well as their special connection. Beautiful illustrations highlight the custom of planting a birthday tree as well as the interaction of humans and nature. (ages 5-10)

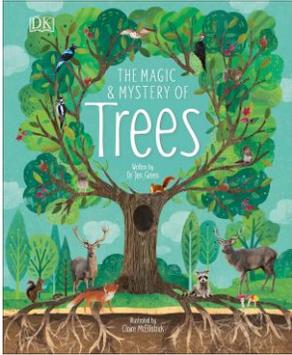


Fredericks, Anthony D. ***Tall Tall Tree***. Illustrated by Chad Wallace (Dawn, 2017). "Complemented by STEM-based activity suggestions, an introduction to the amazing natural world of the giant redwood combines rhymes, gentle artwork and counting prompts that reveal the teeming life that can be found in and around the world's tallest trees." (ages 2-5)

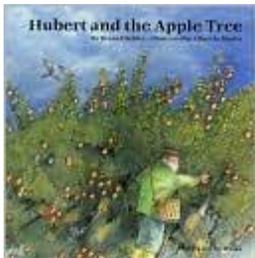


Gile, John. ***The First Forest***. Illustrated by Tom Heflin. (Worzalla, 1989). Rhyming text describes the creation of different trees and shrubs and how the trees grew with light and water. Then some trees get greedy, and a fight breaks out. The Tree Maker is sad, and punishes the trees who fought by making them lose their leaves in the fall; the trees that didn't fight would stay green all year round. A cute fable, though some may be off put by the suggestion and

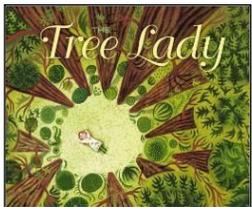
depiction of a “tree maker.” (ages 4-8)



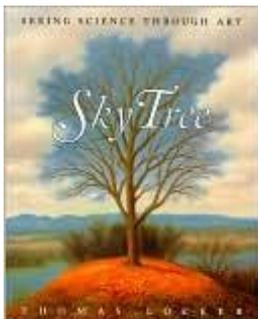
Green, Jen. ***The Magic and Mystery of Trees***. Illustrated by Claire McElfatrick. (DK Children, 2019). The book "takes children on a fascinating journey of exploration, showing them just how special these mighty organisms are. Discover how they communicate and warn each other of predators, how they nurture their networks, record the past, and anticipate the future to ensure their survival." (ages 5-10)



Hachler, Bruno. ***Hubert and the Apple Tree***. Illustrated by Albrecht Rissler. Translated by Rosemary Lanning. (North South Books, 1999). Hubert loves the apple tree in his yard, and he enjoys watching the constant changes with the seasons and the weather. Man and tree grow and age together, so when the tree is struck by lightning, Hubert find a way to preserve his companion. No Jewish content, but a powerful message about enjoying and respecting trees. (ages 5-10)



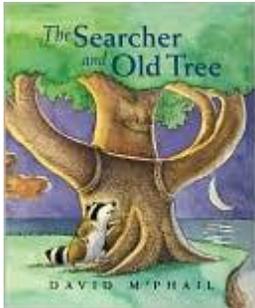
Hopkins, H. Joseph. ***The Tree Lady: The True Story of How One Tree-Loving Woman Changed a City Forever***. Illustrated by Jill McElmurry. (Beach Lane Books, 2013). Kate Olivia Sessions was the first person to graduate of the University of California with a science degree (1881). With her love of trees and knowledge of plant science, she transformed San Diego's Balboa Park from a bare desert to a flourishing landscape. This picture-book biography shows what one person can do, and what trees can do. (ages 5-10)



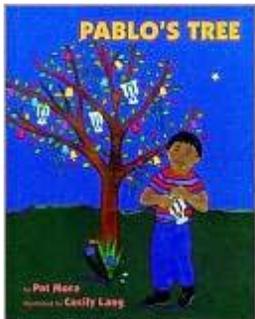
Locker, Thomas. ***Sky Tree***. (HarperCollins, 1995). Gorgeous paintings show how a tree changes with the seasons. Questions about nature are paired with the pictures, making “science come alive through art.” The simple yet poetic text compliments the trees, and the book can be used in schools for lessons comprising science, art, and language arts. (ages 5-10)



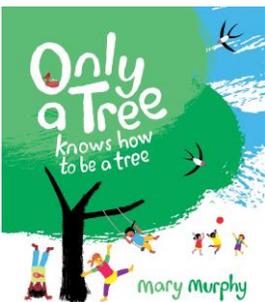
McMillan, Bruce. ***How the Ladies Stopped the Wind***. Illustrated by Gunnella. (Houghton Mifflin, 2007). The women of a village in Iceland decide to stop the wind by planting trees, but they need to prevent the sheep from eating the saplings. The cute, folksy artwork complements the text as the process of nurturing saplings, including fencing and fertilizing, helps them mature to big healthy trees. (ages 5-10)



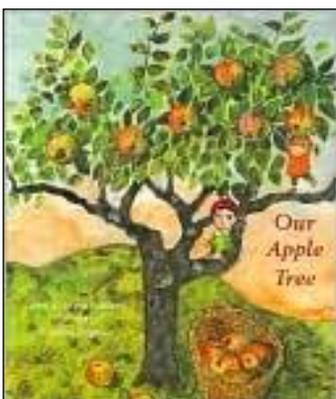
McPhail, David. ***The Searcher and Old Tree***. (Charlesbridge, 2008). Searcher is a raccoon who forages for food at night. In the morning, he returns to a strong old tree and sleeps through a raging storm. Cradled in the branches and shielded from the element, he awakes at night and notices leaves and branches on the ground. (ages 4-8)



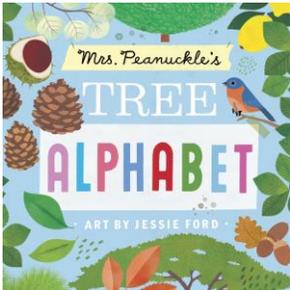
Mora, Pat. ***Pablo's Tree***. Illustrated by Cecily Lang. (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1994). "Each year on his birthday, a young Mexican-American boy looks forward to seeing how his grandfather has decorated the tree he planted on the day the boy was adopted. Although there is no Jewish content, the concept of celebrating a birthday with a tree relates to Tu B'shvat. Subtopics include Spanish language and adoption. (ages 5-10)



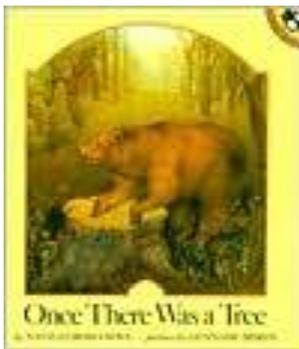
Murphy, Mary. ***Only a Tree Knows How to Be a Tree***. (Candlewick, 2020). "A celebration of the uniqueness of trees—and birds, dogs, fish, the planet Earth, the universe, and each human being." – Kirkus Reviews (ages 3-6)



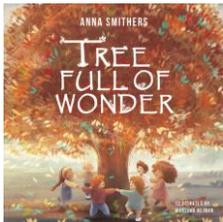
Naslund, Goret Kristina. ***Our Apple Tree***. Illustrated by Kristina Digman. (Roaring Brook Press, 2002). Whimsical illustrations accompany the seasonal changes for an apple tree. Beginning with winter, the tree rests, blooms in the spring, enjoys the summer sun, bears fruit in the fall, and then rests again. A recipe for apple crisp is included. (ages 4-8)



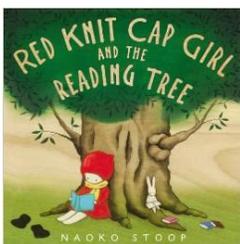
Peanuckle, Mrs. Mrs. Peanuckle's Tree Alphabet. Illustrated by Jessie Fords. (Rodale Books, 2018). "Whether they're short or tall, pruny or smooth, full of berries or flowers or nuts, the 26 types of trees in this alphabet primer are sure to surprise and delight the youngest of readers (and their parents)." (ages 2-5)



Romanova, Natalia. **Once There Was a Tree**. Pictures by Gennady Spirin. (Dial Books, 1985). The stump then becomes a home to insects, a claw sharpener for a bear, a food source for birds and frogs, and a resting place for humans. Each thinks the tree belongs to them, but the book concludes that "the tree belongs to all, because it grows from the earth that is home for all." Spirin's beautiful artwork brings the text to life. (ages 5-10)



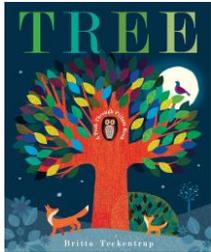
Smithers, Anna. **Tree Full of Wonder**. Illustrated by Martyna Nejman. (Orange Lotus, 2021). *Tree Full of Wonder* is a vibrant, rhyming, educational and unique picture book showing the unbreakable bond between people and trees. Kids will fall in love with nature and will become Protectors of the Trees. (ages 3-8)



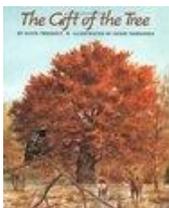
Stoop, Naoko. **Red Knit Cap Girl and the Reading Tree**. (Little Brown Books for Young Readers). The next book in the series finds Red Knit Cap Girl and her friends creating a library in a hollow tree. While she leaves a book for others to read, Beaver makes a shelf for the other books. (ages 3-6)



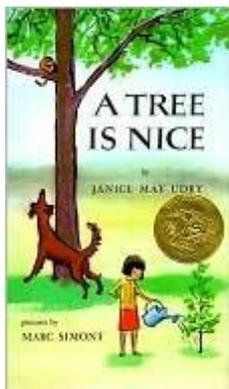
Surratt, Tereasa and Donna Lukas. **The Forever Tree**. Illustrated by Nicola Slater (Crown Books for Young Readers, 2018). “The animals and humans always knew their tree was special. The trunk was the best place to host championship bingo tournaments, and the branches were perfect for swinging in the shade! But when the tree gets sick, neighbors new and old will have to join forces if they have any chance of saving their treetop home. A touching tale based on the true story of one special tree, and the community that brought it back to life.” (ages 5-10)



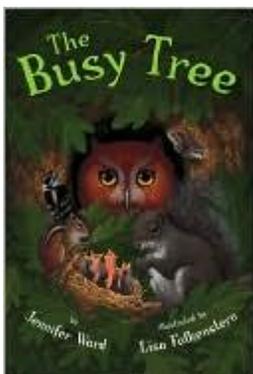
Teekentrup, Britta. **Tree**. (Doubleday Books for Young Readers, 2016). A tree can be a busy place, with animals and birds enjoying it, no matter what the season. Simple rhymes, colorful pictures and peek through holes that this a fun as well as educational story time book. (ages 2-4)



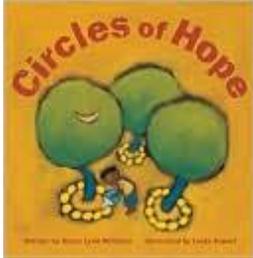
Tresselt, Alvin. **The Gift of the Tree**. Illustrated by Henri Sorensen. (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1992). Richly colored illustrations mirror the change of seasons and variety of animals that center around an old oak, that had grown tall and strong, but succumbed to the cycles of nature. “Just beautiful” describe the pictures as well as the arc of the story, which can be used in language arts when discussing descriptive writing, or with science to identify forest animals. (ages 5-10)



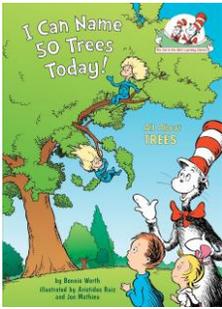
Udry, Janice May. **A Tree is Nice**. Pictures by Marc Simont. (HarperCollins, 1956). “Trees make everything beautiful.” This classic Caldecott Medal Winner expounds on the many benefits of trees, leaves, and branches. At the end of the book, a young boy plants a tree. Over the years, he watches it grow and can tell people that he planted the tree. (ages 4-8)



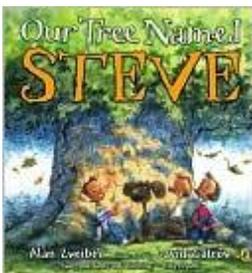
Ward, Jennifer. **The Busy Tree**. Illustrated by Lisa Falkenstern. (Marshall Cavendish, 2009). “Many different types of wildlife live in and around a tree that is their home, from chipmunks and woodpeckers to ants and spiders.” The simple rhymes and detailed illustrations highlight the inter-relationships of nature and the multiple functions of a tree. (ages 4-8)



Williams, Karen Lynn. ***Circles of Hope***. Illustrated by Linda Saport. (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2005). "After many futile attempts to plant a tree in honor of his new baby sister, a young Haitian boy discovers the perfect solution." Although the story takes place in Haiti, the message that "you must have hope to plant a tree" and the challenges Facile faces in terms of the growing conditions will generate lively comparisons to Israel. (ages 5-10)



Worth, Bonnie. ***I Can Name 50 Trees Today!: All About Trees*** (Cat in the Hat's Learning Library). Illustrated by Aristides Ruiz and Joe Matthieu. (Random House Books for Young Readers, 2006). "While stopping to admire some of the world's most amazing trees, the Cat teaches beginning readers how to identify different species from the shape of their crowns, leaves, lobes, seeds, bark, and fruit." (ages 4-8)



Zweibel, Alan. ***Our Tree Named Steve***. Illustrated by David Catrow. (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2005). A young family builds a new home, but spares a large old tree, which becomes a big part of their lives. The father writes a letter to the kids when after a big storm, Steve topples over. He reminds them that the memory of the fun they had around the tree will always be with them. (ages 5-10)