The Midrash Kohelet Rabbah teaches: “When God created the first human, God took them and showed them all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to them, ‘See my works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are. And everything that I created, I created it for you. Be careful not to spoil or destroy my world—for if you do, there will be nobody after you to repair it.”

**Tu B’Shevat and Tikkun Olam at Kol Emet**

As we celebrate Tu B’Shevat, we contemplate the special place that trees occupy in Jewish thought, our connection to the Earth, and our role as caretakers of the environment, our life-support system.

**THE POWER OF TREES**

**Trees remove pollutants from the air.**
Poor air quality can lead to health problems, landscape damage, degraded ecosystems, and reduced visibility. “Tree leaves absorb airborne pollutants and intercept particulate matter, helping reduce the throat irritation, asthma, and even premature death that these pollutants may cause. By annually removing over 35 billion pounds of these pollutants in the continental U.S., trees prevent over half a million cases of acute respiratory symptoms each year.

**Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the air and store carbon as wood.**
Carbon dioxide (CO2) is a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere – trees trap the carbon and release the oxygen. **Trees curb climate change directly** by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Through the process of photosynthesis, forests offset ten to 20 percent of the country’s greenhouse gas emissions each year.

**Trees are crucial for water quality.**
More than half of the American population depend on forests to capture and filter their drinking water.

**Trees help control storm water.**
The leaves on trees intercept rainfall while their roots absorb water from the ground. Trees help protect against climate impacts, such as flooding, which is getting worse with more locally heavy annual precipitation. By catching rainwater, reducing erosion, and creating more permeable soils, trees help prevent nearly 400 billion gallons of runoff annually in the continental U.S., which is enough water to fill about 600,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

**Trees provide other benefits as well!**
Trees enhance property values, lower summer air temperatures, and provide wildlife habitat. *(i-Tree)*

Trees in urban areas can also reduce the urban heat island effect and lower air conditioning needs as much as by 30 percent providing natural shade. Urban trees reduce U.S. energy bills by more than $5 billion per year. And since lower energy consumption means fewer carbon dioxide emissions, planting trees can contribute to a healthier planet while improving our daily lives. *(Climate Central)*
In recognition of Tu B’Shevat and our commitment to sustainability, Kol Emet’s TIKKUN OLAM COMMITTEE recommends adopting two practices:

- Donate money to plant trees in Israel http://usa.jnf.org/jnf-tree-planting-center/
- Plant trees in Bucks County in a beneficial and sustainable way:

**Become a Bucks County Tree Tender**

*About*

Tree canopy in urban settings is correlated with many health, environmental, and economic impacts. **Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) Tree Tenders®** works to increase the number of trees in neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia, prioritizing communities with tree coverage well below the citywide goal of 30% of open space.

Since 1993, more than 5,000 volunteers in the region have become certified Tree Tenders®, receiving hands-on training on the biology, identification, planting, proper care of trees, and working within the community. Each year, with PHS support, neighborhood Tree Tenders groups plant more than 1000 trees and also focus their efforts on follow-up monitoring and care to ensure their survival.

As one of the oldest and most established volunteer tree planting and stewardship programs, PHS Tree Tenders® is at the forefront of the urban tree movement across the country. PHS encourages individuals to take the Tree Tenders® training course and to start a Tree Tenders® group in their neighborhood! To start a Tree Tenders group in your neighborhood, all you need are 3 Tree Tenders graduates!

*Dates:*
Tuesdays evenings: March 31, April 7 and April 14, 2020
6:00–9:15 PM

*Location:*
Bristol Township Senior Center
2501 Bath Road
Bristol, PA 19007

*Fee:*
$40

Available for ISA, PA LA, PLNA, PA Master Gardeners and PA Master Naturalist credit. This course is intended for adults due to the late evening hours.

*Help plant and care for trees in your region, your community, or your yard!*