

## Earth Day 2020 & Nature-Based Resources for Jewish Educators During COVID-19

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If there's one thing we can all count on during this unprecedented time of social distancing, it's that the natural world will stay true to its own rhythms. It doesn't wait for our schools to reopen or for our family gatherings to be large, joyful and filled with hugs again. Instead, it quietly beckons us to take notice of the (sometimes small and sometimes big) changes that happen each day, no matter what else is taking place.

When the pandemic hit and Jewish early childhood educators began sending activity suggestions home and launched new virtual school connections for students and their families, "nature play" wasn't the first thing on their minds. However, teacher-supported nature-inspired activities don't have to be left behind during these unusual times! In fact, it might be the best time to consider introducing nature once again given the warmer weather and the myriad of benefits nature has on children and adults. Not to mention we might all want to look at Earth Day on Wednesday, April 22, as a kind of reawakening. A tuning into nature. A blessing from the earth to us and from us to the earth.

Here is a list of resources to help you think out-of-the-box and be inspired to include nature related activities for your students in the coming weeks between now and the end of school.

### WONDER AND JEWISH VALUES



[Approach Each Day with Wonder, Joy, & Amazement](#), Article by Deborah Schein, Growing Wonder.

*Nature is the perfect integrator. The experience of bringing nature into our interactions, particularly with young children, gives us a shared language and an opportunity to nurture this essential foundation which makes us and them feel more connected, to each other, to the world, to our sense of self. –*  
Deborah Schein, Growing Wonder

[Jewish Value Cards](#) – This set of 12 cards, each with a different Jewish nature value. Each card provides basic information about the value, provides the name in Hebrew and easy to use transliteration, and offers suggestions for classroom activities and projects from a student-centered, Reggio Emilia-inspired perspective. The deck was created by Gabe Goldman.



[Grow Torah](#) is a NY Metro area organization offering garden-based experiential & environmental Torah education programs 🌿 with 14 School Partners 🏫. And now has gone all Instagram on us!

Browse their feed for live city walks, Jewish wisdom on every day interactions with nature, and info about their upcoming calls and web sessions.

## NATURE-BASED CRAFTS



### [Playdough Bird Nests](#)

“One of the great joys in my life is watching my little one create. There is this beautiful energy that takes over when crafting. One of our favorite activities has always been to work with play dough or clay and items in nature. My little one just adores it. Some beautiful and imaginative creations have occurred from combining the two. We have enjoyed making islands, winter wonderlands and rock mosaics. These play dough and nature bird’s nests were another huge hit.”



### [Leaf Threading and Leaf Hole Punching](#)

“Threading helps young children develop small-muscle control and strength in their fingers. Small-muscle control is important when learning to write. When children become more capable in manipulating objects, they also gain confidence and develop independence. With nature threading, there is an imaginative play element as children invent stories while making (and wearing) their creations.”



Because no two rocks are exactly alike, rocks are super fun for kids. They can mark a path, make a plunking sound in water, and can be used to crush other things, just to name a few. Check out these other many creative ideas:

- [Fun with Rocks](#)
- [Painted Rock Treasure Hunts](#)
- [Playdough Rock Houses](#)

## EXPERIENCE NATURE THROUGH LIVE NATURE CAMS



[Zoo Cams](#) – This link is to the Houston Zoo with 7 optional animal habitats. It can be a whole lot of fun. It’s all in real time so you never know what you are going to get, but sometimes it’s pretty exciting. And the folks who set up and operate the cameras sometimes have a little fun and zoom in on special things that are happening!

### Beach Cams on Long Island

- [Main Beach](#), East Hampton, NY
- [Cooper’s Beach](#), Southampton, NY

### Eagle Cams



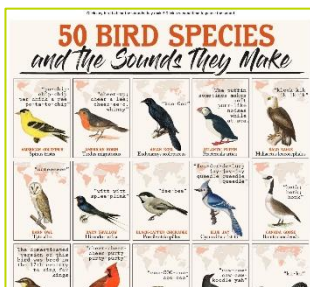
- In Florida – [Watch Eaglets in their nest.](#)
- In Pennsylvania – [Close up cam with lots of background bird sounds.](#)

### Forest/River Cam

- [Redwod Forest River](#), Crescent City, CA
- [Tembe Elephant Park](#), South Africa – night or day you can see the elephants!

## RECOGNIZING BIRD CALLS

Being able to identify a bird's song is a skill that brings joy and fosters an appreciation of nature.



The best [Interactive Bird Poster with Clickable Bird sounds](#) that I’ve ever seen. One page and each image provides children with the sweet and sometimes surprising sounds different birds make.

This Earth Day, read your favorite bird book, play a game with the children using the online interactive bird poster (above), and then recommend this fabulous [interactive book with twelve bird songs](#) of woodland birds for continued play at home.

## NATURE PLAY WITH TINKERGARTEN

Tinkergarten At Home Live - #tinkergarten and #outdoorsall4.

- [Tuesdays with Tinkergarten on Facebook](#). Free Nature Play Live Class Experiences. Tinkergarten Live experiences. Tuesdays with Tinkergarten Free Live Class Experiences.

Tinkergarten At Home [Weekly Activity Suggestions](#).



- [Week 1 - Not a Box](#)
- [Week 2 – Not a Sheet](#)
- [Week 3 – Water Play](#)
- [Week 4 – Hidden Senses](#)

Tinkergarten Blog Articles:

- [How to bring the outdoors in when you are stuck inside](#)
- [How to be down with messy play and keep your sanity](#)

## DIGITAL BASED STARTERS



### What plant is that?

The [Picture This](#) app will help you instantly identify plants, herbs, flowers, or trees during your walks this spring. It claims an accuracy of 98%, better than most human experts. So, don't leave home without it on your next walk!



### [Nature videos and activities from PBS Learning Media](#)

Nature Nuggets are short, minute-long videos drawn from NATURE, one of the most watched documentary film series on public television.

Repackaged for early learners (ages 2 to 6), each of the six videos is accompanied by support materials including discussion questions, teaching tips, and handouts.



Article: [Best Free Apps that Take Kids from “Screen” to “Green”](#). This article is part of the “thrive” resources and author Abby Jenkins suggests 7 free apps that can put you and your students on the path to an outdoor adventure anywhere you are.

## FULL LESSON SUGGESTIONS CONNECTING NATURE & ISRAEL

- [Connecting to Israel Through Junkyard Playgrounds](#)
- [Lupines and Israel: A Nature-Inspired Story and Art Activity](#)

## BACKYARDS AND NATURE ART

Whatever access you have during social distancing, and this may only be a side yard, front walkway, or windowsill, there’s always a way to incorporate it as a teaching garden for children. Just ask Victoria Hackett of outdoor-classrooms.com. Two resources to guide you:

- Article: [5 Easy Tricks to Transform Your Backyard Into a Teaching Garden](#)
- Educator’s Course: [FREE 5-Day Nature Art Challenge](#). Take the self-paced challenge to help you stay creative, play, experiment, and explore how you might use these activities with your own students!

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### [Nature Activities and Resources during Coronavirus](#)

