

SHMITTA



A Home Gardeners Guide

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This pamphlet has been written as a result of numerous requests and individual queries and is intended only as a guide. For more specific enquiries a Halachic Authority should be consulted.

For the purpose of convenience, no specific uniform system of transliteration of Hebrew words has been used...

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FOREWORD

Household gardens are both attractive and comforting. In addition to adding natural beauty to one's immediate environment, they often provide shade and a place to relax in the outdoors.

Much time, money and effort are invested in the household garden. During the Shmitta Year, we can continue to maintain and enjoy our garden and still abide by the laws of Shmitta.

Numerous types of trees, shrubs, flowers and fruiting varieties of plants may be cultivated in the home garden. How do we care for our lawns and garden plants during the Shmitta Year? What does an apartment-house resident do when there is a shared garden in a building where not all the residents are Shmitta observers? Although many farmers circumvent some of the Shmitta statutes by technically selling their land *(Heter Mechira - see note) owners of household gardens cannot avail themselves of this circumvention as they do not come within the same category as farmers since their gardens are not cultivated for the purpose of generating an income.

Any Jew who educates his family in the path of Torah will gladly seek to fulfil the commandment of Shmitta, both in spirit and in detail. The practice of fulfilling the tenets of Shmitta in the proximity of the home is educationally invaluable to all the members of the family. As such, he lovingly assumes the responsibilities of a 'Shabbat for the land, Shabbat for Hashem', thus doing his part to expedite the complete Redemption of Israel (Geulah Shlemah).

May we live to practice many Shnot Shmitta in the land of Israel, according to the spirit and law of Israel and in the merit of our observance of Shmitta may wespeditly witness the return of all Israel to their homeland.

Note:

The Heter Mechira literally means the right to sell and refers to the permission granted by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel to Jewish farmers in the Holy Land to sell their land before Shmitta Years, temporarily to a non-Jew thereby circumventing the economic problems connected with Shmitta Years. This permission must be made use of as rarely as possible and only in circumstances of economic stress as the Rabbinate's approval of Heter Mechira is motivated by the aim to avoid the economic collapse of the Jewish settlers in Israel. Therefore, the Heter should not be made use of by household gardeners where their gardens are not the source of their income and for whom observance of the Shmitta would not create a financial crisis.

The question of use of Heter Mechira in any event is a controversial one. There are Halachic authorities who permit the temporary sale of land in Israel to a non-Jew as a legally permissive way to overcoming the rigors of the laws of Shmitta in particularly difficult economic circumstances - Beshaat Hadechak. This is the view taken by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel who review the economic situation in Israel prior to every Shmitta year and to date, since the first such Heter was granted in 5649 (1889), a Heter has been renewed (with occasional differences in detail taking into account different circumstances), every eve of Shmitta as a Horaat Shaah i.e., a temporary measure.

There are other Halachic authorities however (prominently the Hazon Ish) who deny the validity and effectiveness of the legal device of Heter Mechira. Objections to the use of Heter Mechira have also been made on ideological grounds even by those authorities who recognize the Halachic validity of the Heter Mechira.

Many arguments have been marshalled for and against the efficacy and desirability of the Heter Mechira. The basis of the argument of the supporters of the Heter Mechira is the view that Shmitta in our days is Rabbinic Law only and to that extent the sale of land in Israel to a non- Jew cancels the sanctity of the Holy Land.

INTRODUCTION

THE APARTMENT-HOUSE GARDEN

The apartment-house garden is often shared by those who don't understand or appreciate the value or importance of the commandment 'And the land shall rest a Sabbath to Hashem' (Vayikra 25:2). Such residents often seek to expand and develop gardens and continue with tilling and planting as in a normal year.

One should calmly explain to such people that in Israel, every seventh year is the Land's Sabbath. Fortunate is the Jew who lives in Israel and is accorded the privilege of practicing Shmitta on even the smallest plot of land - the mutually owned apartment-house garden. Most of our sages regard Shmitta, as we practice it today, as deriving from Rabbinical Ordinances. Nevertheless, our scholars took special care in fulfilling the Shmitta commandment. *(1)

Most experts are certain, that with proper preparation prior to Shmitta and within the limitations of permissible gardening activities during Shmitta, no garden need suffer. One can maintain the garden's vitality and beauty within the framework of the Shmitta statutes, as past experience has shown.

Fellow apartment residents should understand that no religious Jew can take part in expenditures which are contrary to his belief and conscience and, therefore, he should not be forced to contribute monies in forbidden gardening activities during Shmitta. *(2)

A landlord must ascertain that the tenants abide by the laws of Shmitta, specifically so stipulating in the lease contract. *(3)

One may assume that a neighbor who borrows garden tools during Shmitta intends to use them in a permissible manner where this is a distinct possibility. *(4)

Notes:

1. There are three views on the question of the applicability of the laws regarding Shmitta today, i.e., after the Destruction of the Bet Hamikdash.

(1). Shmitta applies as Torah Law

(2). Shmitta applies as Rabbinic Law

(3). Shmitta observance is a pious custom 'Midat Hassidut' and does not have the character of Rabbinic Law.

Present day Torah Scholars in the main, uphold the opinion that Shmitta applies as a Rabbinic Law- Miderabonon; for explanation of the different arguments that lead to the conclusion that Shmitta is to be observed Miderabonon, as well as the arguments supporting the minority opinions (1) and (3) above see discussion in Harav Zevin's L'ora ha Halacha.

2. In cases in which despite your effort of persuading otherwise, forbidden work has been performed on a plot of land wholly or partially owned by you and the payment requested therefore is legally enforceable, you should pay the sum demanded as in the case of taxes payable where the monies so collected may sometimes be used for Halachically forbidden purposes Furthermore where, whatever your wishes, the gardening will be done and your non-payment would only serve to cause disharmony, then Mipnei Darkei Shalom for the Sake of Peace, you should make the requested payment

3. See Harav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach's "Maadnei Eretz", Chapter 13. In practice if you cannot prevail on your tenant not to break the Shmitta, you should seek advice from a Halachic Authority as to what steps to take in particular. as there are authorities who state that where one person works the land of another in a forbidden manner, the owner of the land transgresses a Torah command, in this respect, the law relating to the "Land's Rest" is similar to the law relating to the resting from labour of one's animals on the Shabbat; for where one is commanded to let one's animals rest on the Shabbat, one may not allow others to work with them on Shabbat. The Rambam, "Laws of Shmitta and Yovel" lists in his "Enumeration of the Mitzvot" as the first Mitzva "that the earth should rest in the Seventh Year from its work",

A Halachic Authority may advise the use of a Declaration of Ownerlessness as in Shulchan Aruch Orach Hayyim 246:3 However as the technicalities of such declarations could be complicated and their possible effectiveness may vary in different circumstances, expert advice must be sought. Other possibilities exist that may ensure the owner's non-violation of a Prohibition notwithstanding the tenant's forbidden activities on the owner's land and a Halachic Authority will be able to advise the owner of the land or his tenant on the various possibilities.

Generally, see Rambam's "Laws of Shmitta and Yovel", Chapter 8:1 "Just as it is forbidden to cultivate the land in Shmitta, so it is forbidden to encourage Israelites who do cultivate it or to sell them implements for cultivation, in as much as it is forbidden to encourage transgressors".

4. One is prohibited from "placing a stumbling-block before the blind". Where one is doubtful as to whether the borrower of your implements will use them for a prohibited act, one should give him the benefit of the doubt - this in order to perform the Mitzva of acting kindly and promoting harmony and neighbourly good feelings. (See Hazon Ish Sheviit 12:9 See Mishna Sheviit 5:6.)

SECTION ONE TILLING AND PLANTING PRIOR TO SHMITIA - LAWS OF ORLAH

Since the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash, all modes of working the land and planting are permitted during the Sixth Year, practically until the New Year of Shmitta. This permit includes ploughing which, during the time of the Bet Hamikdash, was forbidden at certain times during the Sixth Year. Nevertheless, certain limitations still apply during the Sixth Year as follows:

- A.** Planting fruit trees (Atzei Maachal) which are subject to the laws of Orlah is permitted until the 16th Av of the Sixth Year. *(1)
A young tree which lives and grows in a perforated container (Atzitz Nakuv) *(2) may be transferred to its permanent planting site, together with its own root ball still intact, even after the 16th Av and until the Rosh Hashanah of the Shmitta Year. This stipulation is conditional upon the tree being planted in such a way that one need not re-count its age for the purposes of Orlah *(3). Accordingly, in circumstances where the age of the grafted tree need not be re-counted for the purpose of Orlah, such grafting may be performed until Rosh Hashanah of the Shmitta Year.
- B.** Ornamental varieties, such as some bushes and flowering garden trees, maybe planted up to two weeks before Rosh Hashanah of the Shmitta Year, so that the plant's roots begin their anchoring process while still in the Sixth Year. *(4)
- C.** Flower seedlings and grass plants from cuttings or rhizomes, whose rooting requires three days, may be planted until three days before the Rosh Hashanah of the Shmitta Year. Special care should be taken that any plant should take root in its new planting site before the beginning of the Shmitta Year.
- D.** Vegetables and certain fragrant flower varieties which are susceptible to the 'Prohibition of Sefichin'* laws (5) must be planted so that germination occurs during the Sixth Year.

Type of plant	Latest permissible Planting date 6 th year	Comments
Fruit trees	16th Elul	Etz maachal
Grafts	End of Elul	
Ornamental trees	16th Elul	
Shrubs	16th Elul	
Grass (from Cuttings)	26th Elul	
flowers (from Cuttings)	26th Elul	
Vegetables, Flowers subject to Issur Sefichin (From seeds)	15-19th Elul	10-14days must be allowed for germination

————— **Notes:** —————

1. See Rambam Hilchot Shmitta and Yovel, chapter 3:11. "At the present time, one may not plant trees graft them or sink vine shoots in the seventh year, except when there is enough time for the plant to take hold and go on thereafter for thirty days before Rosh Hashana of the Shmitta year. 'Taking hold' generally takes two weeks. This is a permanent prohibition 'for appearance's sake (Marit Ayin,) lest anyone who sees such work should say, "This planting was done in the Shmitta Year". You must thus conclude that he, who plants a tree, sinks a vine or grafts a tree in the sixth year forty-four days before Rosh Hashana of the Shmitta year may retain the plant; if less than that period of time, he must uproot it. If he does not uproot it, the fruit is nonetheless permitted. If he dies before uprooting it, the heir is required to uproot it".

2. As will be seen from the text, the physical qualities of the container of the plant are an important factor with regard to Shmitta laws as well as Orlah laws. A distinction in law is sometimes made between an Atzitz She'eno Nakuv i.e., plant pots or containers which have no perforation and an Atzitz Nakuv a plant pot or container with perforations.

3. The fruit of any tree within the first three years following its planting is called "Orlah" and must not be eaten. The manner of reckoning the first three years of a young tree is subject to special rules. The years are not counted from day to day three years from the days the tree was planted, but from Rosh Hashana i.e., 1st Tishrei to Tishrei the following year and the reckoning begins from the time the tree has taken root in the soil. The thirty days before Rosh Hashana of Shmitta are considered a year so far as the first year of Orlah is concerned and fourteen days are considered the period required for a tree to take root in the soil. Accordingly, for everything planted before 16th Av, the second year begins with the first Rosh Hashana and the third year with the second Rosh Hashana. However, if the planting took place after the 16th Av. we reckon the first year from Rosh Hashana.

Orlah must be counted not only in connection with the planting of shoots. Orlah may need to be counted also in transplanting old trees as well as in the case of grafting and transplanting from plant pots. The text provides a general guideline to the reader who is advised to consult a Halachic Authority for advice as to correct methods of transplantation which may avoid the necessity of re-counting the Orlah years.

4. There are opinions that hold that where the anchoring process i.e., Kelita takes place during the seventh year although planting *took* place in the Sixth year nonetheless it is considered as if planting itself took place in the seventh year hence the importance of ensuring that all plants take root in the soil before Shmitta

5. 'Sephichin' i.e., the growth caused by seeds that accidentally fall to the ground and grow of a) their own in the Shmitta year.

Such produce of the Shmitta year which grew as Sephichin i.e., aftergrowth which grew by itself without illegal activity is nonetheless prohibited (a minority opinion considers this prohibition as Torah law) by the Rabbis as a preventative measure and a precaution against would be transgressors of the Shmitta laws, (i.e., forbidding sowing of fields in the Shmitta year), who would sow things in secret, pretending that the produce of this forbidden sowing is only aftergrowth (Sephichin).

This prohibition does not apply to fruit of the tree growing in the seventh year, nor to vegetables which were sown in the sixth year and germinated in that year, although the time of their main growth fell in the seventh year.

Similarly, although the Rabbis decreed that the aftergrowths - Sephichin, - of corn and vegetables which spring up in the Shmitta year are not permitted to be eaten there are exceptions to this rule in circumstances where the Rabbis did not consider it necessary to enact precautionary measures forbidding the benefit of the aftergrowth. Thus, for example no measure was enacted against vegetables or corn which are not generally cultivated by mankind and, for example, grass may be eaten, as the majority of mankind do not sow grass but it springs up itself; and Sephichin law does not apply to other vegetables similar to grass in this manner, in that they are not generally cultivated by mankind.

Sephichin law also does not apply to that which grows by itself in places where men do not usually sow. Sephichin law may apply to certain flower varieties. Hence the instruction in the text to plant such vegetables or flower varieties so that germination occurs during the sixth year, thus escaping the Sephichin prohibition.

A Few Laws of Orlah

- A.** All edible fruit, both in a private home garden or in a shared apartment garden, are subject to the laws of Orlah,
- B.** Fruit trees, whether planted out of doors, in the yard or on a roof-top or penthouse garden are subject to Orlah.
- C.** Any tree which hasn't been grown in a perforated container is considered a new planting when replanted in a permanent site, for the purposes of Orlah.
- D.** A perforated container (Atzitz Nakuv) is a container with sufficient holes in the bottom to enable root emergence. Certain materials, such as wood or clay ceramic, are generally regarded as perforated containers whether or not they have holes in the bottom. Metal and glass are generally not considered perforated while plastic containers which have holes are considered perforated. For example, a three-year-old tree in a perforated container is considered three years old if transferred correctly to its new planting site, while the same tree in a non-perforated container must be regarded as newly planted for the purposes of Orlah when transferred from its non-perforated container to its new planting site for the purposes of Orlah the three years must be re-counted from the start before one may partake of its fruit.
- E.** New trees, which grow from sprouts and root shoots of a parent tree must be counted for a full three years of Orlah according to the Torah. Nevertheless, if a new tree arises from the parent's tree trunk at a point slightly above ground level, Orlah is not counted. For grafts, to avoid re-counting for Orlah, the initial grafting should be at least 8 cm (Tefach) above ground level.
- F.** Layered trees, (Air layering as in figs, ground layering as in grapes). - As long as the layered branches are attached to the parent tree, no Orlah is required. As soon as the layered tree is severed from the parent tree, three years must be counted from the date of the separation, i.e., from the time that the young tree grows on its own root system.
- G.** Severed Trees. - A tree which has been cut back to ground level must be counted anew for three years when new growth appears. Trees which have been cut but yet retain at least 8 cm (Tefach) of trunk above ground level retain their original age.
- H.** A tree which grows sparsely and appears to be a young tree may be considered to be Orlah despite its actual age. But an entire orchard of a dwarf variety is judged by its actual age.

SECTION TWO

Gardening During the Year of Shmitta- Ploughing, Cultivating, Fertilizing and Weeding

As a rule, any soil preparation for planting is forbidden during the Seventh Year. Nevertheless, certain maintenance activities designed to preserve existing garden vegetation are permissible, as discussed in this section.

Ploughing - whether by tractor or ploughing by animal. This is the main process whereby soil is prepared for planting and sowing. Most authorities consider ploughing forbidden by the Torah for any purpose including that of maintaining existing trees and plants.

Cultivating - hoeing or spading by hand, when designed to prepare the garden for new planting, is expressly forbidden. One may cultivate around existing trees and shrubs, if such work is vital for the health of the plants (Le-ukmei Ilana) *(1). For example, hoeing beneath grape vines for the purpose of weed removal is permissible, since weeds rob the grape vines of needed water and nutrients. As a general rule, hoeing is permitted when directed at preventing damage to and economic loss from existing plants, for the Rabbis did not decree a prohibition in such instances; nevertheless, a plough must not be used to perform the same functions as can be done by hoeing for then the prohibition of ploughing is transgressed.

Weeding - Removing weed grasses by the roots is Rabbinically forbidden, since it is considered soil preparation. Nevertheless, in the case of sensitive varieties, such as citrus trees, which suffer actual appreciable yield loss in the presence of weeds, weeding is permissible. When weeding is necessary for the preservation of the tree and/or its fruit crop, spraying is the preferred method of weed control. One should still endeavor to take preventative weed control measures, during the Sixth Year.

Fertilization - for the purpose of growth stimulation or tree improvement, fertilization is Rabbinically forbidden during the Seventh Year. Extra fertilization should be given to trees during the Sixth Year. Nitrogen fertilizers especially necessary for the vitality of the trees, should be given before Rash Hashanah of Shmitta. Gardeners should plan ahead and if possible, fertilize according to nutrient needs determined by leaf examinations, (talk to an agriculture extension specialist), thus giving advance fertilizer according to the condition of the tree and the soil. A tree may be fertilized during the Seventh Year only if the tree is in danger of dying. Otherwise, no other plants may be fertilized during the Seventh Year.

Area Cleaning - (rock removal, uprooting tree stumps, burning stubble and thickets) - considered soil preparation. Such activities are strictly forbidden during the Seventh Year In the household garden one may lower but definitely not uproot a tree or shrub.

One may sweep up fallen leaves in one's garden or courtyard, where the purpose is obviously that of cleanliness and not of improving the land in any way.

Thorns and brush in the household garden may be removed above ground level, if they serve as a hiding place for snakes and pests. Leaves may also be raked for the sole purpose of garden cleanliness. A tree may be felled for the purpose of building a playground, sidewalk or other useful facility.

One may dig indentations around trees for the purpose of catching water. Digging is permitted when needed for plumbing, or fence preparation, provided that no soil from the digging is cast into the garden.

The same activities as may be permitted in the house-hold garden, (their purpose being the tidiness and cleanliness of the garden), may be forbidden in the field where such activity may constitute acts done as a preparation of the soil for cultivation.

When rocks are needed for building or for fences one may remove them from a garden. However, rocks may not be removed for the purpose of improving growth in the garden.

Notes:

1. Rabbinically forbidden labour during the Shmitta Year are nonetheless Halachically permitted to be performed during Shmitta where the labour is done in order to prevent disease of the plant, as this comes under the category of Le Ukmei Ilana - "preserving the existence of the tree"; in this case either the Rabbinical prohibition was not promulgated or according to some authorities even Torah forbidden activities are permitted when their purpose is Le Ukmei Ilana. Only where the labour is done for improving the quality of the tree - Le Avruyei Ilana - "strengthening the tree" do the Rabbinic prohibitions apply.

SECTION THREE

Planting Seeds and Seedlings “(1) -Indoor Planting, Seed Examination and Planting for Educational Purposes.

Vayikra 25:4 states with reference to Shmitta "Your field shall not be planted". Under no circumstance is planting permitted in the Seventh Year. This includes trees, both ornamental and fruit bearing varieties, shrubs, bushes, flowers, grass, vegetables, herbs, etc.

Indoor Planting:

Present day authorities (Achronim) regard indoor and rooftop planting like any other field planting and thus forbid rooftop planting and indoor planting in all circumstances other than those specifically mentioned in Section Six.

Seed Examination:

Germination tests in the soil are forbidden during the Seventh Year, since such tests require actual planting of the seeds. On the other hand, seeds which are designed for planting after the Shmitta Year may be checked outside the soil, such as in moist cotton medium. Also, any planting, even for educational purposes, is also forbidden, in that it is the same as any other mode of planting.

Notes:

The prohibition of planting during the Shmitta Year is not specifically mentioned in the Torah; nonetheless it is forbidden by Torah Law according to the opinion of many Authorities who consider planting, to fall under the category of sowing and pruning - categories of labour that are forbidden during the Shmitta Year by Torah Law. Other Authorities however are of the opinion that the prohibition of planting is Rabbinical. The Talmud Gittin 53b. indicates that the prohibition is from the Torah whereas the Talmud Moed Kattan 3b indicates that the prohibition is Rabbinical. Rambam Hilchot Shmitta and Yovel 14 states "Similarly he who sinks a vine shoot into the ground, grafts, plants, or performs analogous tasks relating to the tending of trees is liable to flogging for disobedience, by Rabbinical Order".

Rambam's statement that the punishment for planting during Shmitta Year is flogging by Rabbinical Order, seemingly indicates that his opinion is that the prohibition of planting is Rabbinical. However this is not necessarily the correct inference from Rambam, for as the Hazon Ish argues, although planting falls under the category of sowing and pruning and is, as such, forbidden by Torah Law, such planting would not be punishable by Torah Law because planting is not directly mentioned as a prohibition in the Torah text. Hence, Rambam expressly states that although no punishments are meted out by Torah Law nonetheless the Rabbis initiated the liability to a flogging for disobedience, Harav Kook Z.T.L. was of the opinion that planting may be a Rabbinical prohibition and a distinction must be made between planting of a shoot that is Rabbinically forbidden, - and planting of the fruit of a tree which is in effect sowing, hence forbidden by Torah Law and thus he reconciled the two seemingly conflicting Talmudic texts. The Talmudic statement in Gittin that planting is forbidden by the Torah, refers to planting of the fruit of a tree whilst the statement in Moed Kattan indicating a Rabbinic Prohibition refers to planting of a shoot.

In effect, notwithstanding opinions that the prohibition of planting is Rabbinical it is nonetheless treated as sowing - a Torah prohibition.

SECTION FOUR

Irrigation During the Seventh Year

Irrigation for Maintenance of Tree Vitality: *(1)

Irrigation is permitted not only to preserve the life of the tree, but to prevent economic loss as well, such as in avoiding a yield loss of the fruit crops. An important rule for irrigation during the Seventh Year is that irrigation is intended to preserve the health of the tree and its fruit, provided that the fruit is not subject to "Issur Sephichin" and may be eaten during the Seventh Year,

Irrigation Guidelines:

Citrus – maybe irrigated during summer of Shmitta

Deciduous Fruit Trees -Irrigation subject to expert's opinion.

Rose Bushes - Not subject to "Issur Sephichin", but irrigation depends on variety and soil type. A garden expert must be consulted.

Flowers -If they are neither aromatic nor edible, they are not subject to "Issur Sephichin", and may be irrigated. Also, aromatic and edible plants which were planted during the Sixth Year, which are also free of "Issur Sephichin", may be irrigated as well. Such plants, which perchance germinate and grow in the garden during the Seventh Year, are considered "Sephichin" and therefore must be discarded.

Lawn and Shrubbery - Since they are perennials and live on after the Seventh Year, they may be irrigated when necessary. One must not irrigate lawns excessively, thus increasing the need for frequent mowing. Deep irrigation systems may be installed during the Seventh Year.

Notes:

1. The Mishna Moed Kattan 1:1 states (inter-alia) that one may irrigate a Beit Hashelachin i.e., an irrigated field, during Shmitta. Irrigation is not one of the Torah forbidden labors on Shmitta, thus the Torah would permit farmers to water their fields during the Shmitta, although they are forbidden to work their fields, The prohibition against watering is Rabbinical being a derivative of the major forbidden category of sowing (the function of both activities being the cause of growth). Thus, if failure to water will cause plants to suffer one may irrigate as the Rabbis did not apply their edict where it would cause a loss.

There is a dispute among the commentaries as to whether during Shmitta the Mishna permits the irrigation of a field, even if it can subsist on rainfall alone, or permits only the irrigation of fields which would suffer without artificial irrigation.

Rambam Hilchot Shmitta and Yovell:8 states (inter alia) that 'One may water an irrigated field that is a sown field that is exceedingly thirsty during the Shmitta' and thus he interprets the Mishna as saying that the exemption allows irrigation of an exceedingly thirsty field, which, therefore, must be irrigated because rainwater is not sufficient to keep plants growing.

The Hazon Ish explains that Bet Hashelachin or 'Irrigated field' is not a name of a specific type field, but any plot of land, which, owing to situation or climate or nature of soil or nature of crop, requires to be watered artificially is an "Irrigated field" to which the exemption applies.

SECTION FIVE

Pruning Grape Vines, Tree Pruning, Lawn Mowing, and Spraying and Dusting of Hedges

Pruning Grape Vines - Pruning is designed to remove unwanted arms, shoots, and sprouts during certain seasons, thus influencing the health of the vine and the fruit yield of the vineyard. Green pruning the vines, or "Zemira" is expressly forbidden in the Torah (Vayikra 25:4) even when it is only done for the health of the vine, Household vines should definitely remain unpruned during the Seventh Year *(1)

Pruning Other Trees -Forbidden *(2) except when excess branches and/or excess fruit loads threaten to break or split the tree, causing it serious damage. Nevertheless, most experts concur that necessary pruning should be done during the Sixth Year, thus precluding the need for emergency pruning during the Seventh Year.

Pruning Bushes and Shrubs - Permitted only when diseased branches are discovered, which must be pruned to preserve the life of the plant.

Flowers - May be picked during Shmitta, when they are picked for the sake of gathering flowers and not for the sake of stimulating new growth.

Hedgerows - May be sheared for the sake of cleanliness, neatness, and beauty but not for the purpose of aeration or stimulating new growth *(3).

Lawn Mowing - Forbidden by Rabbis when designed to stimulate new growth but permitted for the sake of neatness and beauty. One must attempt to limit lawn mowing to the absolute minimum during the Seventh Year *(4).

Spraying and Dusting - Permitted when designed to prevent the harmful effects of insects and parasites, and, therefore, considered an act of maintaining the tree's vitality and not stimulating its growth.

Notes:

1. Zemira, as far as vineyards are concerned, correspond to the general prohibition of Zeriah - sowing.

As indicated failure to prune the vine not only reduces the crop of grapes, but also exposes the vine itself to disease. Attempts have been made to find a way to carry out the acts involved in pruning in accordance with the Halacha by modifying the way pruning is performed. so that the act comes under the category of clipping vines, Mezanev, or trimming vines, Pissul, which are Rabbinical prohibitions, but do not come under the category of the Torah forbidden Zimur.

This type of modification would enable activity whose aim It Is to preserve the very existence of the tree, Le Ukmei Ilana, to be performed in the Shmitta Year

2. Pruning is by Torah Laws, only forbidden in connection with vines, but pruning of other trees is not forbidden by Torah Law. This is the view of the Hazon Ish, as expounded In Sheviit 21,15. There are however different Halachic views which hold that the work forbidden by the Torah during the Shmitta Year in connection with vines equally applies to other fruit trees. Rambam's view is expressed in Hilchot Shmitta and Yovel1:2 and is open to both interpretations.

3. There is no blanket permission to shear hedgerows and it is prohibited to cut young hedges where the purpose is to cause growth in certain directions. However, in an established hedgerow several factors combine to have a mitigating effect. These are (inter alia) (a) the fact that the purpose of cutting is to contain the growth of the hedge and although cutting may directly cause further growth such further growth IS not desired: (b) Where hedgerows are made up of non-fruit bearing trees then the prohibition of Zemira (pruning) does not apply as a Torah prohibition, the nature of the tree and the purpose of the act being totally different from the prohibition of Zemira in a fruit bearing tree: (c) The cutter should endeavor not to shear with the same precision and exactitude as such an act is done In a non - Shmitta Year. On the other hand, it must be stressed that the non-cutting of hedges is one way whereby the hedge owner can participate in the fulfilment of the Mitzva of "The earth shall rest" (Vayikra 25.1) in a demonstrative way.

4. A careful balance must be found, which may require experts' advice, between the necessity of a minimum of lawn mowing in order to preserve the existing lawn and excessive lawn mowing which, in effect causes unnecessary growth of the lawn.

At all events lawn mowing will trigger off growth of the lawn. However, where that growth is unwanted then the practice has been to allow mowing of the lawn.

Again, it must be emphasized that, by not cutting the lawn, one can demonstrate to oneself and others, one's practical observance of the Shmitta. Where non-cutting of the lawn will cause the death of the lawn then the additional factor of Le Ukmei Ilana i.e. the permission to do work in accordance with the laws of Shmitta which is necessary to conserve the survival of the trees (here lawn) applies, Certainly if the growth or excessive growth of grass will cause danger e.g. by snakes, rats, etc. one should, avail oneself of the Heter of cutting grass as stated above, Where the grass has been newly planted before Shmitta then the growth of the lawn is often inevitably the desired result of lawn mowing and in such circumstances is forbidden. Care should be taken to lay lawns as early as possible before Shmitta.

SECTION SIX

Potted Plants during the Seventh Year

The following conditions govern the limitations on raising potted plants during the Seventh Year:

1. Type of Container

- a) Non-perforated (She'eno Nakuv)
- b) Perforated (Atzitz Nakuv)

2. Location

- a) Indoors
- b) Outdoors

1. Table 6-1 defines the two types of containers. In principle, perforated containers resemble actual soil conditions. When placed directly on the ground, moisture nutrients and minerals pass freely from the- plant in the perforated container into the ground and vice-versa. However, if a plant with strong roots is able to penetrate a container with no holes, then notwithstanding the fact that the pot was non-perforated, it is treated as perforated.

Planting Guide - use of pots in home during Sheviit

Table 6-1	INDOORS	OUTDOORS
	Perforated containers (Nakuv)	Non-perforated containers (Aino Nakuv)
Definition	At least one hole of 1 mm diameter, or less if it permits emergence of a small root	No holes: Prevents root emergence
Annual Plants	Forbidden	Permissible in pot made of any material (that will not allow root emergence)
Perennial Plants	Forbidden	Permissible in pot made of glass, metal, or other strongnon -porous material (that will not allow root emergence)

2. What constitutes "Indoors" and "Outdoors" must first be defined:-

- (a) "Indoors" comprise any building which has a permanent roof of any structural material but not a tent.
- (b) "Outdoors" is any open area including a field, garden, unenclosed veranda, roof and any walled structure without a roof.

The following Table 6-2 gives a guide distinguishing between plants and vegetables planted indoors and outdoors.

Planting potted plants and vegetables during the Seventh Year

Table 6-2	INDOORS	OUTDOORS
NON- PERFORATED CONTAINER	No limitation No Issur Sephichin No Kedushat Sheviit	Same limitations as outdoor garden - e.g., all forbidden seventh-year activities apply here, Kedushat Sheviit Issur Sephichin
PERFORATED CONTAINER	No limitation, other than ground floor, where a garden divider (such as a saucer, plate, etc.), must be placed between the container and the floor. No Issur Sephichin No Kedushat Sheviit	Same limitations as outdoor garden, Kedushat Sheviit Issur Sephichin

Outdoors:

No sowing or planting in pots is permitted whether the pot is a perforated container - Atzitz Nakuv or a non-perforated container - Atzitz She'eno Nakuv.

Sowing or planting in an Atzitz She'eno Nakuv is also forbidden, in all circumstances whatever the material of the container, even if the container is made of a material such as glass or metal which definitely will not allow root emergence and even where a partition divider exists between the plant pot and the soil.

All other gardening activities which may be done in the Seventh Year in the garden may also be done with regard to potted plants in the garden.

Indoors:

(Other than the floor or the ground floor balcony - roof gardens), Planting is allowed in a non-perforated container Atzitz She'eno Nakuv in a house, Annuals may be planted in any non-perforated container whether made from wood, plastic, asbestos or metal.

Perennials or bush-like plants should only be planted in containers made from material which will not allow root emergence in any circumstances, e.g., metal, hard plastic, glass, asbestos, etc., and not wood or any soft plastic.

Greenhouse roofs may not be removed to enhance plant growth although household awnings may be removed above balconies or alcoves for such purposes as building a Succah but not for the purpose of promoting plant growth.

Moving during the Seventh Year -If one moves to a new home or apartment, potted household plants may also be moved, although generally indoor plants may not be moved outdoors.

Issur Sefichin and Kedushat Sheviit - See Table 6-2.

Notes:

Among the agricultural activities forbidden during the Shmitta Year, sowing presents the greatest difficulty in practice, Even agriculturalists, who may wish to avail themselves of the Heter Mechira, are extremely limited in this sphere; Harav Kook stated: "The sowing (in the Shmitta Year) must of necessity be carried out by non-Jewish labour only, and there is no possibility whatever of finding a more lenient Halachic decision", Mishpat Kohen Chapter 67, It goes without saying that there are no exceptions or exemptions available to the private household gardener whose livelihood is not dependent on agriculture There are however some kinds of "Sowing" which because of position and/or place of sowing are permitted even during the Shmitta Year, The exemption allowing such sowing is based on the following considerations:

Whenever the Torah speaks of sowing or planting "Basadeh" - "in the field" it means an open field or an area of soil which is not covered, and the Torah thus wishes to make a distinction between planting or sowing "In the field" and planting or sowing "Babayit" - "In the house", The expression "Basadeh" - "In the field" - also implies that the seed or the plant is in direct contact with the soil of the open field, Hence, sowing or planting on a plot of land which is covered and surrounded by a wall or fence of at least 10 handbreadths in height would not be considered as sowing on a plot of land that falls within the category of field - "Sadeh" - but as sowing on a plot of land that falls within the category of house - "Bayit".

Similarly sowing in a plant pot which has no hole for drainage "Atzitz She'eno Nakuv" and which stands in a place covered over and walled, would not be considered as sowing in the field, as there is no direct contact between the seed and the soil of the open field.

Consequently, plants grown in such a plant pot would not be subject to Maaserot - as the Torah expressly mentions the word "field" - Sadeh - in connection with Maaser (Devarim 15:22).

With regard to Orlah i.e., the fruit of trees, for the first three years after planting that is forbidden to be of benefit - the Orlah law applies to trees planted in a field which is covered and surrounded by a wall or fence because in the case of Orlah, the Torah only speaks of planting, without mentioning the word field "Sadeh" at all.

In the case of Shmitta, there is a doubt, because the Torah initially mentions the duty of Observing the Shmitta Year in general (Vayikra 25:2) not mentioning the word field "Sadeh" at all, thus implying that the Shmitta laws apply everywhere in Israel. However, in a subsequent verse, (Vayikra 25:4) it forbids "sowing in the field" thus impliedly limiting the Shmitta laws to the field and thus indicating that indirect sowing in a Bayit i.e., a place where the plant pot or container IS situated which has roofing and also a wall of ten handbreadths in height, is a permissible act in the Shmitta Year. Most contemporary authorities permit indirect sowing in an "Atzitz She'eno Nakuv Babayit" - a non-perforated plant pot in a house - with the provisos mentioned in the text.

SECTION SEVEN

Garden Units and Ornamental Flowers, "Issur Sephichin" the Holiness of the Seventh Year Prohibitions and Limitations of the Seventh Year

"Issur Sephichin" Prohibition of benefit from Aftergrowth - The home gardener must learn to determine what falls under this category and what does not and thus be aware of the pitfalls.

Vayikra 25:5 speaks of the "Shabbat of the land", but permits us to eat the fruits thereof. Why then must we beware of "Sephichin", which in essence are volunteer crops which emerge of their own accord? Transgressors were accustomed to secretly plant grains and legumes during the Seventh Year subsequently trading them, claiming that they were volunteer crops from previous year's seeds which emerged of their own accord. To prevent this, our sages declared many varieties of growths to be "Sephichin" during the Seventh Year, thus forbidding ("Issur") their consumption and hence "Issur Sephichin". Issur Sephichin largely refers to annual varieties, which do not sprout perennially of their own accord - for example vegetables as opposed to fruit trees.

Thus, we may summarize that the following categories are not subject to "Issur Sephichin".

1. Fruit trees, since they are not annuals, as well as perennial shrubs (such as roses).
2. Non-aromatic flowers of inedible varieties, or aromatic flowers where naturally occurring, rather than cultured varieties.
3. Annual vegetables and herbs which were planted and germinated before Rosh Hashanah of the Shmitta Year.
4. Fruit of the earth owned by non - Jews. *(1).
5. Bananas, since they are perennials.

The Holiness of the Seventh Year (Kedushat Sheviit)

Even though the above five categories are not subject to "Issur Sephichin", they are subject to "Kedushat Sheviit". Kedushat Sheviit in effect relates to permissible produce of the Seventh Year which must be regarded as sanctified and dealt with accordingly as follows:

"Hephker" - Lack of Ownership

Shemot 23: 11 commands us to leave the fruits in the field. We are commanded to abandon our crops during the Seventh Year, since whatever the land bears should be available to any man. One is forbidden to lock the gate of one's field or vineyard and must guarantee free access without let or hindrance to all those who want to collect or eat produce of the field during the Shmitta Year.

One may however prevent gentiles from taking all the crops for themselves or prevent anyone from doing harm to the trees by negligent picking. Household gardens may also be guarded against animals or birds, which may eat or damage the fruits. In the same way as any person can partake of the "Hephker" during the Seventh Year, the household gardener is certainly entitled to partake of his own flowers and fruit.

A. "Issur Sechora" - Law Against Commerce

No trade may be done with produce collected during the Shmitta Year although eating of such produce is permitted. However, a small part of the produce may be set aside and sold, and such sale will not be considered "Trading". The consideration for the sale is subject to limitations as to its use because it assumes the sanctity - "Kedusha" - of the Shmitta Year produce. This limitation may be circumvented by the buyer delaying payment in such a manner that the subsequent payment will then be considered debt repayment and not produce purchase. When giving fruit or any other produce of the field as a present, one must inform the recipient that "Kedusha" applies to the gift and the produce must be handled according to the laws of Kedushat Sheviit.

B. "Issur Hephshed" - Law Against Loss

Produce of the Seventh Year must only be used in a customary way therefore:

1. One may not ruin fruit with one's hands, or discard fruit, since the Holiness of the Seventh Year applies. However, fruit may be neglected and left to decay or rot of its own accord or left where birds and animals may eat the fruit.
2. Fruit may be peeled as usual. Peels however must not be discarded until they have been allowed to deteriorate slightly.

3. Foods for human consumption should not be given to animals.
4. Fruits should not be picked before ripening.
5. Thinning buds on fruit trees, to prevent oversized yields, is permitted during Shmitta. However, removing fruit from young trees is not permitted before it is ripe; accordingly, flowers (where they have Kedushat Sheviit) should be thinned when buds appear and not after the buds open.
6. Orlah fruit may be removed from the trees at any time as they are forbidden to be of any benefit, and the Shmitta Law against loss therefore does not apply. It follows that they may not be used for one's own consumption.
7. When hosting a non-Jewish guest, one may serve him with Shmitta fruit notwithstanding the fact that 'Kedushat Sheviit' applies to them. However, one should not otherwise provide Seventh Year fruit to a non-Jew, in order to ensure that the fruit is at all times treated as "Kedushat Sheviit".

C. 'Bi'ur' - Removal of Seventh Year Fruits

Seventh Year produce may be gathered and eaten or stored in limited amounts at home for as long as produce of the same kind remains unharvested and available in the field. This produce that has been gathered in, may be stored up and eaten only so long as the same kind of food is available for the beasts in the field. Therefore, when there is no more of any particular kind of food left in the field, one may not keep any of that kind of food in the home or storage place.

The particular moment at which the produce of the Seventh Year must disappear from the house, or the storage place is called the time of Removal 'Bi'ur'.

Our sages prescribed 'Bi'ur' for various tree-fruit species. For example, dates may be eaten until Purim, olives until Shavuot, grapes until Pesach and figs until Hanukkah; all the above refer to the appropriate date of the year after Shmitta. Modern-day experts prescribe the appropriate dates for the removal of other fruit varieties from one's house.

How is 'Bi'ur' translated into practicality?

Seventh Year fruit is taken out of the house, and is left in a public place and declared to be ownerless - "Hephker" before three people, who, can also be friends and acquaintances of the fruit's owner and who won't take immediate advantage of the "Hephker" for their own personal gain. Before abandoning the fruit, the owner may keep for himself as much as is necessary for three meals, and he may distribute the same amount to his neighbours.

After the initial 'Bi'ur' ,the owner can return and reclaim the unclaimed fruit for his own use.

If, at the arrival of the prescribed 'Bi'ur' date, the owner does not fulfil legal requirements as herein described, all such Seventh-Year fruit is forbidden for consumption by anyone and must be buried or burned.

We must be careful to heed the prescribed date for "Bi'ur" according to each fruit species, and not assign 'Bi'ur' dates according to the individual trees in one's own private or back-yard garden. Although unpicked fruit (still attached to the trees) are not subject to "Bi'ur" even after the prescribed date, as soon as the fruit is picked or falls from the tree, it is subject to 'Bi'ur' immediately.

Notes:

There is a fundamental difference of opinion between major authorities regarding the status of fruit grown on land in Israel owned by a non-Jew. Rabbi Yoseph Karo, the author of the "Shulchan Aruch" ruled that products of soil owned by a non-Jew in the Holy Land are not subject to "Kedushat Sheviit" i.e., invested with the holiness of the Seventh Year, while Rabbi Moses b Yoseph di Trani known by the abbreviation of his name as "Mabit" ruled that products of the soil owned by a non-Jew in the Holy Land are subject to "Kedushat Sheviit". Hazon Ish inclines towards the opinion of the Mabit and rules that products of soil owned by a non-Jew in the Holy Land are subject to "Kedushat Sheviit". Minhag Yerushalayim follows the opinion of Rabbi Yoseph Karo in that the produce of soil in the Holy Land owned by a non-Jew has nosanctity.

SECTION EIGHT

Rosh Hashana of Shmitta

The Shmitta Year begins on the first of Tishri and ends on the 29th of Elul of the same year, even though the New Year for trees is the 15th of Shevat. How do we define the fruits of the Seventh Year, when the growing term of some varieties extends from the Sixth (the pre-Shmitta Year) to the Seventh Year or from the Seventh Year to the Eighth Year (the post Shmitta Year)?

The answer depends upon the species. For example, in the case of grapes and olives, if at least the first third of their growing term falls within the Seventh Year, they acquire "Kedushat Sheviit" and the laws of Shmitta apply. But if the first third of their growth occurs during the Sixth Year, they are not subject to "Kedushat Sheviit".

For all other fruit species, the time of "Hanata" i.e., the initial setting of the fruitbuds a/her fertilization, - determines whether the fruit falls within the Seventh Year or not. For example, if the fruit of citrus trees sets during the Sixth Year, they are not considered as having "Kedushat Sheviit" even if they are picked during the Seventh Year. As such, this fruit would require the separation of "Trumot" and "Maaserot" like any other Sixth Year fruit. If, the fruit sets in the Seventh Year and is picked during the Eighth Year, it does fall within the category of "Kedushat Sheviit".

The exception to the above rule is the Etrog; Etrogim are judged by their harvest date. Therefore, if an Etrog is harvested during the Seventh Year, even though the fruit may have set on the trees during the Sixth, it is considered fruit of the Seventh Year and must be treated as such. Harvest time is also the decisive factor for the determination of bananas, vegetables, and fragrant flowers

SECTION NINE

Trumot and Maaserot* - Neta Revaii During Shmitta**

1. Fruit of trees and vegetables to which "Issur Sephichin" does not apply, which are "Hephker" under the rules of "Kedushat Sheviit", are exempt from separation for the purpose of "Trumot" and "Maaserot".
2. Fruit which has set during the Sixth Year, but which is picked during the Seventh, is subject to separation as "Trumot" and "Maaserot" with a Berachah.
3. Fruit of the tree which has set during the Seventh Year but is picked during the Eighth, is exempt from "Trumot" and "Maaserot" but has "Kedushat Sheviit".
4. Etrogim which set during the Seventh Year but are picked during the Eighth Year, are exempt from "Trumot" and "Maaserot".
5. Etrogim which set during the Sixth but are collected during the Seventh are subject to "Trumot" and "Maaserot", but without a Berachah.
6. Fruit (from fruit trees which have reached the Fourth Year of their planting during the Shmitta Year) and which set after TuB'Shvat of the Shmitta Year, is still liable to the law of the Fourth Year's fruit: Neta Revaii, and must be redeemed in the same way as it would be redeemed had it been Fourth Year fruit in a normal year.
7. Citrus fruit (from fruit trees which have reached the Fourth Year of the planting during the Shmitta Year, and which formed fruit after TuB'Shvat of the Shmitta Year) which is only harvested in the Eighth Year, since the fruit set in the Seventh Year, the fruit harvested in the Eighth Year is still liable to the law of the Fourth Year's fruit.
8. Vegetables gathered during Shmitta and exempt from "Issur Sephichin" are not subject to "Trumot" and "Maaserot" as they have Kedushat Sheviit.

9. Vegetables which sprouted as aftergrowth yet were gathered during the Year when Issur Sefichin is no longer applicable, are subject to "Trumot" and "Maaserot" with a Berachah, no "Trumot" or "Maaserot" are generally separated from fruit, vegetables or grain grown during the Seventh Year on land belonging to a non-Jew in the Holy Land.

10. Where fruit, vegetables or grain although grown on land belonging to a non-Jew during the Seventh Year reaches their completed state whilst in the ownership of a Jew "Trumot" and "Maaserot" should be separated without a Berachah.

Notes:

'Separation of "Trumot" and "Maaserot"

Grains, fruits and vegetables that grew in the Halachic boundaries of the Holy Land may not be eaten (in any form) until "Trumah" and the various forms of "Maaserot", tithes (for the Levites, the poor, and the portion that was to be eaten in Jerusalem in Temple times) are separated from them. If the tithes have definitely not been taken as yet, the food is known as tevel and a Berachah is made when they are separated, if their status is doubtful, or if the duty to separate "Trumot" and "Maaserot" is subject to controversy, "Trumot" and "Maaserot" are separated without a Berachah.

"The fruit of trees in the Fourth Year bear a special name: Neta Revaii meaning the planting of the Fourth Year, while the Bet Hamikdash was standing, these fruits had to be taken to and consumed in Jerusalem. Alternatively, they could be redeemed at their full value together with the addition of a further quarter of their value and instead of the fruit, the Redemption Money, to which their sacred nature had been transferred, was to be taken to Jerusalem and spent in buying food to be eaten there.

Nowadays when the fruit or its redemption money cannot be brought to Jerusalem as they were whilst the Bet Hamikdash was standing, the fruits are redeemed without regard to their value by a small coin. The formula for redemption is to be found in many Siddurim.

SECTION TEN

General Guidelines and Summary

1. A general but important guideline states that all gardening activities, prohibited by Rabbinical authorities yet permitted for survival of the tree or plant, are deemed necessary and therefore permitted only upon the professional opinion of a suitable authority who is also a God-fearing person.
2. Any gardening activity which can be performed in advance of the Shmitta Year should be done, so as not to depend on special exemptions during Shmitta. It is preferable to delay gardening activities from the Shmitta Year until after New Year of the Eighth Year.
3. Gardening activities forbidden to a landowner are also forbidden to his labourer or employee; likewise, any activity permitted to a landowner may be performed by his employee.
4. A worker is personally responsible when he performs forbidden acts during the Seventh Year and cannot put the onus on his employer, since " Ain Shaliach L'dvar Avera " - no one can be an agent for what amounts to a breach of Jewish law and the worker who performs forbidden acts for someone else is personally responsible for his actions. At the same time where the owner allows forbidden work in his fields, he transgresses his positive duty of allowing one's field to rest.

Summary:

The following labours are forbidden in all circumstances during the Shmitta Year Sowing, planting and pruning grape vines.

Other forbidden acts of labour during the Shmitta Year may be permitted when performed with the intention of conserving the garden and the plants that grow therein in the state that they were, at the onset of the Shmitta Year. In all circumstances endeavours must be made to limit the extent of labours performed during the Shmitta, even when such acts are permitted acts. Any work on the land which can be performed before Shmitta or can be postponed till after Shmitta, should not be performed during the Shmitta Year. Produce of the Seventh Year which is permitted for consumption, i.e., fruit of trees and such grain and vegetables to which the Rabbinic prohibition of Sefichin, (Aftergrowth) does not apply, as well as fragrant flowers, possess a special

sanctity - Kedushat Perot Sheviit and hence require special treatment and are subject to certain rules which flow from the Kedusha - sacred character of the produce.

The following rules apply:

- a. Everyone who has a garden or vineyard which produces any of the produce mentioned above must abandon - Mafkir - absolute ownership of them in the Shmitta Year in so far as he must allow free access to all who may wish to collect or eat the produce of the garden during the Shmitta Year.
- b. No trade must be done with the produce thus collected -Issur Sechora.
- c. The produce of Shmitta may be used only in accordance with the following rules which are intended to ensure correct treatment of produce which has aninherent sanctity.
 - 1. Produce suitable for human food must not be used for any other purpose. Thus produce whose normal use is for human consumption may not be used for animal consumption and may not be fed to pets.
 - 2. Nothing edible may be wasted. What is usually eaten raw must not be eaten cooked and vice versa.
 - 3. Skin of fruit normally peeled and pulp of fruit normally squeezed must not be thrown away while potentially edible but should be left in a special container until fully decayed.
 - 4. When skins of fruit have slightly deteriorated they may be given to animals.

For the Duty of Removal - "Bi'ur" and the Laws regarding Trumot and Maaserot see respective sections in the text.

Practical hints:

Trimming, Cutting and Clipping trees, bushes or hedges is permitted where it is needed to prevent the deterioration of the design and shape of the hedges etc.

Mowing the lawn is permitted in order to preserve its appearance. The lawn should not be mown at the same intervals as it is cut during an ordinary year and one should ensure that there is a longer interval than usual between cuttings of the lawn which should be done at the last possible moment. This can be achieved by controlling irrigation, taking into account the type of soil on which the lawn is planted, thus causing a lowering of the rate of growth of the lawn.

Pesticides may be used during the Shmitta Year.

One may not thin out plants once the fruit has been formed on the tree.

Watering of plants is permitted, but only the minimum required amount of water is to be given and water should be given at less frequent intervals than usual.

Weeding:

Halachically it is preferable to use a weed killer rather than weeding by hand/Instrument. However, weeding by the use of an instrument such as a hoe or spade is permissible where the weeds cause damage to plants or in order to prevent the prevalence of pests.

Manuring:

Fertilizing. The use of organic manures of sulphuric or potassic fertilizer is not allowed as these fertilizers can be used to good effect before the Shmitta Year. Nitrogenous fertilizer may be allowed if a leaf nitrogen deficiency test shows such a requirement.

Potted Plants:

All that is horticulturally necessary may be done to potted plants where the pot is not perforated and in a house.

Where the pot is perforated then the same rules apply as if the plant were in a garden.