



How to Make Plantable Wildflower Seed Balls

An Educational Program Guide by Lisa Friedman



**THE JEWISH
EDUCATION PROJECT**

Developed in partnership with The Jewish Education Project

Overview

In this 90-minute intergenerational program (for children of all ages and adults), families will create a sustainable project as they explore the ways that Judaism and nature intersect. It is suitable for Tu BiShvat, Earth Day, a community's mitzvah and *tikkun olam* efforts, or as part of an environmental justice program.

Enduring Understanding

Our Jewish ancestors were inextricably linked to the earth. Many of our Jewish holidays are tied to the agricultural cycle. Sukkot reminds us of the temporary dwelling farmers lived in during the fall harvest; Shavuot is the holiday of the first fruits. It is our Jewish obligation to become *shomrei adamah*, guardians of the earth, and to care for our precious resources accordingly.

Goals

- Engage in a meaningful and fun multisensory Jewish learning experience as a family (children, parents, grandparents, other family members).
- Understand that *shomrei adamah*, caring for the earth, is a Jewish obligation.
- Learn to make a sustainable gardening project.

Materials

O: Organization provides

F: Families bring

F	Devices to connect with family members at a distance (cell phone, iPad, laptop, etc.)
O	Mixing bowl, tablespoon, and a tray or cookie sheet lined with wax paper for each participant/family
O	Potting soil, a pint for each participant/family
O	Clay powder, a few ounces for each participant/family
O	Water
O	Wildflower seeds, a packet for each participant/family
O	Printed copy of guidelines for each family/table
O	Name tags for participants, pens/markers
O	Screen and projector, speakers, computer to show the Elan Margulies video on making wildflower seed balls

Suggested Room Setup

- Large room with good cell reception and strong Wi-Fi
- Clear directions to connect to Wi-Fi
- One table with 4–6 chairs per family — enough space to spread out materials and set up devices to connect with family members at a distance
- Table coverings, if desired
- Place card with directions on each table
- Microphone, if needed

Timing (90-minute program)

O: Organization does

F: Families do

O	Welcome, outline of agenda, and set induction	15 minutes
O	Introduction to Elan Margulies and watch Honi story video	20 minutes
O	Watch video on how to make wildflower seed balls	5–8 minutes
F	Make seed balls	30 minutes
O	Wrap-up	20 minutes

Program

0:00–0:15 Welcome, outline of agenda, and set induction

Note to Facilitator: If there will be grandparents or other family members participating from a distance, we suggest preparing them in advance with information about supplies and timing. That way, they can actively participate in the experience with their family on Zoom, FaceTime, or WhatsApp.

Rabbi/educator/facilitator begins by having families connect in their family group with grandparents or other family members at a distance.

Facilitator then welcomes everyone and shares the following text with participants:

“Then God took the man [Adam] and put him into the garden of Eden to tend and guard it.” ~Genesis 2:15

Two ideas emerge from this text:

1. Our role as humans is to take care of the earth. We are asked to take on the responsibility of being *shomrei adamah*, “guardians of the earth.”
2. It is our privilege and a source of joy to care for the earth and all the animals and living things on it.

In small family groups, including grandparents or other family members who are connected remotely, discuss the following questions:

- In what ways do the earth and nature bring you pleasure, joy, or meaning? (*trees, lakes, other natural landforms; changing weather; planting and gardening; outdoor experiences such as swimming, walking, hiking*)
- What does it mean to be a guardian? (*care for something or someone else; be responsible for the well-being of a person, animal, other living item, or an object*)
- In what ways are you already a guardian of the earth? In what ways would you like to be a guardian of the earth? (*plant gardens; compost; don't litter; clean up public spaces; use solar power; family has a hybrid or electric car; use sustainable products*)

0:15–0:35 Introduction to Elan Margulies; Honi the Circle Maker story

Share with families: Elan Margulies aims to inspire joy and reverence for the natural world by introducing participants to earth-based Jewish traditions and natural wonders right outside their door. He has a master's degree in forest ecology, worked as the director of education for Hazon, and is currently the director at Pushing the Envelope Farm in Geneva, Illinois.

Show JGN's [Paper and Seed Ball Making video](#) from the 20:10- to the 22:50-minute mark (Honi the Circle Maker story). Pause the video after the Honi story.

Discuss as a group:

- What can we learn from Honi's story? (*It is not our obligation to complete the work, nor are we free to ignore it [Pirkei Avot 2:16]; sometimes the result of our efforts won't be known until much later; it's our responsibility to think about future generations and their life on this planet.*)
- How can we be like Honi in our own lives?
- Ask your grandparents: How have they acted like Honi?

- What unique role can grandparents play in preserving and sustaining the earth's resources?

0:35–1:10 Making plantable wildflower seed balls

Show participants the remaining portion of the [video](#) (22:50 to the end) to learn how to make plantable seed balls.

Point out the necessary materials, answer questions, and allow participants time to make their own wildflower seed balls.

Encourage participants to think about the following questions as they make the seed balls (discussion will follow during sharing and wrap-up). Consider posting the questions on large sheets of paper or poster board around the room and/or, for those on Zoom, on cards on the tables.

- Where might you plant these seed balls to bring you joy? To have the greatest impact?
- In what ways might you use these seed balls to perform a mitzvah (righteous obligation or good deed)? (*plant them at a senior center or in a highly built-up area*)

While participants are working, consider playing a Tu BiShvat or other playlist with Jewish music. You know your community best and may choose not to do this if it would be distracting.

Invite participants to put their completed seed balls on a tray lined with wax paper to dry. Give participants an opportunity to wash their hands when they finish.

1:10–1:30 Sharing and wrap-up

Lead a short discussion in which families respond to the two questions above.

Have families discuss the following questions among their members:

- How did you feel while participating in this program?
- What was your favorite part and why?
- What surprised you?
- Has this changed your understanding of the value of *shomrei adamah* (being guardians of the earth)? In what way?

- What is one thing you learned today? How might your role in the family (parent, grandparent, child) shape the way you understand or think about what you learned?

If time allows, invite families to share their responses with the group.

Optional variation: Separate children and adult participants at this point in the program. Children can debrief and/or play a game, have a snack, or complete another activity in another room. With the adults, add the following to the discussion: How can we take what we learned forward with us? What are ways that we can extend the learning/experience at home?



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