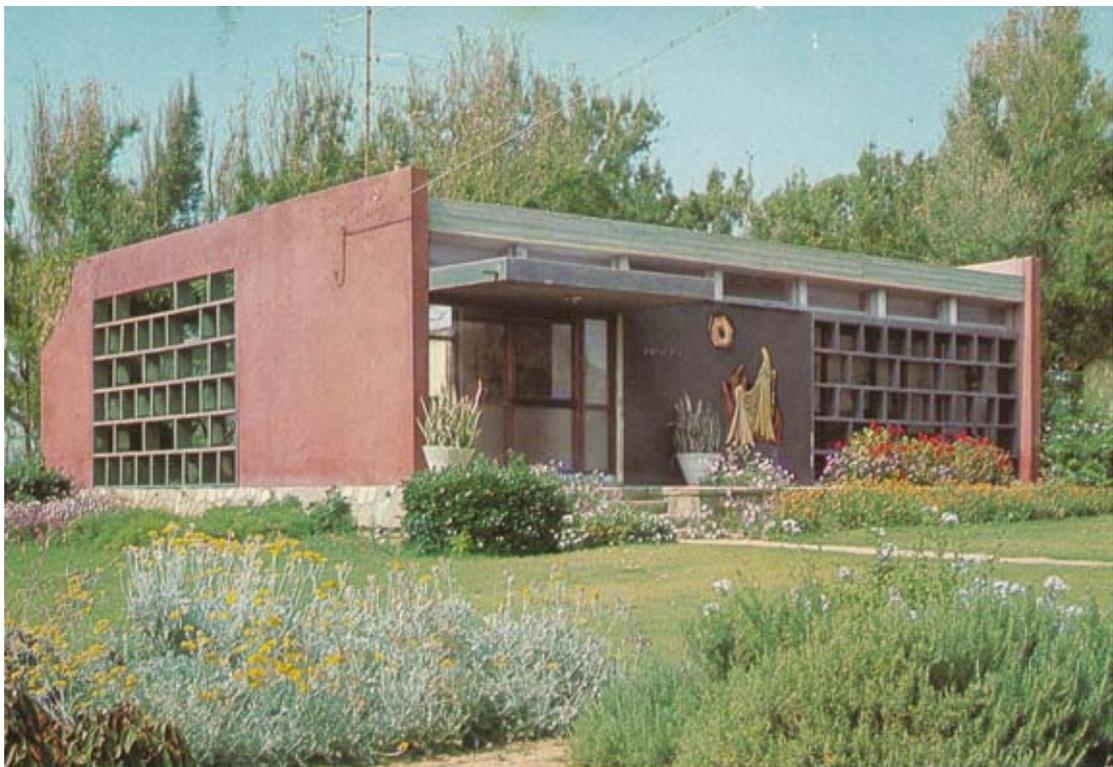


# Gardens

From the Shavei Zion Archives

Judith Temime February 2014

"Eight hundred meters...lead from the Akko-Nahariya road straight to the seashore. A boulevard of tall palms spreads its shade over the road and offers a welcome to the visitor to **Shavei Zion**. Like an enchanted garden in a fairy tale, quiet lanes bring us into an abundantly green village. **Shavei Zion** preserves a custom in which every new resident plants a tree as an expression of thanksgiving..." So wrote **Guenther and Leslie Petzold** in 1978, in their German-language book "A Flower Blooms in Israel from Swabian Roots."



"Shavey-Zion on Sea, Beth Jehoshua". "Palphot" postcard, 1960s (?).  
From the collection of the **Shavei Zion Archives**.

A booklet published in 1998 in honor of **Shavei Tzion's** 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary included historic and current stories and photos. Among the contents of the booklet were the remarks "My Shavei Tzion" made by **Ya'akov (Yaki) Levi** at the Chanukah celebration in 1997. "To grow up in **Shavei Tzion**," said **Yaki**, "was to flourish like the trees we planted in a grove beside our houses at Tu B'Shvat (*the Jewish Arbor Day*). It was sitting in the shade of those same trees in summertime, held breathless by a story read to us by **Yehudit Noymeir (Ben Shmuel, later the legendary natural science teacher at Regba School)**, or waiting excitedly for the start of an outdoor adventure game. It was running along the shortcuts under the tamarisk trees from my house to the grocery store or on the little paths between the garden hedges. It was returning home from the beach in summer at noon, smelling the freshly-cut grass in Otto Hirsch Park and jumping through the spinning sprinklers, their beating 'hammers' watering the chrysanthemums, elephant ear and agapanthus. It was scorching our bare feet on the burning asphalt as we hopped from one bit of shade to the next on our way home. And it was coming home on leave from the army—and this was the very best part of coming home—and seeing **Shavei Tzion** laid out before us, on our left, from the turn at Samaria, between the fields and the sea: the same cluster of green trees and red-roofed houses, the dairy farm and the queue of houses trailing off to the south. And when we came home from the army," continued **Yaki**, "walking the road into the moshav was fun and those same feet in the same boots that were so burdensome on field maneuvers suddenly became light and carried us along at a gallop, like the horses Chemda and Chamuda hurrying home at the end of their day's work..."

In his book "From Generation to Generation" published in 1987, **Alexander Noymeir** recounted his life story to his children and detailed his personal code in chapters with titles like "Defending Democracy" and "Education for Understanding between Arabs and Jews" and "The Love of Labor". **Alexander** recalled how, after 12 years' sojourn in the Jewish agricultural colony of Avigdor, in Argentina, he came to Israel in 1950 with his wife **Elisheva** and their three children **Emanuel, Yehudit** and **Micha**. The fourth **Noymeir** child, **Esty**, was born a Sabra. The day after the family arrived in

**Shavei Tzion**, wrote **Alexander**, "Tu B'Shvat (*the Jewish Arbor Day*) began. With much excitement, we participated in the modest ceremony and the children each planted a tree..." Only the day before, the family had stood on the deck of a ship with dozens of other new immigrants and when they made out the shores of Israel, they all sang "HaTikvah". And here they were, already planting trees and putting down roots!

In their old age, **Alexander** and **Elisheva** walked hand in hand to the beach to watch the sunset every evening. Many pictures held in the archives, showing the **Shavei Tzion** landscape, testify to **Elisheva's** beloved hobby, photography. **Alexander** wrote in his book: "Nature...is the source of our existence. Becoming close to nature keeps us healthy, in both body and mind. Surely now, in these modern times, when technological advances distance us more and more from the sustenance with which nature can enrich our lives" (*and it's well to remember that these lines were written almost 30 years ago*), "the love of nature is more important than ever before. As with every kind of love, the love of nature, too, demands care and devotion. It's important to learn this love from a young age. It will become part of our lives. Go about on foot," **Alexander** told his children and grandchildren, "observe the beauty of the sunset...watch the birds, the flowers, the trees and the clouds. If you connect with nature in this way in your youth, the love of nature will bring you inspiration and delight in good times, and an inner confidence and strength in times of crisis and distress. You'll have a better chance of finding satisfaction and serenity if you live your life in intimacy with nature."

The many friends of **Werner Neufliess** admiringly called him "the gardener of **Shavei Tzion**" and it was as such that he worked for 25 years. Even after he retired, **Werner** faithfully continued to advise and guide novice gardeners. **Werner** himself was as tall and lanky as a young tree and he identified mindfully with the green soul of our village. In 1989, in memoirs published in a German-language booklet, **Werner** told his life story. He was born in Breslau, in 1908, to a secular middle-class family. His childhood games were played in the cemetery of the church neighboring his house, in the

company of the minister's son. As an adolescent, **Werner** joined a Jewish hiking club and that period, he said, was the best in his life: "The outings, the love of nature, the voluntary discipline and the comradeship expressed my ideals." **Werner** quarreled with his father over his desire to become a gardener but in the end he won his father's approval, worked as an apprentice in a big company which built and maintained gardens and, eventually, began his studies at a gardening and landscaping school. **Werner** was the only Jewish student in his class and on the first day of his studies, he found himself seated next to a student wearing a swastika armband. Early on in his coursework, **Werner** said, when he realized that he hadn't enough talent in drawing to become a landscape architect--and in those years, of course, every plan was hand-drawn--he chose to specialize in "fruits and vegetables". It's possible that that choice saved **Werner's** life: imprisoned in Theresienstadt Camp, he was put to work in the vegetable gardens.

In the moshav's *Beineinu (Between Us)* newsletter in 1983, **Werner** wrote, "My first recollections of Tu B'Shvat are from the concentration camp. A group of Zionist youth with whom I worked there asked me to plant a tree with them. I don't remember where I got the tree but we planted it without attracting the notice of the Nazis. Because the tree was situated in the center of the ghetto, I replanted it at the cemetery after the liberation and there it stands today, marked with a plaque that tells its history. Only here in **Shavei Zion** did I come to understand the meaning of Tu B'Shvat. My first job in the moshav" (*Werner and his wife Ruza with their little daughter Dalia, became members of the moshav in 1951*) "was preparing the ground for planting, north of Beit Hava. Today, those trees have been uprooted to make way for the tennis courts. What a shame." In fact, the tennis courts themselves were uprooted in their turn to allow construction of the hotel's banquet facility, "The Garden in the Village". Today, Beit Hava is undergoing an extensive renovation, but the banquet facility is long defunct and the tennis courts and those original trees, a memory.

In that same newsletter, in February 1983, **Menachem (Menko) Berlinger** wrote "The significance of Tu B'Shvat touches on the halachic stipulations forbidding the use of the fruits of a tree during its first three years, delineating the use of the fourth-year fruits and the offering of agricultural produce to the Temple priests and all the commandments imposed on the land. Historically, this holiday deviated from custom and became a festive day celebrating the Land of Israel and a day of identification with nature...with the flowers of Israel and with its buildings, its settlements, its blooming splendor and the fruits of the earth. In times past, our forefathers, in all the different little towns and cities, made great efforts to preserve the privilege of saying the prescribed Tu B'Shvat blessings over fruit from Eretz Yisrael. This custom has been adopted in our own time and, in the Diaspora, it became an act of identification with the Land of Israel. In Deuteronomy 20:19, we read that 'Man is a tree of the field' and every fruit that came to us from Eretz Yisrael was a messenger and a sign of Jewish life there."



Tu B'shvat tree planting, on the dirt avenue that is today's Ela Street. **Shavei Zion**, 1940 (?). In foreground, from left, **Zev** and **Margalit Berlinger** speaking with farm manager **Baumgart**. In left background, barracks and stockade wall of the original camp are just visible.

From the collection of the **Shavei Zion Archives**.

**Marlis Glaser**, the well-known German artist, possessed of a generous world view nourished by Jewish sources, visited **Shavei Tzion** for the first time in 2005 and made her first acquaintance here with **Ya'akov Fröhlich**. From that day, in the light of the heartfelt connection that immediately sprang up between **Marlis** and **Ya'akov**, she has devoted herself to the story of the German-Jewish community and its descendants in Israel, beginning with the story of the first settlers in **Shavei Tzion**. The dramatic story of the German-Jewish community has become the inspiration and subject of **Marlis'** collection of pictures "Abraham Planted a Tamarisk Tree" and that collection, which now comprises more than 200 pictures, has been widely exhibited in Germany, France and Israel.

Among the motifs that **Marlis** uses as the framework of this monumental collection (along with "Face", "Name" and "Object"), is "Tree". Why "Tree"? **Marlis** explains that trees are "a symbol of life, hope and growth". Trees appear again and again in Jewish sources as symbols of the Torah and as a metaphor for human nature, and trees themselves stand in praise of the Creator of the Universe. "Planting a tree", says **Marlis**, "is the act of an individual who works for the future". Each person portrayed by **Marlis** is asked to remark upon a particular tree that has had significance in his life, and that tree becomes a central motif in a painting. In several instances, the artist has painted pictures in memory of persons she did not have the opportunity to meet. Those pictures--such as that of **Werner Neufliess**--have been conceived and completed in dialogue with the subject's family and with the artifacts of his life.



"Werner planted a tree", 2007. Picture by **Marlis Glaser** in honor of **Werner Neufliess**. The silhouettes of "the gardener of **Shavei Tzion**" and of a tamarisk tree are surrounded by flowers representing those grown by **Werner** in the moshav. Courtesy of the artist.

In a picture inspired by the life story told by **Shulamit (Shula) Schindler Gefen**, **Marlis Glaser** has captured, in wonderfully bold and brilliant colors, **Shula's** first impression of the country upon her family's immigration: "In March 1939", **Shula** told **Marlis**, "we arrived in Haifa on the ship 'Galilee'. I was eight years old. The port was full of oranges and grapefruits, all yellow-gold. Everything was Jewish and we were no longer afraid. For me, it was a golden country".

In a draft for her article "The Gardens of Shavei Tzion" found in the archives, **Professor Ruth Enis** (a former lecturer at the Technion and one of the authors of the book *The Changing Landscape of a Utopia: The Landscape and Gardens of the Kibbutz, Past and*

*Present*), praises the precise planning of the public gardens in the early days of the moshav. Under the aegis of Rassco, top-flight architects were employed here, including the landscape architect **Shlomo Oren-Weinberg**, at that time considered the best in the country. **Oren-Weinberg** planned private gardens in **Shavei Tzion** as well as the gardens of Beit Hava, the Kupat Cholim Rest Home and the Dolphin Hotel. He designed a large public garden near the synagogue, the boundaries of which today are the "First Settlers' Barracks", the old weapons storehouse and the historic watchtower building which now houses the archives. That garden included an expanse of lawn, four sandstone benches situated in shade at the four corners of the space, flower beds and a single large mulberry tree. Later, ornamental ponds with water plants and fish were added near the synagogue.



Schoolchildren and their teacher **Zev Gothold**, playing in the synagogue garden. **Shavei Tzion**, about 1955. One of the original sandstone benches is visible in the shade at center left; the fence at center encloses the water garden.  
From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

**Enis** writes that building the first gardens in **Shavei Tzion** began as soon as the first houses were finished. **Oren-Weinberg** designed gardens for the village between 1939 and 1955 and he supervised the building of those gardens by **Shmuel Trattner**, a professional gardener who made his own home here.



Detail of the design by **Shlomo Oren-Weinberg** for the gardens of the "Beit Hava Parents' Home" in **Shavei Tzion**, 1945. The home was never realized but Hotel Beit Hava opened on the site in its modest first iteration and the landscape plan served it.

From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

**Enis'** documentation teaches us that gardening in **Shavei Tzion** in the first days of the moshav was challenging, as the land was empty and desolate when the original settlers arrived. From the shoreline, eastward for about 300 meters, there was nothing but coarse sand and strong salty winds. She reports that maintaining the early

gardens was collective work undertaken by the community and "There was always at least one member of the management committee who was responsible for the gardens". The professor quotes moshav member and celebrated poet **Leopold Marx**, who, in 1960, composed a German-language booklet titled "Schavej Zion": Members of the moshav did not unanimously agree on building gardens. "The love of nature" of some of the members, wrote **Mr. Marx**, "extended only to those things that were profitable: vegetables, fodder, fruit trees and so on. Proposals to build gardens were considered 'chalomes'—dreams". Despite the reticence of some, a majority of members favored the proposed gardens and so they were built. In fact, the gardens here became one of the dominant characteristics of the moshav and such a valued resource that we can read in an excerpt from the minutes of the Management Committee on April 14, 1948, quoted much later in *Beineinu*, that while Western Galilee was cut off by Arab forces from the rest of the land and while the future of the north was wholly unclear, **Shavei Tzion** debated the fate of its gardens: "If it's at all possible", read the minutes "we must save the ornamental gardens. They'll be watered with a measuring cup".

**Zev Berlinger**, who together with his wife **Margalit** founded the little school in **Shavei Tzion** and for years taught all eight classes, specialized in botany and was particularly interested in the plants of the Bible. He was one of the authors of the books *Flowers of the Carmel* and *Plants of the Bible in Their Natural Surroundings*.



Illustration from *Flowers of the Carmel*, by **Bracha Avigad, Zev Berlinger** and **Zvi Zilberstein**.

Published by the Haifa Municipality, 1974.

*Pancratium maritimum*--the beach daffodil--grows in the sands of the **Shavei Tzion** shore.

From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

**Zev's** young pupils, remembers **Sarahinde Schindler Rosenstock**, walked about the neighborhood of the moshav with their teacher, collecting wild plants, flowers and fruits: "Afterwards, in the classroom, we identified them by family, Latin nomenclature, description and the habitat in which we had found them." The children drew these specimens in their "nature" notebooks and were graded on that work and

also on "gardening". From 1939, some of the original work in the gardens of the moshav was executed by the schoolchildren. They hauled buckets of good soil to improve the plots to be planted and carried water to the beds by hand. **Esther Fröhlich Jacoby** remembers that the children grew both flowers and vegetables and "at the weekend," in order to help finance their outings and other activities, "we would sell flowers at the hotel here (*that is, at Beit Dolphin*). We went from house to house with our vegetables and sold (*them*) to the residents."

The central garden of the Kupat Cholim Rest Home in **Shavei Zion** planned by **Shlomo Oren-Weinberg** and the later, supplemental gardens there built by others, were meant to let guests--largely town dwellers--enjoy their annual vacation in relatively secluded surroundings that were "intimate, quiet and calming", wrote **Chaim Strauss** in the January 1960 issue of *Garden and Landscape*. The early gardens were characterized by lawns of "Uganda" grass and by many trees, mainly tamarisk, Persian lilac and ficus. Later gardens at the Rest Home, built and tended in "the very thinnest of soils", comprised shrubs that notably included carissa, acalypha, plumbago, oleander and lantana. **Strauss** wrote that the large lawns and gardens at the Dolphin Hotel, on the other hand, were exposed to the street in order "to invite and attract guests" to the lively resort. Those gardens were open on the west to the seafront and, he wrote, they blurred the hotel's boundary with the natural environment and caused guests to perceive its private spaces as more expansive than they actually were.



Dolphin House Country Club, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. "Palphot" postcard.

Collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

From the early enthusiasm for gardening and the remarkable importance given it, **Shavei Tzion** was known throughout the country for years as a model, flowering village. In the summer of 1952, **Joan Comay**, the "Notebook" columnist for the bi-weekly newspaper *Israel Speaks*, vacationed with her family at the Dolphin Hotel. **Comay** called **Shavei Tzion** "the neatest and prettiest little village outside (of) F.A.O. Schwartz's Fifth Avenue nursery toy department", and she described "the minute red-roofed cottages, all exactly the same... laid out in precise rows, each with its clipped hedge, handkerchief of a lawn, and its smother of creepers and oleander trees". All this, added **Comay**, and the farmyard, too (the barns, paddocks and fields) testify to "bourgeois tidiness and industry...transplanted (*like the farmers themselves*)...from the heart of Germany".

In the moshav's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative booklet, **Leopold Marx** published an English translation of his lyric poem "Shavey Zion". The poem has two parts, the first of which describes the new settlement, a diminutive "dot" on the map of Palestine in 1939:

*Hamlet mine, azure waves wash thy feet,  
Mountains blue and heavens' blue vault meet  
All around thee. Wandering clouds, green field,  
Yellow beach, stars, moonlight, rainbow yield  
Tribute to thy charm, and lo, behold!  
Dawn-blush, sunset glow in glittering gold—  
To The Master's colours' glorious lot  
White and red thou addst, a tiny dot...*

The second part of the poem, entitled "1953", describes the moshav 15 years on:

*Hamlet white, green-hidden, washed in blue,  
Fifteen years thy shiny features view.  
Fifteen years, a tiny instant, true,  
Where eternal measures are in play,  
But, for us—  
the substance of our day...  
Fifteen years—their essence: pasture, lawn,  
House and garden, green-beds, neatly sown,  
Cow-sheds, folds, fields fertile, blessed, green...*

The first settlers of **Shavei Tzion** labored mightily to turn the salty, sandy earth into fruitful green fields capable of producing a livelihood for the cooperative. Families grew flowers and vegetables at home and tended their own small gardens with devotion and fastidious care so that for many years, visitors like **Joan Comay** would

remark on the abundant greenery that demarked both the public and private spaces here and on the tidiness of the village as a whole. The park called "The Big Lawn" became one of the centers of communal life, the synagogue sheltered a lush water garden and the avenue of stately palms lining the entrance road was the moshav's calling card. Occasional "beautiful garden" competitions rewarded the most diligent and successful hobbyist gardeners with recognition and admiration but typical and habitual "house pride" moved every resident to frame the family home in green.



**Nahum Levi**, tending container plants at home. **Shavei Zion**, 1960s (?).  
From the collection of the **Shavei Zion Archives**.