

The species in The Saltzman Family Biblical Garden

And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation." (Genesis 1:11)

The Land of Israel is often referred to as a horticultural paradise, encompassing at least three major climate zones: Mediterranean, steppe and desert climates. Israel is between the sea and desert, having a significant range in topography from high mountains to below sea-level desert. The number and variety of plants that have grown in the Land of Israel and the surrounding countries reflects the variety of those horticultural zones.

Southeastern Pennsylvania's climate cannot begin to sustain the breadth of plants mentioned in the Bible. However, our Biblical Garden has become a place for peaceful contemplation for those who come to reflect on the beauty of God's work.

It includes:

Abraham's Bush (Latin: *Vitex Angustifolia*) (Hebrew: Siakh Avraham)

"He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed."
(Exodus 3:2)

Apple Tree (Latin: *Malus domestica*) (Hebrew: Tapuakh)

*Like an apple tree among trees of the forest,
So is my beloved among the youths.
I delight to sit in his shade,
And his fruit is sweet to my mouth. (Song of Songs 2:3)*

Moonlight Broom (Latin: *Cytisus scoparius* 'Moonlight') (Hebrew: R'tamim)

*A warrior's sharp arrows,
with hot coals of broom-brush (Psalms 120:4)*

Boxwood (Latin: *Buxus sempervirens*) (Hebrew: Bat-Ashurim)

*"...of boxwood from the isles of Kittim,
Inlaid with ivory,
They made your decks." (Ezekiel 27:6)*

Lebanon Cedar (Latin: *Cedrus libani*) (Hebrew: Erez Levanon)

*The righteous bloom like a date-palm; they grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
(Psalms 92:13)*

The Cedars-of-Lebanon are noble trees. They were the tallest and most substantial trees with which the Israelites were acquainted. They grow quite rapidly, attaining a height of up to 120 feet and a trunk diameter of up to 8 feet, filling all who see them now with awe and reverence as in biblical days. In Solomon's day, these trees were abundant on the mountains of Lebanon, but now, because of excessive lumbering, they are very rare. Known for their vigor, beauty and age and also for the fragrance and lasting qualities of the wood. Cedar symbolized strength, power and glory.

Deodora Cedar (Latin: *Cedrus deodora*) (Hebrew: Erez)

"I will plant cedars in the wilderness..." (Isaiah 41:19)

Goldthread Cypress (Latin: *Chamaecyparis pisifera aurea*) (Hebrew: Te'ashur)

The majesty of Lebanon shall come to you –

Cypress and pine and box –

To adorn My Sanctuary,

To glorify the place where My feet rest. (Isaiah 60:13)

Leyland Cypress (Latin: *Cupressocyparis leylandii*) (Hebrew: Te'ashur)

"I will set cypresses in the desert..." (Isaiah 41:19)

Brown Turkey Fig Tree (Latin: *Ficus carica*) (Hebrew: T'aynah)

"He who tends a fig tree will enjoy its fruit..." (Proverbs 27:18)

"The green figs form on the fig tree,

The vines in blossom give off fragrance..." (Song of Songs 2:13)

The common fig, *Ficus carica*, is unquestionably one of the most important plants of the Bible, in which it is mentioned dozens of times.

Grape Vine (Latin: *Vitis rotundifolia* cowart muscadine and scarlet muscadine)
(Hebrew: Kerem)

You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God. (Leviticus 19:10)

The common grape-vine is mentioned throughout the bible. The fruitful vine and the vine brought out of Egypt were symbolic of the Jewish people. The Promised Land – was described as a "land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig-trees and pomegranates." That the vine was early and commonly cultivated in The Land of Israel is indicated by the frequent references to it in the Bible, and also by the numerous remains of old winepresses found cut in the rocks of that land.

Misc. Herbs: Mint, Oregano, Rosemary, and Thyme (Hebrew: M'rorim)

"...They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs." (Numbers 9:11)

Bitter herbs associated with Passover are only a few of the many herbs grown in the Land of Israel for culinary and medicinal purposes.

Hibiscus (Latin: Hibiscus ‘Lord Baltimore’) (Hebrew: Chavatzelet HaSharon)

*I am a rose of Sharon,
A lily of the valleys (The Song of Songs 2:1)*

The “roses” of the Bible are among the most controversial of all Biblical plants. Several different plants were referred to under the name rose-of-Sharon, which may have included the pomegranate, hibiscus, oleander and narcissus.

Hollyhock (Latin: Alcea rosea “Chater’s Double Mix”) (Hebrew: Halamuth)

*Can what is tasteless be eaten without salt?
Does mallow juice have any flavor? (Job 6:6)*

Scholarly thought is that the plant mentioned in Job 6:6, refers to one or more species of the genera malva and alcea, both in the malvaceae family and common in the Land of Israel. The Hollyhock flower is used as a preventative therapy for diseases and discomforts of the respiratory and GI tract.

Hyssop (Latin: Hyssop officinalis) (Hebrew: Ezov)

Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and to the two doorposts. (Exodus 12: 22)

There has been much written about biblical references to Hyssop with more than 18 plants described with that name!

Yellow Flag Iris (Latin: Iris pseudacorus) (Hebrew: Shoshana)

*I shall be to Israel like dew;
He shall blossom like the lily,
He shall strike root like a Lebanon tree (Hosea 14:6 & 7)*

This iris grew in or along the sides of streams, and has extensive poplar-like root systems. Iris was recommended by herbalists for all manner of human ailments, including bruises, coughs, snake-bite, and temper tantrums.

Hetz Blue Juniper (Latin: Juniperus chinensis hetzii) (Hebrew: Arar)

*He shall be like a bush in the desert,
Which does not sense the coming of good. (Jeremiah 17:6)*

Otto Luyken Cherry Laurel (Latin: Prunus laurocerasus ‘Otto Luyken’) (Hebrew: Ezrach Ra’anana)

I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a leafy tree in its native soil. (Psalms 37:35)

Many botanical authorities regard this reference to be the bay laurel.

Lavender (Latin: *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead') (Hebrew: Nirdi)

*While the king was on his couch,
My nard gave forth its fragrance. (The Song of Songs 1:12)*

Lavender may have been known as Naardus or Nard and was 1 of 11 herbs used for fragrance in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

Lily (Latin: *Lilium*) (Hebrew: Shushan)

Upon the top of the columns there was a lily design. Thus the work of the columns was completed. (I Kings 7:22)

Columnar Oak (Latin: *Quercus fastigiata*) (Hebrew: Alon)

*From oak trees of Bashan
They made your oars. (Ezekiel 27:6)*

Scarlet Oak (Latin: *Quercus coccinea*) (Hebrew: Alon)

"...He took a great stone and set it up at the foot of the oak in the sacred precinct of the Lord." (Joshua 24:26)

Pasque Flower (Latin: *Anemone japonica*) (Hebrew: Kalaniyot or Shushan)

*The blossoms have appeared in the land,
The time of pruning has come. (Song of Songs 2:12)*

Several flowers in the Hebrew Bible were called Shushan, including the Anemone, Narcissus, Rose, Lily or Water Lily. Biblical scholars and horticultural historians continue to argue these references.

Mugo Pine (Latin: *Pinus mugo*) (Hebrew: Etz Shemen)

"Go out to the mountains and bring leafy branches of olive trees, pine trees, myrtles, palms and leafy trees to make booths." (Nehemiah 8:15)

Plane Tree (Latin: *Platanus acerifolia*) (Hebrew: Tirzah)

*"For his use he cuts down cedars;
He chooses plane trees and oaks..." (Isaiah 44:14)*

Rugosa Rose (Latin: *Rosa rugosa*) (Hebrew: Shoshan)

*The arid desert shall be glad,
The wilderness shall rejoice
And shall blossom like a rose. (Isaiah 35:1)*

Snowy Wood Rush (Latin: *Luzula nivea*) (Hebrew: Kaheh)
Can papyrus thrive without marsh?
Can rushes grow without water? (Job 8:11)

Sage (Latin: *Salvia* 'Berggarten') (Hebrew: Moriah)
Exodus 25:31-33 gives God's detailed instruction to Moses to make a lampstand (menorah) based upon the structure of the Moriah plant.

Japanese Snowbell or Storax Tree (Latin: *Styrax japonicus*) (Hebrew: Livneh)
*"And the Lord said to Moses: take the herbs stacte, onycha and galbanum..."
(Exodus 30:34)*

Many botanical authorities hold the opinion that stacte refers to the plant now known as the storax tree.

Globe Thistle (Latin: *Echinops ritro*) (Hebrew: Choach)
*Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you.
But your food shall be the grasses of the field. (Genesis 3:18)*

Some 125 kinds of thistle can be found in Israel today; some growing to a height of five or six feet.

Babylonica Weeping Willow (Latin: *Salix babylonica*) (Hebrew: Arvei Nachal)
"...The willows of the brook surround him." (Job 40:22)

Hakuro Nashiki Willow (*Salix integra* 'Hakuro Nishiku') (Hebrew: Arvei Nachal)
"On the first day you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook..." (Leviticus 23:40)

Wormwood (Latin: *Ludoviciana* 'Valerie Finnis') (Hebrew: La'anah)
*He has filled me with bitterness,
Sated me with wormwood (Lamentations 3:15)*

Wormwood's very bitter taste readily accounts for its being spoken of with gall as symbolic of bitter calamity and sorrow. An infamous mind-altering drink called Absinthe was made from species of this group.