



Seed Fund

**Green Apprenticeship Permaculture and Ecovillage Design
Alumni Report Series
Galit Dahabani & Jonathan Ronen,
Yes To Carrots Seed Fund Scholarship Grantees
Spring 2009 Session**

Galit Dahabani, Jonathan Ronen and Itai Barak were the first three recipients of scholarship grants through the Yes To Carrots Seed Fund's **Yes To Growing Eco Designers** project. Included here are words of thanks and their perspectives on the value of the course.



The Spring 2009 Green Apprenticeship alumni (from left to right): Maya (social justice worker) from San Francisco, Galit Dahabani (landscape architect), Shannon (community outreach and farming) from Virginia, Brett (U of Colorado, BSc Cellular and Molecular biology) from San Francisco, Marthe (environmentalist, traveler and baker) from France, Jonathan Ronen (kite surfing instructor), Isaac (performing arts center director and teacher) from Connecticut & Ghana, Kaya (environmentalist) from Sydney Australia, Itai Barak (eco-political strategist).

Perspectives and Thanks

My name is Jonathan Ronen. I'm 27 years old from Pardes Hanna, Israel. I feel that I was given a great privilege to participate in the Green Apprenticeship program on Kibbutz Lotan and it is important to me express my thanks and appreciation to the people who enabled me to attend this amazing, life changing experience.

At the moment, I'm working as a surfing and kite surfing instructor at the Sdot Yam beach, which is close to the old city of Caesarea. (You are welcome to visit). I first read about the Green Apprenticeship (GA) program at Lotan over the internet, but unfortunately I was unable to afford the tuition. So I went to volunteer at an incredible permaculture community farm in Moshav Nahalal, which was established a few years ago by GA graduates.

I will never forget the phone call telling me that I was awarded a scholarship and that I was setting off on a new part of my life's journey. Leaving behind my blue world of the sea, and arriving in the dusty hot Arava Valley, I walked on the road from the highway to the kibbutz breathing in the hot desert air. I tried to comprehend where I was and what a mind-blowing journey I was about to walk into. First I saw the awe-inspiring mud domes -- our home for the next six weeks. Slowly, different people from all around the globe were passing through the archway at the entrance to the eco neighborhood. I thought about how for the duration of the course we'd be members of a small and special community of Green Apprenticeship students; individuals who come together as a group on a journey of new ideas, amazing thoughts and different perspectives. No one was aware of the huge impact that was about to be made on us.



It is hard to put into words what happened during those intense weeks. The best thing was that I learned enough about the different elements of systems to have the confidence to "Just get out there and do it", as program director Mike Kaplin emphasizes. We learned to build with mud, to observe our environment when planning different projects (like communal spaces, houses or gardens), how to grow our own food, how to understand the values of communities, and to respect and appreciate our world, our friends and ourselves.

We left the course as different people – the Green Apprenticeship is truly a life changing experience. I immediately felt the change. Two days after I completed the course I went straight back to work. It wasn't easy, but I found myself talking about the different ideas we learned in the course in a "new" environment. Now I talk a lot with my kite surf students about

growing food, taking care of nature, respecting one another and just taking a moment and smiling at this blue earth ship.

I'm definitely planning to use the practical methods of alternative building and organic gardening in my life. In permaculture we say "think big, start small", so I will start with small steps between working days. Already I'm thinking about a vegetable garden in my house and looking at eco building possibilities. I also enjoyed the lectures on sustainable communities, different permaculture design techniques, observation skills and project implementation instruction. This holistic approach took all the different thoughts and values that were swirling around in my head and made them clear and usable in my everyday life. I feel that I'm more aware of my surrounding environment and that I have more to give and share with the world.

The staff that runs the program is a unique mix of wonderful people - each one of them is an expert in his or her fields. They have a desire to teach the students and to learn from them. Each one of them is a humble person who gives you the feeling of a good friend. I truly appreciated each one of them, their patience and spirit of good will.

The program is one of a kind. The subjects taught through out the course are of vital essence to every human being who breathes on this earth, regardless of gender and religion.

With best regards and heartfelt gratitude.

Jonathan Ronen

My name is Galit Dahabani. I live on Kibbutz Givat Brenner and I have my own landscape architecture business. In my work, I meet new people everyday. Previously, I strived to live an organic lifestyle and I advised people on not using chemicals in their gardens. Now I understand that I only touched the tip of the iceberg.



I came to this program with an understanding about the existing water crisis in Israel and with a will to learn how it is still possible in our country, which has no rain, to benefit from a green and flourishing environment. I learned about water cycles, use of companion planting, composting, and building with recycled materials. I also learned how to observe my environment, to utilize what exists, not to buy

unnecessary materials and not to support policies which perpetuate the wasting of resources. I now know that in every garden I enter, and begin to plan, I will use the knowledge that I collected here.

The Green Apprenticeship has given me new perspective on what surrounds me. I am able to incorporate this into my business by utilizing more organic and recycled materials and exercising the possibility to connect with people/clients from a happier and healthier angle. Through my work I can have a great effect on my clients and slowly influence wider circles. I can teach people how to utilize their waste in a beneficial way, how to reduce water use, to enjoy a nutritious and healthy meal from the garden, and ultimately improve their quality of life. From my experiences, I know that change begins in the intimate circles and I received a wonderful opportunity to propagate this change.



I have met here teachers for life – they are my advisors and mentors. I experienced and received tools that have given me the opportunity to be a better person. For that, I thank them from the depths of my heart. I know that my journey has just begun, and I have many more years of learning, observation and protecting the balance of my environment. I am excited and ready to set off on this journey.

Again, thank you so much for the opportunity you have given me. I am full of hope that many more people like me will receive the privilege of this same experience on the Green Apprenticeship.

With gratitude,

Galit Dahabani

Kibbutz Lotan's Center for Creative Ecology is an environmental research and education institute. Its vision is that through *Tikkun Olam*, the Jewish concept of taking action to transform the world, we can build a just society that protects nature. It is supported by Israel's Amutat Tzel Hatamar nonprofit registered society 580347029 and The Friends of Lotan (USA), a 501(c)(3), number 17053031035036 tax exempt organization.



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