

# Branch Manager

*Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by Rav Ari Stauber*

September 24, 2020

[http://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/DEV80\\_009\\_Haazinu\\_WA\\_TCH\\_YOUR\\_WILLOWS\\_Picking\\_the\\_Right\\_Aravos.mp3](http://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/DEV80_009_Haazinu_WA_TCH_YOUR_WILLOWS_Picking_the_Right_Aravos.mp3)

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When shopping for the Four Species, many people seek the perfect lulav, esrog, and *hadasim* but are not aware of the required and the preferred characteristics of the *aravah*:

1. The leaves must be long and narrow.
2. The stem should be red. Although our *aravos* usually contain green stems, the Bais Yosef and Rama explain that they eventually turn red if left on the tree long enough, so they are the correct species. Nevertheless, R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach sought *aravos* that had begun to turn red.
3. The edges of the leaves may not be serrated.
4. The Torah describes the species as *arvei nachal* (willows of the river). Rashi and Tosafos say that only a tree situated near water is valid, but the Rosh says that the tree must be of the sort that grows near water, regardless of whether this particular specimen did. The Shulchan Aruch follows the Rosh, and this is the common minhag, though some *Acharonim* (Bikurei Yaakov, Chayei Adam) are strict.
5. If most of the leaves fell off, the *aravah* is invalid. Some say that one should preferably not use *aravos* if some of the leaves—possibly even a single leaf (Bikurei Yaakov)—within the top three *tefachim* have fallen off, though others disagree (see Mishnah Berurah).
6. A dried-out *aravah* is invalid (Shulchan Aruch), while a withered one is kosher, though it is best to use fresh ones (Rama). Some hold that brown *aravos* are also kosher, though it is best not to use them.
7. Most *poskim* hold that an *aravah* can be missing its *lavlav* (a small leaf at the top), provided it fell off when the *aravah* was still on the tree. Nevertheless, many *poskim* recommend purchasing an *aravah* with a *lavlav* if possible.