

People around the world are using the Square Foot Gardening Method to become successful gardeners!



Learn the easiest, most productive method of gardening without the weeds, work, and waste of a traditional row garden! The Square Foot Gardening (SFG) Method was created by Mel Bartholomew as an alternative to row gardening. This condensed method of gardening uses less water, soil, space, and fewer tools. Reduce, reuse, and recycle are big themes in the SFG Method! Create a Square Foot Garden in your backyard, on a rooftop or balcony, in a parking lot, or in a community garden. Utilizing Mel's Mix™ - a special growing soil that you can make yourself - and a grid for plant-spacing, it's easy to maintain and it's perfect for beginner gardeners. For more detailed information, it is recommended that you purchase a copy of the *All New Square Foot Gardening, 3rd Edition* book, or borrow it from your local library. Here is an overview of the basics!

THE 10 BASIC PRINCIPLES:

- 1. PLANT DENSELY** Don't waste space. You can grow a lot of produce in much less space that you dreamed possible. A huge row garden just isn't necessary—placing a few Square Foot Garden beds in a relatively small space can be more productive than a large row garden that occupies a good portion of your yard.
- 2. GROW UP** The greatest productivity comes by growing up, not out. A variety of easy-to-build trellis structures allow vining vegetables to use the vertical plane rather than sprawling out as they do in a traditional row garden.
- 3. MEL'S MIX™, NOT GARDEN SOIL** You don't need your old garden soil to grow great vegetables. The best results come if you make your own growing medium—the fabulous formula Mel Bartholomew created, which we call Mel's Mix™.
- 4. GARDEN CLOSE TO YOUR HOME** Gardens are more efficient when planted close to your house, not in a distant plot. It's human nature to pay attention to what is close-at-hand, and Square Foot Gardens should be close to your house where you can admire them and tend them easily.
- 5. GROW SHALLOW** Raised beds don't have to be large and deep: a mere 6 inches of growing medium is all it takes for most crops. Gone are the days of laboriously digging and double-digging a row garden to mix in soil amendments to improve the soil.
- 6. FERTILIZER IS NOT NEEDED** Mel's Mix has a rich mixture of different organic composts, and provides all the nutrients that plants need. Just add fresh compost when you replant a square.
- 7. KEEP AISLES BETWEEN BOXES NARROW** Rather than long rows, a vegetable garden is most efficient planted in small boxes with aisles set about 3 feet apart. The traditional practice of planting long rows with wide, empty spaces between them just creates more ground in which weeds can grow. That's too much work!
- 8. BE STINGY WITH SEEDS** Rather than planting lots of seeds, then thinning them out to the desired spacing, SFG uses a simple 1, 4, 9, 16 spacing guideline. No wasting seeds or thinning. Seeds can last for two or more growing seasons when stored properly.
- 9. PLANT IN SQUARES** Planting in 1-foot squares is the most efficient way to plant. Mel viewed this as one of the very important basics of his method. The grids are key to planting efficiently and rotating in new crops when the first crop has produced its bounty. And by planting with diversity—many different types of plants intermingled in a single box—you eliminate many of the disease problems that can plague a traditional garden.
- 10. ROTATE CROPS** Rotation planting is automatic in a SFG and gives the maximum yield from your garden. The yield from a single 4' x 4' SFG will surprise you, and the reason is that many of the squares can be planted at least twice in a gardening season—either with two successive crops of the same vegetable or swapping out a new crop for late-season produce.



In practice, these 10 principles of Square Foot Gardening become the core by which you can garden with remarkable efficiency. The first steps can be done well before the growing season starts—and don't we all like to dream and plan during the late-winter and early spring months, when we are just itching to get out in the garden again?

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