

The 8 Steps of Building Your Square Foot Garden

This is meant to be an overview. For details, we recommend using the book as a guide.

1. PLAN YOUR GARDEN Create a map of your garden by drawing a big square with 16 squares inside. Use pencil as you may want to adjust your planning. If you have the *All New Square Foot Gardening Method, Third Edition* book handy, refer to Chapter 3 to learn how to plan your boxes to grow the amount of produce you're likely to need. Tip: put plants that will grow the tallest on the North side of the box and plants that require more attention such as bush beans near the borders of the box.

2. LAY OUT THE GARDEN A sunny location close to the house is the best spot. Use Chapter 4 to plan the shape and configuration of the SFG boxes and map out where they will be located in your yard/area.

3. BUILD BOXES AND GRIDS A simple 4' x 4' box is the recommended layout for beginners. If you choose to do another configuration, just make sure you can walk all the way around your box and be able to reach into each square. Grids allow for visualization for planting and help prevent overplanting. Grids also maximize the harvest. Chapter 5 provides instructions about how to build the basic 4' x 4' box that is six inches deep, as well as other box shapes and sizes.

4. BUILD BOX ACCESSORIES Consider building trellises to get the most use of space, protective covers for pest and critter protection, or other accessories for maximum productivity and efficiency.

5. CREATE MEL'S MIX™ One of the most important factors in SFG is creating a special growing medium. To make Mel's Mix™, you will need a large tarp, particle mask for dust, shovel or rake, compost, coarse vermiculite, peat moss, and a water supply. Spread out the tarp, empty the measured compost onto it, then add peat moss and mist lightly with hose. Add the coarse vermiculite and mix well. Transfer mix to garden box, water thoroughly, and add your grid. It is recommended to follow the book for best results and Chapter 7 explains the importance of using this mix.

6. PLANT Chapter 8 provides details about how to plant with no wasted seeds. If you decide not to use seeds, you can start your garden with the "plant starts". These are the plants already started in cell packs that you find in your local nursery or garden centers. Divide your squares into either 1, 4, 9, or 16 holes for seeds/plants. Determine the number per square by thinking of the grown plant in sizes of small, medium, large, and extra large. Use your fingers to evenly divide 1x1-foot squares into appropriate number of holes, depending on the crops.

- 1 per square for extra-large crops such as broccoli, cabbage, and peppers
- 4 per square for large crops such as a leaf lettuce, swiss chard, or flowers
- 9 per square for medium crops such as bush beans, spinach, or beets
- 16 per square for small crops such as carrots, radishes, or onions

7. MAINTAIN In Chapter 9 you'll learn techniques for watering and weeding your garden, as well as inspecting it and tending to any pest problems and diseases. Some tips include: hand water at base of plant. Avoid sprinklers! Overhead watering is wasteful and causes disease. Hand pick pests or cut away infected plant part with scissors. Wash scissors afterward. Clean up any dead debris around plants. Vertical crops - weave in and out of netting weekly being careful not to break.

8. HARVEST With careful planning, your garden will have a good, long harvest season. Given the diverse planting pattern of a Square Foot Garden, this pleasure occurs all through the gardening season and beyond. Chapter 10 will help guide you with timing your harvest, harvesting techniques, and storing your harvest.



All New Square Foot Gardening, 3rd Edition is available through Amazon.com or your local book store.