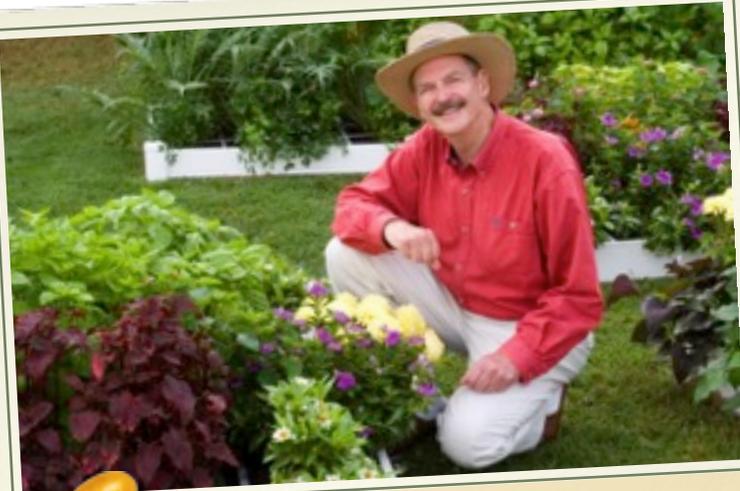


# An Introduction to SQUARE FOOT GARDENING



**MEL BARTHOLOMEW**  
SQUARE FOOT GARDENING CREATOR

GROW MORE  
LESS SPACE

SFG is a unique and efficient system of gardening developed in the late 1970's by retired engineer Mel Bartholomew.

## THERE IS AN EASIER WAY TO GARDEN

**C**ompared to a conventional single-row garden, a Square Foot Garden can grow...

100% of the harvest for only  
50% of the cost in only  
20% of the space using only  
10% of the water with  
5% of the seeds and  
2% of the work and  
0% of the weeds (almost)

The problem with traditional row gardening is that it...

- Takes up a lot of space,
- Is often far from the house,

- Takes a lot of water,
- Requires tilling, amending, and fertilizing (every year!),
- Weeds, weeds, & more weeds,
- Produces too much all at once,
- Is very inefficient, and
- is a LOT of work!

It doesn't have to be this way. Square Foot Gardening eliminates all the problems of traditional row gardening and allows you to grow more in less space with FAR less work.

## The Basics



### Direction

Build up instead of digging down. Square Foot Gardens are built on top of existing soil making local soil conditions irrelevant. Bad soil? No problem!

### Boxes

Garden above ground using raised beds.

### Soil

Use a perfect growing medium called Mel's Mix instead of your existing soil.

### Depth

Raised beds are only 6 inches deep making it easier and less expensive than conventional gardening.



### Fertilizer

No longer needed because Mel's Mix supplies all the necessary nutrients. Now you can garden easily and organically!

### Location

Smaller size allows a square foot garden to be placed almost anywhere.

### Grids

Think squares, not rows. Grids make visualizing the available planting space much easier.

# If you are a complete novice you can learn the Square Foot Gardening system in one hour.

A typical Square Foot Garden is built using a raised bed 4' x 4' wide and 6" high. When divided into square feet using a permanent and prominent grid, a bed this size creates 16 separate squares for planting. That's 16 possible crops in a very small space.

The average size of a traditional row garden is 20' x 35' which is 700 square feet. To grow the same amount of food, a square foot garden only needs 140 square feet!

**How is it possible to get so much in such a small space?** The answer is that each square foot of the garden is planted with either 1, 4, 9, or 16 plants depending on their size. Just like t-shirts plants come in four basic sizes; S, M, L, and XL. Extra large plants are planted one per square. These include broccoli, cabbage, tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers among others. Large plants are planted 4 per square and include leaf lettuce, corn, chard, marigolds, and strawberries. Medium size plants include bush beans, spinach, and beets and are planted 9 per square. Small plants are planted 16 per square and include carrots, radishes, and onions.

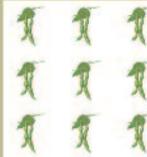
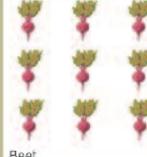
Using this type of spacing it is possible to plant a single 4' x 4' Square Foot Garden with; 1 tomato, 1 pepper, 1 eggplant, 1 broccoli, 1 cabbage, 4 lettuce, 4 romaine lettuce, 4 marigolds (for a bit of color), 4 Swiss chard, 9 spinach, 9 bush bean, 9 beet, 16 onion, 16 carrots, 16 chives, and 16 radishes.

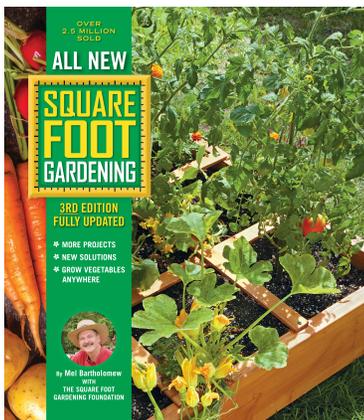
That's a total of **112** plants! You can't do that in a traditional single row garden because there is far too much wasted space. Square Foot Gardening allows you to grow so much more in less space.



Anyone can be a successful gardener using the Square Foot Gardening method. While there are many more details, tips and applications in the SFG books, the basics are very simple. To learn more visit us at: [www.squarefootgardening.org](http://www.squarefootgardening.org)

## PLANT SPACING FOR A TYPICAL 4' X 4' SQUARE FOOT GARDEN

EXTRA LARGE (1)	LARGE (4)	MEDIUM (9)	SMALL (16)
 Broccoli	 Leaf Lettuce	 Bush Bean	 Carrot
 Cabbage	 Swiss Chard	 Spinach	 Radish
 Pepper	 Marigold	 Beet	 Onion
 Tomato	 Leaf Lettuce	 Spinach	 Radish



[SquareFootGardening.org](http://SquareFootGardening.org)  
[ShadesOfGreenInc.com](http://ShadesOfGreenInc.com)

## The Secret is Mel's Mix

Since Square Foot Gardening is done in raised beds above the existing soil the condition of that soil is irrelevant. Instead, square foot gardens are planted in a growing medium called **Mel's Mix** which is composed of **1/3 blended compost**, **1/3 coarse vermiculite**, and **1/3 peat moss** mixed in equal parts by volume. This growing medium is lightweight, rich in nutrients, holds moisture, and drains well. The vermiculite and peat moss both hold water while keeping the 'soil' loose and friable. They also drain well because - like a sponge - they'll absorb all the water they can then stop and any excess water will pass through. A blended compost - preferably containing a mix of 5 different types of compost (unless you have plenty that you made yourself) - provides the plants will all the nutrients they need. Thus there is no need to add fertilizer and no need for the roots of your plants to go deeper than six inches looking for nutrients.