

# ONE SQUARE AT A TIME

Newsletter of the Square Foot Gardening Foundation

**SQUARE  
FOOT  
GARDENING  
FOUNDATION**

Summer 2018

## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION

### Welcome, Summer!



At the Square Foot Gardening Foundation, we're excited to hit the ground growing, with a new Foundation website, new partner initiatives, and events happening all over the United States and world.

Mel's original mission for the Square Foot Gardening Foundation was to help end world hunger, one square at a time. At a time when food insecurity is higher than ever, this remains a vital and timely mission, one that we wholeheartedly embrace.



*Mel Bartholomew, creator of Square Foot Gardening*

In late 2017, we awarded a grant to Plant Pure Communities (PPC), a 501(c)(3) organization, to help with their Oasis Program, which works to bring healthy food and science-based nutritional education to underserved neighborhoods across the country, engaging hundreds of people who otherwise would not have access and/or could not afford access to fresh food and information about how to grow it. In this newsletter, you can learn more about PPC and how you can get involved.

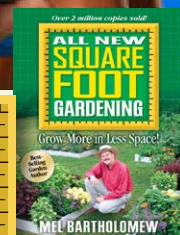
Our Certified Instructors are key in teaching new Square Foot Gardeners, and we're continuing to work on strengthening and expanding that program, as well. In this newsletter, we're spotlighting one of our longtime Certified Instructors, Bob Markey, and the wonderful work he's doing with New Jersey-area YMCA campers. Are you the next instructor we spotlight? Read on to find out how to get in touch with us about your great work! Want to become certified? We can help with that, too.

There are tons of ways to get involved with Square Foot Gardening. This newsletter is just the beginning.

Happy Gardening!  
Laura & Steve Bartholomew

## SAVE THE DATE!

### World Square Foot Gardening Day - July 1, 2018



**24-HOUR GLOBAL  
ONLINE CELEBRATION  
INCLUDES AWARDS, GIVE-  
AWAYS, FACEBOOK LIVE  
Q&A'S, PLUS MUCH MORE!**

**#worldsfgday2018**

**[www.squarefootgardening.org](http://www.squarefootgardening.org)**



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

# #GetGrowing with Plant Pure Communities



Plant Pure Communities



In the fall of 2017, the Square Foot Gardening Foundation awarded the nonprofit organization Plant Pure Communities (PPC) with a \$10,000 grant. The mission of PPC is “to build stronger, healthier, and more sustainable communities. This is being accomplished through a wide range of research, policy, and program activities and working with local nonprofits, businesses, governments, hospitals

and other health-related organizations, faith-based groups, and other community organizations.” The grant will allow PPC to integrate gardening, specifically Square Foot Gardening, into their programs.

Executive Director Jody Kass says, “There is just an incredible amount of synergy between our goals and objectives, and in the ways we think about things and operate. We’re all about healthy food and nutrition, at the heart of which is eating plant based and with a purpose in mind. We know that you won’t understand food any better than if you grow it with your own hands.”

PPC offers programs, resources, tools, and knowledge to empower community leaders, activists, and advocates, in order to help educate people about evidence-based nutrition that shows that optimal health may be achieved through a whole food, plant-based (WFPB) diet.

“It’s a huge transition we’re suggesting that people make with their health, and for the health of animals and the environment,” Jody says. “There are cultural issues at work, family issues, and problems with access to food. It is hard for people to stick with something new if they’ve spent most of their lives a certain way.”

Plant Pure Communities works with individuals and communities in various ways. “We seek to meet people wherever they are in their journey,” Jody says. PODS, which are individual groups that offer support for individuals practicing and advocating for whole food, plant-based lifestyles. There are over 500 PODS scattered around the United States, and people can join existing pods or start new ones.

They started the Oasis Jumpstart Pilot Program to bring healthy food and science-based nutrition education to underserved neighborhoods across the country. “Our feeling is that we don’t want to leave people behind in the food revolution,” Jody says. “We don’t want people not to have access to food and nutrition because of their zip code.” Right now they have pilots in four different communities, with an open call for more. “The grant from the Square Foot Gardening Foundation will allow us to integrate gardening into the Oasis program. We know that



people who get dirt under their fingernails will succeed better, long term,” Jody says.

To facilitate integrating Square Foot Gardening into both the POD and Oasis programs, PPC and the Square Foot Gardening created a free toolkit, available here. [www.plantpurecommunities.org/gardening-toolkit](http://www.plantpurecommunities.org/gardening-toolkit). Watch for more to come from both organizations!

## #GetGrowing

Now through August 2018, Square Foot gardeners have the opportunity to become involved with Plant Pure Communities and win copies of the book the *All New Square Foot Gardening* and a hand trowel.

Learn more and enter here:  
[www.plantpurecommunities.org](http://www.plantpurecommunities.org)



Congratulations to April's winning garden submitted by Andrea!

## 10 BASICS OF SQUARE FOOT GARDENING



“I’ve taken all the hard work out of gardening. No digging, weeding, thinning, or all-at-once harvest. What’s left is a productive, well-kept colorful garden that looks more like a landscaped area than a typical single-row garden.”

- Mel Bartholomew, Originator of the SFG Method

Just getting started? Here are Mel's key tips for a productive garden.

### 1 Layout



Always think in square feet. Easy examples include 4' x 4' or 3' x 3' planting areas.

### 2 Boxes

Build raised bed boxes for growing.

### 3 Aisles

Space boxes 3' apart to form walking aisles.

### 4 Soil

Fill boxes with Mel's Mix™.

### 5 Grid

Make a Square Foot Grid for the top of each box. This is your visual road map.

### 6 Care



Never walk on your growing soil. Tend your garden from the aisles.

### 7 Select

Select 1, 4, 9, or 16 plants depending on the size of the plant chosen for each Square Foot.

### 8 Plant

Conserve seeds. Plant only a pinch (2 or 3 seeds) per hole.

### 9 Water



Water by hand from a bucket of sun-warmed water.

### 10 Harvest

When you finish harvesting a Square Foot, add compost and replant with a new and different crop.

## QUICK TIPS



### Maximize Space: Grow up!

Should you grow bush type or vining type cucumbers, squash, zucchini, and beans?

In a Square Foot Garden, you want to pick the vining type! You can build a trellis out of electric conduit pipes and nylon trellis netting on the north side of your Square Foot Garden and train the plants up, leaving you more space to grow everything else.

### Hand Watering for a Big Harvest

More water = more vegetables, right? Not necessarily. Mel always advocated for hand watering (using a watering cup or a watering can) for a number of reasons. The biggest is that watering by hand lets you conserve water. You water the plants right where they need it—at the root zone—and don't fling water around to evaporate or drain and not reach the plant roots. Hand watering also lets you keep plant leaves dry, which helps prevent the spread of plant diseases. And, when you hand water, you're constantly checking on your plants, so if they're having issues, you'll be able to get on top of them early!



### Flowers:

### More than just pretty faces

You definitely want to maximize your Square Foot Gardening space for edibles, but leaving room for a few flowers can help your edibles along. Mel recommended marigolds to help keep tomato hornworms and beetles at bay, rosemary to prevent cabbage moths and carrot flies, and rue to repel dogs, cats, flies, and Japanese beetles.

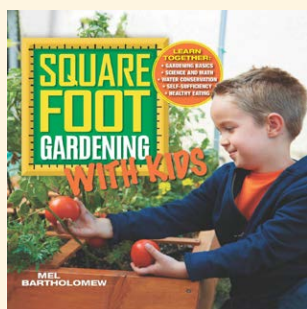
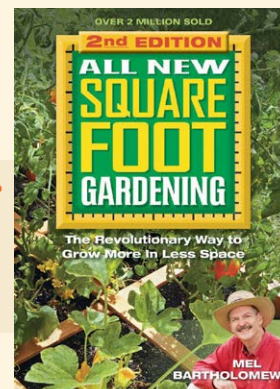
For more quick tips, consult the *Square Foot Gardening Answer Book*. Square Foot Gardening isn't complicated but there are some specific tools, methods, and ingredients that will make you successful straight out of the gate!



## Books

### *All New Square Foot Gardening II: The Revolutionary Way to Grow More in Less Space*

New to Square Foot Gardening? This book will start you off right, with all of the information you need to build, plant, maintain, and harvest from your first Square Foot Garden.

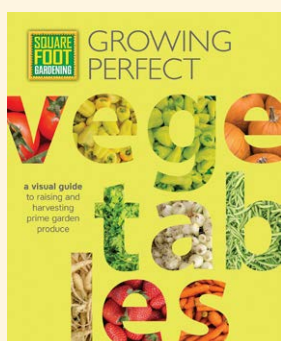
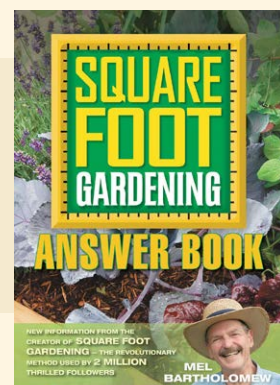


### *Square Foot Gardening with Kids: Learn Together: - Gardening Basics - Science and Math - Water Conservation - Self-sufficiency - Healthy Eating (All New Square Foot Gardening)*

The book to get started gardening with kids!

### *Square Foot Gardening Answer Book: New Information from the Creator of Square Foot Gardening - the Revolutionary Method*

Quick tips from Mel, with answers to the most commonly asked questions about Square Foot Gardening. From which vegetables to start with to how to combat pest problems, this book has specific info you need, broken up into handy chunks for quick implementation.

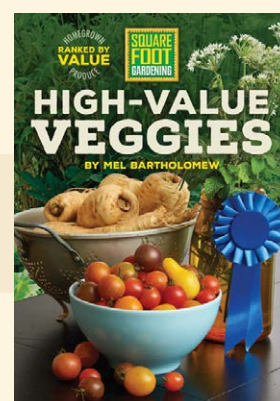


### *Square Foot Gardening: Growing Perfect Vegetables: A Visual Guide to Raising and Harvesting Prime Garden Produce*

What's the right time to harvest? When is a melon ripe? How do you grow perfect veggies? This plant-by-plant guide explains it all.

### *Square Foot Gardening High-Value Veggies: Homegrown Produce Ranked by Value*

How do you get the most out of your Square Foot Garden? Mel did the math to figure out which veggies give you the biggest bang for your buck and return on your space.



## GET THE GRID

It's not a Square Foot Garden without a grid! The grid makes all the difference in helping you keep your garden organized and seeing and using the potential of the space.



In the original Square Foot Gardening book, Mel talked about using string to make the grid. Over time, he found that the string would get dirty, making it hard to see, or break, making it . . . not a grid. In the All New Square Foot Gardening book, he revised that advice, recommending that you use rigid materials to make the grid, rather than string so that the grid is:

### Permanent & Prominent

Use wood lath, old window blinds, or vinyl strips to make the grid. Materials are easy to find in home improvement stores.



### Soil Calculator

How much soil do you need to fill your Square Foot Garden? Find our Soil Calculator on the lower left of this link:

[www.squarefootgardening.org/method](http://www.squarefootgardening.org/method)

## Make Your Own Mel's Mix™



After much experimentation, Mel determined the ideal soil formula for Square Foot Gardening. Known as Mel's Mix™, this proven soil promotes the biggest yield without fertilizer and having to constantly water. This mix is simple to make yourself. Here are the ingredients:

### 1. Peat Moss or Coconut Coir

Rich in organic matter, which helps keep Mel's Mix™ soft and friable. Helps with water retention.

### 2. Blended Compost

Use up to 5 different types of compost. The more variety of compost you can use and mix, the more varied and comprehensive the nutrition provided by the soil will be.

### 3. Coarse Vermiculite

This is the ultimate nontoxic water retention ingredient and the perfect soil conditioner.

Mix in equal parts and fill your Square Foot Garden bed, and you'll have great results without needing to fertilize.



# Certified Instructor Program

Mel started the Certified Instructor Program to help people share Square Foot Gardening in their communities and around the world. Certified Instructors have been to Mexico, where they installed a Square Foot Garden at an orphanage, teaching the children how to be more self-sufficient with few resources. Others have been to Peru, working with governmental organizations to spread the word. There are programs in Africa, South America, Central America, and around the globe, helping to make fresh food and good nutrition available to everyone.

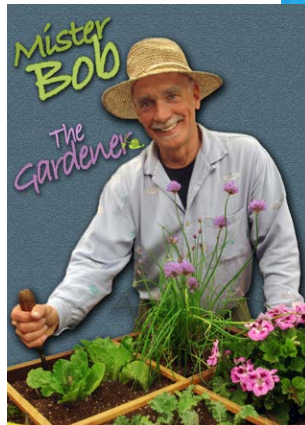
"In addition to the humanitarian efforts, becoming a Certified Instructor gives people a wonderful income-producing opportunity," says Laura Bartholomew, Managing Director of the Square Foot Gardening Foundation. "They can go in many different directions—working with individual homeowners, community organizations, or even becoming a sought-after speaker."

In 2018 the Square Foot Gardening Foundation is working to update the curriculum and offerings for Certified Instructors.

Want to learn more about becoming a certified instructor? Please contact [info@squarefootgardening.org](mailto:info@squarefootgardening.org) with your name, location, and questions.

# Featured Certified Instructor Bob Markey, "Mr. Bob the Gardener"

ALL PHOTO CREDITS  
TO BOB MARKEY



Getting ready for the Great Zucchini Race



The racetrack

Visit the Rahway, New Jersey, YMCA in August, and The Great Zucchini Race is just about anything anyone can talk about. A soapbox derby, but with vegetables, this family-fun event sees youngsters of all ages building "cars" out of zucchini, carrots, and other vegetables to race down Mr. Bob "The Gardener's" 14-foot long, 3-lane wooden track. There are so many participants, they have to run heats to determine the victor. "They soup up the zucchinis," Bob says. "Once they're rolling, the kids will decorate them with feathers and such. Then it's time to race."



"Taste of the Garden"

The race is just one piece of an entire summer for kids at the Rahway YMCA Summer Camp Square Foot Gardening Program. They also host a "Taste of the Garden," bringing in a local chef, who stands under a tent in the garden and prepares nutritious new foods for the kids to try, using the fruits and vegetables they grew. "The kids are a little skeptical at first. A little 'we gotta





"Seed to Sale"

check this out.' One will be bold and try it and then the others will follow. It is wonderful to see their faces light up and to hear them say, 'That's really good!'" Bob says, "I let them taste impatiens flowers. I have a video of one little girl who says, 'That tastes like vanilla!'"

Those are the moments he lives for, as a Certified Instructor. "Even on the hot days, the kids, from age 5 to 15, are anxious to get outside in the garden." He breaks up the hour lesson in 20-minute segments to give them a break from the sun. At the end of the summer, the kids participate in "Seed to Sale," where they harvest their veggies, load up their wagons, and take them to sell at the big farmers' market at the train station. "It gives them the full circle of understanding. They planted it, tended it, watered it, loved it, harvested it, and then they get to make some money from it," Bob says.

In 2008, Bob moved back to his hometown after 25 years in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. "I was at a nursery or farm, touring it during late winter and saw the book, *All New Square Foot Gardening*. I remembered that my brother did



Late summer Square Foot Gardens

that with strings! Originally, I thought, that is not for me, but then I found the new, simplified version. It became my Bible for teaching gardening."

He attended a certification workshop in Utah with Mel in 2008. "I had just, that summer, started a Square Foot Gardening Program at the YMCA," Bob says. "We made a video and I sent it back to Mel after the program concluded." Bob went back to Utah the next year to support the next class of instructors.

Bob has worked with thousands of kids through the YMCA program, continually expanding it as he gets one location up and running. He encourages all Certified Instructors to pursue an avenue that rings their bell. "That's the key. It has to be something you enjoy," Bob says. "I work with YMCA summer camps. Maybe someone else wants to work with veterans or senior citizens or just a local garden club. If you can bring Square Foot Gardening into a venue that is important to you, you've got it made."

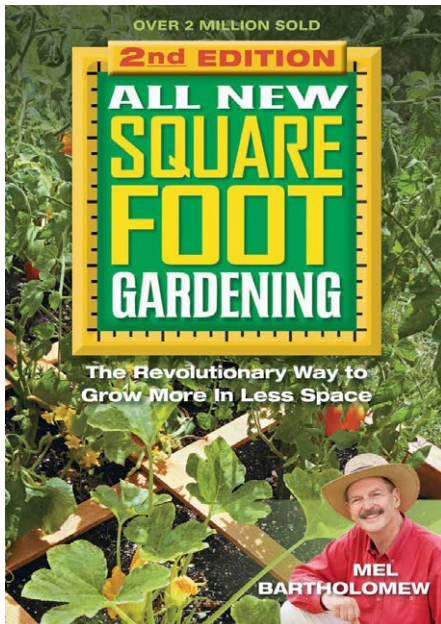
## Tip from Mel

Bob says, "Mel was frugal and very into reusing things. If he could find a way with efficiency to cut the cost of something as it pertained to his Square Foot Garden, he did. You don't have to buy fancy boxes. Make it from scratch, wood, cement blocks, whatever you have around. But don't scrimp on the Mel's Mix™."



# Planting Square by Square

Excerpted from the 2nd edition of *All New Square Foot Gardening*, published by Cool Springs Press 2013.



## Planting Square by Square

This chapter is going to instruct you on your plant choices, how to put your seeds in the garden with the proper spacing (it's as easy as Zip-Zap, Bing-Bing-Bing—you'll see), and growing your own transplants for the quickest, most dependable growth.



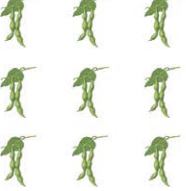



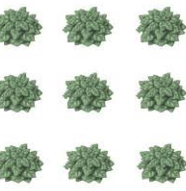
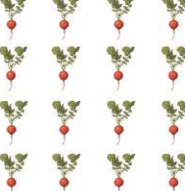


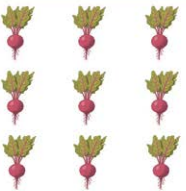
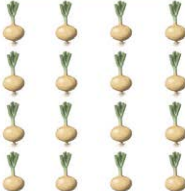
## VISUALIZE THE HARVEST

In SFG, begin by visualizing what you want to harvest. This simple step prevents you from planting too much. Picture a large plant

**Mel's got the proof! With your grid in place, it's easy to have a stunning garden by planting a different crop in every square.**

like a head of cabbage. That single cabbage will take up a whole square foot so you can only plant one per square foot. It's the same with broccoli and cauliflower. Let's go to the opposite end of the spectrum and think of the small plants like radishes. Sixteen can fit into a single square foot. It's the same for onions and carrots—16 per square foot. (Yet that's a 3-inch spacing between plants, which is exactly the same spacing the seed packet recommends as it says "thin to 3 inches apart.")

## PLANT SPACING

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

## Small, Medium, Large, Extra Large

Think of these plants as if they were shirt sizes. Shirts come in all four sizes: small, medium, large, and extra large, and so do our plants. It's that simple.

The extra large, of course, are those that take up the entire square foot—plants like cabbages, peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, and geraniums. Next are the large plants—those that can be planted four to a square foot, which equals 6 inches apart. Large plants include leaf lettuce, dwarf marigolds, Swiss chard, and parsley.

Several crops could be one per square foot if you let it grow to its full size or it can be planted four per square foot if you harvest the outer leaves throughout the season. This category includes parsley, basil, and even the larger heads of leaf lettuce and Swiss chard. Using the SFG method, you snip and constantly harvest the outer leaves of edible greens, so they don't take up as much space as in a conventional garden.

Medium plants come next. They fit nine to every square foot, which equals 4 inches apart. Medium plants include bush beans, beets, and large turnips. Another way to get the proper spacing and number per square foot is to be a little more scientific and do a little arithmetic.



You can see that one, four, nine, or sixteen plants should be spaced an equivalent number of inches apart. This is the same distance the seed packet will say “thin to.” Of course we don’t have to “thin to” because we don’t plant a whole packet of seeds anymore. So if you’re planting seeds, or even putting in transplants that you purchased or grew from seed, just find the seed packet or planting directions to see what the distance is for thinning. This distance then determines whether you’re going to plant one, four, nine, or sixteen plants.

Just because we’re talking about measuring in inches doesn’t mean you have to get out your ruler or yardstick, and you don’t have to do any complicated measuring or figuring either. This is when the grid becomes handy. When your square foot is bordered by a grid, it’s much easier to think one, four, nine, or sixteen plants in each square foot.

All you do is draw lines in the soil with your fingers! For one plant per square foot just poke a hole in the middle of the square with your finger. For four per square foot, draw a vertical and horizontal line dividing the square in half each way. The plants go right in the center of these four smaller squares.



## HOW MUCH TO PLANT

I recommend, especially at the beginning, that you plant only what you want to eat. Occasionally try something new, of course, but especially at first only grow those vegetables and herbs that you normally eat.

Remember, plant each adjoining square foot with a different crop.

Why? Here are several reasons:

1. It prevents you from overplanting any one particular item.
2. It allows you to stagger your harvest by planting one square foot this week and another of the same crop in two weeks or so.
3. It promotes conservation, companion planting, crop rotation, and allows better plant hygiene and reduced pest problems.
4. It automatically helps to improve your growing soil three times a year in very easy, small steps. Remember the saying, “Square by square, you’ll soon be there.”
5. Besides all of the above, it looks pretty.

### Quick Tip

If growing corn or asparagus, some Square Foot Gardeners like to plant one entire 4’ x 4’ box with the entire crop.



# SQUARE FOOT GARDENING THEN & NOW

## Then: Getting Started

Mel Bartholomew, an engineer by training, created the Square Foot Gardening method in 1976. He had started a community gardening program and realized that traditional row gardening methods resulted in a lot of waste—of water, time, space, and harvest. Row gardening and farming was meant for large pieces of land and feeding hundreds of people at a time.

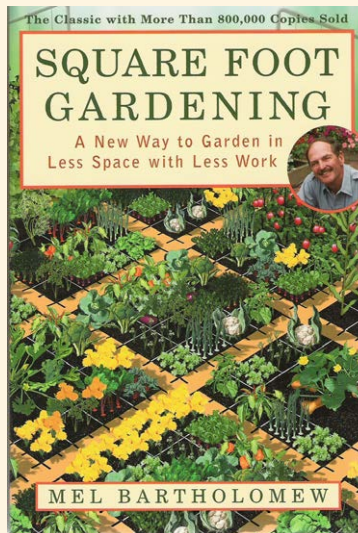
Being the engineer that he is, Mel tinkered and experimented until he developed a way for home gardeners to maximize their space, minimize the resources needed (such as water or fertilizer) to get the biggest harvest possible. Square Foot Gardening was born.



*Mel's original Square Foot Garden was a series of 4'x4' beds with 12-inch-wide boards in between the squares, and each 4'x4' space was divided into 2'x2' squares.*



*Mel decided to shrink the grid to 1'x1' because the 2-foot spacing produced more of any one crop than he wanted to eat at one time, and he created the Square Foot Gardening method, in part, to help people produce just as much as they wanted to eat when they wanted to eat it.*



2001 saw the start of Square Meter Gardening and partnerships in other countries, with a mission to improve nutrition, prevent starvation, and increase economic independence, especially for women and children.

In 1981 The original Square Foot Gardening book hit shelves and turned thousands of gardeners into Square Foot Gardeners.

PBS took notice in 1982 and visited Mel, filming several clips, eventually resulting in Mel's own television show.

In 1989, Mel moved to the Discovery Channel through 1991.

In 1996, The Square Foot Gardening Foundation was formed with the mission to help teachers get school children involved with gardening. The initial program was called "A Square Yard in Every School Yard." By 2000, Mel met his goal of putting a Square Foot Garden at every school in Utah (his home base at the time).



In 2005, The All New Square Foot Gardening book hit shelves. Mel completely updated and revised the Square Foot Gardening method based on everything he had learned over the years. He listed ten basics that everyone should do for best results.

In 2013, the second edition of All New Square Foot Gardening was published with even more improvements..

In 2016, Square Foot Gardening founder Mel Bartholomew died at age 85. Management of The Square Foot Gardening Foundation passed to his son, Steve, who is continuing with Mel's legacy.

In 2018 and beyond, the Square Foot Gardening Foundation continues to grow, partnering with aligned organizations, and spreading the love for and benefits of Square Foot Gardening around the globe. Their mission: to help end world hunger, one SFG at a time.

## Now: Happy Homeowners Keep Growing

We have a lively community of gardeners over at the Square Foot Gardening Foundation Facebook page!

We'd love if you'd join us and share pictures of your Square Foot Gardens! [www.facebook.com/squarefootgardeningorg](https://www.facebook.com/squarefootgardeningorg).

## THE ARCHIVE: STRAIGHT FROM MEL



### Growing Potatoes in a Bucket (Square, of course!)

We're working through our video archives and found this gem of Mel explaining how to grow potatoes in a bucket. That's something everyone can do, regardless of how much space they have. Enjoy!

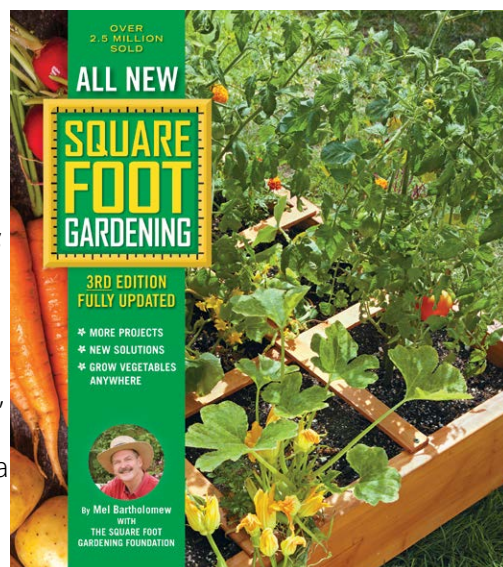
[Click Here to Watch](#)

## COMING SOON!

### This November, get ready for

***All New Square Foot Gardening: MORE Projects - NEW Solutions - GROW Vegetables Anywhere***

In *All New Square Food Gardening*, 3rd Edition, the best-selling gardening book in North America is relaunched and updated for the next generation of gardeners and beyond.



**With over 150 new photos and illustrations, this new edition makes it easier than ever to achieve nearly foolproof results in virtually any situation: 100% of the produce; 20% of the water; 5% of the work.**

[Click here to preorder!](#)