

# ONE SQUARE FOOT AT A TIME

Newsletter of the Square Foot Gardening Foundation

Fall 2018

## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION



## Happy Fall!

We hope you have had a fruitful harvest this year! There's still time to grow some fall vegetables (or spring, depending on your hemisphere of residence). This newsletter is packed with information about growing cool-weather vegetables.

During the summer, our Certified Instructors have been hosting workshops, building Square Foot Gardening beds, teaching kids at summer camp programs, and bringing Square Foot Gardening to families around the world. For an exciting new initiative, the Square Foot Gardening Foundation has partnered with Certified Instructor Brian Fuder to help empower our veterans. Turn to page 9 for more details.

This fall, we welcome a new book to our shelves, the Third Edition of *All New Square Foot Gardening*. We hope it inspires an entire new generation of Square Foot Gardeners. You'll find a preview on pages 7 and 8.

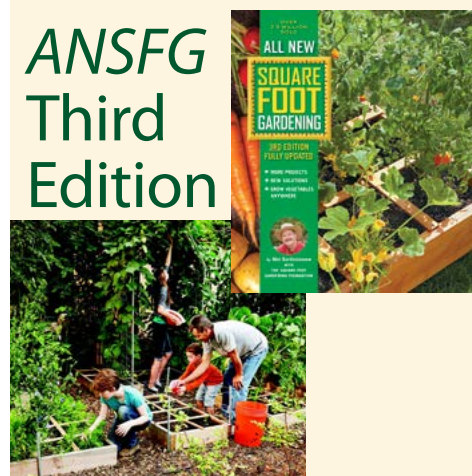
It's always fun to connect and see what you're growing. Please join us on [Facebook](#) and tag us on [Instagram](#).

Happy Gardening!  
Laura & Steve Bartholomew

*Certified Instructor Bob Markey's Great Zucchini Race at the East Orange YMCA featured cars made from fresh veggies.*

## COMING SOON!

## ANSFG Third Edition



We're excited to announce the publication of *All New Square Foot Gardening*, Third Edition, on November 15.

## Click here to pre-order

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

You'll love the new info inside, including:

- Creating trellises and archways
- Substituting with new materials
- Adding automatic watering systems
- "Thinking Outside the Box" with creative configurations and shapes
- Square Foot Gardening in dense urban areas with little or no yard
- Square Foot Gardening with kids
- Protecting crops

## SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT



Wisconsin teacher Jodie Visker.

to School Grant. I was asked to design school gardens as a result of district officials' awareness of another youth vegetable gardening project I had been doing. I'm a master gardener who has been growing vegetables for over 20 years as well as a former art teacher, so I was thrilled to take on the challenge!

I began by building six Square Foot Garden beds at each of our three elementary schools. I also use cold frames on top each of the beds to extend our season and allow our students to eat what they grow during the school year. We grow lettuce, radishes, and spinach in the very early spring, then replant with warm-season veggies before school is let out in the summer. Spring produce is used for a school-wide sampling and also used in the salad bar. Families volunteer to take turns watering and harvesting the summer garden to get an idea of what it would be like to have a backyard garden. They take home what they harvest. Cherry tomatoes continue growing when school starts again in the fall and are harvested for the schools' salad bars.



Everyone pitches in and everyone enjoys the harvest!

*When school teacher Jodie Visker wrote to us about her Edible Schoolyard Project program, we knew we had to share her inspiring story with you. Read in Jodie's own words how she has introduced children and their families to the practice of growing and harvesting their own food. Amazing work, Jodie! We're so proud of how you are using Square Foot Gardening to teach lifelong healthy habits and how you and your students are contributing to the community!*

The Onalaska School Garden program began in 2011 when our school district received a Farm



Students show off their lettuce crop. Lettuce is the perfect school garden plant because it likes the cool temperatures of fall.

The garden has now expanded to include 4-by-8-foot compost beds/pumpkin patches and a garden at our middle school, plus indoor gardens using Tower Gardens at all levels. I also coordinate another project with high school kids where we grow a large Square Foot-styled garden. We donate the produce to the local food pantry. This garden is really incredible and a true testament to how well Square Foot Gardening works!

I was first introduced to Square Foot Gardening about 20 years ago when I was an eager gardener in my first home. My initial garden was a bit of a failure. Then a family friend sent me some back issues of *Organic Gardening*. In one issue, I found an article by Mel Bartholomew that was an introduction to the Square Foot Gardening method. I located his first book in the library, followed the instructions, and my second garden was a happy jungle full of all the yummy veggies I had been dreaming of!

I'm a creative person who doesn't always like to be confined by too much structure, so in a way I'm surprised this very specific



*Four lettuce plants per square; just like the book instructs!*

method appealed to me, but I loved how complete and practical the information was! I didn't want to waste any time or resources, or grow more than I needed. Plus, I was a complete beginner with no clear idea of how to grow vegetables well, despite reading book after book of general gardening information.

In the beginning, I started out using the original method of SFG, but when I was faced with the task of starting vegetable gardens at three schools, I looked into the All New Edition. I was skeptical of growing in only 6 inches of soil, but working with a limited budget, I decided I

couldn't afford deeper beds, so I gave it a try. It has been a huge success! I'm so appreciative of the books and the building of the SFG Foundation that Mel Bartholomew has created. It has meant so much to me personally and in my work, which is a true labor of love! I have recommended this method to many adults as well; I've even taught several classes in the community.

I always recommend SFG to other aspiring school garden coordinators because it works with children, and works with large groups in general, and it is so low-maintenance. I can't imagine a better method to use when working with several students at a time. Thanks to the use of the grid and the 4-by-4-foot beds, I can simply model an example of how to plant a square, then let students work independently on their own square without having to supervise each one. Amazing when you think about the fact that I mostly work with 8-year-olds and that we grow enough lettuce to feed a whole school for at least a week! The raised beds and lightweight Mel's Mix™ soil outlined in the book reduce my need for tools as well—a real budget saver! Most days my equipment list simply includes several plastic hand trowels (about a dollar each), some kneeling pads from the dollar store, and a few free 5-gallon buckets.

Our school garden has impacted literally thousands of children, not only giving them a hands-on learning experience about how food grows, but also encouraging better nutrition through eating vegetables. I'm truly grateful for having learned the Square Foot Gardening method so early in my gardening journey and being able to use it to teach so many others about the joy of gardening!



*The Square Foot Method is easy enough for 8-year-olds to follow.*

## READY, SET, COMPOST!



When you're cleaning out your Square Foot Garden (see more on page 5), where do you put the plants you pull up?

That's easy! Throw disease-free plants into the compost pile. Compost is one of the three main components of Mel's Mix™ (the soil mix we recommend for Square Foot Gardening). While you can buy compost, you can also make your own.

### Composting 101

Here's how Mel explained composting. He said:

"I had no idea people would be so confused about composting until I realized that only 10 percent of gardeners actually compost, another 10 percent say they don't ever want to compost, and the middle 80 percent say they would like to but are confused and scared by the process. Of course, much of that confusion comes from not knowing how to compost aerobically."

Let's summarize: keep everything moist, make a big pile, and keep turning it. How often? Every day if you want the compost in 2 weeks; every week if you want the compost in 3 months; or every month for it to be ready in a year.

The ideal conditions for the fastest compost results are:

1. Mix: Add in as many different plant-based materials as you can find.
2. Mash: Chop everything into fine pieces.
3. Moisten: Not dry, not wet—just moist.
4. Move: Keep turning the pile toward the center, where all the action is.

### Composting Tips

Our fall featured Certified Instructor, Reese Michaels, has some tips for creating a productive pile. Reese is the co-chairman of the Composting Committee for Cornell Cooperative Extension and regularly teaches kids about composting, encouraging them to “reduce, reuse, and recycle.”

- Keep your leaves! Use your mower to shred leaves and leave them on the lawn as extra fertilizer. You can also spread them over garden beds as mulch. Leaves are an important part of a compost pile. Fill a few bags with leaves to keep and use during the winter and following summer. You'll want them to layer on top of fruit and vegetable peels and other “juicy” ingredients.
- Pick up extra compost materials from Starbucks and local restaurants. If you don't generate enough materials to make a good pile, check around at local food service operations. They will sometimes save scraps or coffee grounds for you if you ask nicely.
- Don't put meat in the compost pile, since it will attract rodents.



*Bag up leaves to save for use throughout the summer.*

## GROWING WITH PLANTPURE COMMUNITIES

This summer, PlantPure Communities sponsored a #GetGrowing contest with the Square Foot Gardening Foundation. They selected two winners each month—one random and one for creativity. We saw some gorgeous gardens! Would you like to be featured in our next newsletter? Tag us on Instagram @ SquareFootGardening.

Remember: It isn't a Square Foot Garden without a grid!

## Square Foot Gardening Toolkits

You can get growing with these great toolkits from the Square Foot Gardening Foundation and PlantPure Communities. Click [here](#) for the toolkits.



*Jodie's garden in Indiana.*



*Kathy's garden in Indiana.*



*Andrea's gorgeous garden!*



*Diane's garden in Syracuse.*

## SFG QUICK TIPS

Get the most out of your Square Foot Garden this fall (or spring if you're in the Southern Hemisphere). Here are some of our favorite tips from the *Square Foot Gardening Answer Book*.

### Water in the Morning



You still need to water your fall and winter Square Foot Garden crops, but Mel recommended watering in the morning, rather than the evening. Watering late in the day means the moisture has a chance to freeze, which doesn't do the plants much good. He recommended using lukewarm water, saying, "Just imagine it was you out there in the garden; wouldn't you like something warm to drink in the morning after a chilly night?"

## Clean Out Your Square Foot Garden

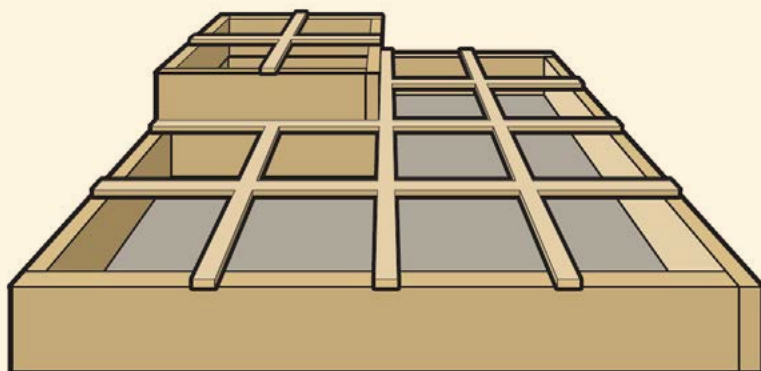
What you do in your garden in the fall sets you up for success in the spring. While it might be tempting to leave veggies in the garden and let them "compost in place," that's not a great idea. Here's why:

Throughout the growing season, pests and diseases will make your garden plants their home. At the end of the season, if the plants stay in the ground, so will the pests and diseases, priming them to start gnawing their way through new plants in the spring. So, always clean out the garden. Chop up and throw any plant materials that don't appear to be diseased into the compost pile. You'll thank yourself when it's time to replant.



## Build a "Top Hat" to Grow Leeks

In the book, Mel said, "The rule is the same as with other SFG crops: build up, not down. In the case of leeks (and some carrots and potatoes, as well) you'll need to provide the root crop with deeper soil. That means building a 1-foot-deep SFG box. I recommend that when gardeners want to grow these specific crops, they build a special SFG square 1-foot by 1-foot by 6-inch box we call a "top hat" just for that crop. Then you put it right on top of an existing square and fill it with Mel's Mix™. You can move the top hat during the next growing season for a different crop."



## FEATURED CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR

Are you interested  
in becoming a  
Certified Instructor?

Please sign up to be notified  
when we're launching the  
new program!

### Meet Reese Michaels



*Certified Instructor Reese Michaels.*

Reese Michaels, a Square Foot Gardening Certified Instructor from New York, said his wife used to be more interested in gardening than he was.

"I started digging the garden for her, but every year it got bigger and I found more rocks," he said.

His wife enjoyed having a beautiful landscape and flowers, while he became more interested in vegetables. It grew on him. (Pun intended.) "Somewhere along the line I became invested," he said.

Reese doesn't remember exactly how he got into Square Foot Gardening. "I don't know if it was from Mel's old PBS television show or if I came across the book," he explained. "I can definitely say it made a difference in my life. Everything with Square Foot Gardening just made sense. It made everything I didn't like about gardening go away and I could enjoy the garden." Of course, it doesn't hurt that there's no digging and no rocks when you use Mel's gardening method.

Reese got his certification in 2012 with the online program. He became a Master Gardener, as well, and is active with Cornell Cooperative Extension. "I love the people I've met along the way," he said.

The certifications have made it easier to work with school districts. He takes his Square Foot Gardening show on the road, visiting schools, boy scout troops, girl scout troops, and other community organizations.

Every presentation is unique. "I go with ideas in mind, like you go into the garden, thinking you're going to do one thing and then you end up doing something else," Reese said. "When you go teach at a school, you have to be adaptable. If the kids see a spider, you have to know how to work it into your talk!"

He recommends keeping the kids busy. While one group might practice planting onion sets, another group might be drawing in their notebooks or recording their observations. "You can't have 60 kids planting at the same time," he explained. He's not above removing the onions that one class planted, smoothing over the soil, and letting the next group have a go.

"They can always weed," he said. "Weeding is part of gardening."

At home, Reese continues to tend his own gardens. "My wife and I have a pact," he said. "We don't travel during the gardening months."

#### Reese's Tips for Square Foot Gardening

Start small. Don't start with 10 Square Foot Garden boxes. You think you're going to eat that much, but you won't and you'll get overwhelmed. You can always add more boxes.

I learned from Mel to reuse anything you can find. Local contractors are always throwing out things that you can use.

Keep it simple. The principles do work! If you adhere to them relatively closely you will be successful with gardening.



*Reese enjoys sharing gardening knowledge with his community.*

**"If I'm starting to  
make this sound  
complicated, stop  
me, because it is not."**



*Reese explains the Square Foot Gardening grid system to a group of students.*

## BOOK PREVIEW

# Take a Peek Inside *All New Square Foot Gardening*, Third Edition

Just what will you find inside the brand new Square Foot Gardening book? New projects, charts, illustrations, and resources to help you make the most of Mel's original gardening method. Here's a look inside.

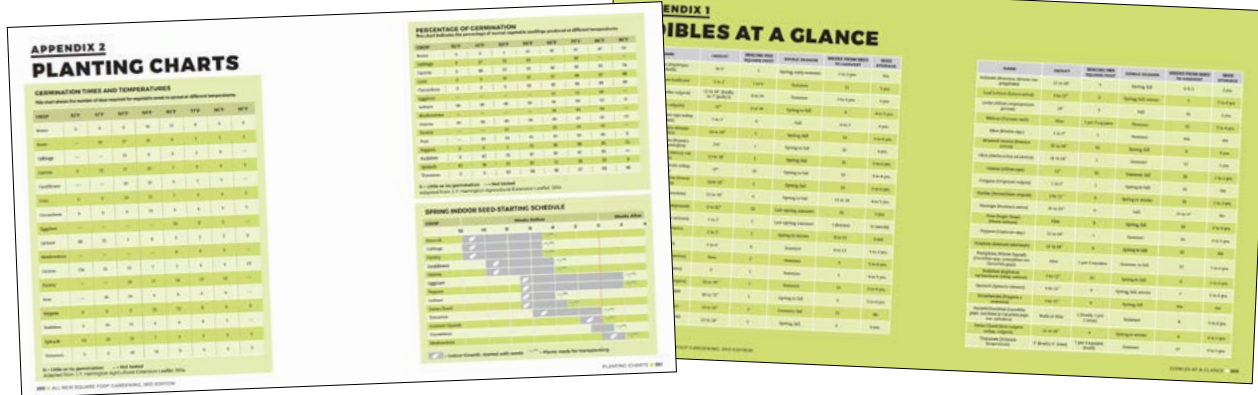
## How to Build Square Foot Gardens

New to Square Foot Gardening? There are pages of diagrams and step-by-step instructions for building your garden beds.



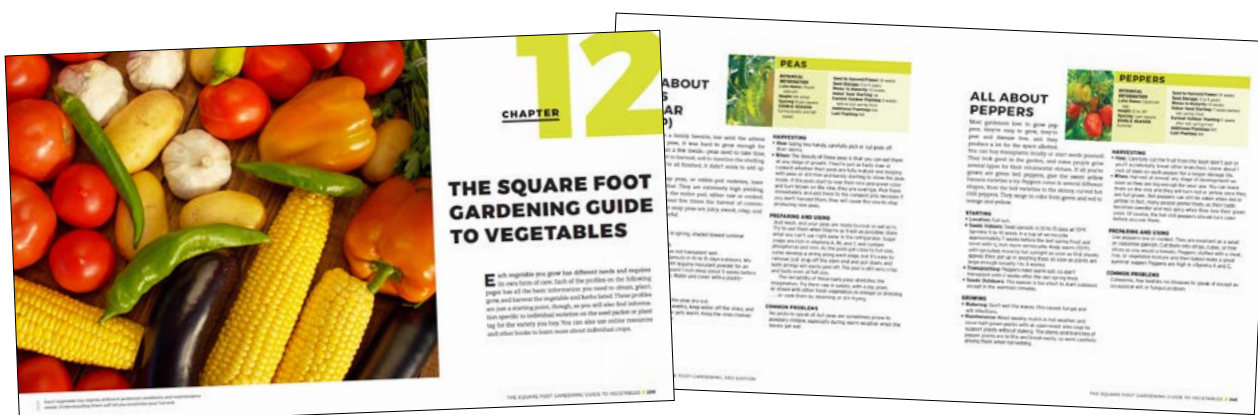
## Easy Reference Charts

From when to start seeds to how to store your harvest, almost every element of Square Foot Gardening is broken down into quick-look charts.



## Comprehensive Growing Guide

Everything you need to know about growing your favorite fruits, vegetables, and herbs in your Square Foot Garden.



## How to Deal with Pests and Diseases

When you use the Square Foot Gardening method, pests and diseases are usually not big problems, but, in the event that you have an infestation, you'll find the information you need to eliminate it.



## Projects & Add-Ons

Learn how to extend the season, grow vining crops, and add a bit of flair to your Square Foot Garden.



## Square Foot Gardening in the Community

Square Foot Gardening has taken off around the world as a way to bring fresh food to underserved populations. Learn tips for getting gardens going in your town and around the world.



# Click to Pre-order Today!

## SQUARE FOOT GARDENING IN THE COMMUNITY

### Elevated Square Foot Boxes Provide Funds for Veterans



Certified Instructor Brian Fuder has been busy making Elevated Square Foot Gardens, and we're excited to announce that they're now available online. Shipping is included, and all profits will be donated to military veterans groups.

Brian makes all boxes with care in his Minnesota workshop. They're built from pine with a steel bottom, and come complete with a grid. They ship flat. The only assembly required is to pop in the legs.

[Click here to learn more](#)



**Makes a great holiday gift!**

### World SFG Day 2018: It's a Wrap!



*Planting with Cultiva International in Guatemala.*

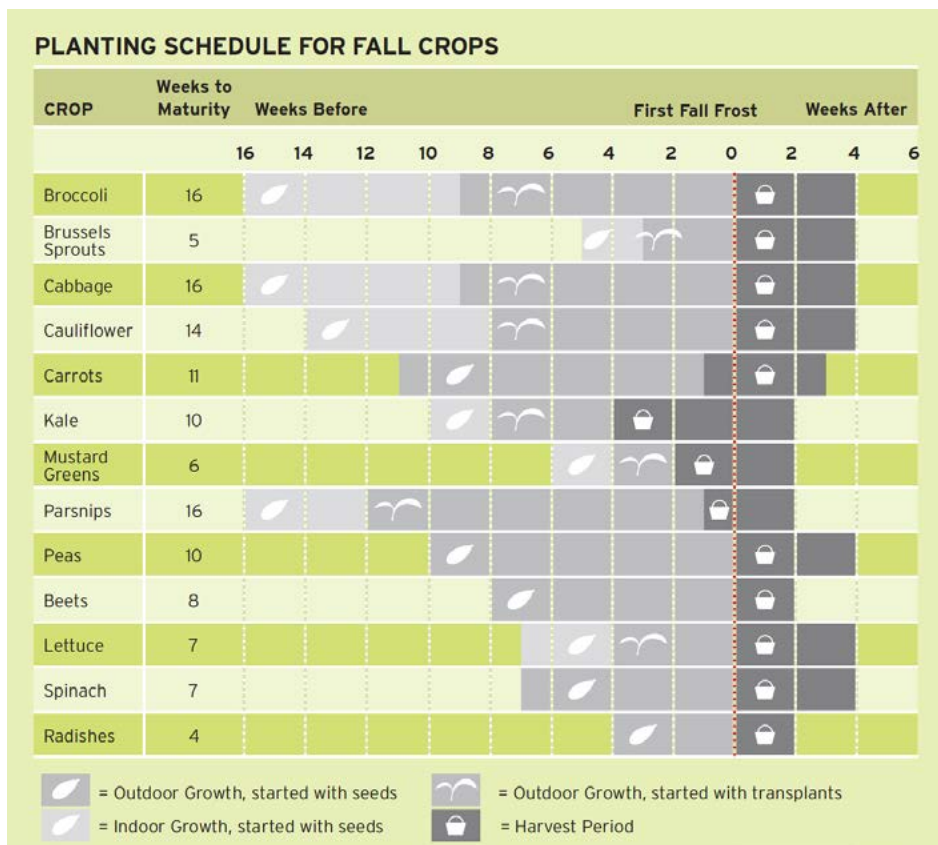
Foot Gardening around the globe, including Fami Farm for their work in Vietnam and Germany, the entire Cultiva International team, and Gardens for Heroes for their work with veterans. We recognized Rachel Chaney Wilson and Dave Werth, Sr. for their visible dedication and understanding of the SFG Method with an opportunity to earn their Instructor Certification and celebrated our dedicated CIs around the world. We also gave away 21 Square Foot Gardening quick-start packs to help new Square Foot Gardeners be successful.

Thank you, everyone, for making it a great day!

*Square Foot Gardens at Fami Farm.*



## BOOK BONUS: FALL PLANTING CHART



Here's another peek from *All New Square Foot Gardening, Third Edition*. It's our fall planting chart. Depending on where you live, it's not too late to start fall and winter vegetables. [Click here](#) to look up your first frost date and then check the chart for next steps.

Would you like all of the new charts? Easy peasy: [pre-order the book now!](#)

## Square Foot Gardening All Day Every Day

*Plant spacing in square foot gardening is simple...*

Use the "thin to" directions on the seed pack

Thin to 12" = 1 plant per square

Thin to 6" = 4

Thin to 4" = 9

Thin to 3" = 16



**STRAIGHT FROM MEL**

**SQUARE FOOT GARDENING FOUNDATION**

Connect with other Square Foot Gardeners and our Certified Instructors via social media. We share tips and info constantly, like "Straight from Mel" and Wednesday Wisdom. We have live Q&A sessions on Facebook twice each month, and special guests pop in from time to time. We'll see you there!



**Southern Hemisphere Sunday**

**Useful Tools: The "Dome"**



This simple structure consists of two thin PVC pipes crisscrossed diagonally in a raised bed. Just use a cable tie in the center to hold them together. Then add whatever "cloth" is needed to cover.

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

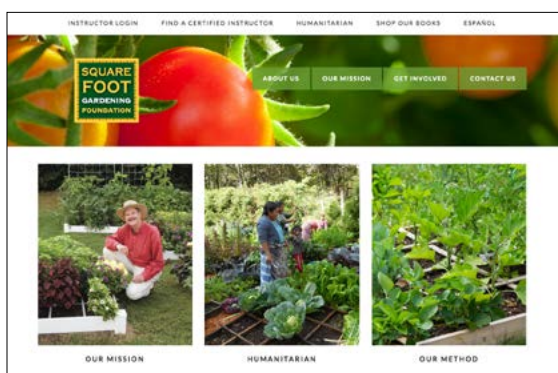
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## KEEP IN TOUCH



Check out the new Square Foot Gardening Foundation website at [www.squarefootgardening.org](http://www.squarefootgardening.org). We now have a blog that we're updating with recipes, Square Foot Gardening information, and more.