

# ONE SQUARE FOOT AT A TIME

Newsletter of the Square Foot Gardening Foundation

Fall 2019

## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION



### Greetings Square Foot Gardeners!

It's the end of summer. How did your garden grow? Many know

this, but many may not, but you can grow fall (and even winter) edibles depending on your hardiness zone. In this Fall Issue of our newsletter, we cover fall and winter gardening, plus ways to beat the cold.

Are you thinking of Thanksgiving? We sure are and feature a pumpkin pie recipe and a winter greens side dish so you can show off some of your produce. Our featured Square Foot Gardener is Diana Busque, who only got her book in April! Take a look; we think you'll agree she's well on her way to becoming a great gardener. We love our CIs, and this issue highlights the work of Wayne and Connie Burseson.

If you have something you want to share, please head over to our Facebook page and leave us a message. Or email us at [info@squarefootgardening.org](mailto:info@squarefootgardening.org). We love to hear from our SFG community.

There's so much in our pages to read. We hope you enjoy it!

Happy Gardening!

Laura & Steve Bartholomew

## LAUNCHING SOON!

### CI Program Launching Soon!

We're hard at work creating a brand-new Certified Instructor Program. If you're interested in becoming a Square Foot Gardening Certified Instructor, please [click here](#) to sign up to be notified when we re-launch.



## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SFG

Do you have your copy of the *All New Square Foot Gardening, Third Edition*? Don't wait!

With over 150 new photos and illustrations, this new edition makes it easier than ever to achieve nearly foolproof results in virtually any situation. Remember:

- 100% of the produce
- 20% of the water
- 5% of the work

You'll love the new info inside, including:

- Adding 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

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HERE  
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## THINK PINK—PINK SQUARE FOOT GARDENING PLANTERS!



During the month of October, Aaron's Homestead Products will be donating 10% of sales to the **American Breast Cancer Foundation.**

Now, that's *really* taking sales and service to a new level. Here's how it all got started.

Julie and Aaron Kingston opened a powder-coating shop in their small town in northwestern Pennsylvania in 1996. In 2002, sheet metal fabrication equipment was added, and they started making products for the military. Before Julie's mom passed away in 2010—from breast cancer, which is why they sell pink planter boxes—Julie, her sister, and her mom would gather in the fall to can lots of peaches and tomatoes. Julie's sister, Debbie, is disabled, as is her husband. Debbie has degenerative discs in her back and has had kidney cancer, bad knees, and several other medical issues to the extent she can no longer garden on the ground. Debbie *loves* growing tomatoes for canning, so she asked Aaron and Julie to build her a tall planter box. An engineer by trade, Aaron came up with several designs until he found one he liked and that was sturdy enough to last in the cold/wet winters and that Debbie could lean on without it being top-heavy. If you look at this planter box, you will see that it somewhat resembles a military footlocker, with metal bindings and wood sides.

Aaron also made some planter boxes for Julie, and then, all their family and friends wanted some too. At the same time, government spending was slashed, so Aaron and Julie switched their company's direction to sell planter boxes (although being in the manufacturing business, especially in a small town, hasn't been easy!).

Like many families, cancer has affected their family. Breast cancer has taken Julie's mom, her mom's sister, Julie's best high-school friend, and another friend. Plus, there are the breast cancer survivors. It's something that has really hit close to home. So, they decided to do something.

They have developed a line of raised planter boxes that come in pink, including support cages and trellises. This planter box (see photo) is a new product this year and is also marketed for kids in a "tractor green" and blue. (BTW, Ellie loves to work in the garden with her mom and grandma,



*Julie Kingston's sister, Debbie, holding Julie's 3-year-old granddaughter, Ellie.*

confirming the gardening gene is real.) They are proud to report that their products last longer than those from garden stores.



*Their Suprite support cages and trellises come in a pink version in addition to the raised beds.*

If you'd like to check out their line of "pink" planter boxes and other SFG boxes and accessories, please visit the **website**.

Or contact them at:  
Julie and Aaron Kingston  
Aaron's Homestead Products  
Corco Industries, Inc.  
155 Industrial Dr.  
Corry, PA 16407  
814 665-2628  
corco@velocity.net



*Square Foot Gardening in action!*



## SQUARE FOOT GARDENING GOES TO SCHOOL!

### Northport High School, New York



*Well done, Northport High School! These beds look great.*

The Square Foot Gardening Foundation chatted with Janet Byler, Science teacher & Greenhouse Coordinator at Northport High School, to learn all about their Square Foot Gardening Program. Here's what she said.

"We had been planning for the greenhouse for years but thought maybe we'd do something outside. After a local news article featured us pouring the greenhouse foundation in November 2018, Laura Bartholomew saw the article, and contacted me.

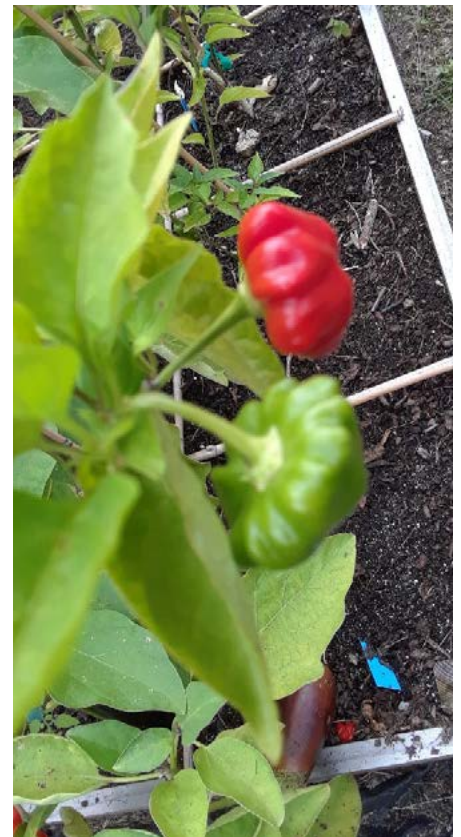
"She came to our school and did a presentation with the teachers who had an interest in the greenhouse, going over the technique and providing us with the Square Foot Gardening books (which tell you *everything* you need to know, even the size boards to use).

"When she described the SFG technique, I thought, *I can do this* (although I had never had a vegetable garden in my life). *I'm not afraid to try it. Let's do it!*

"I met with other teachers and the high school custodial/groundskeeping people to come up with locations that would be appropriate. Because we did ask before doing everything, the groundskeepers felt like they were a part of it. We spaced the boxes so that the weed whackers could get in between, and when they mow, it looks beautiful.

"The SFGs are between two wings of the school. There is this wind vortex, and the wings block light in early morning and late afternoon. It might not be the greatest place to do it, but that was the space we had.

"We have always wanted to have multiple departments work together on the greenhouse, and adding the Square Foot Gardens gave us that opportunity. We didn't have funding for the Mel's Mix™, so our boss stepped up to the plate to help us get the materials, and another teacher donated piping and netting. The technology and woodworking department cut the wood and assembled the boxes. My research class mixed the Mel's Mix™ and installed the weed barrier. Then, the teachers decided what to plant at the end of the last quarter in the spring.



*A very healthy-looking ripe pepper, with one waiting in the wings.*





*It's not surprising that the garden has attracted all kinds of creatures, including the one that has left this chrysalis.*



*Several Square Foot beds were planted. A generous number of marigolds were planted as well as edibles.*



*Even more unusual vegetables were planted, including these white eggplants.*

"When school came to an end and the greenhouse and SFGs were growing, we thought, *What are we doing over the summer when everyone is gone?* Eight teachers agreed to water the gardens and greenhouse. Everybody took a week. If anything ripened while you were "on duty," it was yours! This year, in September, we're getting beautiful marigolds and zinnias from seed; we did not plant enough zinnias. Eggplant did very well, tomatoes did great, as did peppers. Now, we have this beautiful garden, and it draws people to look at the gardens on their way out of school. We had praying mantises for the first time recently. Now, we're planning for the winter: which ones [squares] will sleep and which ones will be winter vegetables and leafy greens. We'd like to get some teachers or the gardening club to plan for next year so that the students can decide this time. The boxes make all the difference; they're excellent for schools and easy for schools to maintain.

"What I've realized is that you have to be willing to try and realize you might fail. Laura was so encouraging, and that gave me the courage to try. If you read the book, you pretty much can't fail. Everything is going to grow, even if it might not grow the way you expected. Now, I would love the history department to get involved and plant heirloom seeds or medieval garden herbs. Wouldn't that be fun?"



*One of the history teachers who asked to grow flax is enjoying her harvest.*



*Adding Mel's Mix™ to the beds.*



## FEATURED CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR

# Meet Wayne and Connie Burleson: Certified Instructors

Billings, Montana



Wayne and Connie Burleson (middle, right) accepting an award for their volunteer service.

and Connie Burleson, CIs based in Billings, MT, who have been Certified Instructors since 2008. They are world travelers who have made 21 trips to 10 countries, including South Africa, Malawi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Mexico, Jamaica, and Guatemala.

### The Beginning

Wayne and Connie had been conventional gardeners all their lives, and so, as they were retiring from the forest service, they searched for other ways to be of use. They submitted an application to USAID to participate in a 3-week farmer-to-farmer assignment in South Africa to grow rooibos tea. Sadly, they fell flat on their faces (their words!). But it was an important trip. Wayne decided that bringing modern ideas straight out of a university to individuals with no extra money or resources was a mistake. This set them on a quest to find newer, simpler ways to grow food.

Shortly after that trip, while researching online, they stumbled upon Square Foot Gardening. They learned that SFG Founder Mel Bartholomew was offering a CI certification class, and both Wayne and Connie attended the symposium. It was an eye-opening experience on how to grow food in a simple way without using a lot of resources.

From Wayne and Connie: *We love SFG because it stops people asking for help and helps them take care of themselves. It's self-regenerative agriculture using local resources only. People in Africa know how to live without extras. Teaching people to use local resources is better. It kickstarted our whole "gardening for life" effort. We purposely always make an SFG to Mel's specifications because of him.*

### Gardening for Life

Wayne and Connie networked with everyone in the CI class and picked up some good ideas that they have carried into future projects. Another person in the class taught them to use toilet paper rolls or newspaper rolls for seed-starting. "You can always find a circular piece of cardboard and a

Are you interested in becoming a Certified Instructor?

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

newspaper. And when children make pots themselves instead of having someone do it, they have ownership. They'll then show their parents." As they continued traveling and teaching, this little trick became a big part of their tool box.

At the class, they sat next to a person from California, who invited them to visit. Those participants were researching Square Foot Gardening through the Saddleback Church for mission trips to Rwanda, and Wayne and Connie ended up signing up for a 5-month extended tour of Africa. The first part was three weeks in Malawi through the USAID "farmer to farmer" program where they taught seed-saving and SFG.



"Gardening for Life"

Then, they went on to Rwanda on a “seed to stomach” mission. “We lived in an African hut because we wanted to feel how they lived.” Wayne believed he could teach most effectively when he understood his students’ daily routines. The last part of the trip was to Ethiopia. This is where he learned the most. They had great success with the Square Foot Gardens there, growing beautiful crops in 60 days at an altitude of 7,000 feet (but it was at the Equator).

From Wayne and Connie: *We took heirloom seeds with us, but we didn't know if the Africans would eat the pumpkins. We raised some and taught them how to grow them, and on the last day, they cooked one and ate it. They ate the whole thing, including the skin and seeds. We had to tell them to save the seeds.*

### Challenges of Teaching SFG Overseas

Wayne and Connie note that there’s a learning curve for Americans teaching SFG overseas. You have to learn how the culture works. They’ve determined that the best way to teach Square Foot Gardening is to build one with the students and

have them tend it. It’s similar to the axiom of teaching a man how to fish. Wayne goes even further: *Go do it with them and teach with them by tending the garden with them.*

There are other challenges too. You can’t buy the ingredients for Mel’s Mix™ in most areas of Africa. So, what can you do? You have to make compost yourself and make do with what you have. Says Wayne, “A soil scientist recommended we not grow in 100% compost. So, we did an experiment in six or eight buckets, knowing we’d better test this out before leaving for Africa. Well, we got 35 tomatoes in one bucket. We put windows in the sides of the buckets so that we could see where the roots went and studied root development.”

“Once in Africa, because we didn’t have other ingredients, we used local material, local carbons, and chopped it up.” It worked!

### Growing SFG Overseas

Wayne and Connie learned it’s important to understand both the culture and the environment when growing SFG internationally. For example, in Africa, the houses are surrounded by animals, kids, and so on. They have to protect their gardens, to modify and make them work when they’re located next to one of the mud huts where it can be more secure. When teaching overseas, you have to get creative, such as increasing production by carbon loading the soil or protecting the gardens and securing them. And, oh—there’s usually no money for supplies.

Another challenge is that farmers can be so remote, they don’t generate garbage. They are trading and swapping with people, so one *really* has to go back to the basics to find the needed materials. Wayne and Connie advise, “Always take seeds. Seeds are available everywhere when you think about it. [Also] teach people how to take cuttings and propagate their plants. Some seeds will grow, and some may not. Teach seed-saving the best you can. We learned how to pass seeds out by having people sign their name on an envelope, writing ‘Seeds’ on the envelope, and passing them out at graduation.”



Teaching people in the African country of Zambia how to make compost. There are 60 people in this photo who all walked or rode bicycles to this workshop.



Other valuable lessons that Wayne and Connie have learned is that because Square Foot Gardens are designed for smaller backyard gardens, you have to work to get the farmers involved. They'll ask a volunteer if they can go to his farm and build a Square Foot Garden. Then, everyone gets to participate in making the soil and growing. They call these "kitchen gardens" because, to them, that's what the gardens are. The rest of the time, they're tending big farms.

Wayne says that feedback and follow-up communication are key; it's the most effective way to teach. "It's important to find someone in a class who is willing to teach in the future." They tell the volunteer, "You can make a career out of this," and thus train the trainers. The Burlesons get feedback from these individuals, too, through Facebook and Messenger. They both say that teaching SFG has become an important part of their lives.

The proverb goes, "Necessity is the mother of invention." We are confident that Mel would agree and would be proud of all our Certified Instructors, including the Burlesons, who grow with what they've got.



CI Wayne Burleson with his SFG harvest.

## YES! YOU CAN KEEP YOUR GARDEN GROWING THIS FALL

### PLANTING SCHEDULE FOR FALL CROPS

CROP	Weeks to Maturity	Weeks Before								First Fall Frost		Weeks After			
		16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2	0	2	4	6		
Broccoli	16														
Brussels Sprouts	5														
Cabbage	16														
Cauliflower	14														
Carrots	11														
Kale	10														
Mustard Greens	6														
Parsnips	16														
Peas	10														
Beets	8														
Lettuce	7														
Spinach	7														
Radishes	4														

= Outdoor Growth, started with seeds    = Outdoor Growth, started with transplants  
 = Indoor Growth, started with seeds    = Harvest Period

Some traditional gardeners begin closing down the garden as the season enters fall, but it's possible to use this as an opportunity to get in one more round of cool-season crops before a hard frost hits. Depending on the average first frost date for your region, you may be able to plant and harvest a number of vegetables in fall. These will be crops that are frost-hardy—meaning both young and mature plants can tolerate air frosts that don't penetrate the ground.

Some crops to consider are:

**0 to 5 weeks before frost:**

Lettuces, Radishes

**5 to 10 weeks before frost:**

Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Beets, Carrots, Spinach, Swiss Chard



## Keep an Eye on the Weather

As fall progresses and winter approaches, keep an eye on the weather and provide temporary shelter if you think temperatures might dip low enough to kill your crops. Different parts of your yard may have their own microclimates, and a walk around your property on a cold night might make this evident. Low-lying areas “collect” cold air that rolls in from higher areas—a phenomenon known as cold air drainage.

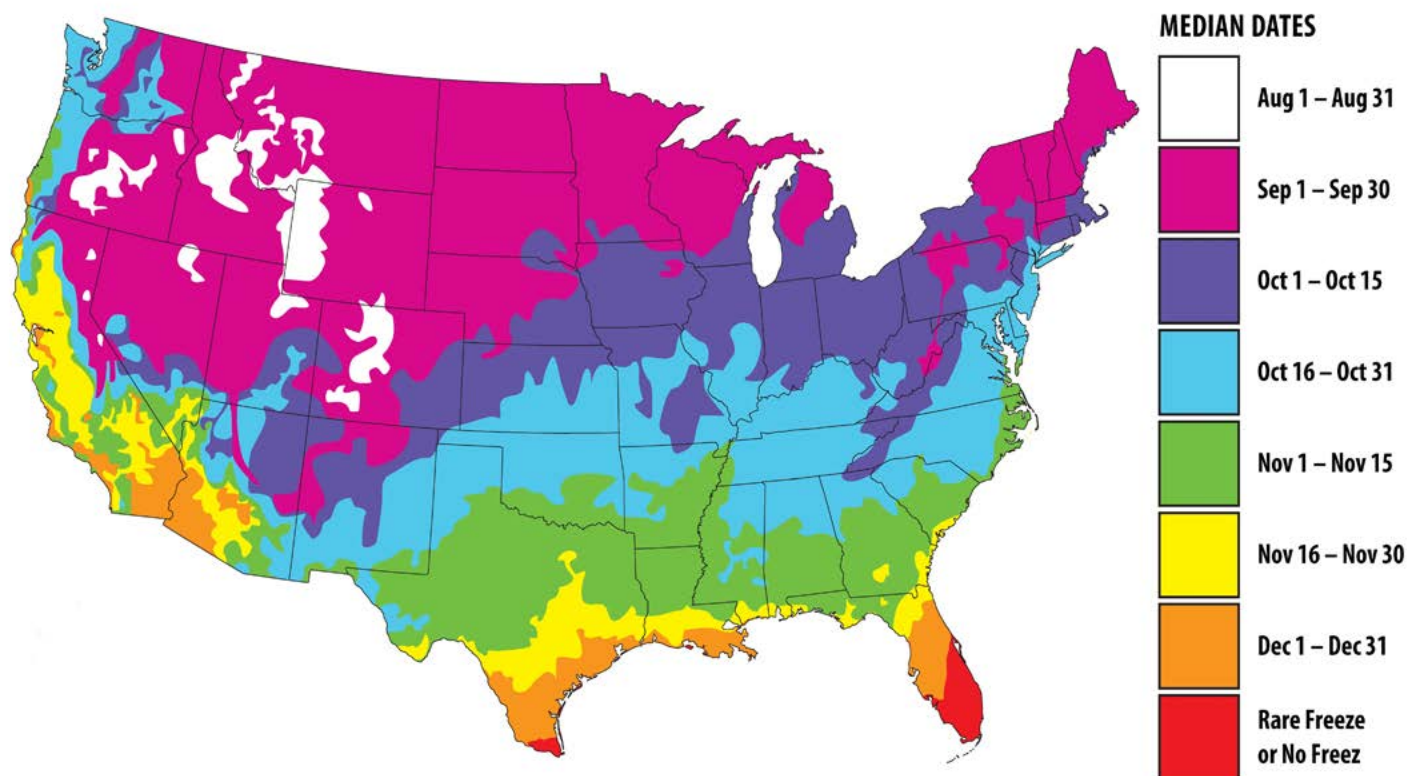
On nights when borderline-freezing temperatures are predicted, you should cover the garden boxes in low-lying areas, with a protective structure for the night (like the Dome, which we show you how to build in this newsletter). Frost often occurs in low-lying areas while just a few feet away, a garden box that is just slightly higher can escape unscathed. If a body of water is nearby—even a small landscape pond—it can reduce the chances of frost in a nearby Square Foot Garden. In general, the very early morning hours are the coldest, especially when the air is still and calm at night. Misty or rainy nights are less likely to see frost in these borderline times between fall and winter.

Watch the daily weather forecasts and be ready when frost is predicted. Most cool-season crops tolerate a light frost with temperatures at or just below the freezing point of water. A light frost may blacken the edges of warm-season vegetables and flowers but usually does not kill them; cool-season vegetables usually tolerate this light frost just fine. A hard frost,

though, when temperatures dip down into the 20s and below for extended periods, will kill all warm-season crops and flowers, and some cool-season crops too. You’ll know you’ve had a hard frost if you hear a crunchy sound when you walk on the ground and see a thin film of ice on the surface of your birdbath.

Many cool-season flowers (such as mums and asters) and many fall vegetables (such as turnips, kale, and cauliflower) will survive these first hard frosts even without a protective cover. The longer you’re willing to play watchdog and protect your crops against cold snaps, the longer you can grow those crops.

## Estimated First Frost Date in Fall





### How to Build a Protective Dome

A very simple but functional dome support can be made with pieces of ordinary ½-inch PVC plumbing pipe that's been formed into an arch from corner to corner of your Square Foot Garden box and secured in the center. This framework can support any type of cover. In early spring, it can be covered with clear plastics to retain heat from the sun; in late spring, it can be covered with cheesecloth to keep out egg-laying insects; and in summer, it can be covered with shade cloth to provide shade for young, tender plants. In fall, it can also protect late crops.

### Materials

½-inch PVC pipe, 10 feet long (2)

Zip ties

Plastic sheeting or other covering of your choice

### Here's How

Bend the two lengths of PVC pipe from corner to corner in your Square Foot Garden box, inserting the ends deep into the ground. The bent pipes should form a tentlike frame over the box. Secure the dome frame at the intersection of the bent pipes by using a plastic zip tie. Cover the dome frame with the covering of your choice. Thick, durable plastic sheeting can protect your plants from many things, including harmful weather and animal and insect pests.



Materials needed



Install PVC pipes in beds.



Zip tie the pipes together where they meet.





## HOW DID YOU CELEBRATE WORLD SFG DAY?

Every year, July 21 is celebrated as World SFG Day. It's a great way to honor our founder, Mel Bartholomew, and you—the SFGers of the world. We salute you! Here are some of the highlights.

### Photo Contest Winners!

Winner #1

Jeff N. What beautiful gardens, Jeff—congratulations!



### Winner #2:

Congratulations, Kirsten S.—looks like the SFG gene is being passed on!



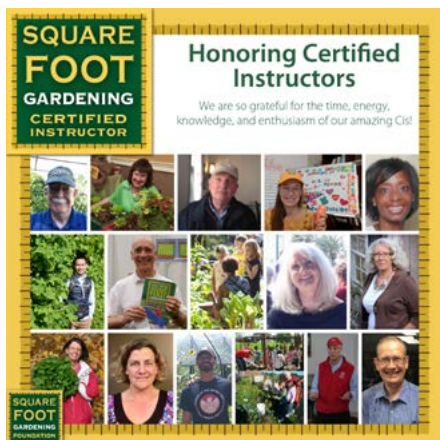
### Runner-Up:

This looks great, Trudy—congratulations!





# Thanks to Our Instructors!



Our Certified Instructors are spreading the word about Square Foot Gardening, and we appreciate their hard work so much! We can always use more CIs, so please contact us if you'd like to be part of our team. Special shout-out to Kim Howes Roman, our first Level 3 SFG Ambassador.

# This Year's Veterans' Honor Award

This year, we honor our veterans by making a donation to the Semper Fi Fund, and we celebrate CI Brian Fuder, who constructed and sold these elevated SFG beds to raise funds.



# Get Gardening with a PlantPure Toolkit!

This gardening toolkit is for anyone who wants to grow their own fruits and vegetables. Learn how to create a Square Foot Garden and initiate gardens in your own community, as well as support local farmers and more. The toolkit consists of action sheets, info sheets, SFG materials, links to recommended resources, a multimedia presentation—and more! Get connected with SFG CIs to arrange a gardening workshop or demonstration—and get growing.

[Click here](#) to get your toolkit.



# Mel Bartholomew—A Tribute

We are pleased to share this video tribute to the Founder of the Square Foot Gardening Method, Mel Bartholomew. He created more than a way to garden; he created a movement that's still going strong. Words are hardly sufficient, but thank you, Mel.

[Click here](#) to watch.





## SFG QUICK TIPS

### Veggies that Are Sweeter after a Frost



Some vegetables are actually tastier and sweeter after a frost. That's because colder temperatures trigger the plants to convert starches into sugars. Most of these plants will withstand a light frost. Root vegetables, such as carrots and turnips, can stay in the ground in "cold storage" for much of the winter with a heavy mulch on top.

- Beets
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbages
- Carrots
- Collard Greens
- Kale
- Leeks
- Parsnips
- Rutabagas
- Spinach
- Swiss Chard
- Turnips

### Caring for Cold-Weather Crops



For the fall or winter gardens, there are a couple of things to keep in mind. One is watering. With cooler weather, we may not be thinking as much of watering as we do during the hot, summery months. Even though the Mel's Mix™ holds moisture well, it also drains well, so it's important to monitor the moisture content. Keep a watering can or bucket where it can be warmed by the sun, too, so it's not such a shock to the plants when you water. Remember, in SFG, it's "less water, more often." Let plants tell you they're thirsty by their appearance. If you don't have a drip irrigation system installed, you can still install one.

Also, if you're using a cold frame or a dome, you will need to vent those on particularly warm days. Temperature fluctuations aren't good for plants, and venting allows hot air to escape. It can be accomplished by simply raising the dome edge at one end or by propping the cold frame open (a little or a lot). If your cold frame is constructed using an old storm window, then placing a piece of wood (a shim or a stake) under the lid to keep it open may be all that's needed.

### Plant Now: Garlic



Garlic, a relative of the onion, is very easy to grow and is planted from individual cloves broken off a bulb. It needs well-draining soil and does not tolerate a lot of moisture. Avoid planting garlic in the same spot where onion or another garlic plant was grown the year before to avoid/prevent diseases. Garlic cloves can be planted in early spring as soon as the soil can be worked, but it is better to plant them during fall. This allows them to develop growth before overwintering in the soil for harvest the next summer.

#### Planting Details

**Sun:** Full sun

**When:** Plant 6 to 8 weeks before the ground freezes (hard) in your region.

**How:** Break a garlic bulb into individual cloves and push individual cloves 1 to 2 inches into the ground. Water well, and in regions with freezing winters, cover with about 4 inches of protective mulch.

**Water:** Keep moist while new leaves are growing. Keep soil mulched to retain moisture. Once leaves stop growing, restrict watering to prevent bulb rot.