



# ONE SQUARE FOOT AT A TIME

Newsletter of the Square Foot Gardening Foundation

Summer 2020

## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION



### Greetings, Square Foot Gardeners!

As we discussed back in our Spring issue, we stated we knew that we were entering uncertain times with an unpredictable future. What we did not realize then was how profound that statement would be. In addition to the ongoing pandemic, we are experiencing great social unrest in America that has deep roots. We understand that the world is hurting—perhaps even you are hurting.

But this is a great opportunity, too.

Because we also know that food does more than nourish the body. It also nourishes the soul. Food and the gardening that creates the food can bring us together. There is a reason that the phrase “breaking bread” goes far beyond its literal meaning of sharing a meal; it has great symbolism. It’s also come to mean having a sense of brotherhood or sharing a future with others based on your common interests and goals. And what better way is there than to share your love of Square Foot Gardening—literally, as in sharing food, or by sharing your knowledge—as a way of “breaking bread”? This is your moment.

The sun will rise, the garden will thrive, and we are still certain that we will get through this—together. So stay well, garden, and we hope you’ll be able to break some bread (or a zucchini or two or seven) with your neighbors.

Happy Gardening!  
Laura and Steve Bartholomew



*Laura & Steve's Square Foot Gardens with their faithful protector, Ellie.*

## LEARN TO SQUARE FOOT GARDEN ONLINE!

We're so excited to announce our new **Square Foot Gardening Certified Instructor program**, and the new version of this popular program is divided into levels, so no matter what you hope to learn and do with your Square Foot Garden, there's an opportunity for you. Learn more on page 3.



## SFG Inspiration

A few World SFG Day contest entries!



*Winona D*



*Tonya B*



*Ad L*



## WORLD SFG DAY 2020

We are so proud of you! On June 28, 2020, we celebrated World Square Foot Gardening Day, our 24-hour celebration of all things Square Foot Gardening. The festivities included a photo contest, random drawings, awards, and more!

### Photo Contest Winners

First, we'd like to share some of the winning SFG photos with you. This year, the photo contest prizes included one of two (2) elevated garden beds or one of two (2) 4x4 Garden In Minutes® raised garden beds with Garden Grid™ watering system.

The Elevated garden beds are from our friends at Square Foot Gardening for the **Red River Valley** and include a Square Foot Garden grid, are wheelchair accessible, and are constructed out of pine with a steel bottom layer to ensure a long product lifespan.



*Terry's SFG makes the best use of some non-traditional materials.*



*Derek A.'s impressive side yard Square Foot Garden.*



*Paula S.'s SFG would make Mel proud with all of the recycled materials.*



*Sharonda's raised SFG bed is looking great!*

The Garden Grid™ watering system in the Garden In Minutes® raised garden beds is a dual purpose plant spacing grid and garden irrigation system. These tool-free garden beds set up in minutes and are from our friends at **Garden In Minutes**.

Remember: each photo had to include the all-important SFG grid. And the winners are: Derek A. and Paula S. (who each won a 4x4 Garden In Minutes® raised garden bed) and Sharonda S. and Terry W. (who each scored an elevated bed) — your SFG gardens are gorgeous and we truly appreciate your dedication to the SFG Method!

### Drawing Winners

Thanks to everyone who sent in a photo!!

Another big congratulations goes to the lucky winners of our random drawings. No photo was necessary to enter these drawings to win either beginning SFG courses or beautiful Aaron's Homestead Trellises. This year, we gave away *four* "Learn to SFG" online courses and two Aaron's Homestead Products Trellises.

**Trellis winners:** Janine T. and RD W.  
**SFG Course winners:** Kenneth, Jake, Olivia, and Liz:



*These beautiful trellises from Aaron's Homestead Products will wing their way into winners' gardens!*



# World SFG Day Photo Contest

We had tons of great photo contest entries. Check them out!



[Click here to watch now.](#)

## Teacher Grants

Teacher grants are vitally important to further Square Foot Gardening. These grants were based on the organization's alignment with the SFG mission and by completing the required paperwork. This year, we awarded two grants of \$2,000 each!! We are pleased to announce the grant recipients: Brad Hendershot from Excelsior Academy Charter School in Erda, UT, with their Greenthumbs program, and Steven Treankler from D.C. Everest Middle School in Weston, WI, with their Interactive Community Garden.



Teacher Grant winner Brad Hendershot's SFG is growing strong!

## BECOME A CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR

We could not do it without you, our Certified Instructors. You are the lifeblood of our SFG mission. By training others, you help us by "teaching a man to fish." By teaching self-reliance and sustainability with the unique SFG method, we are changing the world. So—thank you!

To train our instructors, the Square Foot Gardening™ Foundation offers classes to anyone who is interested. *Even if you have never gardened before*, our 6-part course teaches you how to grow fresh produce, no matter where you live. Our online course includes charts, handouts, and tutorial videos that you can study at your pace, and on your timeline.

There are two levels to consider: Level 1 and Level 2. Level 1 is the Introductory SFG course to learn the basics of Square Foot Gardening. The estimated course length is two weeks. Anyone who wants to become a Certified Instructor *must* complete Level 1 first—but we have a special offer for you (see below) to make this simpler.

Level 2 is our Intermediate Certified Instructor course. Level 2 focuses on the tips, tools, and information a SFG'er needs in order to be able to teach others. The course topics include:

- What it means to be a Certified Instructor
- How to create a fantastic SFG presentation
- How to be a great presenter
- How to handle the inevitable snafus during a live presentation (Humor helps!)
- How to follow up after a presentation
- How to market your events and presentations to reach the greatest number of interested people

Also included with the Level 2 course are numerous handouts, templates, tutorials, and how-tos.

Once you have completed the requirements for Instructor Certification, you will receive promotional and marketing materials, handouts, templates, tutorials, and PowerPoint presentations that you may personalize to your needs.

You'll also have access to our ongoing learning opportunities. **Enroll today!** Our new Level 2 CI course begins early Fall 2020.

By itself, the Level 1 course is \$29.95. But you can "bundle" these two courses for only \$119.00—and in the process, become a Certified Instructor for Square Foot Gardening. Don't wait— put your knowledge to work helping spread the word about Square Foot Gardening. The world is waiting for you.





## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR HONORARY CERTIFIED INSTRUCTORS, RICK & MARCIA!

On World Square Foot Gardening Day, we were so pleased to award Rick Bickling and Marcia Tate "Honorary Certified Instructors!" Rick has 10 years of Square Foot Gardening under his belt and produces amazing videos about our Method (see them [here](#) on our YouTube Channel), and Marcia has worked tirelessly to teach the school children in her community about Square Foot Gardening.

We're so appreciative of the passion and joy that both Rick and Marcia bring to their work, and we look forward to many more years of knowing these incredible people. Three cheers for Rick and Marcia!


*Always plant a few flowers in your SFG to attract pollinators!*



**SQUARE FOOT GARDENING CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR**

**Honorary Certified Instructor**  
**Rick Bickling**

We celebrate Rick Bickling, the "How Do Gardener," a longtime Square Foot Gardener and the producer of our popular new SFG Essentials videos on YouTube! Congratulations, Rick, and thank you for all you do!



**SQUARE FOOT GARDENING CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR**

**Honorary Certified Instructor**  
**Marcia Tate**

We celebrate Marcia Tate for her work with school children and the community around her North Carolina home. Congratulations, Marcia!





## IN THE KITCHEN WITH SFG

Dear Readers and Facebook Friends,  
We would love to hear from you! What are your favorite summer harvest recipes? Please share those with us either by [emailing](#) or sharing on [Facebook](#). There's no limit to the number of recipes you can share with your fellow SFG'ers – and you might be featured in an upcoming newsletter issue!

### Tomato Pico de Gallo

Did you know that in 1893, a lawsuit arguing whether a tomato is a fruit or a vegetable went all the way to the Supreme Court? It was to decide whether imported tomatoes would be taxed as a vegetable vs. the (less-taxed) fruit. No matter whether you think it's a fruit or a vegetable, the popularity of the tomato is undisputed. Let's try this recipe for a fresh tomato salsa, pico de gallo, using some of the produce from your SFG. If you can make it a day ahead of time, the flavors will have time to blend.

#### Ingredients

- 1/3 cup finely chopped green bell pepper
- 1/3 cup finely chopped red bell pepper
- 1/3 cup finely chopped English cucumber
- 2 1/2 cups (about 3 or 4) seeded chopped tomatoes
- 1/3 cup finely chopped sweet onion
- 4 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1 or 2 fresh jalapeños (to your taste); seeded and finely chopped
- A handful of cilantro, chopped
- Juice of 1 lime
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Note: to seed a tomato, cut it in half, and using a small spoon, scoop out the seeds and pulp.

There's only 1 step: combine all the fresh ingredients in a large bowl, and season with the salt and pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate about 30 minutes or overnight. Leftovers—if you have any—will keep about 2–3 days in the refrigerator.



### Squash Pickles

When you're swimming in squash (which may be about now), finding ways to preserve them will be so helpful. This easy refrigerator pickle recipe uses both yellow squash and zucchini for color, but you can use just one. This just might be your year to make pickles.

#### Ingredients

- 9 sprigs fresh cilantro
- 3 large cloves garlic, halved
- 3 teaspoons mixed peppercorns
- 1½ teaspoons coriander seed
- 3 teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes
- 1½ pounds yellow squash and zucchini, thinly sliced into rounds
- 1/3 cup thinly sliced sweet onion
- 1¼ cups apple cider vinegar
- 1¼ cups water
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2½ tablespoons honey

In a large glass jar or bowl that holds about 2 quarts, combine the cilantro, garlic, peppercorns, coriander seed, red pepper flakes, squash and/or zucchini, and onion. Set aside.

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the vinegar, water, salt, and honey to a boil. Pour the hot mixture over the contents in the jar or bowl, pressing down on the vegetables so that brine covers them completely. Let it cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate at least 4 hours or up to 2 days for maximum flavor. These pickles will keep in the refrigerator for 2 months. (But you'll eat them long before that!)

# Baked Parmesan Eggplant Rounds



Surely, no vegetable is more gorgeous than a ripe eggplant. Its glossy skin is like a jewel in your SFG garden. Many people are familiar with the traditional Eggplant Parmesan, but what if you want something “lighter”? This recipe should do the trick.

## Ingredients

- 1 large eggplant, washed, ends trimmed, skin peeled if you don't like the taste of it, sliced into ½-inch rounds
- Salt
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 cup breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil or parchment paper.

Place the eggplant rounds in a colander set over a baking sheet, sprinkle with salt, and let them sit for at least 30 minutes.

Mix the breadcrumbs, Parmesan cheese, and spices in a small bowl. Dip each eggplant round into the melted butter first, and then in the breading mixture.

Bake for 15 minutes, then flip each eggplant round and bake for 7 more minutes. The eggplant should be golden brown, and the breading should be crispy.

## KIDS' CORNER

# Welcome to the SFG Kids Corner!



*Our friend Julie sent us these fun veggie faces she created with long beans grown from seeds given to her by family members.*



*Square Foot Gardening is a family affair, as you can see from Angela and Brittany's photos!*



*Dress up your Square Foot Garden with a recycled pallet mural or by painting the sides of your beds like Nola did!*

Square Foot Gardening is fun for the whole family, and we hope these photos give you some inspiration for your own gardens!

## Win a “Back to Cool” Kit

We want to see your veggies, but not in any ol' way. Use your harvest to create some cute veggie faces and send your pics to [info@squarefootgardening.org](mailto:info@squarefootgardening.org) by August 26th. We'll randomly choose 10 winners to receive the SFG supplies pictured.



*Win a “back to cool” kit with a trowel, tape measure, pencil, and SFG official Square Foot Gardening magnifying bookmark/ruler.*

## Paint Your Own Plant Labels

Do your kids love to pick up rocks? Turn their pile into a craft project! Just grab some acrylic paints, paint brushes, and creativity and paint your own plant labels. Or, paint positive gardening pictures and messages and leave rocks around the neighborhood for neighbors to find as a pick-me-up. Keep the rocks looking spiffy with a quick coat of outdoor ModPodge.



*Rock painting tip: use light colors on dark backgrounds or dark colors on light backgrounds.*



## FEATURED CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR

### Donna K. Becker

There's a clear pattern that runs through Donna Becker's life — this is not a woman who is afraid to try new things, and she approaches life with a sense of possibility and humor. The Bend, Oregon resident has enjoyed many shifts in her career over the years — from picking strawberries as a teenager to working as a library assistant, card counter (yes, you read that right!), receptionist, stockbroker, legal secretary, and a children's social worker, she's honed her skills and never backs down from learning and growing.

Clearly a woman of many interests, Donna added gardening to her passions early on. "The Beckers have a gardening gene," she says, "I used to help my father with the watering, and I had a couple areas where I grew things like gladiolus bulbs." Donna also recalls that when they were little, she and her brother would grab the salt shaker, dash outdoors to pick a few tomatoes, and then hide in the nearby corn field to gobble them up, away from their mother's watchful eye.

For about 20 years in her earlier adult life, Donna lived in various places but always in apartments, yearning to garden again. So when, in 1992, her chiropractor recommended the Square Foot Gardening book to her, she dove right in. "Square Foot Gardening gave me the motivation, the method, and the opportunity to garden like I'd always dreamed of," she explains. "Although, when I started, I didn't have a grid — I just used my fingers to draw out the squares!"

She used the method for a number of years before meeting Mel Bartholomew at a talk he was giving in Orange County (CA). She showed him pictures of her garden — with all of its clay soil — and she remembers Mel making a joke about how she had her work cut out for her. This meeting created instant rapport with Mel and, ultimately, led to her decision to become a Certified Instructor in 2008.



*Sterling the kitty loves Square Foot Gardening, too.*



*Donna is always experimenting with different materials to use in her SFG beds.*

## Are you interested in becoming a Certified Instructor?

**Click here for more information**

Now retired and gardening in Oregon, Donna says her USDA Hardiness Zone 6B has its challenges and is, in part, what leads her to take some risks with her gardening. "Our growing season is from Memorial Day to Labor Day — so it's really just a 70- to 90-day season," she explains. "And our cool summer nights make it necessary to add about 14 days to the maturity date on the seed packet."

Donna clearly recalls that when she started her Square Foot Garden after moving to Oregon, there was a freeze warning (believe it or not) in August, so she ran out to the home improvement store to purchase materials to cover her beds and protect her plants. Always experimenting, she decided the next year to expand her SFG from one bed to five. "Big mistake!" she laughs. "I always tell people as a result of that debacle to start out and increase your SFG slowly so you're not suddenly overwhelmed with maintenance you're not used to."

These days, Donna has vinyl beds that are about one foot deep in her full sun front yard, where all of her Square Foot Gardens are. "One of the requirements I had when house-hunting in this area," she says, "was that the house could not be in a neighborhood with an HOA — in hindsight, that was a good plan, because otherwise I wouldn't

have been able to place my SFGs in my front yard!"

She grows a variety of fruits and veggies in these front-and-center beds, including beans, peas, corn, tomatillos, broccoli, garlic, potatoes, spinach, and a wide range of berries. Because her berries are acid-loving, she does tweak her Mel's Mix to include a little extra peat moss and a bit less compost. "I really like the extra coarse vermiculite, too," she says, "And because we only get about 12" of annual precipitation here — including snowfall — the little extra peat moss helps retain that moisture in my soil."

While she does have a drip system in her Square Foot beds, Donna also likes to go outside and hand-water with the hose. "Gardening just makes me forget about things," she explains, "and watering is so calming and relaxing to me that I really don't mind it at all."

Donna always recommends buying the **All New Square Foot Gardening, 3rd Edition** book to anyone who is thinking about learning this method. "There's just so much in that book to learn," says Donna, "and you can refer to it again and again. From there, you can always check the SFG website and **blog** to learn more. Grow what you like to eat, study your sunlight patterns, and get really familiar with your particular growing zone — those are the really important considerations."

As for Donna, she's considering changing her SFG beds around this fall. "I might arrange 6 beds in a star pattern," she laughs. Always experimenting, and having fun in the process!

## HARVESTING TIPS

### Harvesting Your Square Foot Garden: Tips

#### When Is the Best Time to Harvest?

Most vegetables should be harvested very early in the morning because they'll stay crisp longer and store better. When they're harvested later in the day, they can become limp and wilt quickly because their moisture has evaporated in midday heat. This is particularly true for leafy vegetables such as lettuces, herbs, peas, cabbages, broccoli, radishes, and chard. If you're not a morning person (no judgment here), then harvest as late in the evening as possible after the sun has gone down.

But—some vegetables aren't as sensitive to temperatures as others. Peppers, tomatoes, and zucchini can "take the heat" and won't wilt as much. So as long as they don't sit in the sun after they're harvested, you can pick these later in the day.

#### How to Harvest: Useful Tools

Pick, pull, twist, or cut—there are many ways you can harvest produce. But have you thought about how to harvest so that you do not damage the plant itself? This is important because many plants will continue to bear until nature (cold weather) forces it to stop—as long as the plant is viable. So let's take a look at useful tools for harvest that will protect plants too.

**Scissors:** Use scissors for cutting leaves from leafy vegetables and herbs, like lettuces. As long as the cut itself is clean, leafy vegetables will continue growing and producing.

**Garden fork:** If you're growing large root vegetables such as potatoes and sweet potatoes, a garden fork is a must-have to dig them up without damage.

**Trowel:** A trowel isn't just useful for planting; you can harvest smaller root vegetables, think carrots and beets, by digging them up with your trowel.







**Pruners:** As tempting as it may be to “do the twist,” it’s better to use pruners to harvest fruiting crops such as eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes. When you twist, you’ll inevitably pull the entire plant, too, sometimes harming it. (You can also use a garden knife.)

**Garden knife:** There are specific garden knives, but really, any sharp knife will do. (But you’ll probably want to dedicate a knife to use in the garden.) Then you can cut off the stems of produce such as melons, peppers, and tomatoes instead of twisting or pulling them using force. Remember: the knife must be sharp!

## Keep Tools Clean

In this era of COVID-19, we’ve all become far too familiar with viruses and how easily they can be transmitted. What you may not realize is that there are viruses (and bacteria, fungi, and other pathogens) that live in your garden too. We can easily spread these as we move about in the garden to harvest. Keep your tools clean (washed) but also sterilize any tools or your hands by wiping them with a cloth or paper towel moistened with isopropyl alcohol. Wipe down before you begin harvesting and after each plant if you’re harvesting more than one.

## How to Know When Produce Is Ready for Harvest

Although experience helps, it’s not always easy to know when to harvest. Herbs and leafy vegetables can be harvested anytime they have leaves (though you will, of

course, want to make sure you leave enough of the plant to regrow). But what about carrots? Or potatoes? First, check the seed packet for “Weeks to Maturity” information. (Even if you didn’t keep the seed packet, if you know the name of the cultivar, you’ll be able to look this up online). That will give you a timeline/range to harvest. Then, use this handy chart to give you some visual clues.



Vegetable	When to Harvest
Cabbage	when the head looks large enough and the leaves are tight against it.
Carrot	when the shoulders are just above the soil line
Celery	anytime the stalks are 6 inches or longer
Collard greens	when the plant is about 1 foot high
Corn	the silk tassels will begin to brown and the cobs will feel full and heavy when you touch them
Cucumber	anytime a cucumber is about 5 to 8 inches long; don’t wait too late or they’ll become woody
Eggplant	when the fruit skin becomes glossy
Garlic	when the lower leaves begin to dry
Leek	when the leek is about 1 inch in diameter (you’ll have to dig one up to test)
Okra	when pods are about 2 to 3 inches long
Onion	the leaves will yellow and flop over
Pepper (bell)	the size will be the size you want. And remember, green bell peppers turn red naturally as they mature.
Pepper (jalapeño)	when the fruit is about 2 to 3 inches long
Peppers (hot)	in general, the smaller they are, the less heat they have
Potato	for “new” potatoes, harvest once flowering stops. Otherwise, harvest in fall when the plant begins to wither.
Scallions	when the leaves have about 6 inches of top growth
Squash (winter)	when the vines begin to dry and the rinds are toughened up
Squash (summer)	when they’re about 6 to 8 inches long
Sweet potato	just before your first frost
Tomato	when the fruits are colored according to their variety but before their skin splits
Turnip	when the fruits are 2 to 3 inches in diameter
Watermelon	when they sound “hollow” when you thump the rind with your fingers; the vines will also be starting to dry
Zucchini	when they’re about 6 to 8 inches long



## STARTING SEEDS FOR FALL PLANTING

### Yup! It's Time to Plan a Fall Garden

For many of us, it's hot, hot, *hot!* It hardly seems the time to think about—much less start—a fall garden. But summer is the time to plan your fall garden. Fall will be here sooner than you realize (the first day of fall is September 22—we'll let you do the math). Take a look at your SFG boxes and sketch a diagram/schematic of the boxes to note which squares will need to be replanted once the summer harvest is complete.

And guess what? You may find that you like fall gardening even better than your summer SFG box because of the cooler weather to come.

Depending on your hardiness zone, you may be able to grow quite a lot. If you're not sure of your zone, check out this [link](#). This will also tell you the average date of your first frosts—important information that will be used to starting your fall garden seeds. Or—and this is nifty—you can also look up the date of your area's first frosts (on average) by zip code. This information is based on varying temperature ranges by date. A frost date is one thing, but what is really the determining factor is the first “hard” (or, killing) freeze. Pick the date that's closest to that.

Try these links:

<https://davesgarden.com/guides/freeze-frost-dates>

<https://www.almanac.com/gardening/frostdates>

Then, use your zone information to help you decide what you'll be able to grow in a fall garden. Here are some ideas:

#### CROPS YOU CAN PLANT IN FALL

##### 5 TO 10 WEEKS BEFORE FROST

Broccoli  
Cabbage  
Cauliflower  
Beets  
Carrots  
Lettuce  
Spinach

##### 0 TO 5 WEEKS BEFORE FROST

Lettuce  
Radishes

### Order Seeds & Supplies

Once you've thought about what you want to plant, order your seeds from your favorite sources. Your local garden centers are also probably stocking fall-planting seeds too. Though some centers *do* sell transplants for fall



planting, many do not. And there won't be a huge selection even if they do. The best way to ensure you'll have them is to start your own seeds. (If you start to run *really* late, you can always try direct planting, but then harvest becomes an iffier prospect. You'll want to plant them a little more shallowly than the usual so they get enough summer heat to germinate.)


Don't forget any supplies—do you need to replenish your Mel's Mix™? Order your composts, vermiculite, and peat moss, too, if you do.

### Do the Math

In general, most seeds need to be started four to six weeks before planting outside in your SFG box so they're of sufficient size to withstand outdoor living. Begin by finding the days to maturity on the seed packet (or, just check online if you don't have your seeds in-hand yet). If that vegetable needs 100 days to maturity, then count back 100 days from your average first frost date. That's when you should start seeds indoors.



## LET'S STAY IN TOUCH

 “Like” Square Foot Gardening on Facebook

 Follow on Instagram @SquareFootGardening

 Subscribe on YouTube