



# ONE SQUARE FOOT AT A TIME

Newsletter of the Square Foot Gardening Foundation

Fall 2020

## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION



### Greetings, Square Foot Gardeners!

Well, here we are, about six months into the pandemic—how are

you holding up? We think it's safe to say that no one, if asked a year ago where they'd be at this point in 2020, ever thought of this. But to put things into some perspective, six months is the lifespan of many vegetables. A beginning, a middle, and an end—but not the end. We will persevere, harvest the remainder of our summer crops, plant a fall garden (if you live where that's possible!), and we will keep on.

We certainly hope that you and your loved ones will continue to be blessed with good health. So, until we meet again, stay well and please keep gardening the Square Foot way. The world needs you.

Happy Gardening  
Laura and Steve Bartholomew  
The Square Foot Gardening Foundation

## GET GROWING THIS SPRING WITH ALL NEW SQUARE FOOT GARDENING, 3RD EDITION

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



**CLICK HERE  
TO ORDER!**

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

## CI COURSE

### Full Certified Instructor Course Now Available

Don't let any time spent indoors go to waste. This is a great time to invest in a little "armchair gardening" and become an SFG Certified Instructor (CI) at the same time!

Our CI program is in full swing, and we're offering all courses at some great rates. You can bundle Levels 1 and 2 for just \$119 — ideal for holiday gifting as well as a little armchair winter gardening for yourself. Level 1 is the introductory course to Square Foot Gardening consisting of 6 "modules." Level 2 teaches you the ropes of becoming a Certified Instructor, capable of spreading the benefits and joy of Square Foot Gardening to the world.

Think how much use you can get out of these courses for yourself and how much good you can do to help change lives for the better. Don't wait—sign up today. **Learn more here.**



## FEATURED CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR



### Debra Stuart

Ask CI Debra Stuart what one of her earliest memories of gardening is, and she'll tell you the story of when she was a little girl wearing a beautifully smocked dress with pristine white socks. She went out to the garden and, when she returned later on in a less-than-clean outfit, her mother fussed at her. "I'm not dirty, Mommy," she responded. "It's the earth!"

While her parents were not avid gardeners, her grandmother and aunts were. They lived fairly close to their New Jersey town, and Deb spent many weekends getting "not dirty" with her extended family—and her love of gardening has only grown from there.

Deb has lived in her Rahway, NJ, community her entire life, and while she would love to have a larger property for gardening, she's found ways around that limitation. "My own property is just 50 x 100 feet," she explains, "but I'm involved in several community gardens that allow me to grow almost whatever I want."

One of those is the JFK Community Garden, which she also manages. This garden has been an interesting experience for Deb—it's a large garden with 40 raised beds, 6 of which are reserved for the Helping Hands Learning Academy for children's gardening. While Deb's raised beds in this garden use the Square Foot Gardening Method, most community members' beds are traditional row gardening.

"I try to lead by example," she says. "When they see my beds doing really well with lots [to] harvest, many times they'll come and ask me about it, so it's an opportunity to teach them. For those who are committed to traditional row gardening, I just let the results speak for themselves!"



*Raised beds to teach the children of the Helping Hands Learning Academy how to SFG.*

And those six children's beds? Those are SFG beds as well! "It's just another opportunity to not only teach those children about SFG," Deb says, "but [it's] a great way for the parents to see the growing method themselves!"

The other community garden that Deb helps facilitate is the Rahway YMCA garden—which is a good deal smaller than the JFK garden with just eight 3x3 beds, but it's strictly an SFG bed-grid-Mel's Mix™ system (no row gardening allowed!). CI Bob Markey oversees this garden, and that's how Deb became a CI herself in 2018. "I needed to become certified to work with this garden," she explains, "and guess what's happened now? I'm now a mentor for someone else going through the SFG Certified Instructor program!"

Deb talks about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the YMCA garden but remains hopeful and energetic about the program. While the curriculum was changed to accommodate social distancing during the summer programming, Deb—as well as the camp directors and counselors—feels grateful to be a part of a program that not only decreases stress but also supports the health and wellness of children and adults alike.

It's easy to see how Deb's enthusiasm for gardening in general and SFG in particular spills out to those around her. She's an avid seed-sower, loves to experiment, and tries to grow something different each year. That being said she's definitely got her favorites and go-tos: "I grow lots of onions, garlic, and peppers," she says, "with heirloom tomatoes being my #1 favorite veggie."





*An experiment in higher quality blended compost resulted in vibrant growth at the Rahway YMCA Square Foot Garden.*

In fact, she started over 200 tomato plants from seed this year, using an 8' x 8' greenhouse and gro-lights in her basement. Seed-starting begins in February for this Zone 6a gardener since she has a relatively short growing season. "Our last average frost is around May 11," Deb laughs, "so we have to be ready to go!"

At the end of each season, Deb saves her seeds ("But only from the heirloom plants!" she stresses) and jars much of her harvest, a skill she learned from her mother.

"I just love gardening," she explains, "it takes you away from your worries, and I love knowing that the food I'm eating is clean, because I've grown it myself."

Certified Instructor, avid gardener, passionate teacher, seed-starter and saver, and now SFG mentor: Deb Stuart has spent her life getting "not dirty" with amazing results. We'd love to jar some of her energy and passion, and we are beyond grateful to have her as a member of our SFG family!

**Are you interested in becoming a Certified Instructor?**

**Please visit**  
**[www.squarefootgardening.org](http://www.squarefootgardening.org)**  
**to learn more!**

## CI INSPIRATION

### This Is How Our Garden Grows

The definition of the word "collaborative" means "working together," and that's exactly what Gina Chilton did when she led a group of residents and volunteers to establish five Square Foot Gardens to benefit Globeville Village, a tiny home community near Denver, Colorado.

Chilton, a 10-year CI, had long followed the work of the Colorado Village Collaborative, which exists to, "...bridge the gap between the streets and stable housing by creating and operating transformation housing communities in partnership with people experiencing homelessness. We embody radical solutions. ...that are affordable, sustainable, and community oriented."



*This is an example where there can't be too many hands in the mix—mixing the Mel's Mix™ at Globeville Village.*

Square Foot Gardens would be great idea for residents to learn a new skill, re-establish a routine shaken loose by COVID-19 restrictions, and nurture the spirit among residents. Plus, growing your own food is extraordinarily empowering—something everyone needs.

To cover the expenses of this vital project, Chilton applied for — and received! — a grant from the SFG Foundation. This funding provided elevated SFG beds made by SFG Certified Instructor Brian Fuder, as well as Mel's Mix™, small hand trowels, watering buckets, and seeds and plants to get this project off the ground.

CI Gina Chilton and Clifton Parris delivered all of the materials and supplies, and

since the gardens were being started in late August, the seeds included late-season crops such as spinach, turnips, carrots, and beets. Once the beds were set up, Chilton answered questions, explained how to plant seeds and got the group started by demonstrating how to combine components for the Mel's Mix™—which they did. Together.



*It didn't take long to move the raised Square Foot Gardens into position.*

Wow! That sounds so much like Square Foot Gardening itself—no wonder this was a match that was meant to be. When Chilton saw photos of the tiny homes, she knew that Square Foot Gardens would fit perfectly next to each entrance. So, she got to work by contacting an organizer for Colorado Village Collaborative, Dorothy Leyba. Although food pantries ensure that food security is not an issue for Globeville Village, Leyba knows that gardening also feeds the soul as well as the body. Once CI Gina Chilton contacted her, Leyba realized the

**Is your non-profit interested in creating an SFG project? You may qualify for grant money from the SFG Foundation!**

**Email us at [info@squarefootgardening.org](mailto:info@squarefootgardening.org) to inquire!**



If, like most people, you've never met a potato you didn't like, then you're in luck! One of the featured vegetables for this issue is... *the potato!*

## Mustard Potato Gratin

If you think you don't like the taste of mustard, this may change your mind. There's just enough to flavor this delicious, cheesy gratin dish wonderfully, but there's not too much. It's absolutely perfect with holiday ham and turkey. Mmmmm... *seconds*, please!

### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter at room temperature
- 6 Yukon Gold potatoes (or any thin-skinned red or white potato will work); about 2 pounds; peeled and sliced ¼-inch thick
- 1 garlic clove
- 3 cups milk (whole milk, preferably)
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 4 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 4 ounces Gruyere cheese, grated and divided
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F and butter a shallow baking dish. (Note: the size of the baking dish will affect the cooking time; if you have it, use one that's about 12" x 7")

Next, combine the potatoes, garlic, and milk in a medium-sized saucepan. Over high heat, bring the mixture to a boil; reduce the heat and simmer until the potatoes are just tender, about 8 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, and drain the potatoes, reserving 1 cup of the hot milk.

Combine the reserved milk with the cream. Whisk in the Dijon mustard. Season with the salt and pepper. Next, begin layering the potatoes in the baking dish, sprinkling the flour and 2 ounces of the cheese between each layer. Keep half of the cheese (2 ounces) to top the gratin. Once you've layered all the potatoes, pour the milk/cream mixture over the potatoes. The liquid should just cover the potatoes.

Sprinkle the remaining 2 ounces of the cheese on top. Bake until the potatoes are completely soft when checked with a fork. The cream mixture will have thickened and will be bubbly but not boiling; cooking time is about 25 minutes. Turn on the broiler and adjust the rack (removing the gratin if needed to adjust the rack). Broil for about 3 minutes until golden brown. Enjoy!



## Acorn Squash Stuffed with Fruit and Nuts

Squash, dried fruit, nuts, apples, sugar, butter—what's not to love? This dish makes a beautiful presentation, and each half is generously sized to serve to one person as a wonderful side dish for your holiday table. Or it could be a vegetarian main dish as well.

### Ingredients

- 2 acorn squash, halved (total 4 halves), pulp and seeds scooped out
- 2 apples (Granny Smith would be good), cored and chopped into ¼-inch pieces
- ½ cup sweetened dried cranberries (or you can substitute raisins if you prefer)
- ½ cup lightly toasted chopped nuts (walnuts are good)
- 1 ½ teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar, optional
- 2 tablespoons butter
- Boiling water (or boiling apple juice if you want a little more sweetness)

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. In a large ovenproof baking dish, place the squash cut-side down. Pour in enough boiling water (or apple juice) to a depth of ¼ inch. Bake for 30 minutes.

In a large bowl, combine the apples, dried fruit, nuts, cinnamon, brown sugar if using, and butter to make the "stuffing." After the squash halves have baked for 30 minutes, remove from the oven and turn the halves over. Stuff the center of each squash with equal amounts of the apple mixture. Bake 30 to 35 more minutes, or until the squash and apples are tender when tested with a fork or knife. Enjoy!



## FEATURED SQUARE FOOT GARDENS

### I Get By with a Little Help from My Friends

Everyone can use a little inspiration sometimes, so let's get motivated by checking out what these amazing SFGers and a Certified Instructor have done with their gardens! Maybe you'll find some takeaways for yourself.

First up is **Brian Fuder**. Brian is also a Certified Instructor for SFG, and he enjoys growing cool-season vegetables in his elevated beds, which are protected by a PVC arch for convenient protection in the event of a cold snap. What beautiful and healthy plants Brian has!



Next is **Derek A.**, who is a huge fan of herbs and has filled this gorgeous Square Foot Garden with them (though there's a sunflower too!). Hey Derek, can we come for dinner?



**Bob B.** has gotten **very** creative with his Square Foot Garden by setting up an irrigation system and a trellis. This is impressive!



## INTERVIEW FROM *CENTRAL TEXAS GARDENER*: MEET STEVE BARTHOLOMEW



*Central Texas Gardener* is one of the longest-running PBS programs on the Austin, Texas-based KLRU-TV, having its premier in the late 1980s. Originally a monthly show for Saturday afternoons, the popularity of the program meant it went weekly in 1999, and it has been going strong since. Host John Hart Asher of *Central Texas Gardener* interviewed Mel Bartholomew's son, Steve, in February to discuss SFG, its history, and why it's so productive for so many gardeners.

Steve shares what initially motivated Mel to create the SFG Method, how vital Square Foot Gardening is to combat world hunger today, and why SFG is ideal for organic gardeners. SFG, still going strong since the early 1980s!!

And take note: our own Rick Bickling, who lives in Austin, TX, is also featured on this program with the transformation of his kids-basketball court-turned SFG. Way to go, Rick!



Some of you may know that our founder, Mel Bartholomew, was the host of his own long-running PBS and Discovery Channel programs, a series of seventy-four 30-minute programs.

You can watch the full episode of this very informative program [here](#).

[Click here for an overview of the episode.](#)

## KID'S CORNER

### One Potato, Two Potato, Three Potato...for Stamping!

It's a French fry, it's a craft! Yes, they are delicious (see this issue's recipe for Mustard Potato Gratin—yum!), but potatoes also make great stamps for art projects for kids of all ages. Here's how to make a potato stamp for fall craft art projects, which is a great way to combine art + science to teach kids new ideas. (Which is kind of like slipping a few vegetables into their food.) Maybe you can also take a walk in the woods to ID leaves and acorns as part of this activity, or how different colors can combine to make a new color—you get the idea.

One of the best parts of this fun craft is that it's not age-related, meaning your three-year-old and your pre-teen (and you) will be equally interested. You will need: potatoes of different sizes, paint and/or ink stamps of different colors, paper plates to serve as a palette, brushes (optional), art paper (this



does not have to be fancy), small cookie cutters, a sharp knife, paper towels, and some newspaper or other covering to keep the mess to a minimum. **Mini cookie cutters like these are great.**

**Step 1** – Begin by selecting some nice, firm potatoes of different lengths and sizes to make different “leaves.” An Idaho and some Yukon Gold would be nice, and maybe fingerlings. It’s good to have a variety of sizes. But, really, just use what you have. Cut each potato in half—it can be lengthwise or crosswise. It can be cut in “sections” if you’re cutting in half crosswise. You only need enough to make the stamp.

**Step 2** – Now, create the designs. Note: *Unless your child is a bit older and can handle a knife safely, carving the designs in the potatoes is something you should do.* Press a mini cookie cutter into the cut side of the potato; maybe it’s an acorn design. Press firmly and pretty deeply; you want clean, sharp edges, and you’ll use the edges of the cookie cutter as a guide. Next, with the mini cookie cutter still in place, position your knife about ¼ inch down and trim away the potato surrounding the design so that it’s in “relief.” *Relief* refers to the raised, three-dimensional surface above the rest of the potato. Pull the mini cookie cutter off the potato.

**Step 3** – If you’re using inks, squeeze some of each color onto a paper plate, which will serve as your artists’ palette. If you’re using ink pads, just pop them open. Either brush or dip the cut side of the potato design into an ink color and begin! Your child’s creativity will be the driving force, but you can draw an outline of a tree trunk and branches to help get them started if you like. You can wipe off the potato when you switch colors, or just let it flow. Remember to press the inked potato pretty firmly onto the paper and lift straight up to

avoid smudging. But—*wabi sabi*—if it smudges, that’s okay too.

Options – you can carve designs into the cut side of the potato pieces yourself if you have that talent. Nothing has to be fancy; it can be an outline of the veins of a leaf (midrib and lateral veins for example) to suggest the idea of the leaf shape. Cutting your own designs allows you to create any shape too—an apple, a pear, a cat face.

And remember, you can always learn more about getting your kids involved with SFG with **Square Foot Gardening with Kids**.



### 3 QUICK COMPOSTING TIPS

## Compost Does Happen but You Can Help: 3 Quick Tips

Compost is one of the three ingredients to the all-important Mel’s Mix™. Although you can certainly buy compost (remember—from different sources) to use in your mix, compost is something that you can “grow” on your own for *free*.

Here are 3 quick and easy tips to keep in mind when you compost. Also, see the chart on the next page for other ideas:

- Question: what’s the best time of year to compost? Answer: anytime! Add to and build your compost pile year-round. Fall is a great time to add fallen leaves and other garden leftovers (we can’t say the word “debris”). There’s nothing to be wasted in the garden. By the time spring planting time arrives, you’ll have plenty of black gold.
- Shred or chop leaves and other plant-based materials into smaller pieces before adding to the compost bin or pile; you can do this by mowing over them. Then work them in by turning the pile over gently; in fact, you can turn the pile daily if possible. Both of these will speed up the process quite a bit.

- Keep the compost moist—but not wet. This is a little like the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears because you want it to be just right. Fall rains will help keep it moistened, but you may need to water it too (until it’s time to put up the hose in deep winter climates).

Remember to put your SFGs to bed, too, by tidying up, pulling up any plants that should be composted, and adding a little finished compost to each square. Smooth it all over and you’ll be ready for planting come next spring.

#### Bonus Tip

Some people refuse to compost because they think it’s degrading. Bada-bing!

## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPOSTING

	Do	Don't
<b>Ingredients</b>	Add plant material such as top growth, prunings, roots, and kitchen scraps	Do not add any animal parts such as bones or synthetic materials
<b>Bin Size</b>	About 3 x 3 feet	Smaller than 3 x 3 feet or larger than 4 x 4 feet
<b>Moisture</b>	Moist	Too dry or too wet
<b>Mixing</b>	As often as you can	Never

## DETAILED LIST OF INGREDIENTS

Yes	Caution – Limited Amounts	No
<i>Each item should be under 20 percent of total by volume</i>	<i>Each item should be under 10 percent of total by volume</i>	<i>These items should not be added to a compost bin</i>
Hay (including salt hay) Leaves Grass clippings (dried) Old sod Reject or spoiled garden produce Vegetable and fruit peels Newspaper (shredded) Eggshells (crushed) Stable or poultry manure Tea bags	Corn cobs Shredded twigs Shredded bark Pine needles Hedge trimmings Wood shavings Sawdust Coffee grounds Peanut shells	Diseased or pest-laden materials Meat or bones Grease Whole eggs Cheese Seeds and fruit pits Cat or dog manure Bakery products Dairy products Kitchen scraps

## HARVEST STORAGE TIPS

At the end of the season, you've got a few options when it comes to storing the harvest from your Square Foot Garden. Aside from canning and preserving, Mel always thought the most economical and environmentally correct way to extend the season (and the rewards of it) was to properly store your harvest. Here are some tips to help you get the most out of your end of season harvest:



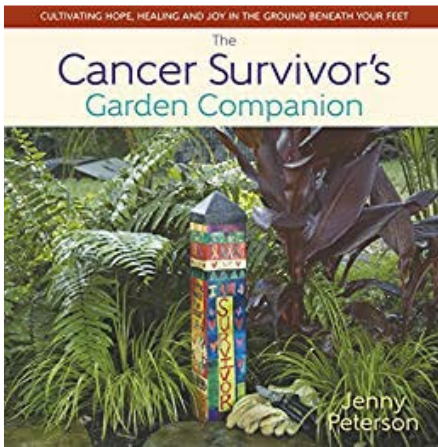
- **Learn how each veggie likes to be stored best:** It'll either be cool and dry or cold and moist. The "cool and dry" veggies are pumpkins, winter squash, and onions. The "cold and moist" veggies are all the root crops plus fruit and all of the cabbage family.
- **Handle produce as gently and as infrequently as possible:** Bruises and cuts will be the first areas to spoil! Mel recommended handling them like they were eggs.
- **Store some veggies in the garden:** Keep root crops in the garden and simply cover them up with a bale of hay, and store cabbages and other leaf crops in the garden by covering with loose straw or leaves.
- **Bury your harvest:** If you don't mind a little digging, this method works very well! Sink a metal or plastic garbage can into the ground, leaving the top few inches above ground so no water seeps in. Then add your veggies in several layers of moist sand, peat moss, or sawdust. Cover tightly and pile at least 12" of hay or leaves over the top, topping everything with a weighted-down tarp or plastic sheet.

### DON'T FEED THE ANIMALS

There is one problem with using hay bales as winter mulch—they can provide a cozy nest for ground mice and voles that love to eat crunchy root crops. So keep an eye out for these pests and any damage they may be doing. If they do infest your winter storage plot, it's best to harvest everything and store your produce in a different place.



## BOOK EXCERPT: THE CANCER SURVIVOR'S GARDEN COMPANION



Jenny Peterson on her 1-acre urban farm where she grows food and raises animals.



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and to honor that, we are pleased to feature author Jenny Peterson's book *The Cancer Survivor's Garden Companion: Cultivating Hope, Healing & Joy in the Ground Beneath Your Feet*.

Having been diagnosed with cancer twice, Jenny Peterson credits her garden for helping her overcome the challenges of mental fog, depression, physical limitations, and pain. In her book, published in 2016 by St. Lynn's Press, Peterson explores the therapeutic benefits of gardening and the vital "earth connection." She found that what pulled her out of the long, hard journey of cancer treatments was her desire to garden again.

Although the title may suggest otherwise, *The Cancer Survivor's Garden Companion* has words of wisdom for anyone facing physical or emotional pain or who wants to rekindle their connection to the healing power of nature. With empathy, beautiful photographs, and numerous how-tos, Peterson shows us how to create a backyard haven for healing. Bonus material includes well-researched and grounded advice about diet, exercise, mental focus, and spiritual renewal.

### Bonus: Anti-Anxiety Smoothie

Many nutritionists and doctors agree that healthy smoothies are good for you. They are also very soothing for sore mouths and upset stomachs with their cool, creamy textures. This recipe is one of Jenny's favorites and is super easy to pull together. It includes anti-anxiety components such as magnesium and omega-3 fatty acids too.

#### Anti-Anxiety Smoothie

- 1 cup plant-based milk
- 1 banana
- 1 cup frozen pineapple chunks  
(you can replace with berries if you have a very sore mouth)
- 1 handful organic spinach
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 scoop vanilla plant-based protein powder

Add the milk and banana to a blender; blend well. Add the pineapple, spinach, chia seeds, turmeric powder, and the protein powder. Blend on High for a few seconds until everything is mixed well. If you want a colder drink, chill in the refrigerator for an hour or so.

## SFG VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

Many people are visual learners, so it's wonderful that we have access to these two new videos on the Square Foot Gardening Foundation's [YouTube channel](#). There are several videos in total, but let's focus on these two new ones brought to us by Rick Bickling.

### Extending Your Growing Season with Cool-Weather Crops

Do you live where you can have a fall garden? Lucky you! In this video, Rick explains how to extend your growing season. Follow these simple steps in your Square Foot Garden to plant cool-weather crops, such as arugula, Brussels sprouts, turnips, peas, and carrots to keep your garden thriving during the beginning of the frost season. Includes tips for crop rotation.

[Check It Out Here](#)



### Building Materials for Your SFG

There are so many choices when it comes to building materials. Rick explains the variety of building material options for your SFG beds. You can choose between untreated lumber, oak, cedar, composite deck boards, brick (with and without mortar), logs or pre-built kits. When making your decisions, don't forget to consider price, durability, safety, ease-of-use, effectiveness, and aesthetics.

[Let's Take a Look](#)



## LET'S STAY IN TOUCH



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