



ONE SQUARE FOOT AT A TIME

Newsletter of the Square Foot Gardening Foundation

Spring 2021

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION



Greetings!

There's a saying that goes, *When life gives you lemons, make lemonade*. While we in no way are trying to minimize the seriousness of the ongoing

COVID pandemic, we also know that the rhythms of life go on. Spring follows winter and another season of growth—of opportunity—awaits each of us. As gardeners, this can mean trying a new vegetable (cucamelons, anyone?), adding a SFG bed (maybe use a top hat for those deep-rooted crops), or even teaching someone the Square Foot Gardening method. But, what if you replace the word *or* with the word *and*? Imagine the power in that. A person can only do what a person can

do, but we often sell ourselves short. People can accomplish more than they realize.

What more can you accomplish in this season of growth? We'd like to know—drop us a line and send in your photos. We're all rooting for you (yes . . . pun intended).

Happy Gardening!
Laura & Steve Bartholomew

LEARN HOW TO SFG—OR BECOME A CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR!

Clearly, you are someone who wants to learn how to grow your own food. Well, there's no time like the present to take advantage of this great *opportunity* to learn the SFG method from the source and/or to become a Certified Instructor (CI).

Our 6-part introductory course teaches you all you need to know to grow lots of produce—no gardening experience needed. You will receive terrific downloadable charts and planning worksheets, plus access to our tutorial videos. The worksheets cover helpful details such as compost recipes, planting reference charts, and bed building charts. You will earn your certificate of completion and be up and growing in no time.

Level 2 is our Certified Instructor course that trains you to *teach* the SFG method. We cover what it means to be a CI, how to *create* and *give* great SFG presentations, how to “think on your feet” if there are any presentation issues, following up, and how to market your events. And just like Level 1, Level 2 comes complete with many handouts, templates, tutorials, and how-tos—including a basic PowerPoint to adapt for your presentations.

Now you can bundle both for \$119! And remember—you must complete Level 1 in order to advance to Level 2. Don't wait—sign up today!

For more info, please visit www.squarefootgardening.com.

MEL'S MIXERS

Zoom with Fellow CIs

We're zooming and we're Zooming!

Are you a Certified Instructor? Want to meet up with your fellow CIs to exchange some ideas? Check your email to register for upcoming meet & greet events! During our virtual meet & greets, you'll be able to share (and learn new) best practices, ask questions, and meet the Bartholomews. It's sure to be fun and we promise you do not have to be a techno-wiz to participate in our Zoom calls.



FEATURED CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR

Featured CI: Robert D'Alimonte



To understand Robert D'Alimonte's passion for Square Foot Gardening, you also have to understand his passion and commitment to his Native American and First Nations heritage and culture. Robert is a member of the Beaver Clan of the Tuscarora Nation, a 10-square-mile sovereign territory landlocked by the state of New York northeast of Niagara Falls.

Robert didn't always live on the territory; in fact, neither did his mother. His grandfather, Stan Hill, actually grew up on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, Canada, then moved to Tuscarora, where he met Robert's grandmother, a member of the Beaver Clan, and finally moved to Buffalo, NY, where Robert's mother was born. It wasn't until the death of one of his sons that his grandfather took stock of his own life and began to embrace his Mohawk heritage.

At age 55, Stan became an artist and learned the skill of bone carving, inspiring many other family members to become artists as well.

Robert greatly admired his grandfather, but it wasn't until his grandfather's death in 2003 that he, himself, began to be more curious about his Native American (and First Nations) culture. He began to learn the art of woodworking while he was employed in healthcare IT, and then eventually became interested in gardening. "My grandfather was a great gardener," Robert says, "and my mother enjoyed gardening, too, but was more interested in flowers than in growing vegetables."

While at his IT job in 2010, he had a conversation with the CIO (Chief Information Officer) of his company that would change the course of his gardening. "What are you up to these days, Robert?" he was asked, to which Robert responded, "I'm learning how to garden."

"You need to read this book, then," the CIO said, later handing him a copy of *Square Foot Gardening*.



Robert makes SFG flags, featured in our CI April Giveaway.



Solar lights are installed on all SFG beds.



Robert's multiple SFG beds and container plantings are growing strong!

"I couldn't believe how simple this method made growing vegetables," Robert says, "and I got so interested in it that in my first year, I made six boxes and was amazed at how well those gardens grew!"

Then in 2013, the course of Robert's life changed when he moved to the Tuscarora Nation. He'd wanted to learn more and more about his heritage, and as this quest led him to relocate, his passions for SFGing and for his culture intersected.

"Native people have the highest rates of diabetes in the United States, higher than any other racial or ethnic group," says Robert. "We were an agricultural culture and then, when our diets changed years ago, our health followed suit." Robert realized that SFGing could be a valuable bridge to their Nation's traditional ways of growing food, thereby healing their community through their work and gardening.

"Square Foot Gardening makes growing food so easy," Robert explains, "but it also supports my culture's values of being healthy and conserving resources, so it was a very natural thing for me to become passionate about."

Robert, whose Tuscarora name is Rayekwiratkyehná:we:k ("he shapes the wood"), decided to become a SFG Certified Instructor and just recently received his certification. "When I moved to the Tuscarora Nation in 2013, I read all the SFG books and then dove into the new curriculum. I blew through Level 1 and patiently waited for the Level 2 course to come out so I could finally get certified," he laughs, "and although I knew a lot about the SFG Method, a couple of the certification quizzes really made me work for it!"

Now, Robert and his partner, Murisa (of the Tuscarora Turtle Clan), live on her clan's land and run **Tuscarora WoodWorks** while Robert uses his new SFG certification to teach others how to grow food. "I love speaking to people and teaching—whatever it takes to get people to grow food, be healthy, and conserve resources!" he says.

"My people follow the Seventh Generation Principle," Robert concludes. "When we make decisions, we consider the impact upon the seventh generation to follow us. It helps us to make sustainable choices about our resources, and Square Foot Gardening is a part of that."

We're thrilled that Robert has joined our CI family—and in the words of the Tuscarora language, we say Nyà:wę ("thank you") for everything he is doing not only for his community, but to make the world around him a better and healthier place!



Springtime Lemony Pea and Asparagus Pasta Salad

Ingredients

- 1 pound (16 ounces) uncooked pasta
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- dash black pepper
- 1 1/2 cups shelled peas
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Lemon Vinaigrette

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- zest of 1 lemon
- 1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon fresh-cracked pepper

Directions

1. Cook the pasta in salted water according to the package directions. Drain and rinse under cold water; set aside.
2. While the pasta is cooking, heat the olive oil (1 tbsp.) in a large skillet. Add the asparagus, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Cook on medium-high for 3 to 4 minutes until the asparagus is crisp-tender. Remove from the pan and set aside. Rinse the peas in strainer with cool water; set aside to drain.
3. Vinaigrette: In a small bowl, mix together the olive oil, lemon juice, red wine vinegar, lemon zest, salt and pepper. Set aside.
4. In a large serving bowl, combine the pasta, asparagus, and peas. Drizzle the lemon vinaigrette over it all; toss to mix all ingredients. Sprinkle the Parmesan cheese and parsley over the top. Gently toss again to mix. Garnish with additional Parmesan cheese and parsley if desired. Serve and enjoy!



Easy-Peasy Spring Peas with Mint

Pairing fresh peas with mint is a traditional favorite, and for good reason.

Ingredients

- 1 spring onion, sliced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups shelled English peas
- 6 mint leaves, torn
- Salt

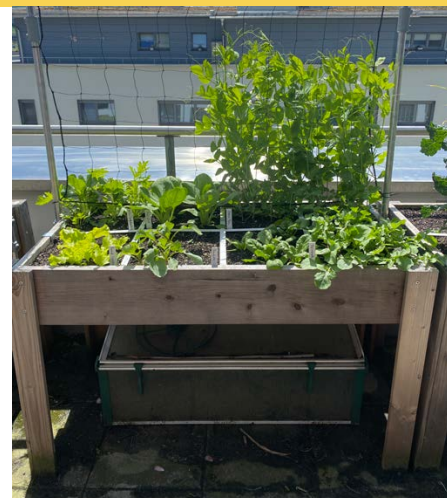
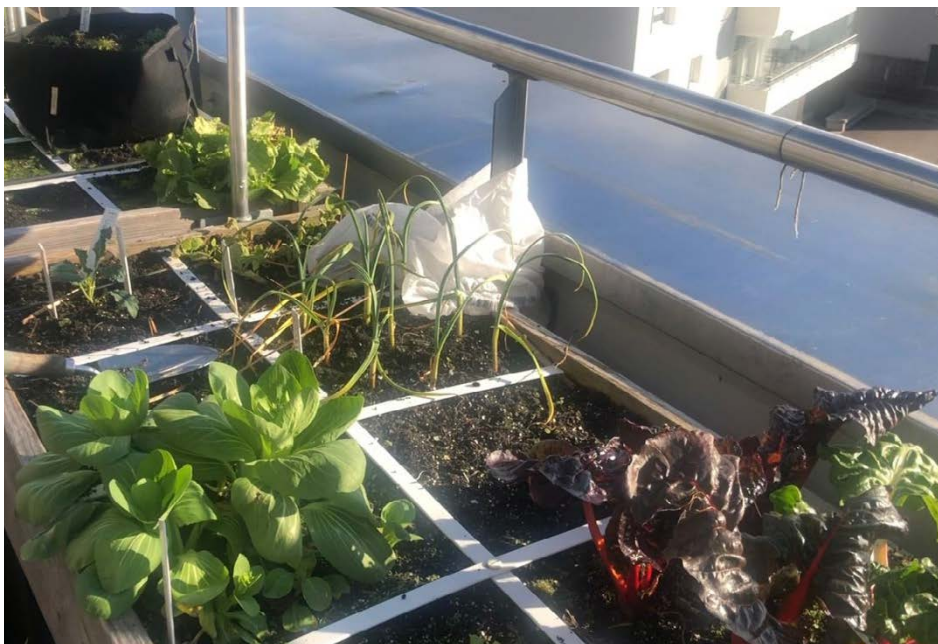
Directions

Sauté the spring onion in the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the peas, a pinch of salt, and enough water to barely cover. Cook over high heat for 2 minutes; then add the torn mint leaves. Continue cooking until the peas are tender, about a few more minutes. Taste and add more salt if needed.

FEATURED SQUARE FOOT GARDEN

Bonjour from Switzerland!!

Square Foot Gardening is universal and international as you can see in this issue's featured Square Foot Garden. Actually, Certified Instructor Emely Steegstra-Hendrix, living in Baar, Switzerland, has constructed several elevated beds that have a home on her balcony. Emely's gorgeous, productive gardens show how much food you can raise even in constricted spaces when you garden the SFG way. *Merci, Emely!*



KIDS' CORNER

If you're looking for a fun, family-friendly, and creative SFG project, here you go! This freeform project is also easy to adapt to any age range — just get them started!



Plant Markers from Paint Sticks

Materials Options

- Plant Markers to decorate:
 - Paint sticks (which should be "free for the taking" from hardware, home-improvement, and paint stores)
 - Popsicle sticks
 - Pieces of lathe-cut wood, cut to about 6-10 inches long
 - Paint, colored markers, colored pencils—any coloring or marking supplies (but nothing toxic, such as fingernail polish, near food, please)
- Plant ID tags that come with container seedlings and/or seed packages

Directions/Tips:

1. Paint, color, and decorate the sticks.
2. Color-code the sticks to the produce they will mark (green for lettuce, orange for pumpkins, etc.).
3. Label the sticks by stapling seed packets or plant tags to the sticks, or by writing the names of the plants on the sticks.
4. Trim the bottom ends of the sticks to pointed shapes to more easily push the sticks down into the Mel's Mix™.

SFG FOR PETS

Now here's a great idea! If you have a pet, you can create their very own Square Foot Garden, planted with food that they love. It's a great way to vary their diet or add in treats with delicious, fresh produce, and you can paint or decorate the SFG so everyone knows it belongs to Fido or Fluffy.

These SFGs for pets can produce food suitable for dogs, cats, guinea pigs, rabbits, chickens, and pot belly pigs, and they can be as large or as small as you like — it all depends upon the size of your animals, how many you have, and the type of food you want to grow. You don't, however, want your pets meandering in your SFG, so consider using a chickenwire cage to protect your beds if your pets are free-range.

You can build a 4 x 4 bed (or larger!) to grow lots of pet food or food that needs more space (hello, tomatoes), or keep it simple by building a 1 x 1 bed

or purchasing an affordable Square Inch Garden from **Square Foot Gardening for the Red River Valley**.

Those small beds are perfect for one little pet or to grow food that doesn't take up a lot of space — and remember to always use the plant spacing recommended for SFGs!

Food Ideas for Pets

These plants are favorites for many pets, and they're easy to grow in your SFG.

- Radishes
- Lettuces and all other greens
- Herbs
- Carrots
- Broccoli
- Pumpkin
- Sweet Potatoes
- Beets
- Turnips
- Zucchini
- Green Beans
- Spinach
- Brussels Sprouts



Tip: Always check to see what fresh foods/produce is suitable and safe for the pets that you have.

Garlic and onions, for example, are toxic to dogs, while tomato/pepper/eggplant leaves are poisonous for chickens and pigs should avoid kale, parsley, and celery tops.



WORLD SFG DAY IS COMING UP!



You won't want to miss this! Mark your calendars for Sunday, July 18, 2021—World Square Foot Gardening Day. WSFGD is our annual virtual event held on our **Facebook** page. (If you haven't "Liked" us yet, do that now so you'll be up-to-date on all the latest news.) We're really excited about this year and have lined up lots of:

- Interviews
- Videos
- Quick tips
- Inspirational photos
- And more!

To sustain the excitement, we'll be posting every hour for 24 hours on the Square Foot Gardening Foundation Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/squarefootgardeningorg>.

Here's what you can expect:

Photo Contest!

Share your love of SFG by sharing your photos ... and you could win one of our great prizes.

Here are the deets:

The deadline for submitting photos is July 12, 2021 (and remember to show the grid in your photos!)

Prizes include:

- (2) 4x4 Garden Grid™ watering beds with irrigation built right in featuring a dual-purpose plant spacing grid and garden irrigation system. These tool-free raised beds set up in minutes and are from our friends at Garden in Minutes.
- (2) 3x3 Elevated Beds from Square Foot Gardening for the Red River Valley. These wheelchair-accessible beds are constructed out of pine with a steel bottom layer to ensure a long product lifespan. A light water sealant protects it from the elements; you can paint, stain, or leave it to weather naturally. Plus—a Square Foot Garden grid is included.

- [Click Here to Enter](#)

Random Drawings!

- We'll be giving away (4) Learn to Square Foot Garden courses and (4) copies of All New Square Foot Gardening 3rd Edition.
- The deadline for entering is July 14, 2021.

- [Click Here to Enter](#)

Teacher Grants!

Drop us a line at info@squarefootgardening.org to ask for your grant paperwork.

We'll be giving away four \$2,000 grants!

*Contest for the 4- x 4-foot beds, elevated beds, and books are open to entrants in the United States only. The course giveaway is open to global entrants.



Elevated SFG Beds made by Certified Instructor Brian Fuder are one of this year's contest prizes!



Garden Grid™ watering bed from Garden in Minutes.

2020 World SFG Day Photo Contest Winners

Here's some SFG inspiration for your 2021 photo contest entries!



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!

4 QUICK TIPS!

Regular readers will know that we usually offer 3 Quick Tips, but this time we're adding 1 more! Each of these helpful tips will come in handy if you're planning to build new boxes this spring or even if you'll be using your existing SFGs.

Wood for Building SFG Boxes

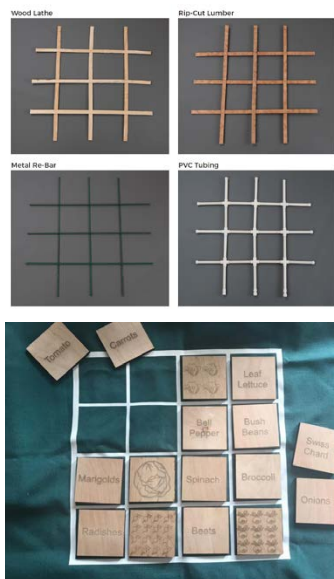
Want to use wood to build your SFG boxes? Use pine, fir, cedar, or cypress. Avoid pressure-treated woods, which may contain toxic chemicals—not good in edible gardens! There is some debate about this, but we prefer to be extra-careful.



5-gallon Buckets to the Rescue

We love 5-gallon buckets and recommend you use them to measure your Mel's Mix™ ingredients in equal portions. If you're not sure how much you'll need of each ingredient, use our Square Foot **Soil Calculator**—and remember to wet down the peat moss as you're incorporating it into the mix!





Materials for Grids

Grids are vital to organizing your SFG beds and ensuring proper plant spacing. SFGers are creative and resourceful folks who have come up with all sorts of interesting materials to use for their grids. We love bamboo, Venetian blinds, wood molding, rebar, old decking boards cut into thin strips, wood lathe, and PVC tubing—bonus points for recycling or repurposing materials you already have on hand!

Spacing Plants

Take a look at CI Kim Roman's nifty prop she uses for her SFG presentations, reminding us of how to space different veggies for planting. You can create something similar to help you quickly space out your plants! And hey! Did you know that Mel created his spacing recommendations based upon the "thin to" spacing information found on seed packets? The big difference is there's no thinning of seedlings in SFG so there's no waste!

SPRING GARDENING IS HERE!

Squirrel Deterrents . . . in a Nutshell!

Squirrels—AKA, rats with better PR—can be the bane of a gardener's existence. They dig, they take bites out of your harvest, they bury things, and they are destructive. But even though they are devious, you'd be nuts not to fight back! Although nothing is 100 percent foolproof when it comes to combating squirrels, here are some ideas:

- Mel's recommendation is to mix 1/3 cup flour, 2 tablespoons cayenne pepper, and 2 tablespoons garlic powder. Now spread that around your SFG boxes. Reapply as necessary!
- Install motion-detecting sprinklers—let 'em dance.
- Sprinkle dog hair around your plants.
- Tie organza wedding favor bags around each developing fruit.
- Sprinkling shavings of Irish Spring soap (aye, ye lads and lassies, it has to be Irish Spring).
- Leave out opened jars of Vick's® Vapo-Rub.
- Squirrel Spinner and Flipper Squirrel (Google them; they're funny).

Are Pests Pestering You?

Even in the healthiest gardens, some pests will appear and do some damage. Because pests are highly localized, each gardener has their own "worse" pest, but check out this chart to learn more about the four most common and Mel's tips on how to manage them.



GUIDE TO COMMON PEST SOLUTIONS

The treatments are listed in the order of severity and the order in which they should be used.

Insect	Affected plants	Treatment
Cabbage worms (adults are white or cream-colored moths, with dark spots on wings; damage-causing caterpillars are fuzzy green and slow-moving)	Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and similar crops	Floating covers early in the season; handpick worms and drop in soapy water; spray with neem oil; for serious infestations spray with bacillus thuringiensis (Bt)
Flea beetles (dark, shiny—sometimes metallic—greens and blacks on small bodies; these beetles can hop when disturbed)	Beans, squash, lettuce, turnips, broccoli, sunflowers, corn, and other plants such as mustard and eggplant	Sticky traps; beneficial nematodes at the start of the season (experts recommend pyrethrin spray for severe infestations, but I don't believe this is ever needed in an SFG)
Slugs & Snails (soft-bodied slugs are green to yellow, slimy and 1 to 2 inches long; snails are similar, brown, with brown shells and prominent antennae)	Tender young seedlings and transplants	Go out at night to detect them in the garden; hand-pick and drop in salty or soapy solution; set out flat beer in shallow saucer near susceptible plants
Tomato hornworms (green worm with white bands and red horn)	Tomato plants, eggplants, peppers, and potato plants	Cut off affected leaves with hornworms on them and dispose of the hornworm and leaf in the garbage: do not try to pick off hornworms because they can leave an awful smell on your hands

COMPOSTING 101



Contrary to popular belief, compost does not just happen. But you can brush up on your knowledge of compost—one of the vital ingredients in Mel's Mix—and composting. Rick Bickling has done a great series of videos about compost for us. **Subscribe to our YouTube channel** so you won't miss a single episode of content. We have lots of resources for you, including:

- **Blog post: [Bagged vs. Homemade Compost](#).** In the war of the composts, which one is better?
- **YouTube Videos: [SFG Essentials: How to Make Compost](#), [The Importance of Compost in Your Own Mel's Mix™](#), [The 4 M's](#)**

Compost Recommendations

We know some of you have a harder time than others finding the type of blended compost Mel recommends in the SFG method, so we did a little digging around to find some information that will help you.

Bagged Compost

Most bagged compost is from a single source. Try to find 3-5 different sources of compost to blend together for your Mel's Mix™.

For example:

- Mushroom
- Bat guano
- Botton burr
- Sea kelp or byproducts
- Worm castings
- Forest products (Screen out any wood chunks.)
- Composted manure (Manure should make up no more than 20% of the total composts, so cow, llama, chicken, goat count as one source of compost.)



Remember to always check the ingredients list of any bagged compost you purchase. If it lists peat moss as an ingredient, be sure to adjust the amount of peat moss you add to your Mel's Mix™ or simply avoid buying the compost with peat in the first place.

Common Places to Buy Compost

Try these places to locate bulk compost in your area: a city composting program, landscape supply yards, independent garden centers, parks and recreation departments, and home-improvement stores. You can also contact your local Cooperative Extension office for local recommendations. And it never hurts to see if you can get a discount by buying in bulk—ask your friends and fellow gardeners if they would like to share a delivery. It may mean DIY bagging for some, but the cost savings and opportunity for a higher-quality compost can offset that.

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH



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