



ONE SQUARE FOOT AT A TIME

Newsletter of the Square Foot Gardening Foundation

Summer 2021

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION

Greetings!

Over the last 16 months of the pandemic, it certainly felt as though “readjust” was on our daily agenda. We saw ups and downs, took many turns no one saw coming, and found hope in small moments of normalcy.



One thing rang true and steady: when the world turned upside down, our gardens didn’t even notice. And though COVID-19 isn’t conquered yet, we’d like to reflect on some of the good—yes, good—things we have all learned from the pandemic over the last year and a half.

- We’ve learned there is no substitute for family and friends.
- We learned we have greater resilience than perhaps we knew.
- We’ve learned that the outdoors is crucial to our physical and mental well-being (and how blessed we are to be able to garden).
- We’ve learned that good nutrition is essential to good health.
- And we learned that we need to help one another, because we’re all in this together.

As you watch your 2021 Square Foot Garden grow, we hope you also reflect on what you have learned from the past year—and what you’re grateful for.

So, until next time,
Happy Gardening!
Laura & Steve Bartholomew

CI COURSE — SHARE THE LOVE!

Give a gift card to someone you love -- or buy one for yourself! They make a wonderful, year-round gift that can be used anytime! They can be e-gifted for the last-minute shoppers in the crowd and are sure to be appreciated by any recipient. There are three options:

- **Level 1**
– Learn to Square Foot Garden
- **Level 2**
– Become a Certified Instructor
Must complete Level 1 for this option
- **Combo**
– Levels 1 and 2 just \$119

[Click the image below to learn more](#)



LET’S STAY IN TOUCH



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WORLD SQUARE FOOT GARDENING DAY— SUMMER 2021

Greetings!

Did we ever have fun on World Square Foot Gardening Day! Our annual party over on our [Facebook page](#) was on Sunday, July 18, and it was a whirlwind of videos, inspiring photos, contests, and more! If you weren't able to join us, we'd love to share a few things that you missed.

Photo Contest Winners

Congratulations to the winners of our Photo Contest! We asked for creative, thriving images of your SFGs (including those all-important grids!) and you did not disappoint. We hope this serves as inspiration for you in your own SFG.

Brian from Texas:



We love the trellises Brian built for his 4' x 4' SFGs! The mulched areas around his beds will cut down on maintenance.

Jessica from Illinois:



We're positively swooning over how neat and tidy Jessica's garden is. Wondering what she's planning with all those herbs?

Terrie from Arkansas:



Terrie's SFG is so sturdy and well-built! And we're spying that bucket for rainwater, too.

Natalie from Wisconsin:



Check out Natalie's SFG — tons of beds in different configurations, lots of healthy growth, and a fence to keep the critters out. Well done, Natalie!

Honorary Certified Instructor Juan Cosigua

We couldn't have been more proud to name Juan Cosigua a Square Foot Gardening Honorary Certified Instructor! Juan lives with his family in Guatemala, and got involved with **Cultiva International** while trying to recover and learn from a tomato harvest lost to fungus. Cultiva helped him start gardens, learn animal husbandry, begin composting and more. Juan thrived in learning how to make a better life for his family. He put a variety of food on the table, his family enjoyed a second helping for the first time ever, and he sold the extra at the market.



Now, Juan pays it forward every day. As a husband, father, community leader and Field Director of Cultiva International, Juan leads the Cultiva field team as they teach, train and support thousands of Guatemalans who are improving their nutrition and life by growing their own food with Square Foot Gardening. Congratulations, Juan, and welcome to the SFG family of CIs!

Cultiva International Webinar Replay

And speaking of Cultiva International, we recently participated in a webinar with them where we talked about humanitarian work, food security and Square Foot Gardening. If you missed it, you can **watch it here**. We've been pleased to partner with Cultiva for years, and look forward to many more!



FEATURED CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR

Featured CI – Alexander Blaauwgeers

As the pandemic challenged each of us, it also provided some valuable opportunities. Take gardening, for example. With so many people working and attending school from home and with the addition of potential food scarcity at the onset of the pandemic, interest in vegetable gardening rose to astounding new heights this past year. More people took steps to grow their own healthy food. One inspiring example is that of Alexander Blaauwgeers, one of our newest Certified Instructors.

Alexander is 30 years old and lives in The Netherlands where he is working on his master's degree in computer science. He doesn't come from a particularly long line of gardeners—in fact, he says his

parents never gardened that much at all. But during the pandemic, Alexander was staying home while he attended class online, and in the fall of 2020 he decided to try his hand at gardening.

That's right—in the span of seven months, Alexander started gardening, discovered Square Foot Gardening, took the CI course, and became certified. "I love to travel," Alexander explained. "I've probably traveled to 30 or 40 countries and because of the pandemic, I stopped traveling and had so much more time on my hands." With all of this extra time, he began looking at things to do that would not only be fun and rewarding but also balance out his computer science studies.

Here's how it all happened: Alexander started reading a book about how to easily grow vegetables (*De Makkelijke Moestuin*), and he saw a reference to Mel Bartholomew and Square Foot Gardening. His interest piqued, he did a quick internet search, which led him to the SFG website and to the certification course.





"I immediately loved that it was such an easy way to garden," he said, "and that you don't need a lot of space to do it. The Netherlands is a small country, so we are challenged with space issues and are always looking for ways to do things on a smaller scale." When Alexander says "small," he means it. For reference, The Netherlands is smaller than the state of West Virginia but larger than Maryland. It is 16th on the list of "high population density" countries—so every inch of real estate is a valuable commodity.

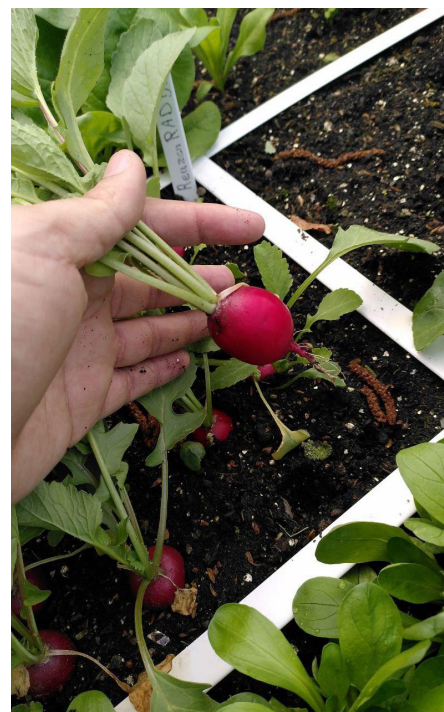
Alexander started by building a 4' x 4' box with help from his father, and fortunately found the ingredients for Mel's Mix™ easy to source. Alexander is presently growing radishes, lettuces, spinach, turnips, carrots, beans, and tomatoes, with a few flowers added in to attract bees. And like all passionate gardeners, he keeps a close and protective eye over his squares. He's currently lamenting the state of his cucumber seedlings and worries that they are too small to really take off in the garden at this point in the year.

He starts his seeds indoors before transplanting outside when the weather warms up. "Our last frost is usually around May 13, so we still have to be careful about protecting transplants," Alexander said. "But I have freeze cloth on hand if I need to quickly cover my beds."

The growing season in his area of central Netherlands is relatively short, with ideal gardening time running from May through September. And while some may think of this European country as more of a cold climate, it's actually relatively mild. Because it's close to the North Sea, it enjoys a maritime climate with mild winters, cool summers, and regular rainfall year-round—an ideal environment for vegetable gardening.



During our interview with Alexander via Zoom, he was seated outdoors by his SFG and proudly showed us his entire set-up. His enthusiasm is infectious. As a young man and a newcomer to gardening in general, and SFG in particular, Alexander's perspective is a unique one. He speaks of the SFG method as "revolutionary" in that it takes something that has been done for thousands of years—growing food—yet makes it so much easier and more convenient.



Beyond simply growing food easily, Alexander is drawn to helping people, and views his CI status as a way to teach other people how to grow their own food one day. It's no wonder Alexander is such a great match with SFG, because his mission aligns perfectly with Mel's vision. Welcome, Alexander—we love your passion and are looking forward to following your SFG adventure!



Soup made from beets Alexander grew in his garden.

3 QUICK TIPS

1) Mulching

In real estate, the mantra is, "Location, location, location." For "regular" gardening, it might be, "Mulching, mulching, mulching." It's true that mulching is great—essential, even—to suppress weeds and maintain soil moisture. SFGers don't usually have much of a problem with weeds, since Mel's Mix™ is weed-free when you mix it, and it's loose and friable, making it easy to pull any weeds that might blow in and sprout. But keeping soil moist and the soil temperature moderated, especially if you live in a really hot climate such as the American Southwest, are key. And mulch is invaluable for that. Once your plants are up and growing, put down a thick (about 2 inches) layer of mulch.

Good mulch choices include:

- Compost
- Straw (not hay)
- Shredded leaves
- Grass clippings
- Shredded newspaper
- Leaf mulch
- Shredded hardwood
- Cocoa beans
- Bark chips



2) Why Use Mel's Mix™?

Mel's Mix is a combination of equal parts peat moss, a blend of compost, and coarse vermiculite. Here's what Mel's Mix™ does:

- **Conserves water.** Mel's Mix™ retains moisture while allowing excellent drainage so plants don't rot.
- **Feeds plants.** Blended compost means plants get the nutrition they need without you having to mix, measure, and add fertilizers. Fertilizers can sometimes burn delicate roots, and some may not be good for the environment.
- **No digging or double-digging.** Mel's Mix™ ingredients create a very loose soil texture that allows plant roots to grow and expand without the need to dig and then dig some more.
- **Takes science out of gardening.** Because the components of Mel's Mix™ are pH balanced, you can put your chemistry books away and enjoy your healthy, happy plants.

Use this calculator to plan how much you'll need!

Read about Mel's Mix™



3) Shade Cloth Can Be a Lifesaver—for Plants!

Shade cloth is what it sounds like: a covering, often made from loosely woven materials, that protects plants from heat and too much sun while allowing rainwater in. Even natural materials such as burlap can be used. In a garden setting, shade cloth can be set up like a canopy suspended on four posts or as an "umbrella."

For the summer gardener, especially for those of us in "hot" climates (and it seems as if that's most of us), shade cloth gives us one more tool to help control the environment for whatever we choose to grow.

Even "full-sun" plants can find afternoon sun too brutal to handle. Creating a screen can reduce the sun's intensity up to 50 percent. Tomatoes are a perfect example of a full-sun plant that sometimes needs relief from the hot summer sun.

Want to learn more about shade cloth? [Read our blog post here!](#)



Fresh Harvest Lasagna

Freshly Roasted Cherry Tomato Sauce

- 2 pounds cherry tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt

Lasagna

Note – any 4 cups of mixed vegetables will be fine, so feel free to mix and match whatever you're harvesting from your garden.

- 1 medium eggplant, peeled and diced
- 2 bell peppers, red, orange, or yellow, diced
- 2 small zucchini (less than 6 inches long), diced
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups greens (baby spinach, kale, or chopped Swiss chard)
- 1 pound (16 oz.) whole milk ricotta
- ½ pound (8 oz.) fontina or soft Havarti cheese, coarsely grated
- 12 sheets no-boil lasagna noodles
- ½ cup (8 oz.) grated fresh Parmesan cheese, plus additional for serving

Make the fresh cherry tomato sauce

Preheat the oven to 425F degrees (220C degrees). In a bowl, combine the tomatoes with the garlic, oil, and 1 teaspoon salt. Spread the tomatoes onto a large, rimmed baking sheet. Roast until the tomatoes are very soft and slightly browned, about 25 minutes. Cool 10 minutes and then place into a blender or food processor; blend until very smooth.

Directions

Put the eggplant, bell peppers, zucchini, and red onion in a large bowl. Add 1 ½ teaspoons salt, pepper to taste, and ¼ cup olive oil. Toss to coat. Transfer to a large, rimmed baking sheet and roast in a 425 degree oven until the vegetables are soft and slightly browned, about 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and immediately add the greens. Toss with tongs to mix all the vegetables together and wilt the greens.



Reduce oven temperature to 400F degrees (200C degrees).

Lightly coat an 8 x 8-inch baking pan with olive oil. Ladle ¼ cup of the tomato sauce evenly over the bottom of the pan.

Make three layers in the pan as follows: 3 pasta sheets, slightly overlapping, topped evenly with 1/3 of the vegetables, cheeses, and 1/4 cup sauce. Finish the final top layer with the remaining sauce and the Parmesan cheese.

Cover the pan with foil and bake 35 minutes. Peek under the foil—if the sauce is bubbling, the cheese is melted, and the noodles are tender, it's done. If not, recover and bake 5 to 10 minutes more. Remove the pan from the oven and let it cool 30 to 60 minutes before serving. (Most of us can't wait that long, so 15 minutes will do but it will not be as "firm.") Sprinkle with additional Parmesan cheese to serve.

Tips

Roast the vegetables the day before making the lasagna to save time. Or assemble the whole lasagna, cover, and refrigerate up to a day ahead before baking.

You can use your favorite jarred tomato sauce instead of making the roasted cherry tomato sauce. You'll need 4 cups of sauce (1 quart).

Assembled but unbaked lasagna can be frozen for 1 to 2 months. Wrap securely to prevent freezer burn. Defrost overnight in the refrigerator and bake as directed.

Uber-Veggie Gazpacho

Ingredients

- 1 can (46-ounce) tomato or vegetable juice, chilled
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- Tabasco sauce, to taste
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 medium tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 1 each medium green, red, and yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 jalapeño pepper, finely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 1 large cucumber, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 bunch scallions, white and light green parts only, chopped
- Fresh herb sprigs, diced avocado, and/or lemon slices, for garnish



Directions

1. In a large bowl, combine the tomato or vegetable juice, garlic, lemon juice, white wine vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, and Tabasco sauce; add salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the prepared vegetables and taste again, adding more salt and pepper if desired. Chill 6 to 8 hours before serving. Garnish with herb sprigs, avocado, and/or lemon.

KIDS' CORNER

Parents and grandparents—here's a fun way to sneak a little education into an activity for youngsters. (And you may learn something too!)

Camouflage Insect Hunt



Draw a line from the insect to its name!

Match the Camouflage Insects!

Can you name the insects that are hiding in the garden?

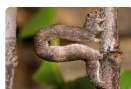
**SQUARE
FOOT
GARDENING**



1



2



3



4



5



6

A

GEOMETRID MOTH
CATERPILLAR

B

WALKING
LEAF

C

PEACOCK
BUTTERFLY

D

BARK
MANTIS

E

GOLDENROD
CRAB SPIDER

F

WALKING
STICK

Some insects are hiding in plain sight—can you figure out which ones? [Click here](#) to download the Insect Hunt PDF and make some copies.

Now, match up the insect in the first row to its name in the second row. You can draw lines between the two. Then check your answers—how many did you know?

(Note to Parents: Here's the answer code for when your child is done: 1-D, 2-F, 3-A, 4-C, 5-B, 6-E.)

[Download PDF](#)

Edible Flower Ice Pops



Did you know lots of kids *like* to cook? (Though we make no claims as to whether they enjoy cleaning up!) Even younger children are thrilled to be allowed to create in the kitchen. Ice pops are perfect for summer fun and are easy to make and easy to clean up. Rosewater is a flavoring; if you absolutely cannot find it, you can try substituting lavender essence or vanilla.

Note: The edible flowers **must not have been treated with any pesticides**. Some edible flowers include rose petals, nasturtiums, pansy and/or viola flowers, marigold flowers, and chive flowers.

Rose Syrup*

- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup water
- 1 teaspoon rosewater

For the Rose Syrup: Combine the sugar and water over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Lower the heat and simmer 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir to add the rosewater. Cool completely.

Popsicles

- 2 cups coconut water (make sure you get coconut water—not canned coconut milk or cream)
- ¼ cup rose syrup*
- edible flowers
- popsicle molds (or paper cups) and popsicle sticks

Stir together the coconut water and rose syrup. Place 3 to 5 flowers into each popsicle mold and fill with the coconut water-rose syrup mixture. Freeze until the pops are completely solid. Take the pretty popsicles out of their mold and enjoy!

SFG VIDEOS WITH RICK BICKLING



SFG Essentials - Why Use Landscape Fabric Under Your Square Foot Garden

The use of landscape fabric can make Square Foot Gardening even easier. Take a look at our latest video where Rick Bickling discusses why the extra step is so worth the effort. Don't miss this tip!

[Watch Now](#)



SFG Essentials - You Asked We Answer Your Top 5 Square Foot Gardening Questions

What does everyone want to know about Square Foot Gardening? SFG YouTuber Rick Bickling answers the five most frequently asked questions about Square Foot Gardening for you.

[Watch Now](#)

PREPARE FOR FALL GARDENING

Although there is *plenty* still to do in the garden to enjoy your harvest of summer vegetables, it's also the time to prepare for fall gardening. If you do a little bit of preparation every day (or every week), you won't have to face a much-bigger project at the end of the summer growing season. Refer to the planting chart below for ideas.



- Pull out warm-season veggies that have stopped producing. Otherwise, they are just taking up space. Warm-season vegetables include peppers, eggplant, melons, zucchini, beans and possibly tomatoes. Clean any debris in the square.
- Replant each square as you pull something out, adding a shovel of compost to each hole when replanting.
- Start planning your fall garden. Great fall/winter crops include garlic, lettuces and cool-season greens (such as spinach and mustard greens), parsnips, Swiss chard, and another round of radishes.

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

= Indoor Growth, started with seeds



= Outdoor Growth, started with transplants



= Harvest Period