



# GRIDLINES#

Fall 2021 Newsletter



## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION



### Greetings!

For our Northern Hemisphere friends, every time you look under a leaf you still find MORE tomatoes, zucchini and peppers. You're canning, freezing, sharing and donating that organic, delicious SFG harvest - and hopefully already planting fall crops.

It's hard to believe, but a year ago we launched our Level 2 Online Certified Instructor Course. What once were in-person workshops taught by Mel became a virtual, self-guided one-day immersion in how to teach the SFG Method. We've certified 58 expert gardeners as CIs since then; if you're inspired to join their ranks, [learn more here](#).

For our many SFGers who garden below the Equator, we know you're excited Spring has arrived. We are too! See Page 5 for links to Spring newsletters with tips to power up your Southern Hemisphere gardens.

Finally, you'll see a few changes to our Quarterly Newsletter thanks to feedback from SFGers like you. We're packing more tips into a trimmed-down length to make this a quicker "can't miss" read for busy gardeners.

Happy Gardening!

Laura & Steve Bartholomew

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## YOUR GORGEOUS SFG GARDENS



**Mark's footed beds in West Virginia are impressive - and safe from "wascally wabbits!"**



**That's a handsome SFG, Christopher, we love your permanent grids.**



**A win for watermelon, and recycling too: Natalie used pantyhose for a clever sling.**





**#Debra Stuart freezes about 150 pounds of produce each season - garlic, too!**



**#Check out the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's tips on freezing at <https://bit.ly/USDAFreezingTips>**



**#Debra purees raw garlic to freeze in ice cube trays; loose cubes store easily in a bag.**

## Preserve the Delicious Taste of Summer

### Freeze Your SFG Bounty

This time of year our countertops are piled high with tomatoes, peppers, green beans and corn. What to do with all of this SFG goodness? Freeze it!

We talked with Debra Stuart, a Certified Instructor in New Jersey who has decades of canning and freezing know-how. "100% of the produce I eat is from my SFG gardens. I enjoy fresh, frozen or canned veggies year round from my refrigerator and cupboards," she states. Debra gardens seven SFG beds each year; "I never visit the grocery produce aisle; it's in my back yard!"

#### Freezing - Fresh, Fast Magic in the Kitchen

This simple, quick method lets you prep in advance, giving you organic ingredients for future use in recipes. Equipment is minimal- heavy duty plastic bags and if desired, a vacuum sealer to remove air from your bags.

Other than leafy crops, potatoes, melons and cukes, almost every vegetable in your SFG can be frozen. Tomatoes, peppers, beans, broccoli, celery, corn, onions, garlic, okra, herbs, asparagus, peas, beets and many more deliver great results when frozen. Here's a few "how to's" for specific crops:

#### Tomatoes - Easy Peasy

Wash your tomatoes, remove the stem and cut an X in the bottom. Put in a pot of boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds (longer for larger fruits), lift them out and plunge into a bowl of cold water. The skins slip right off; you're ready to bag them whole for sauce making or dice and bag for stews and soups.

#### Blanching for Flavor and Texture

Except for peppers and herbs, nearly all veggies need a few minutes in boiling water - called blanching - before freezing. It's not a food safety issue, however: blanching simply stabilizes the color (especially green veggies) and delivers better flavor and texture once cooked.

#### Peppers - No Blanching Needed

While many veggies are best frozen after blanching (see above), peppers of any color do not need it. Just rinse and remove the seeds and stem before freezing. Debra has a clever prep trick if you like stuffed peppers: freeze them WHOLE. Once frozen, stack them inside one another to take up less space or fill the gaps in the bag with already-frozen cut up veggies.

#### Get the Air Out for Smart Freezer Space Use

You want as little air in that bag to reduce the chance of freezer burn, plus air takes up space in your freezer. Debra uses the FoodSaver brand which are heavier than regular zip top food bags; use them with a vacuum sealer. She bought a small one a few years ago, "it's been a big convenience," she says.

#### Freeze Like a Boss - Sheet It!

Need just a handful of frozen veggies but that solid "iceberg chunk" in your freezer won't cooperate? Smart cooks do this: put wax or parchment paper on a cookie sheet, spread out chopped veggies, and pop in the freezer for an hour or so. When frozen, put your diced harvest in a freezer bag and store.##



## FEATURED CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR

### Gardening Entrepreneur. Nurseryman. Urban Farmer. Foodscaping Visionary.

**Mustafa Sayed holds all of these titles, as well as becoming the first SFG Certified Instructor in his homeland of Egypt. This passionate horticulturist has a mission, and doesn't let challenges get in his way.**

## Egypt's Rooftop SFG Gardener, Mustafa Sayed

First, Mustafa is *not* from a gardening family so everything he's learned has been self-taught. After earning a communications degree he started a video production company; a project on urban farming planted a seed of curiosity. "Egypt is an agricultural country," he says, "so gardening is very much in keeping with where I live."

But it's so difficult to find gardening supplies that many people simply give up. "Here, nothing is centralized," Mustafa explains, "You buy your seeds here, your soil there, and your pottery in another place. You have to really want to garden in order to get everything you need."

And he really wanted to garden.

"There are no food regulations in Egypt," he states, "so food labelled 'organic' may or may not actually be organic. You don't really know what you're buying ...or eating."

What Mustafa knew is that he had a large roof and wanted to grow his own produce. YouTube videos taught him container gardening, and things turned more ambitious. In 2016 Mustafa took a job at one of Egypt's first commercial hydroponic farms, and in 2018 he co-founded a B2B agricultural supply company. His skills and interests had definitely taken a horticultural path, but his passion to help Egypt's city dwellers



**This corner of Cairo can claim the most gorgeous, inspiring roof thanks to the SFG skills of new Certified Instructor, Mustafa Sayed.**

start their own urban farms was still unfulfilled. In 2020 he co-launched GrowPro, an e-commerce site with urban gardening systems, seedlings and gardening supplies for at-home residential customers.

Soon, he saw another opportunity: Cairo customers who bought garden supplies and seedlings might need an expert to build and install their new garden. And thus the inspiration for Foodscape, his edible landscaping business, was born. This nursery and vegetable

garden service builds tiny urban farms in every small space available — rooftops, public medians, and any sliver of ground outside a front door.



As he learned more about growing produce, his research led him to Square Foot Gardening.

"I found a website that mentioned Mel Bartholomew's Method," he says, "so I looked up the SFG website and found out about the CI course. I loved how Mel said that gardening should be fun, but I also love that it's easy, convenient, and weeding is less of a chore."

So he dove into the CI course, was certified in February 2021, and already has hosted three in-person workshops! *Continued on Page 4*





## Our CI In Egypt - Mustafa Sayed

*Continued from Page 3*

And this is where his mission - and passion - truly shines. "I've always wanted to do something that was of use to others, not simply have a job. And I'm aware that people have very little connection to their food aside from how it tastes or how pretty the garden looks."

His goal is to teach people how to grow food using the SFG Method anywhere he can — in schools, community gardens, orphanages, and in senior living facilities. These days, Mustafa's roof features six SFG beds. He's impressed with their healthy growth and big yields, and is eager to show everyone how they

can successfully grow their own food with the Square Foot Gardening Method. "I love the American DIY culture, and SFG fits right in with this. I use no chemicals, am 100% organic, and have a worm farm for my compost."

**Mustafa has shown that where there's a will, there is always a way. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Just like a civil engineer named Mel who never let obstacles get in his way, either. #**



**Learn more about Mustafa's edible gardening businesses in Cairo - all of his websites are in English. They are <https://growpro-eg.com> and [www.foodscape-eg.com](http://www.foodscape-eg.com); his Facebook and Instagram pages are @growpro.eg**

## VERMICULITE SUPPLY UPDATE

SFGers have shared their difficulty in finding coarse grade vermiculite over this past growing season so we thought we could help by providing a few recommendations.

As a major component of Mel's Mix™, coarse grade vermiculite has been consistently recommended in all SFG books and materials. Finding the right amount or bag size to buy seems to be the challenge.

We know that Uline, a family-owned distributor of packaging materials, is a good source for vermiculite in larger quantities. Check [Uline's website](#) to see if the sizes they offer meet your needs.

[Greenhouse Megastore](#) is another excellent source of coarse grade vermiculite and they have 4 cubic foot bags in stock, ready to ship.

Why did Mel prefer coarse over medium? Medium will disintegrate

faster than coarse and may not retain water as well. Coarse grade creates more air channels which allows your Mel's Mix™ to breathe and your plants to thrive.

Our local big box DIY stores carry a name brand vermiculite sold as an organic soil conditioner registered with OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) for earth-friendly gardening. Just make sure it is coarse grade before buying.

Still having challenges finding coarse grade vermiculite? Drop us a note and we'll share any new developments; write us at: [info@squarefootgardening.org](mailto:info@squarefootgardening.org) #



**Sandi, we're excited about your success with Square Foot Gardening. Our Method delivers delicious organic crops with no weeding, tilling or digging. Click here to [SHARE YOUR SQUARE](#) and maybe be in our next newsletter - send us those photos!**



# Garlic, Yes!

## Fall is the Best Time to Plant in Zones 3-7

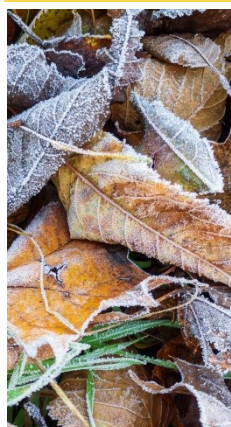
NEED WARM CLIMATE GARLIC TIPS?

[VISIT GRAY DUCK GARLIC'S WEBSITE HERE.](#)



Garlic cloves need cold temps to root, so planting too early when it's still warm can result in rot. In the Northeast, plant garlic in mid to late fall. Blog writer Alex Darc plants hers right after removing summer crops and adding more compost to refresh her Mel's Mix™.

[Click here to read Alex's popular tips on selecting and planting garlic](#)



Certified Instructor Rick Bickling, the "How Do Gardener," shares SFG winterizing tips in this quick video.

[Click here to watch Rick's helpful YouTube video](#)



## E-Gift Cards Grow Their World

From homeschoolers to new homeowners, share Square Foot Gardening with someone you love. Our new E-Gift Cards let you give a present of STEM learning to pre-teens and teens, or treat that first-time gardener you know.

In our Level 1 course, newbie gardeners learn how to grow organic, delicious veggies with far less work, space and water than traditional gardening. You can also buy a Level 2 E-Gift Card, or save on a bundled Level 1 and 2 gift pack.

[Click here to learn more about our new E-Gift cards](#)

**Are you a  
Southern Hemisphere  
gardener?  
Happy Spring!**

We know you're looking for spring gardening tips. Click the links below for timely info from past Newsletters.

[Spring 2019 Newsletter](#)  
[Spring 2020 Newsletter](#)  
[Spring 2021 Newsletter](#)

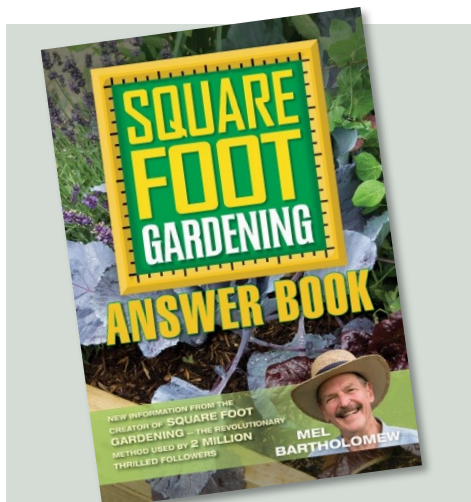


## GARDENER KAREN ASKED US . . .

**I'm a snowbird and have to close down my beds earlier than others do. Should I pull out all the annuals or leave them as mulch? Should I compost now or next spring?**

## WE ANSWER . . .

**Clean out the beds before you leave as decaying plant matter can harbor disease and insects. Take off your grid if it comes off, and stow it away. Add a little compost and fluff your Mel's Mix™. Lastly, to keep out weed seeds but let in water, cover with cardboard, old sheets or weed fabric. Voila - you're ready to relax for the winter and so is your Square Foot Garden!**



## Laugh 'n Learn with Mel

**From critter control to community gardening, this quick, fun read is an informative and humorous addition to your SFG library. Mel shared in depth advice on homemade pest spray, compost, planting and more. But what you won't expect are Mel's tips on toilet paper tubes (a tray of 'em upright and filled with Mel's Mix™ makes a perfect seed starter block), keeping cats out of your SFG beds and adding old beer to your water buckets . . . just some of the many gems from Mel's decades of veggie gardening excellence. ##**

**Click here to order a copy today for yourself ... or a gift for that hard-to-buy for gardener**

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Hoop House How-Tos

Hoop houses and cold frames are a must-have for the pro gardener. Keep these tips in mind as you tend your cool weather crops:

- ## Have your hoop house ready well before your area's first frost date.
- ## It may be cold season, but don't forget to water! Your SFG is a raised bed and may not absorb enough water due to being covered.
- ## On warm days, fold back much of the plastic cover during daytime so plants don't roast.
- ## If temps are above 60, vent by pulling back a bit of the cover.
- ## Mulch with dry, shredded leaves or straw as added insulation.
- ## Once you're deep into winter, you can add more insulation by placing a floating row cover over the hoop house to protect plants.



### Water Wise SFG Tips

With the SFG Method and Mel's Mix™ you already use far less water than traditional row gardening - congrats! Here's how to be even more "green" in your SFG:

- ## Reduce evaporation by watering in the morning or early evening.
- ## If you live in hot, dry climates, mulching will help retain soil moisture and reduce evaporation.
- ## Water the soil directly - not the leaves (so avoid using a sprinkler hose). Hand watering, a soaker hose, or drip irrigation are the best options.
- ## Group plants with similar watering requirements together - concentrate this precious resource where it's needed!
- ## Plant crops that need less water - pole beans, okra, tomatoes, tomatillos, summer squash and many herbs. While they need water as young plants, once established they can tolerate some drought.
- ## Collect rainwater with a rain barrel or reuse household water (think pasta or corn water) that is free of chemicals.

## GET SOCIAL WITH US - CLICK HOTLINKS TO FOLLOW + LIKE ♥



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