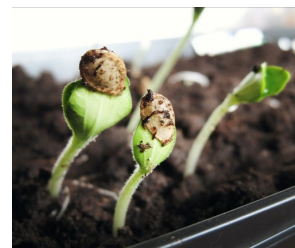




# GRIDLINES#

Winter 2022 Newsletter



## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION



### Greetings, Gardeners!

We aren't meteorologists, but...our winter forecast includes a 100% chance of garden daydreaming with occasional seed overbuying and scattered compost planning.

These bleak months, we're all peering at our backyards and patios, imagining a cornucopia of tastes, colors and scents from our SFG beds.

We garden for so many reasons. We challenge ourselves to be more self-sufficient, eat healthier, and know what's in (or on) our food. Gardening helps us reduce our carbon footprint. Getting outside is therapeutic, healthy (Vitamin D!) and entertaining to boot.

Putting in a vegetable garden lets us show the next generation where food comes from, too. It teaches kids patience, experimentation and to marvel at Mother Nature.

Right now, our SFG plans are on spreadsheets. But until we can bring them to life this spring, they're the boost of "paper sunshine" we need this season.

Want some extra inspiration? Check out our fresh, new website with dozens of how-to blogs that will make your SFG even better this year at [www.squarefootgardening.org](http://www.squarefootgardening.org).

Here's to reaching YOUR personal best - this summer - in your Square Foot Garden.

Happy Gardening!

Laura & Steve Bartholomew

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## CURL UP THIS WINTER WITH THESE GARDEN RESOURCES

### Free Planting Chart Download

Anyone can be a successful gardener using the Square Foot Gardening method. While there are many more details, tips and applications in the SFG books, the basics are very simple. To learn more visit us at: [www.squarefootgardening.org](http://www.squarefootgardening.org)

A 4" depth of Mel's Mix is all you need for most plants. To learn more about Mel's Mix visit: [www.squarefootgardening.org](http://www.squarefootgardening.org). Join thousands of helpful SFG gardeners on our Facebook group at [www.facebook.com/groups/151455750578050](https://www.facebook.com/groups/151455750578050)

**PLANT SPACING FOR A TYPICAL 4' X 4' SQUARE FOOT GARDEN**

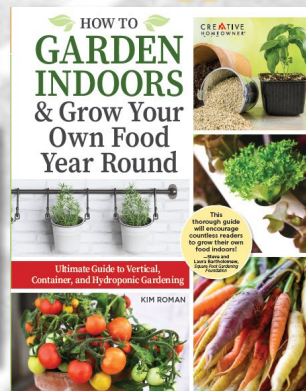
EXTRA LARGE (2) LARGE (4) MEDIUM (9) SMALL (16)

**VISUALIZE YOUR HARVEST USING OUR 1-4-9-16 SPACING AND DON'T FORGET TO ADD A GRID.**

Our handy tool makes garden planning EASY. Just print this SFG plant spacing chart, get out your seed collection, grab some pencils and bring your spring garden dreams to life.

[Download charts here.](#)

### Grow Veggies Indoors



Certified SFG Instructor Kim Roman's book from Creative Homeowner Press is a complete guide to vertical, container, and hydroponic gardening under your roof, with a foreword by Steve and Laura Bartholomew.

[Pre-order on Amazon.](#)



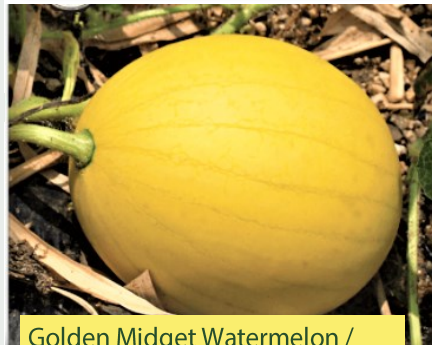
Honeynut Butternut Squash /  
photo Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds



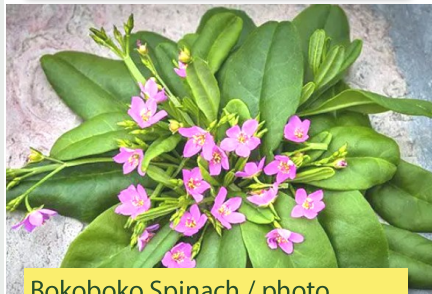
Burgundy Broccoli / photo  
Botanical Interests



Black Strawberry Tomato / photo  
Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds



Golden Midget Watermelon /  
photo Sow Right Seeds



Bokoboko Spinach / photo  
Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds

## Tasty 2022 Seed Introductions

# Check Out These New Varieties!

No matter what hemisphere you're in, "armchair gardeners" have a favorite winter hobby: salivating over seed catalogs! Whether you're a newbie just starting out, or an experienced grower with a nifty seed collection, we bet you're on the hunt for some ooooooh-worthy varieties. Read on!

### TOE-MAHTO, TOE-MAYTO - NEW 'MATERS TO TRY

With 13,000+ heirloom and hybrid varieties, there's so many tomato choices for your SFG. Nurseries and big box stores offer just a fraction of those, so gardeners look to catalogs and online for unusual seeds. Here's a few to try:

**Marvel Stripe Bicolor / Renee's Garden Organic Seeds.** This heirloom with climbing vines bears large sunny gold fruits shot through with rose-red, giving these indeterminate tomatoes a marbled effect. Flavor is mild and sweet.

**Black Strawberry Tomato / Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds.** These indeterminate little beauties offer balanced flavor, durability and big harvests. One-ounce fruits have a gem-like appearance with marbled blue, scarlet, and gold skin.

**Banana Legs / Territorial Seed Company.** This low-acid variety is delicious in salads and sandwiches. These determinate plants produce 4 inch Roma-shaped fruits with a golden yellow skin and faint streaks of orange.

### READY, SET, SALAD!

Is a garden complete without crunchy, cool greens? No wonder the National Garden Bureau named 2022 'The Year of the Salad Greens.' They're easy to grow, nutritious, and a year-round crop when shade coverings are used.

**Granaat Chinese Cabbage / Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds.** This cool-weather, high-yield variety is perfect for small spaces due to its tall, skinny growth habit. Enjoy in stir fry, soup and kimchi!

**Bokoboko Spinach / Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds.** Sun and heat? Bring it! Also known as waterleaf, this Ghana native is heat/drought tolerant (ideal temp is 80-100 degrees) and loves humidity. Edible stems and flowers, too.

### VERTICAL VEGGIES

Don't forget to think 'up' to make the most of your SFG grid. Here's some perfect-for-the-trellis varieties to grow this year; read Chapter Six of *All New Square Foot Gardening, 3rd Edition*, for instructions on how to build a trellis.

**Honeynut Butternut Squash / Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds.** Sized right for one serving, these 4-5 inch mini butternuts are big on flavor and highly regarded by chefs. And smaller squash equals faster roasting time!

**Golden Midget Watermelon / Sow Right Seeds.** These personal-size melons are 3-5 pounds on vigorous vines and are early producers, too. Did we say cute?

### BONUS: A PURPLE SPROUTING BROCCOLI

**Burgundy Broccoli from Botanical Interests.** With its stunning color and great flavor, this brassica likes warmer temps, too. After the main head is harvested, the plant produces lots of side shoots to extend your harvest. ##

*Seed availability was "in stock" at time of publication. This article contains affiliate links; our writers may receive a commission for purchases made through these links.*



# Improving on a Family Tradition

## Elizabeth Fiorentino Williams

### Challenge from Dad “Grows” a New CI in North Carolina

For Elizabeth, it was just a matter of time before she continued her family's gardening tradition.

Her parents farmed 57 acres in upstate New York, raising livestock. “As a kid I was digging in the dirt, helping mom in the vegetable garden, gathering eggs, and exploring every corner of our farm with my siblings,” she shares.

Even after the family moved to North Carolina in 1985, the Fiorentinos grew vegetables in their suburban front yard.

“But here’s what else I remember: constant weeding, harvests coming in all at once, and watering being a major chore,” she chuckles.

Decades later, those memories of inefficient, tedious gardening stuck with her. That’s why in 2012 a YouTube video on SFG caught her eye.

“SFG is what I’d been looking for - a way to grow a lot of vegetables in a small space without all the work I remember as a kid” she says. Elizabeth bought the 2nd edition “All New Square Foot Gardening” book for \$5 and was hooked on its simplicity and productivity.

Did she want to grow vegetables with the SFG method? Absolutely. “But there’s one thing I don’t have at home: sunshine!”

Living with her husband outside of Chapel Hill where she works in Duke University’s HR department, her dreams of an SFG garden had to go on pause, unfortunately.

That part of the state happens to be near the headquarters of PlantPure Communities, a plant-based education and advocacy nonprofit founded by Nelson Campbell.

With her interest in healthy eating,

Elizabeth kept hearing about PlantPure Communities (PPC) and attended a local open house. She soon committed to a plant-based lifestyle and has been a vegan since



Elizabeth had a happy convert to SFG - and grew a fantastic, Dad-approved harvest her first season.

2017. “My husband’s diet is more traditional, but he enjoys many of the dishes I prepare,” she explains.

Around that same time she became more active with PPC as a local pod leader. She also started spending more time with her dad, a widower who was still planting old-fashioned



“It was music to my ears to hear Dad say over and over, ‘the weeding is so easy, they just pull right out!’”

row gardens every year. And that’s how SFG popped back in Elizabeth’s life.

PPC launched a Gardening Toolkit to pod leaders in 2018 that used the SFG method. Elizabeth pored over the materials. “It all came full circle. I pulled out that book I bought in 2012 and started pestering Dad to stop his antique garden ways and start using SFG.”

Elizabeth saw his dismay every year when his row garden had a poor yield, needed weeding all the time, and was often eaten by critters.

For ages she had been urging him: “Please try Square Foot Gardening. It’s a gamechanger, even for long-time gardeners like you.”

“But he said ‘no’ every year, despite frustrating results in the garden. I would leave my SFG book at his place, I asked him to make Mel’s Mix™. He would not budge.”

Then the pandemic happened and “Dad saw how important it was to more easily grow his own food.”

*Continued on Page 4*



## Fiorentino Family Gardeners

Continued from Page 3

He gave Elizabeth a challenge in early 2021: Become a Certified SFG Instructor and he'd agree to garden 'her' way with a Square Foot Garden.

She wasted no time! Elizabeth bought our Level 1 and 2 courses in late March, and by mid-April 2021 earned her certification.

With Elizabeth now a CI, Dad was on a mission. Together they built five SFG boxes, two elevated beds and made Mel's Mix™. In went tomatoes, zucchini, peppers, eggplants, squash, radishes and salad greens; staggering their squares allowed them to harvest until Thanksgiving.

What advice does she have for new SFG gardeners? "Just get started! One thing I'll do next year is harvest daily. I'd visit Dad weekly to harvest but that was not enough. This year I'll be there more often to tend and pick. What a great chore to have!" #

**Curious about a vegan lifestyle? Want to join a pod near you? [Click here to learn more](#) at the PlantPure Communities website.**



Elizabeth could not have been more proud when her dad finally said, "you might have been right about Square Foot Gardening all along!"

**"Becoming a Certified Instructor allowed me to shift my 91-year-old Dad to a method that was finally joyful, easy and productive after years of tedious row gardening. I love seeing him outside more. This will be the only way we garden going forward."**

**- Elizabeth Fiorentino Williams**

## Become a Certified Instructor



Share your garden expertise, earn extra income, and help neighbors grow their own food. Online courses teach you to spread the nutritional, economic and culinary benefits of SFG in your community. Join us!

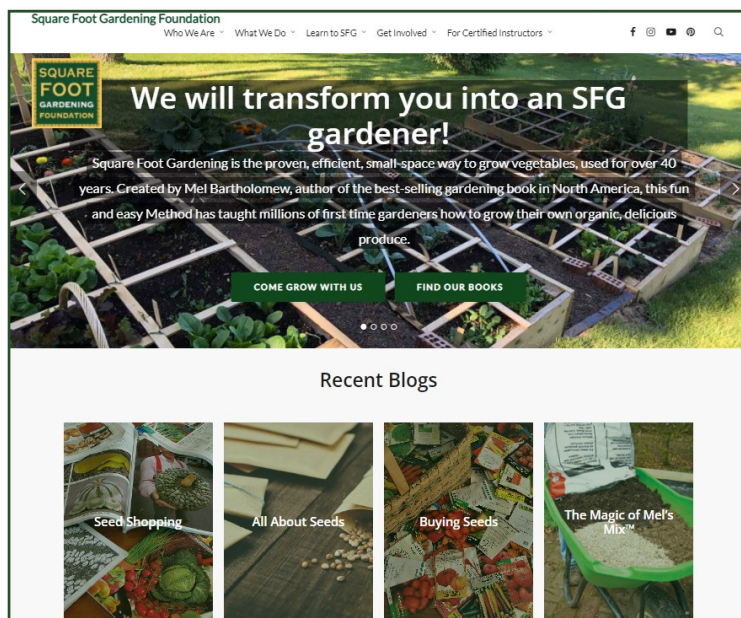
**[bit.ly/GetCertifiedtoTeachSFG](https://bit.ly/GetCertifiedtoTeachSFG)**

## SFG WEBSITE HAS A NEW LOOK!

## Makeover Alert!

If you haven't visited our website lately, stop by to experience an easier-to-navigate redesign! Our blogs are now organized by topic to more easily find expert advice on Mel's Mix™ and compost, seeds, pest control, specific vegetables and more. All downloads and videos are on one resource page, too. Enjoy! #

**[www.squarefootgardening.org](http://www.squarefootgardening.org)**







No grids? Then you have a nice raised bed garden. Without a grid like Linda's smart-looking set up above, it's just not a Square Foot Garden, friends!



## GRIDS: THE HALLMARK OF AN SFG GARDEN

**Mel Bartholomew said: "If your garden box doesn't have a grid, it's not a Square Foot Garden."**

Every step Mel outlined (box, Mel's Mix™, grid, spacing) in his revolutionary gardening method delivers the maximum productivity from a tiny growing area.

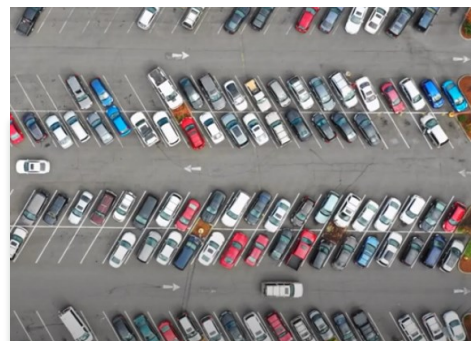
Imagine pulling into your local mall, looking for a parking spot but there are no painted spaces. Chaos! Could you play chess without squares on the board? Or Tic Tac Toe without lines?

A grid is what makes it possible to achieve an amazing harvest. We hear "Oh, I can estimate where things should go, I don't need a grid."

Mel said a grid keeps your garden organized for sequential planting PLUS maximizes squares for tightly-spaced plantings of seeds. It's not until you put a grid on top of your SFG that the brain grasps you can grow **16 different** vegetables, herbs

**Check out tool-free grid ideas on page 7.**

**Read our blog on why you need a grid for your SFG.**

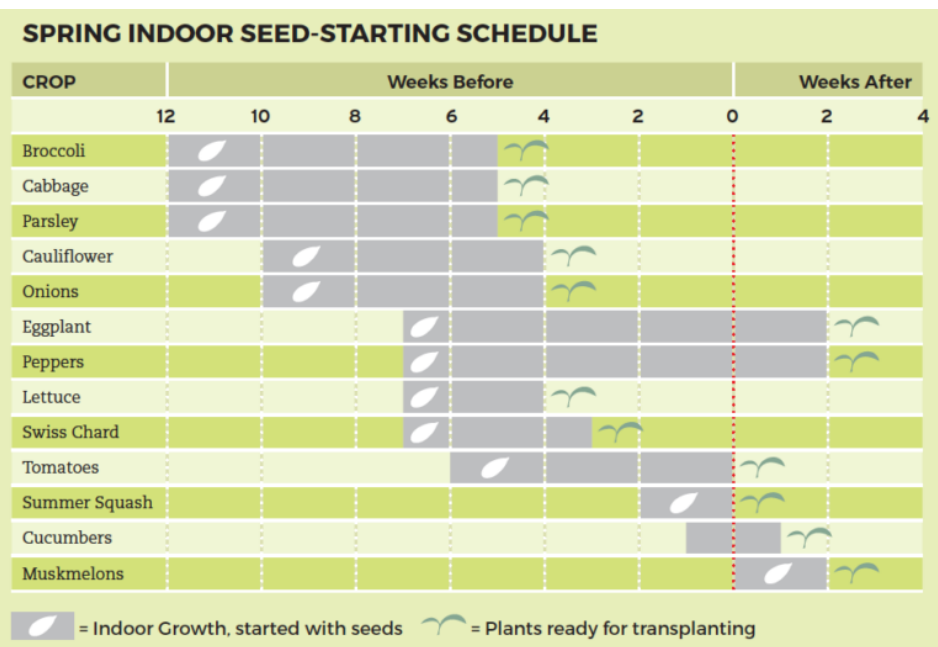


If you had a big unlined asphalt surface, sure, you could park cars on it. But you can't maximize that space without lines!

or flowers in that 4' x 4' raised bed! Not a fan of light color grids? Try the **Garden in Minutes Garden Grid™ Watering System**, build your own irrigation grid (see page 174-5 in the *All New Square Foot Gardening 3rd Edition*, or buy inexpensive bamboo stakes at the local garden center or dollar store. ##

## SPRING INDOOR SEED STARTING SCHEDULE

The "zero" is the last frost date in your zone; find it here <https://davesgarden.com/guides/freeze-frost-dates/>. Plug in that date at zero, pick the veggie on the chart you want to grow, walk back to its ideal seed starting week, and there's your seed starting schedule.



## When to Begin Seed-Starting

Our chart, from the *All New Square Foot Gardening 3rd Edition*, shows when gardeners should start their seeds indoors.

Many crops (peas, carrots, radishes) can be easily started outside, seeds directly sown into your SFG grids.

But if you're in a cold climate and want to give your broccoli, peppers, tomatoes and other veggies a "head start" in a shorter growing season, try starting them indoors this winter. Happy germinating! ##

**Read our blog on buying and starting seeds indoors.**

**TEMPORARILY  
OUT OF STOCK**

## Coarse Vermiculite: Your alternative for making Mel's Mix™ this spring.

As of early 2022 there's a **shortage of A3 and A4 coarse vermiculite** from sources like Uline, Farmtek and Greenhouse Megastore. Vendors are requiring bulk minimum orders or estimating availability in 120 days.

If you can't find coarse grade for this year's batch of Mel's Mix™, gardeners can use **either** the super coarse grade OR replace the 1/3 vermiculite with that amount of extra compost.

**DO USE SUPER COARSE GRADE** as a substitute in your Mel's Mix™. Or, make it with 1/3 peat moss, 2/3 compost.

**DO NOT USE PERLITE** as a substitute. It doesn't hold moisture like vermiculite, it's gritty, it floats to the top of your beds and its white color looks unnatural. Mel didn't like it for those reasons.



**VIDEO:** Rick Bickling, the "How Do Gardener," reviews the wide range of materials available to build your SFG bed. He shares the pros, cons and costs of each.

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

### Square Foot Garden Material Choices

- Untreated Lumber
- Hardwood
- Cedar
- Composite Deck Board
- Metal
- Brick
- Stone
- Concrete Block
- Logs
- Kits



**SQUARE FOOT GARDENING**  
Based on founder and creator  
Mel Bartholomew's method

Private group · 64.1K members



Joined + Invite

About Discussion Featured Topics Members Events More



## JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP

Are you part of our Facebook community of SFG gardeners? Learn from this helpful bunch of **64,000 expert AND new gardeners** who share photos, tips, and encouragement. We're all here to get you growing this year!

This is a private group; **you must answer a few questions before being admitted** so we know you're not a spammer or a "bot."

See you in the SFG Group soon!

[Apply today to join the Official SFG Facebook Group](#)

## Do you garden in the Southern Hemisphere?

We've got you covered!  
Here's our Summer issues  
with in-season tips. Enjoy  
your SFG harvest!

### [Summer 2019 Newsletter](#)

School gardens, herbs, crop rotation, when to harvest.

### [Summer 2020 Newsletter](#)

Harvesting, fall crop planning.

### [Summer 2021 Newsletter](#)

Mulch, shade cloth, planting schedule for fall crops.





## GARDENER TYSON ASKED:

**Is there a cheaper alternative for ingredients of Mel's Mix™? Vermiculite is hard to come by and also expensive! I'm a new gardener and on a budget.**

## WE ANSWER:

The cost of Mel's Mix™ is far outweighed by how long it lasts. Yes, it's expensive at first if you're starting a huge garden, but the cost is amortized over the 10 or so years you'll be using it. You just top off with compost each year, and will never need to buy fertilizer. **Make your first SFG a SMALL 4' x 4' bed to economize!**

Here's what gardeners say about Mel's Mix™: Maggie shares: "The vermiculite is a key ingredient. Don't skimp on it." Jimmie states: "Once your Mel's Mix™ is in, that's it. I'm going into my fourth season and can wiggle my hand down to bottom of the bed - try that with soil or dirt!" [Watch our video of Rick Bickling](#), the "How Do Gardener," sharing a quick tutorial on Mel's Mix™.

## QUICK TIPS

### Wooden Yardstick Grids

**Stumped on a tool-free wooden grid for your SFG?** Problem solved! With a handful of twist ties and cheap wood yardsticks from your local hardware store, you have a **"prominent and permanent"** grid to customize - then easily take apart for winter storage. To extend a yardstick so it reaches across the bed, use twist ties or clear packing tape to secure one ruler to the one below it. Old **venetian blind slats** and **bamboo stakes** work the same way!



### Start Seeds in TP Tubes

**Save those cardboard toilet and paper towel tubes!** Upcycle these biodegradable cylinders in a few easy steps: 1) Fold the tube flat. 2) To make four flaps, cut 1-inch slits on the fold lines, then 2 more slits halfway across the first two flaps. 3) Open tube and fold the four flaps up to create a "cup." 4) Fill with moist Mel's Mix™ or vermiculite. Tuck them into a plastic tray or glass casserole dish (metal rusts); when tightly packed they'll stay standing.



Photo courtesy of Jenny, a Facebook follower. Thanks for sharing!

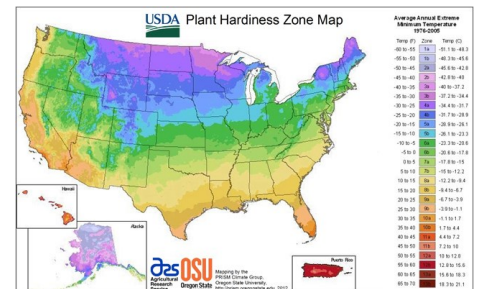
### Zone + Frost Date Finder

You've probably heard gardeners talk about their "Zone." If you don't know your USDA Plant Hardiness Zone, find it here by adding your zip code:

<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>

As shown on the map below, zones are wide swaths. Your zone tells you **WHAT** you can plant, but not **WHEN**. For that, you'll need your First and Last Freeze/Frost Date. Just add your zip code to this website and you're set: <https://davesgarden.com/guides/freeze-frost-dates/>

With your last frost date, you can use our Spring Indoor Seed Starting Chart (on page 5) and other gardening resources. The "0" equals your last frost date. Just grab a calendar and work backward and forward to find when to plant by seed or transplant.



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