

# Square Foot Gardening

Halton Food Gardens a program of Halton Environmental Network

### What is Square Foot Gardening?

- System for planting
  - All levels of experience
  - Physical ability
  - Geographical location
- Grow more in less space
- Saves
  - Time
  - Water
  - Effort
  - Money



### **Benefits of Square Foot Gardening**

- Uses less space then conventional gardening
  - eg. 4x4, 2x2, 3x8, etc
- Low maintenance season to season
- No heavy equipment needed
- Never enter bed
- Maintained from perimeter



### **Benefits of Square Foot Gardening**



- Soil raised above ground tends to drain better and warms up much quicker
- Allows for faster seed germination

### **Benefits of Square Foot Gardening**

- Dense planting techniques result in higher production per square foot of garden
- Helps reduce weed seed germination





### Aesthetic planting

Formal or natural looking

### Location, Location, Location!

![](_page_6_Picture_1.jpeg)

Pick an area that gets 6-8 hours of afternoon sunlight

![](_page_6_Picture_3.jpeg)

Stay clear of trees and shrubs where roots and shade may interfere with veggie growth

### Location, Location, Location!

![](_page_7_Picture_1.jpeg)

![](_page_7_Picture_2.jpeg)

![](_page_7_Picture_3.jpeg)

Have it close to the house for convenience

Build upon existing soil

Area should not puddle after a heavy rain

![](_page_8_Picture_0.jpeg)

![](_page_8_Picture_1.jpeg)

![](_page_8_Picture_2.jpeg)

### Construction

Most common is wood (cedar)

Brick, stones, block, plastic lumber, milk crates, commercial kits, etc..

### \*\* Never use treated lumber

![](_page_9_Picture_0.jpeg)

# Small and large scale applications

![](_page_10_Picture_0.jpeg)

### Soil

1/3 compost,1/3 peat moss or coco coir1/3 coarse vermiculite

Soil conditioner – fine pine bark mulch (not coloured)

Mushroom compost

**Composted manures** 

### Construction

- No wider than 4 feet, 8–10 inches deep
- Deck screws work best
- Rotate or alternate corners to end up with a square inside
- Allow 2–3 feet (48" perfect) between boxes for accessibility

### Construction

- Crops such as tomato, squash, zucchini, etc. do best when grown on a trellis
- Keep it simple as long as it functions
- Needs to be anchored in the soil very well

### Grid

- On top of each frame place a permanent grid that divides the box into one-foot squares
  - Lengths of wood, twine, branches, etc..
- Use screws to attach them where they cross
- Leave the grid in place all season

![](_page_13_Picture_5.jpeg)

![](_page_14_Figure_0.jpeg)

### Grid

On a 4 foot by 4 foot frame the grid divides the frame into 16 easy-to-manage spaces.

How many different crops could you potentially plant?

16 different crops!

![](_page_15_Picture_0.jpeg)

## Planting

Depending on the mature size of the plant grow 1, 4, 9, or 16 equally spaced plants per square foot

#### Square foot gardening plant spacing cheat sheet Download and print at plant and plate.com

#### SFG basics:

Divide your garden into 1' x 1' squares.

Plant a different kind of vegetable, fruit, herb, or flower in each square.

Use the "recommended space after thinning." Space plants evenly by subdividing each square into 4, 9, or 16 smaller squares.

Plant one seedling or 2-4 seeds (in case some don't sprout) in the middle of each small square.

Remember to write down what's planted in each square and the date you planted it.

After you harvest a square, dig in a little compost, and plant something else!

#### Tips:

Plant the tallest plants on the north side of the bed (south in the southern hemisphere) so they don't shade the shorter plants.

Make your garden beds narrow enough that you can reach the plants in the middle, or leave a pathway every 4 feet or so. I prefer raised beds that are 3'x5' or 4'x4'.

Plant in waves! Plant a half square of carrots every two weeks, and you'll have tender baby carrots all season long.

Put the plants that you harvest often - like salad greens for dinner - around the edges of the bed, where they're easy to reach.

Train summer squash, winter squash, and melons up trellisses, or plant them at the edge of the bed so they can sprawl over the side without crushing other plants.

![](_page_16_Picture_16.jpeg)

Questions? email claire@plantandplate.com

For more info on SFG, read Mel Bartholomew's excellent Square Foot Gardening books, available at your local independent bookstore or library.

#### 3" spacing = 16 plants / square foot

 0000	carrots radishes parsnips
 0000	

#### 3"(on trellis) = 8 plants / square foot

	peas
0000	pole bean
 0000	
 1 1 1	

#### 4" spacing = 9 plants / square foot

 \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$	bush beans spinach beets, turnips leeks, onions,
4 1 4	garlic, scallions

#### 6" spacing = 4 plants / square foot

 	$\varphi$ $\varphi$	Ŷ Ŷ	lettuce swiss chard corn basil, thyme quinoa

#### 8" spacing = 2 plants / sq ft

![](_page_16_Figure_28.jpeg)

#### 12" spacing = 1 plant / sq ft

Ŷ	tomatoes eggplant peppers celery cauliflower sunflowers	potatoes broccoli cabbage most her asparagu okra
	a samoners	on or or or

most herbs asparagus okra

#### 18" - 24" spacing = 2 sq ft / plant

![](_page_16_Picture_33.jpeg)

summer squash (zucchini, etc.) winter squash (pumpkins etc.) melons

![](_page_16_Picture_35.jpeg)

### Planting

- Plant one or two seeds in each spot
- Cover with soil, but do not pack soil
- No need for thinning seeds are not wasted
- Plant only as much of any one crop as you will use

![](_page_17_Picture_5.jpeg)

![](_page_18_Picture_0.jpeg)

### Watering

Water only as much as each plant needs

Water often, especially at first, and on very hot dry days

Raised beds dry out quicker than ground plantings

Set up rainwater catchment system or drip irrigation

### Harvesting

- When you finish harvesting add compost and replant it with a new and different crop
- Replant a different family of crops
  - Tomato, pepper, potato (Nightshade family)
  - Squash, cucumber, zucchini (Cucurbits)
  - Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower (Brassicas, Cole crops)
  - Onion, garlic, scallion, leek (Alliums)
  - Carrots, radish, beet, sweet potato (various root crops)

### Challenges

- Increased plant density may lead to foliar diseases
  - Watch and look every day
  - Prune and remove diseased or dead material
- Large sprawling crops such as pumpkins, watermelons, cucumbers etc. tend to take over the garden
  - Create a trellis and grow vertically!

![](_page_20_Picture_6.jpeg)

![](_page_21_Picture_0.jpeg)

# There's gnome place like home!

Let's get gardening!