



Square Foot Gardening

Square Foot Gardening: A gardening method developed by civil engineer Mel Bartholomew in the early 1980s. The technique involves planning and creating small but densely planted gardens. Square Foot Gardening borrows heavily from earlier organic gardening methods including French Intensive Gardening, biodynamic farming, and biointensive agriculture.

What are the principles of Square Foot Gardening?

The goal of Square Foot Gardening is to maximize yields from small garden spaces while at the same time reducing the labor required to maintain a garden. This is achieved by following two basic guidelines:

- First, native soil is heavily amended or even replaced with an entirely different growing medium. The most common amendments are a mixture of compost, coco coir* and vermiculite.
- Second, rather than using row spacing guidelines, crops are planted in a pre-defined grid-shaped pattern designed to maximize yield in small areas such as backyard gardens or community garden plots.

What are the Benefits of Square Foot Gardening?

- Combined with mulch, crops grown using the square foot method require up to 75% less water
- Densely planted crops will actually shade themselves creating a “living mulch.”
- Compared to traditional row planting, square foot gardens will yield 2-6 times more produce. Yield can be increased if trellises are utilized for vertical growing.
- The square foot gardening method can be combined with other organic gardening techniques such as companion planting, succession planting, and cover cropping.
- Densely planted, nutrient-rich garden beds virtually eliminate the need for weeding.