

# The Revolutionary Way to Grow More in Less Space

## SQUARE FOOT GARDENING 10 Basics

Square Foot Gardening is a simple, unique and versatile system that adapts to all levels of experience, physical ability, and geographical location. Grow all you want and need in only 20% of the space of a conventional row garden.



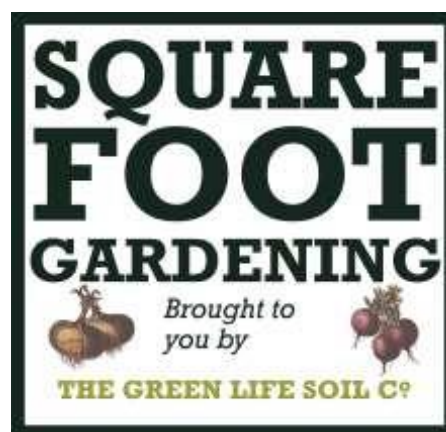
- 1. Layout** *Always think in squares. Layout 4 x 4 planting areas.*
- 2. Boxes** *Build raised bed boxes and fill with SFG Mix.*
- 3. Aisles** *Space boxes approx. 90cms apart to form walking aisles.*
- 4. Soil** *Fill boxes with Square Foot Gardening Mix*
- 5. Grid** *Make a square foot grid for the top of each. This is your visual road map.*
- 6. Care** *NEVER walk on your growing soil. Tend to your garden from the aisles.*
- 7. Select** *Select 1,4,9 or 16 plants, depending on the size of the plant chosen for each square foot.*
- 8. Plant** *Conserve seeds. Plant only a pinch (2 or 3 seeds) per hole.*
- 9. Water** *Water by hand from a bucket of sun-warmed water.*
- 10. Harvest** *When you have finished harvesting a Square Foot, add compost and/or a pinch of fertiliser and replant with a new and different crop.*

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**Growing your own fresh vegetables and herbs can be done – even if you have a small yard.**



## ***What is Square Foot/Square Metre Gardening?***

Square Foot Gardening was developed by Mel Bartholomew, an ex US army efficiency expert who thought there had to be a better way to increase yields and reduce gardening workloads.

His technique uses a box made from four boards 1.2 metres long. The 1.2m<sup>2</sup> box (4ft x 4ft) allows for a compact 16 square feet of garden space that can be placed in any sunny spot.

A Square Metre Garden is 1m x 1m<sup>2</sup> and allows for 9 x square feet of growing. Mel has re-written his original Square Foot Gardening book for Australia and it is sold here as 'Square Metre Gardening'. All information has been revised for our opposite seasons & climatic conditions.

## ***What do you need to create a Square Foot/Metre Garden?***

Building a Square Metre Garden is easy. You can use bricks, blocks or timber to make the garden edges, which only need to be about 20cms high. (Using treated lumber is not recommended, because the chemicals may leach into the garden soil.) It is easy to add a trellis to a Square Foot/Metre Garden, so that peas, cucumber and other vines can grow up.

## ***Why do you need special soil?***

As the soil depth in a Square Metre Garden is traditionally shallow, a good mixture of nutrition and water holding ability is essential. Mel Bartholomew created 'Mel's Mix' which is one third peat moss, one third compost and one third vermiculite. This is a lightweight mix perfectly formulated to allow good root penetration, airflow and water holding.

We have revised this mixture suited to Western Australian conditions, sourced from locally available materials, and added trace elements and additional nutrition to achieve the best results.



We have created a version using sustainably sourced cocopeat to replace the peat moss, and added minerals to this mix to make it suited to Western Australian conditions. This mix creates a well-drained soil that still holds plenty of moisture for root growth. Almost all roots on vegetable plants grow in the top 15cms/six inches of soil, so the box doesn't need to be deeper. Our Square Foot Mix is available in 25L bags or in bulk.

A grid which divides your box into squares is an essential part of the process. It helps you visually judge the spacing between plants. Without the grid, your mind tends to naturally want to space things further apart (as we have been conditioned to do).

A grid can be a permanent part of your box; made from timber slats, plumber's string line, or even lengths of hose. Or you can have a 'lift off' grid that you use when planting out, but can be stored out of the weather when not required. (We have timber slat grids available for \$18 if purchased separate from the SFG/SMG kits.)

## ***Where do I position my Square Metre Garden?***

Anywhere that gets enough sun! Try to put your Square Foot/Metre Garden close to the house, so you can pick produce regularly and observe growth. You will be able to see straight away if your plants have any pest or disease issues, and can pick out any errant weeds while walking past! That's about all the maintenance required!

If the spot you are going to place the garden is an existing lawn or weed patch, cover the square with four or more layers of newspaper and a weed barrier cloth from the nursery or just a piece of cloth. You can also use a sheet of plastic but ensure you put a few drainage holes in it – probably best located in the corners and slightly up the sides, so you can inspect these drainage holes periodically to check for roots or grass invading your box. (Don't underestimate the voracity of neighbouring plants to send roots into your Square Foot/Metre Garden to scavenge for nutrients and moisture.)

There is no reason a Square Foot/Metre Garden can't be positioned on top of concrete or paving if that's the best area you have for it. Be aware of staining hard surfaces (if that's an issue) and reflected heat in summer.

A Square Foot/Metre Garden can easily be re-located if necessary between seasons, or taken with you if you move house. For those with mobility problems, there's no reason why a Square Foot/Metre Garden can't be built onto a raised table or platform to allow wheelchair access, or remove the need to bend.



## ***Benefits of a Square Foot/Metre Garden***



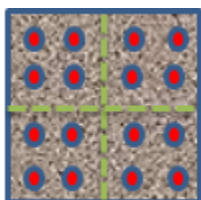
- A Square Foot/Metre Garden bed is perfectly sized so you can tend it from the sides. You should never walk on your growing surface (as it compacts the soil); and with this sized garden bed you'll never need to. If you have two (or more) beds, allow about 90cms aisles in between them so you can easily manoeuvre a wheel barrow if you need to.
- Growing in a compact way reduces the opportunity for weeds to germinate, so you spend less time maintaining and weeding the area. Using fresh soil also means fewer weeds.
- Watering requirements are reduced due to the smaller area, and the higher water holding capacity of the special soil mix.
- Square Foot/Metre Gardening has a higher success rate than a typical garden and will help you want to stay in gardening rather than giving up. If you decide you like vegetable gardening and want a bigger plot, you can add more Square Foot/Metre Gardens or make it longer. Keep one dimension a maximum of 1.2m<sup>2</sup> (four feet) for easy access to the middle without wasting garden space in an aisle.
- Traditional gardens are often built with large aisles, partly to allow for good air circulation, partly for easy tilling of weeds and partly to allow for the growth of spreading plants. Small space gardening uses vegetable varieties that have a compact growth habit. (You will see these smaller plants listed in the seed catalogue or on a nursery sign as petite, bush, compact or determinate.)
- The garden can be built close to the house and a water source.
- One of the most important features of a Square Foot/Metre Garden is managing it one square at a time. As each crop finishes in a square, a new one is installed. There is no wasted space in a Square Foot/Metre Garden and production is much higher.

## ***Planting in a Square Metre Garden***

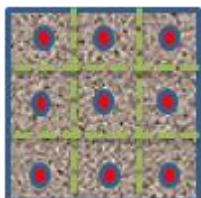
Most common vegetables and herbs can be grown in a Square Foot/Metre Garden. Some very large growing plants may be best not to include; or to have their own dedicated growing box instead. It's a great idea to include small flowering annuals in your Square Foot/Metre Garden. They not only look lovely, but attract pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Following is a table with the recommended planting ratios for most common vegies and herbs. As a general rule:

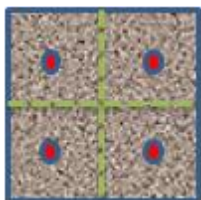
Small plants can be planted out 16 per square (ie. 5 cms apart).



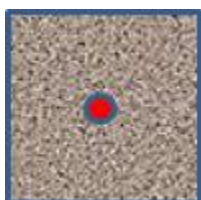
Medium plants can be planted out 9 per square (ie. 10cms apart)



Large plants can be planted out 4 to a square (ie. 15 cms apart)



Extra-large plants can be planted out with 1 whole square to themselves



Some plants on the table may require two squares per plant, or vertical trellising to allow them adequate space.

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| VEGETABLES (per square) |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Beans (bush)            | 9             |
| Beans (climbing) *      | 8             |
| Beans (broad)           | 1             |
| Beetroot                | 9             |
| Bok Choy                | 9             |
| Broccoli                | 1             |
| Brussels Sprouts        | 1             |
| Cabbage                 | 1             |
| Capsicum                | 1             |
| Carrots                 | 16            |
| Cauliflower             | 1             |
| Celery                  | 4             |
| Chard                   | 4             |
| Collard Greens          | 1             |
| Corn                    | 4             |
| Cucumbers*              | 2             |
| Eggplant                | 1             |
| Garlic                  | 9             |
| Kale                    | 1             |
| Kohl rabi               | 4             |
| Leeks                   | 9             |
| Lettuce                 | 4             |
| Mizuna                  | 4             |
| Mustard Greens          | 9             |
| Okra                    | 1             |
| Onions                  | 16            |
| Parsnips                | 16            |
| Peas*                   | 8             |
| Potatoes                | 4             |
| Pumpkin*                | 2 squares/per |
| Radishes                | 16            |
| Rocket                  | 4             |
| Rockmelon*              | 2 squares/per |
| Shallots                | 9             |
| Silverbeet              | 4             |
| Spinach                 | 9             |
| Spring Onions           | 16            |
| Squash                  | 1             |
| Swede                   | 9             |
| Sweet Potatoes          | 2             |
| Tomatoes -Bush Type     | 2 squares/per |
| Tomatoes -Vine Type*    | 1             |
| Turnips                 | 9             |

|                                  |               |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Watermelon*                      | 2 squares/per |
| Zucchini                         | 2 squares/per |
| * Climbing plant – needs trellis |               |

| HERBS (per square)    |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Basil (small)         | 4 |
| Basil (large variety) | 1 |
| Borage                | 1 |
| Chives                | 9 |
| Coriander             | 4 |
| Comfrey               | 1 |
| Dill                  | 1 |
| Fennel                | 4 |
| Fenugreek             | 1 |
| Marjoram              | 1 |
| Mint                  | 1 |
| Oregano               | 1 |
| Parsley               | 4 |
| Rosemary              | 1 |
| Thyme                 | 1 |
|                       |   |
| Annual Flowers small  | 4 |
| Strawberries          | 4 |
|                       |   |

\* If growing a climbing plant that requires a trellis, position this at the southern side of your Square Metre Garden, so that the lower growing plants are in front of it and still get adequate sunlight. Position taller plants at the back for the



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## ***Vegepod – An Ideal Solution***

**The Vegepod is a modular, kit system that is easy to put together. Vegepod comes in 3 sizes, and the medium size (1m x 1m) is ideal for a Square Metre Garden.**

(The large is 2m x 1m; the small is 0.5m x 1m).

No tools are required to build it; and all required parts to assemble the kit are included.

To fill, we recommend our Square Foot Garden Mix Soil - it is perfectly designed for shallower beds, and will provide long and short term nutrition for your vegies and herbs.

The self-contained system is excellent to avoid root competition from surrounding trees, lawns etc. This can be such a problem with traditional raised beds. Because the Vegepod is a self-contained unit, there is no need to worry about staining paving, etc.

The self-watering reservoir holds up to 64 litres providing all the moisture your plants require - from below! The Vegepod is made of UV stabilised polypropylene, and is food safe. Each Vegepod comes with a 12 month warranty from the manufacturer.

## ***Create a Microclimate with the Greenhouse Cover***

The unique greenhouse cover provides a micro-climate that promotes rapid growth. The cover is hinged, and allows easy one-handed access.

Built into the frame is a mist-spray watering system with a clip-on fitting to simply attach to your garden hose, or a retic system if required.

The covers protect your plants from animals, pests and damaging weather. The cover provides approx. 17% shade protection to protect your seedlings. It is made from a clear, commercial horticulture grade material.



## ***Harvesting from a Square Foot/Metre Garden***

Begin harvesting leaves early! Use scissors to snip outer leaves of lettuce, spinach, Silverbeet, kale etc. from within a few weeks. This will encourage the plants to put on new growth, and mean you can enjoy light harvests from your crops early on; without having to wait months before you can pick a whole lettuce for example. Look for varieties that are 'cut and come again' in your seed catalogue.

Once you do pick produce from a Square, simply plant into that space the next crop you wish to enjoy. If harvesting a leafy or fruiting crop, you can cut off at ground level and leave roots to break down into the soil.

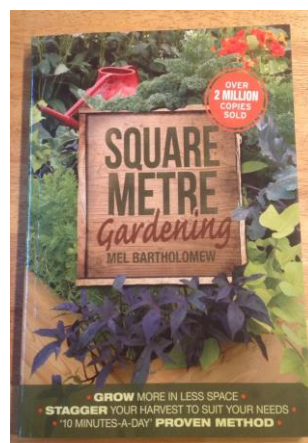
When planting your next crop, you may wish to add a small sprinkling of slow release fertiliser or a trowel of fresh compost or SFG Mix; but that's all you need to do; there is no need to dig out and completely refresh the soil.



A light liquid fertilise every 2 – 4 weeks is beneficial in most cases to keep plants producing at optimal rates during their peak growing season.

## ***More Information***

Mel Bartholemew's best-selling book has been completely revised for Australian seasons & growing conditions. Packed full of information, this book is ideal for those new to the theory of Square Metre Gardening, and is a valuable resource & season by season guide for those already using the principles.





For more information contact:

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opening hours: 8.30 – 5.00pm Monday, Tuesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday (closed  
Wednesday)

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See our website for sustainable gardening tips on topics like: Companion Planting, Crop Rotation, Natural Pest & Disease Control... and many more!

#### **How we can help YOU:**

- **ADVICE.** We can offer advice on setting up new gardens and the most effective way to use your budget.
- **GUARANTEE.** We are so confident in our soil mixes that we guarantee you will be happy with results (see our website for details).
- **INFORMATION.** Subscribe to our e-newsletter and like our Facebook page to receive growing tips, information and special offers to our VIP customers.
- **UNIQUE BLENDS.** We tailor make our soil mixes and soil concentrates on site. Our soil recipes are designed for optimal balanced nutrition, pH and water holding ability.
- **ORGANIC STANDARDS.** A number of our products used as inputs for food production are Certified Organic with NASAA.
- **LOAN TRAILERS.** We have trailers available free of charge. These can be booked for convenience.
- **BULK DELIVERIES.** We deliver throughout the Perth metro area and up to 6m<sup>3</sup> per load. We can deliver a number of products in one load – please email or call to discuss.
- **ONLINE SHOP.** If you don't have time to visit us, check out our online shop. Safe and convenient shopping – Anytime.

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