

How to Make a Square Foot Garden

What if I told you that you would never have to use a shovel again when you garden? That you would never have to work in compacted soil again; That you could get the same amount of food in 20% of the space. Would you believe me? Introducing a new way of gardening - **SQUARE FOOT GARDENING**. It is simple, efficient, portable and requires a minimal investment both physically and monetarily. Here's the basic idea:

Most gardens are planted in long rows separated by three foot aisles that are used for walking on to work with your plants. This means 80% of your garden space that you dig and fertilize does not grow anything. You just walk on it. The square foot method eliminates that 80% by planting in blocks. Using the square foot gardening method, you divide a 4' x 4' box into sixteen 1 foot squares. You can plant a different crop in each of the squares. Large plants use 1 square; medium sized plants are 4 to a square; smaller plants are 8 or even 16 to a square. For example, you might plant 16 carrots in one box, four lettuce plants in another and one cabbage in another. That leaves you with 13 other boxes to fill.



XL 1 plant per 2 square feet	L 1 plant	M 4 plants	S 9 plants	XS 16 plants
Watermelon 	Tomato 	Lettuce 	Bush bean 	Radish
Zucchini squash 	Eggplant 	Basil 	Beet 	Carrot
Pumpkin 	Broccoli 	Marigold 	Spinach 	Onions
Melon Winter squash Summer squash	Cabbage Cauliflower Cucumber Okra Pepper	Corn Parsley Potato Strawberry Turnip		

X Small Plants –radishes, carrots, green onions (16/sq)

Small Plants spinach, beets, bush beans, sweet onions (9/sq)

Med. Plants basil, lettuce, swish chard, kale, parsley, corn, strawberries, turnip (4/sq)

Large Plants tomato, eggplant, broccoli, cauliflower cabbage, peppers (1/sq)

XLarge melons, pumpkin, squash varieties (1 in 2 squares)

Trellis Plants climbing peas, pole beans cucumbers

WHY SQUARE FOOT GARDENING IS SO EASY

#1. PERFECT DIRT

It doesn't matter what kind of soil you have, because you won't be using it. Acidic or alkaline – it doesn't matter. Rocky or sandy – it makes no difference. **You build your own perfect soil.** And it's all really rather simple. It requires just three ingredients.

- Peat Moss
- Compost (use 3 to 5 different kinds)
- Vermiculite

Just mix these three **ingredients** in equal proportions and you have the finest soil you could imagine. It's light and loose (*thanks to the peat moss*), it retains moisture very well (*thanks to the vermiculite*), and is full



of the nutrients your plants need (*thanks to the compost*). If buying compost, be aware that a bag is usually from only one source and its nutrient base will be narrow. Buying 3 to 5 different kinds and mixing them together will ensure a broader base of nutrients.

All these ingredients can be found at your local garden center.

#2. NO WEEDING

Believe it or not! Since you're making your own soil, there will be no weed seeds in there to start with. Plus, any weed seeds that might happen to blow in are easily removed because the soil is so light and loose.

#3. LESS SPACE REQUIRED

Your square foot garden takes up only 20% of the space required by a traditional garden. That means you can be more productive with the space you have. It also means you only need to do 20% of the work.

#4. INEXPENSIVE

To build two square foot gardens the costs are as follows:

- Lumber: (Free if you use scrap)
- Vermiculite: \$20
- Peat Moss: \$8
- Compost: \$20

Total: \$48 for two – \$24 each.

Of course with your own lumber and your own compost from your kitchen & yard waste, you could cut that cost down to \$14 each. And once your initial garden is set up, you only need to add a little compost each year. You'll never again need fertilizer or weed killers.

READY TO BUILD YOUR OWN?

Required Materials for One 4ft X 4ft Box

- (4) 4' 2 x 6 boards
- (6) 4' lattice strips
- (8) 4" nails or screws
- (12) 1" nails or screws
- cardboard, newspaper, or landscape fabric for weed control

Soil - 8 cubic feet ($\text{area} \times \text{depth} =$
 $4\text{ft} \times 4\text{ft} \times .5\text{ft} (6") = 8 \text{ cu ft of soil}$)

- 1/3 or 2.6 cu ft of vermiculite (preferably coarse). Buy 4 cu ft bag
- 1/3 or 2.6 cu ft of peat moss (half bale is about 2 cu ft compressed = 4 cu ft loose)
- 1/3 or 2.6 cu ft of compost (at least three different types – eg. fish, steer manure, sheep manure, mushroom, green manure (plant source))

Don't worry about exact amounts. Close ratio will be fine.

Building the Square Foot Garden

Attach your 2 x 6 boards together with nails or screws to form a four foot square box.



Lay down your newspaper, cardboard, or landscape fabric on the ground where you wish to place your gardens. This will prevent existing grass or weeds from pushing up into your garden. Lay your box on top of the newspaper, cardboard, or landscape fabric.



Mix the compost, peat moss, and vermiculite together in equal portions. An easy way to do this is to pile the ingredients on a large tarp and roll them back and forth in the tarp. Lightly water down the ingredients as they are rather dusty when dry. Carry the tarp to your garden and pour 1/3 of the soil in. Saturate with water. Pour in another 1/3, saturate and then pour in remaining 1/3, saturate.



Once the soil has filled the box, place the lattice on top and nail each piece of lattice in place so that there are sixteen equal squares. (You can also use bolts where the lattice pieces cross for removal & storage in winter. The bolts will allow the pieces to fold/slide together.) You could also just use a heavy string to mark squares.



And there you have it. You're ready to plant!

Pretty simple, isn't it?



IT'S A BEAUTIFUL THING

