

Square Foot Gardening

- invented by retired engineer Mel Bartholomew as a better way to grow a vegetable garden
- made popular in his book Square Foot Gardening published in 1981
- beds should be 6 - 12 inches deep
- raised beds mean you don't have to bend so far making gardening easier for seniors
- 4 feet by 4 feet or 4 feet by 8 feet are common sizes
- 4 feet across means you can reach the middle of the bed
- because you never step on the soil it stays loose and doesn't need to be cultivated
- raised beds warm up earlier in the spring
- square foot garden beds are divided into 1 foot squares
- to determine the spacing of the plants in each square read the back of the seed pack to see how far apart each plant should be thinned to in a row
- without rows the plants are spaced that far apart in each square
- each square usually is planted with 1, 4, 8, 9 or 16 plants
- intensive planting means high yields in small spaces
- densely planted crops can prevent weeds from establishing
- variety of crops in a small space reduces spread of plant disease
- inter-planting with insect repelling companion plants can reduce insect pests
- beds are small, so making covers to protect plants from pests, cold, wind or sun is easier
- the soil you start with should be loose, fertile and weed-free
- important to add compost or composted manure each season to maintain fertility
- square foot beds (like all raised beds) require more water, as they will dry out more quickly than in-ground gardens