Mel Bartholomew, Karen Bastow, Pat Westaway **BYU Education Week 2007**

SQUARE FOOT GARDENING
No Weeding, No Digging, No Tilling, No Kidding!

"We encourage you to grow all the food that you feasibly can on your own property . . . Grow vegetables and eat them from your own yard. Even those residing in apartments or condominiums can generally grow a little food in pots and planters. Study the best methods of providing your own foods. Make your garden . . . neat and attractive as well as productive. If there are children in your home, involve them in the process with assigned responsibilities."

- Spencer W. Kimball, *Essentials of Home Production and Storage*, p. 2.

What is Square Foot Gardening? 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. Save time, water, work and money.

The Ten Basics of Square Foot Gardening

1. LAYOUT – Arrange your garden in squares, not rows. Lay it out in 4' by 4' areas.
2. BOXES – Build boxes to hold a new soil mix above ground – only 6 inches deep.
3. AISLES – Space boxes 3' apart to form walking aisles.
4. SOIL – Fill boxes with special soil mix: 1/3 compost (made from many different ingredients), 1/3 peat moss, 1/3 coarse vermiculite. Existing soil doesn't matter.
5. GRID – Make a square foot grid for the top of each box to organize the garden for planting.
6. CARE – Never walk on the growing soil. Tend your garden from the aisles. Few, if any, weeds sprout and are easily pulled with fingers. Soil stays loose and friable. Easy to protect from weather.
7. SELECT – Plant a different flower, vegetable, or herb crop in each square foot, using spacing of 1, 4, 9 or 16 plants per square foot. Crop rotation happens naturally.
8. PLANT – Conserve seeds. Plant only a pinch (2 or 3 seeds) per hole. Place transplants in a slight saucer-shaped depression. Plant only what you will use during each season. No waste.
9. WATER – Ideally water by hand from a bucket of sun-warmed water (hose or drip system okay).
10. HARVEST – When you finish harvesting a square foot, add compost to replenish nutrients and replant with a new and different crop.

LOCATION


Pick an area that gets 6-9 hours of sunshine daily.


Stay clear of trees/shrubs where roots/shade may interfere.


Have it close to the house for convenience and protection.


Existing soil is not really important. You won't be using it.


Area must not puddle after a heavy rain.

SFG Ideas:
- Humanitarian Efforts
- Public/Home Schools
- Eagle Scout Projects
- Young Women Projects
- Senior Centers
- Hospitals
- Community Gardens
- Home Gardens

"*Gardening also teaches many spiritual lessons. It lets children see that the Lord's creations, things of great value, cannot be rushed. There is a process that must be followed patiently. They learn that besides doing the work, we must wait upon the Lord to finally see the fruits of our labor. Finally, children can see the hand of the Lord while working on a garden. The miracle of life in all its varieties is manifested.*"

– Gene R. Cook, *Raising Up a Family to the Lord*, p. 235

COMPOSTING

What is it?
The decomposition of any organic waste and plant material. Properly made, it has all of the nutrients your plants need.

Why do it?
It produces the best growing material you could have for your garden. It's natural, full of nutrients, organic, inexpensive, and made from ingredients readily available around the world.

How to make it
Make a pile of your ingredients using all the different possibilities available. Nature will do all the work. To speed the process, mix in a variety of materials chopped into small pieces. Turn the pile weekly to aerate, and keep it moist but not soggy. Compost will be ready in a month to a year depending on your climate.

Enclosure
Pile everything in a big pile or build an enclosure or bin to make it neat and efficient.

Ingredients
Any part of the plant (roots, stem, leaves, flowers, fruit) that was once growing in the ground, trees, sea, swamps, or mountains. It can be gathered while still growing, or salvaged as a by-product from a processing factory. Animal manure (but not from carnivores) is excellent when available. Usually the best and most readily available material is what nobody wants and has been thrown out. It's considered a waste or by-product from some process. Consider paper, cardboard, rice, wheat, or peanut hulls, tomato or bean vines, even weeds, vines, seaweed, sawdust, animal and human hair, or feathers. A good source of organic vegetable matter is the local market. Ask for any left over leaves and other vegetable and fruit debris.

When is your compost ready to use?
When it is uniform, dark brown, crumbly, and has a pleasant "earthy" smell.

COMPOST BINS

Location
- Out of the way, yet easy to add material.

Construction Materials
- Wood or metal posts with wire fencing, lumber or bamboo sides.
- Wood pallet sides
- Brick or block sides

Size
- 3' x 3' x 3' minimum. (2m x 2m x 2m) (any smaller will not heat up enough.)
- 4' x 4' x 4' maximum. (3m x 3m x 3m) (any larger will restrict air to middle.)

PROBLEMS

Unpleasant odor.
- Not enough air – turn every week.
- Wrong ingredients – remove any animal, dairy, or bakery products.
- Too wet - keep moist not soggy.

Won't heat up
- Too wet or too dry.
- Needs nitrogen type material (manure, grass clippings, weeds)

OTHER MATERIALS TO ADD

- Residue from fruit and vegetable processing plants.
- Almost any weed, vine, or plant growth.
- Old flowers and leaves.
- Grass clippings, straw, hay.
- Corncobs and egg shells.
- Branches and bark (shredded).
- Sugar cane residue.
- Old sod.
- Sawdust and wood shavings.

DO *NOT* ADD

- Animal fat, bones, meat, skin
- Milk products
- Bread and baked goods
- Dog, cat or human manure.