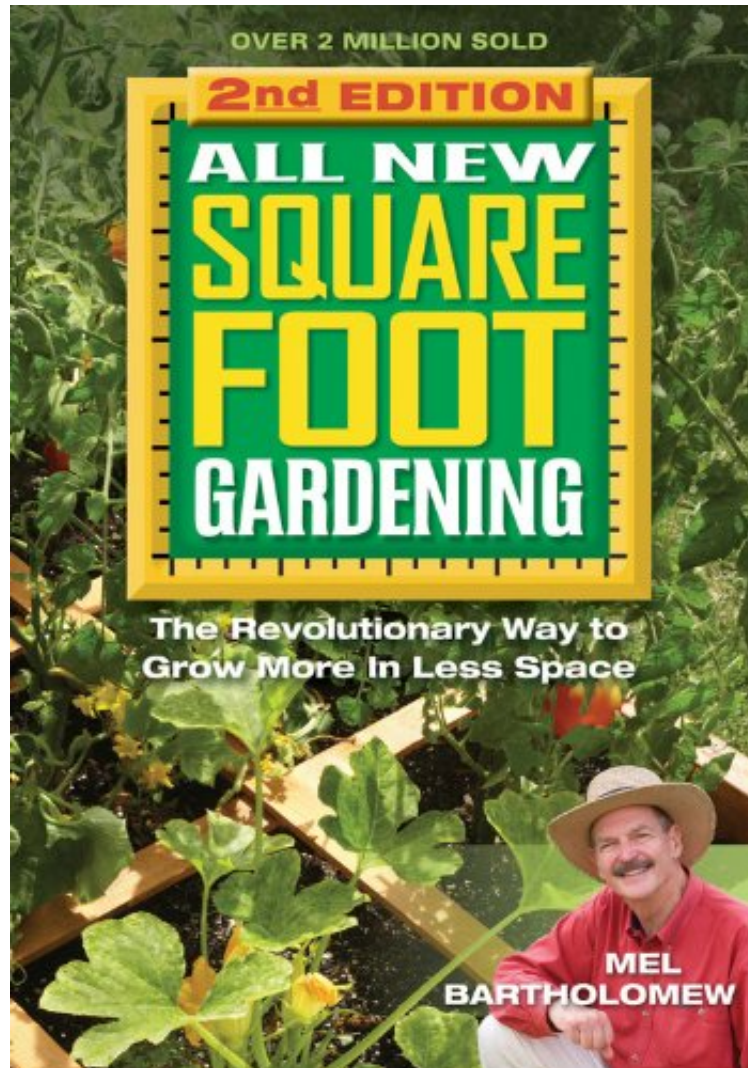


All New Square Foot Gardening II: The Revolutionary Way to Grow More in Less Space

Mel Bartholomew

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Mel Bartholomew : All New Square Foot Gardening II: The Revolutionary Way to Grow More in Less Space before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised All New Square Foot Gardening II: The Revolutionary Way to Grow More in Less Space:

1180 of 1190 people found the following review helpful. Proven method for successful organic gardening - My experience with what's involved and cost By Windmere I INTEND TO UPDATE THIS REVIEW FOR A PERIOD OF AT LEAST A YEAR... THIS WILL HOPEFULLY GIVE YOU A GOOD SNAPSHOT OF THIS ENTIRE

ENDEAVOR. I'D LIKE TO WARN YOU THAT THIS REVIEW IS EXTREMELY LONG. My family and I have been wanting to plant an organic garden for years. However, we live in an area where the soil is red clay. The thought of tilling our soil was too daunting, so we put the gardening project on hold for several years. This year we decided to "go for it" and the idea of using raised garden beds made sense (due to our horrible local soil). My wife did some research and found that Mel Bartholomew's method is consistently shown to be one of the best methods around. She bought me this book to get our project off the ground. My wife had some reservations about this project. The reason being that initial set up (when done correctly) can be a bit costly. One of the key elements of this book is the innovative composition of the soil used in the garden beds. I'll quote a portion of the book that discusses the ideal soil: "There are three characteristics of a perfect growing mix. First of all, it's lightweight, so it is easy to work with and easy for plants to grow in. Next, it is nutrient rich and has all the minerals and trace elements that plants need without adding fertilizers. Finally, it holds moisture yet drains well." Mr. Bartholomew goes on to say, "After many experiments, I found three of my favorite ingredients made the perfect mix when combined in equal portions." Mr. Bartholomew's perfect soil (which he calls "Mel Mix") is made up of 1/3 vermiculite, 1/3 peat moss, and 1/3 compost that is made up of five different types of compost. The use of five types of compost is so that your plants get a range of nutrients. Using only one type of compost will provide only one type of nutrient. All this makes perfect sense to me. Here's the negative part with regard to cost: Below I will list all of the soil components I plan to use for my soil mix. I will be using this soil to fill three 4x4 garden beds with a depth of six inches (this means I need 24 cubic feet of soil). I will list the cost of each (what I actually paid) after each ingredient. VERMICULITE 37.98 PEAT MOSS 19.95 COMPOST MADE UP OF THE FOLLOWING: Organic Vegetable and Fruit Compost 11.98 Black Kow Composted Cow Manure: 9.94 Organic Mushroom Compost 11.98 Earthworm Castings (worm poop) 24.98 Organic Composted Chicken Manure 13.98 This comes to a grand total of 130.79 (not including sales tax). I shopped and compared prices at four different nurseries. The individual items above were purchased from all four depending on price. You really need to do your homework with your local garden centers to truly get the best price. Ok. Now, something about cost that will make you feel better: When using this mix again for another planting season, you do not need to ever again add vermiculite and peat moss. The only thing you need to again add is the compost. BUT, if you make your own compost (made up of all the variety of your scraps), you do not need to buy the five component compost mixture again. Needless to say, we IMMEDIATELY began our own compost project. We make daily contributions to our compost containers because we REALLY want to avoid having to buy compost again. Of course the prices above will vary depending on where to live. You also may choose compost ingredients different from the ones I chose. As you can see, the earthworm castings were the most expensive element of my compost (however, I learned that earthworm castings hands down provide some of the best nutrients). Rather than make my own raised garden beds, I chose to buy prefab beds. My cost for those was 171.97. I also needed seeds, seed starters, ingredients for organic pest control mixture (I chose neem oil and organic liquid peppermint soap - I got this idea from the Global Healing Center... they wrote an article entitled "10 Organic Homemade Pesticides"), a water hose nozzle, garden fabric (for underneath raised beds), and other miscellaneous items. We have deer and other critters near our house, so we need netting, poles, etc. Fortunately, a dear older couple is giving us their anti critter materials because they no longer garden. We also need trellises (for plants that vine... like eggplant and cucumber), but my ten year old daughter fashioned some beautiful trellises from bamboo harvested from a neighbor's yard (with their approval of course). Factor in all of the above, and my total cost for this project was around \$450.00. Again, all of these prices can vary dramatically, but I'm just giving you a ballpark figure based on my own experience. One nice thing about using the Square Foot Gardening ("SFG") method is that there is an SFG website you can visit. Available information at this website includes a blog by Mel Bartholomew as well as a forum with posts from SFG gardeners from around the world. In the forum, moderators and SFG gardeners provide a huge amount of supporting information. You can post your own gardening questions and, typically, within a few minutes, someone posts an answer. If you have children, getting them involved with gardening is easy with the SFG method. In fact, Mr. Bartholomew devotes a whole special section in his book to children. My daughter is having a blast participating in our garden project. Gardening teaches responsibility and valuable skills. I think any child will really benefit from being a part of this kind of gardening project. Weeding duties are minimal because the soil composition makes it easy to pull weeds out. Also, this soil is forgiving when it comes to watering (you cannot over water because of the water absorbing and drainage properties of the soil). Based on my family's experience so far (we are at the indoor seed raising stage), I have to highly recommend this book. The SFG method is proven to be one of the best organic high yield systems. You can get maximum produce production with limited space. There may be other gardening methods out there, but I believe SFG to be the best. NOTE: I will periodically update this review to let you know how our project is coming along. UPDATE 3/2013: We are in the process of determining where our raised beds should be located based on sun exposure. We have a couple trees whose shade interferes with sun exposure. One thing that needs to be taken into account is that as the season progresses, the sun's position changes. An area that was sunny one month may not be sunny a month later. UPDATE 3/20/2013: Our little seedlings are coming up beautifully. We put them out in the sun during the day and bring them in when evening frost sets in. QUICK SEED STARTING TIP: My daughter and I found that a turkey baster is excellent for watering seedlings gently and precisely. UPDATE

4/23/2013: I have had various experiences (very bad and very good) with Jiffy seed starters (pellets). You can read my reviews in my profile. Our seedlings are now "young adults" and are doing quite well. The weather in the Southeast has been freakishly cold. Beds should be planted soon. UPDATE 4/29/2013: Made our first batch of "Mel's Mix." It is pretty amazing. The texture is light and airy. At the same time, it is moist and the color is a rich dark brown. The soil has a fresh earthy scent. My daughter calls it, "Black Gold." UPDATE 5/7/2013: As was noted in this book, you simply cannot over-water when using this soil mix. I have been using the mix to re-pot some of my smaller plants from seed starters. I have to water, maybe, every other day. When I do water, I give the plants a pretty good drink. The water quickly drains without leaving the soil soggy. This soil mix is amazing! Best of all, my plants are growing like crazy. UPDATE 07/01/2013: Well, my square foot garden beds are taking off. Right now, as far as fruit developing, I have baby tomatoes (Black Krim) and a few sugar baby watermelons. I started my beds a bit late in the season, but there is still time for them to produce a good harvest. I have lots of other things growing in my beds. UPDATE 09/15/2013: Well, some interesting developments: Due to events beyond my control, for over six weeks my garden received only sporadic watering and organic pest control. My friends and family did a heroic job of helping. Despite the watering issues, many of my plants still did well! I think my successes are completely due to the SFG method (vermiculite water retention is great). I know that my situation is unusual, but I think it is a credit to this method that if circumstances are less than perfect, you won't have a total loss. My Black Krim tomatoes produced a nice amount of juicy and sweet fruits (and they are still going). The complex flavor of the tomatoes is unlike anything I've gotten from a grocery store. My basil plants really took off and since I planted them as companion plants to the tomatoes, my tomato plants appear to have suffered fewer pests. Those tomatoes not planted with basil nearby had some leaves stripped off by caterpillars (I'm not sure if there was a direct connection, perhaps it was a coincidence). French marigolds (Queen Sofia variety) did extremely well, and veggies planted by the marigolds also suffered fewer pests (aphids in particular). We got one beautiful Sugar Baby watermelon (a personal sized melon and you typically only get one or two per plant each season). Our chives survived and even our carrots did ok. Our squash, bell pepper, and eggplant, and cucumber plants fared badly. Our radishes bit the dust despite my having planted French breakfast radishes (which are a bit more heat resistant). I took a big chance on the radishes because they hate very hot weather (I at least wanted to try). UPDATE 01/10/2014: Despite bitter cold days (sometimes in the teens), I have been having fantastic success with winter variety vegetables. I have been able to devote some time to my garden, but overall, very little effort has been required. When temps were in the teens, I covered everything with tarps. When temps got up to at least the mid 20's, no tarps were required. Pests are non-existent (probably due to the bitter cold). At the moment, I am working with nine EarthBoxes (these were a gift) and two raised beds. I'd like to stress that Mr. Bartholomew does not advocate the use of EarthBoxes, they just happen to be something I have and they work well for me. UPDATE 3/14/2014: Just for fun, my daughter and I planted "rainbow" carrots last fall. These included: Lunar White, Solar Yellow, Cosmic Purple, Atomic Red, Bambino and Dark Knight. We harvested the carrots earlier this week. The very dark purple (almost black) are the Dark Knight. My wife has become partial to the Lunar White and my daughter is partial to the Cosmic Purple. I'm going to plant a square each of these just for them for mid spring harvest (hopefully!!). I need to tell you that these carrots do in fact taste like carrots... and they are sweet as candy. We've never tasted a carrot so fresh, crispy and sweet. UPDATE 3/23/2014: I planted tomatoes, sweet bell peppers, Anaheim chiles and eggplant 2/21/2014. For the tomatoes I used peat seed starters. I planted the rest in 3" pots containing my homemade Mel's Mix. I learned that peppers really dislike soil very high in peat, so I avoided planting them in peat starters. The first tomato seedlings peeked out on 2/26/2014. The rest of the vegetables seemed to take forever (I'd say about two weeks). - Peppers, in particular, take forever to come up. I have once again begun my ritual of putting my seedlings out during the day when it is warm and sunny. I bring them in at day's end when it gets cold. Georgia weather has been ridiculous. The "in-and-out" thing (no pun intended for my CA readers who are burger lovers), can be tiresome. I'm not necessarily recommending it, but it works well for me. UPDATE 4/13/2014: Unfortunately, my family and I did not make a concerted effort to prepare our own compost during the past months. I have purchased the following composted materials: Cow manure, chicken manure, mushroom compost, worm castings, and vegetable/fruit compost. I will begin amending my beds with compost later this week (hopefully). I have quite a few seeds that I accumulated over the winter. Many are disease resistant varieties (but non-GMO). I figure I need all the help I can get when it comes to disease. Like the rainbow carrots I planted, some of the seed varieties are novelties. This keeps the interest of my daughter and we all have some fun. I bought some fresh neem oil. I am going to direct sow the rest of my vegetables when the weather gets warmer. UPDATE 7/19/2014: I have good news and bad news: The bad news is that all but one of my tomato plants have fungus. I am trying everything I can to help the problem. I have been getting some good advice from folks at the Square Foot Gardening Forum. We'll see what happens (of course, I will keep you posted). I did not have any problems with fungus last year... many gardeners in my area were surprised by this because this problem is common here. The good news is that I have gotten lots of Anaheim peppers, tomatoes of all sorts of varieties and an eggplant (with more to come it looks like). Also, I harvested some garlic from what I planted in October. I have a zucchini that grew to a monstrous size just one month after it was planted. I am experimenting with asparagus. I am also trying to grow some Kentucky Wonder beans (bush variety). Eureka variety cucumbers are

progressing nicely. I direct sowed some Genova basil (same kind I planted last year), and it also is doing well. I set up a large pot full of Mel's Mix and in it I have rosemary, thyme and ginger. I will probably need to eventually move out all but the rosemary... rosemary gets really big. For the time being though, it's going to be a trio. With regard to tomato horn worms: After my daughter saw the first one of the season, I applied BT Thuricide. About a week later I found a horn worm dangling from one of my tomato stems. It was shriveled, brown and mushy (and, of course, dead). Thumbs up on the BT Thuricide (I wish I had known about it last year!) UPDATE 11/15/2014: Well, I've planted winter crops. I've got four different kinds of kale, six kinds of carrots, spinach, garlic, winter lettuce and shallots. Something interesting: My daughter has foregone her flower bed for winter variety vegetables. Despite the opportunity to plant cold resistant flowers, she would much rather have fresh lettuce, etc. I think that's pretty cool! UPDATE 12/14/2014: Despite weather in the teens, my winter vegetables have all come up and are doing quite well. One of the joys of winter gardening is the absence of bugs. Also, your body doesn't easily overheat like you might in oppressive spring/summer weather. Dear reader, this is my last entry. I have taken you on my gardening trip for over a year. I wish you much success with your own garden. Take care and thank you for reading my review. :) REMEMBER: Shop around for the best prices... and above all... enjoy your garden!! 35 of 35 people found the following review helpful. Success with some alterations! By Lee Ann I am your average vegetable gardener. I grow the basics and I like to can and freeze what I produce. I got tired of weeding and my husband dislikes roto-tilling. I was looking for a low maintenance garden technique. I read this book last winter and my husband built 5 boxes for me for my summer 2016 garden. Lettuce grew great but other plants grew to about 4 inches and then seemed to stop. I fixed the problem and had great results. I added more compost plus dirt from our woods to fill the boxes to 12 inches. This increased my depth (6 inches just was not getting the job done) and lessened the percentage of vermiculite which was making Mel's mix too light and dusty. I really felt like Mel's mix was just too artificial and I decided to give the plants more dirt! The book says to use 1/3 vermiculite which might work for growing flowers, herbs, lettuce but next time I will make his mix with only 1/5 vermiculite. I mostly followed his advice about how much you can squeeze into a square foot but green beans did better planted 4 to a square foot rather than 8. We are hoping to build more boxes for next summer. I love this method. I had no weeding!! We ate out of the boxes all summer and had extra to freeze. Plus, I now have fall peas, lettuce, radish, and am making my gardens. into green houses to extend my growing into November (I live in Wisconsin). Lastly, I will confess that I also used fertilizer twice, which I was really hoping to avoid. Mel's info is great in theory but I found it needed adjusting. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Novice Gardeners Need This Book By Judy Baird I'm an absolute novice at vegetable gardening and this book was among the 6 books I found at the library. I got 20 pages into this and knew I wanted a copy of my own. I remember Mel's show on PBS and how easy it was to grasp his methods. The book puts all of it in a ready reference. Winter's coming so the book will guide us in the months ahead so we're ready for Spring. We have a problem area on our property that is ideally suited to a raised-bed garden. The problem will go away with SFG and we will have the fun of learning to garden without all of the time-honored annoyance of in-the-ground row gardening.

Square Foot Gardening is the most practical, foolproof way to grow a home garden. Whether you're new to gardening, growing an urban garden, or are in the backyard, we have the tools and techniques for you. That explains why author and gardening innovator Mel Bartholomew has sold more than two million books teaching how to become a successful DIY square foot gardener. Mel developed his techniques back in the early 1980s and has been teaching them around the world ever since. In the process, he has made improvements and refinements, and has continually adapted his practices to keep pace with modern times. In this new volume, Bartholomew furthers his discussion on one of the most popular gardening trends today: vertical gardening. He also explains how you can make gardening fun for kids by teaching them the square foot method. Rich with new, full-color images and updated tips for selecting materials, this highly produced, new edition will bring you up to speed with Mel's industry-changing insights.

STARRED REVIEW This classic reference is updated for beginner and expert gardeners alike on evaluating space, creating a soil mix, vertical gardening, and controlling pests. *Library Journal*, Collection Development February 2014