

## **Increase Your Yield with Square Foot Gardening**

### **By Nannette Chisholm**

Published in *Estes Park News*, April 24, 2020, page 17.  
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For those of you who have enjoyed tending a raised bed garden plot with Estes Valley Community Garden (EVCG), you know by now that certain plants do better in raised beds than others, and that space restrictions of a 4 by 10 plot may influence what you choose to grow. Many of us who have experienced gardening in other areas of the country are used to a large plowed section of land where we plant our crops in rows and spend a good deal of our summertime weeding those rows.

Square foot gardening is a technique that was developed by Mel Bartholomew, an American gardener and author, in the 1970's. Advocates of this type of gardening believe that you can grow more produce, use less soil and water, and spend a fraction of the time traditionally needed to weed and maintain a garden.

How do you do it? First, build and prepare your own raised bed or rent a raised bed garden plot with EVCG. A huge perk of gardening with EVCG is that your soil and fertilizers are provided, thereby giving you a jumpstart on the whole raised bed preparation process. Given the current pandemic situation, also cross your fingers that the Community Garden will be able to open this year.

Then, measure your plot into foot long sections by driving a small nail into the boards that make up the edges of your raised bed. Place a nail every 12 inches both lengthwise and widthwise on your raised bed borders. Then, take a sturdy string and connect the nails you have placed, so that you end up with a bed of soil that has a grid of string across the top, dividing the bed into 40 equal squares.

Now all you need to know is what you want to plant, and how many of each vegetable to plant in each square. Typically, each square will hold 1, 4, 9 or 16 seeds or plant starts, depending on how large the plant will grow. Some plants will need more than a single square foot to mature and grow well, so you can use a section of 4 square feet, or perhaps a small mini-row consisting of 2 or 3 square foot blocks that lie next to each other.

There are many charts that you can find online, giving guidelines for how many plants of each type would fit into a square foot. Here is one example of such a reference chart, sourced from Pinterest. With a little online searching, you can find all the information you would need in order to chart out your garden in the square foot gardening method.

Refer to last month's article, "Improving Your Garden with Companion Planting", as you plan out your squares. This way, you can be sure to plant herbs, flowers, and vegetables together that will be beneficial to each other. If you missed it, visit [evcg.org/resources](http://evcg.org/resources) and click on "Techniques & Suggestions" for the archived article.

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Arugula 16	Basil 2	Beans 4	Beets 9	Broccoli 1
Brussel Sprouts 1	Cabbage 1	Cauliflower 1	Carrots 16	Cilantro 9
Cucumbers 1	Dill 9	Eggplant 1	Fennel 2	Garlic 4
Head Lettuce 4	Kale 2	Leaf Lettuce 16	Onions 9	Parsley 2
Peas 8	Peppers 1	Potatoes 2	Radish 16	Spinach 9

Slow and Dippy