Square Foot Gardening

Bonnie Schaschek

Square Foot Gardening was created in 1975 by Mel Bartholomew with his first book being published in 1981 called “Square Foot Gardening”. It became very popular because of the PBS (Public Broadcasting Station) television series.

His first revision was published in 2007 called the “All New Square Foot Gardening”

In 2013 his 3rd book called 2nd Edition of “All New Square Foot Gardening – the Revolutionary Way to Grow More in Less Space” came out

Unfortunately, Mel passed away in April, but he has left his mark on the gardening world.

Square Foot Gardening/Raised Bed Gardening - SFG

1. **It is easy to understand**

2. **Can be located almost anywhere**

3. **Can be any shape: square, rectangle, circular, large container, triangular,… as**

4. **It is efficient,**
   a) **you get at least twice as much produce, in less than half the space.**
   b) **With traditional gardening there is weeding, with SFG less than 5% of your time is spent on weeding.**

4) It is economical –

a) it's approx. 50% less expensive than traditional row gardening
b) it uses on average 80% less space
c) it uses 75-80% less water
d) it uses 80% less seeds
e) it is 90% less work
f) the seasons can be extended for harvesting and preserving

5) It is user friendly – great for beginner gardeners and gardening with children

6) Easy to protect from pests and weather

7) It's highly productive - plants can be planted much closer together than they would be in traditional row gardens using the 1,4,9,16 per square method

8) It's fun, innovative and attractive

Whether you are doing a traditional, raised bed or a square foot garden, you need a plan

1) **Choose a Location**

   a) **Find a spot away from trees (there can be an exception)**

   b) **It <u>should</u> receive at least 6 – 8 hrs of direct sunlight daily**

      Vegetable plants requiring 6+ hrs are beets, carrots, onion, tomatoes, peppers, squash, herbs, cucumbers- always read seed packets or labels

      Areas that only get 2 – 4 hrs of sun can be planted with leafy greens, chives, basil, parsley (leafy greens like morning sun especially in the heat of the summer)

      Shady areas receiving dappled sunlight can be planted with endive, leaf lettuce, spinach, radishes, and small-head cabbage varieties

      You can plant in a raised bed with a bottom under a tree or large pots if you get morning or afternoon sun, check plant light requirements

Location - continued

c) Drainage is a key consideration when deciding where to put your garden.

The area should drain well, you don't want puddles after heavy rains

d) Protection from winds, animals …….

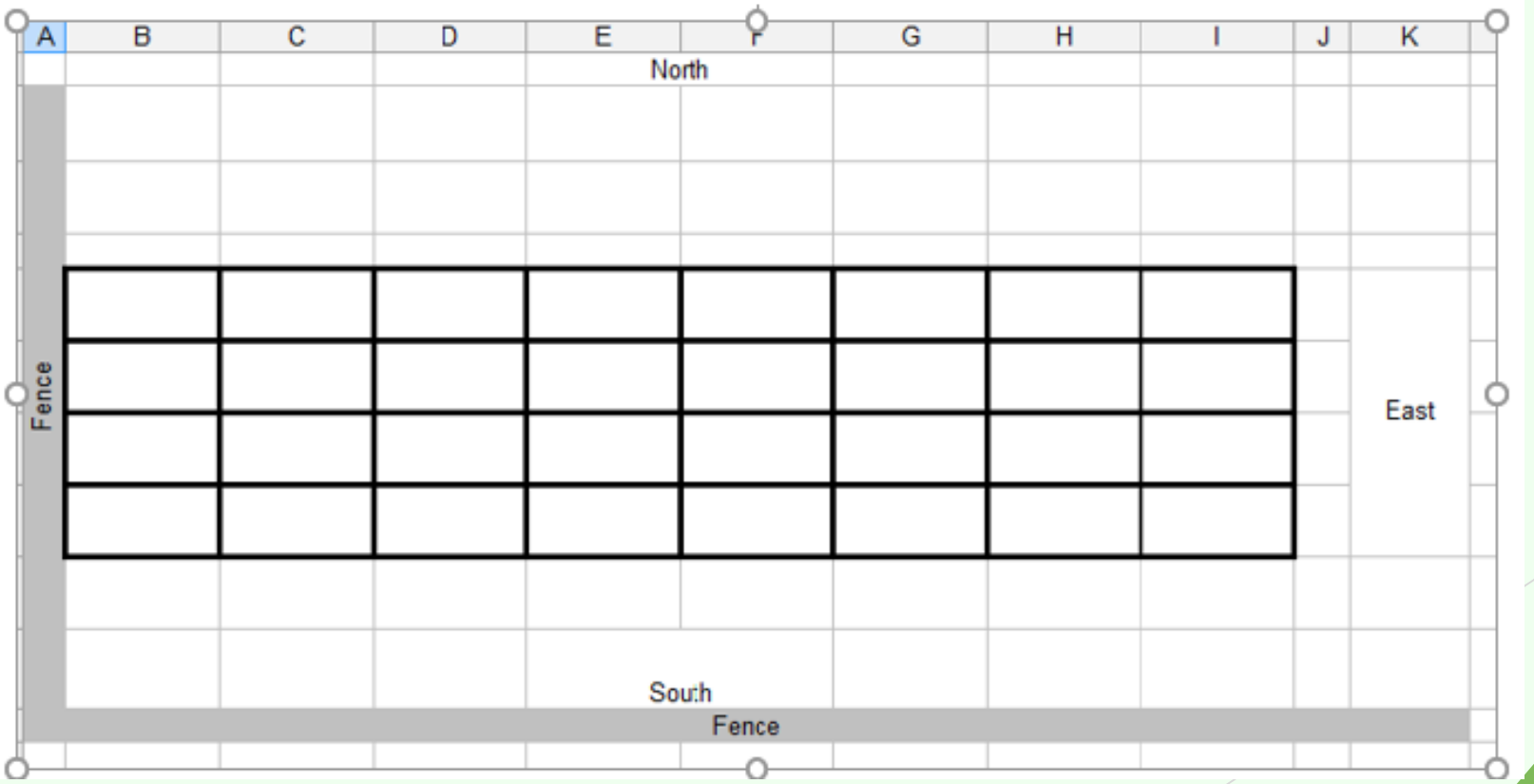
e) Make it easy on yourself

If the garden is near the house, a well travelled area or a water source you will probably spend more time tending the garden

2) Draw an outline of your garden (4 x4, 4 x 8, 3 x 10, 2 x 2, circular beds, triangular……)

One 4 x 4 SFG = 16 sq ft and produce enough salad for one person per season, another 4 x 4 can supply daily supper ingredients and a 3rd will supply extra for giving away or preserving

3) Add landmarks and features (north, south, east, west, fences, ponds, structures….)



Sample 4 x 4 x6” Spring garden

In a 4 x 4 box - in one spring season you could harvest:

- **One head each of Cabbage, Broccoli and Cauliflower**
- **Four heads each of Romaine, Red Lettuce, leaf lettuce, then 16 scallions**
- **Four heads salad lettuce**
- **Five pounds sugar peas**
- **Eight bunches of Swiss chard**
- **Nine bunches of spinach, then nine turnips**
- **Sixteen small ball carrots**
- **Sixteen beets, plus four bunches beet greens**
- **Sixteen long carrots**
- **Thirty-two radishes**

4) Choose what to grow

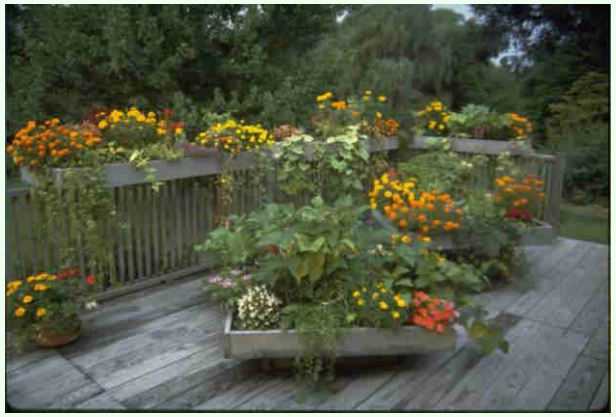
a) Think about seasonal plants for continuous planting (at least 3 seasons)

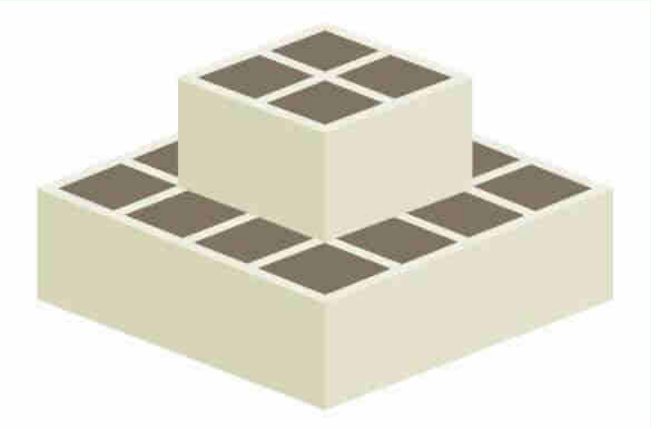
b) Schedule your gardening activities around your regions frost dates

c) Look through seed catalogs – don't get carried away – think about what your family eats You can find over 60 seed companies on www.successfulgardens.com

d) Check with your local garden center for plants they plan on carrying

5) SFG Box- materials of your choice (avoid pressure treated lumber)





a) Preferably No wider than 4 foot - reach from all sides

b) Along a fence, wall or building 2 foot – 3 foot width

c) SFG Depth is 6" for most veggies and flowers

d) Add extension height box for potatoes, large carrots .....

e) weed cloth –stops weeds, garden mesh cloth-stops rodents…

f) bottom - If placing on a patio, deck, raising to waist height or wheelchair height

g) grid – furring strips, vinyl strips, ¼ in pvc - something for identification string doesn't hold up –the grid identifies the box as a SFG

6) Aisles – Spacing between the beds

a) 3 – 4 foot allows space for tending, walking, kneeling, wheelbarrows

7) Soil Mix – the success to SFG is dependent on your soil.

Pending where you are located, your soil may be rocky, sandy or clay with an acidic or alkaline pH. By creating your own soil you can virtually eliminate amending or adjusting your soil.

The <u>standard</u> SFG mix is- 1/3 blended compost, 1/3 peat moss and 1/3 course vermiculite

a) blended compost – if you have homemade compost that's the best, otherwise purchase several types and mix – usually comes in 1 cubic foot bags

b) peat moss – a full bale is 3.9 cubic foot and expands to 8 cubic foot when opened. It makes the soil lighter, crumbly and water retentive.

c) vermiculite – is made of rock, but it is light and fluffy and keeps your soil from getting bogged down – comes in 4 cubic foot bags

How much Soil Mix do you need

Cubic Feet = Area x Depth so a 4′ x 4′ x 6″ box will require 8 cu ft of the soil mix (4x4)/2 = 8

If you have three 4x4x6″ boxes (24 cubic feet total) you will need two 4-cubic-foot bags of vermiculite, one 3.9 cubic foot bale of peat moss and 8 cubic feet of compost.

one five-gallon bucket = .668 cubic feet

To simplify, one needs 4 pails each of coarse vermiculite, peat moss, and at least 5 composts for each 4'x4' x 6" box.

8) **Planting** So we have the location, the size, the shape, the boxes, put in the SFG Mix and and added the grids. Now it's time to plant

Plant a different crop in each square

a) it prevents overplanting any one item

b) it allows you to stagger your harvest by planting one square foot this week and another of the same crop in two weeks or so

c) it promotes conservation, companion planting, crop rotation and reduces pest problems

d) it automatically helps to improve your soil three times a year in small steps

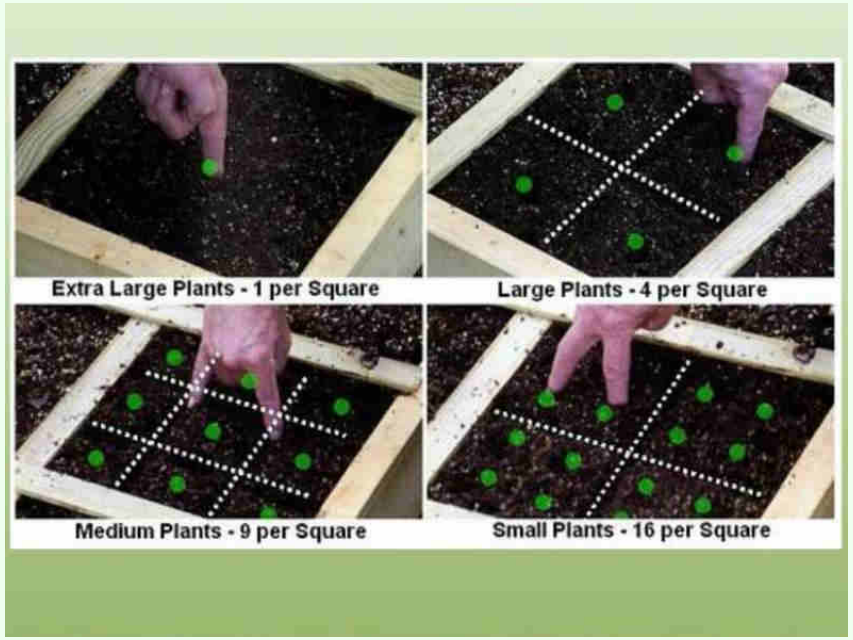
Why plant a whole package of seeds all in one row, only to thin out to seedlings to 2, 4, 6 inches apart? With SFG, seedlings or seeds are typically planted 1, 4, 9 or 16 per 1 sq ft pending the seed packet instructions or the label of the seedling

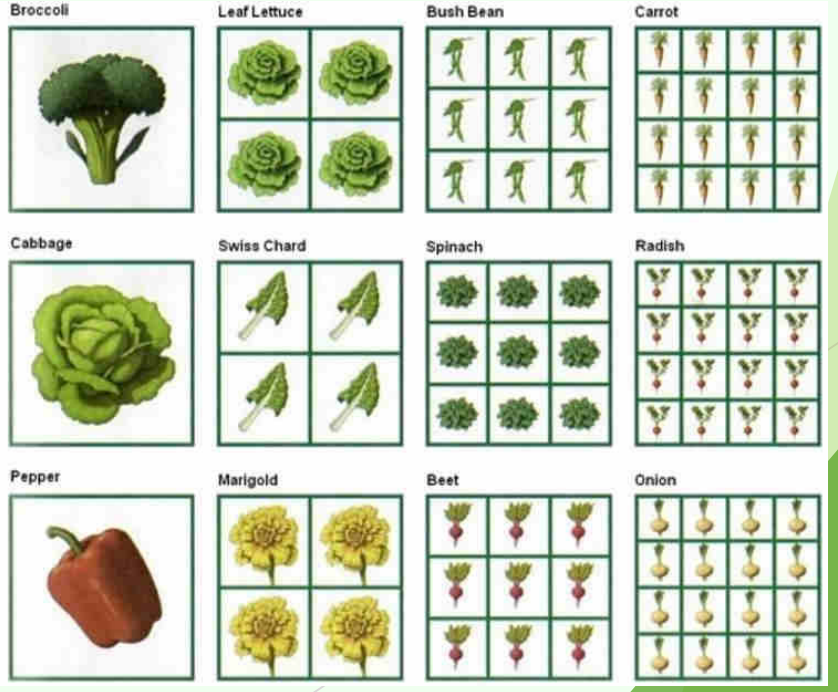
Smaller plants such as radishes, carrots, onions or any plant requiring less than 3 inches will be planted 16 to a square.

Medium size plants such as spinach, bush beans, beets, turnips require 4 inches can be planted 9 plants per square

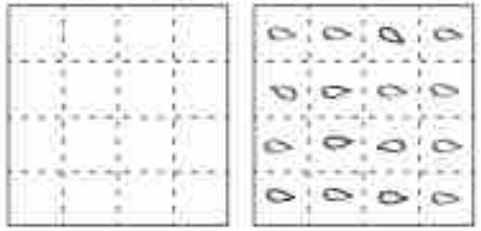
Large plants such as leaf lettuce, swiss chard, parsley, marigolds are planted 4 plants per square which equals 6 inches apart

Extra large plants requiring 12 inches apart are planted 1 per square, such as broccoli, cabbage, and bell pepper



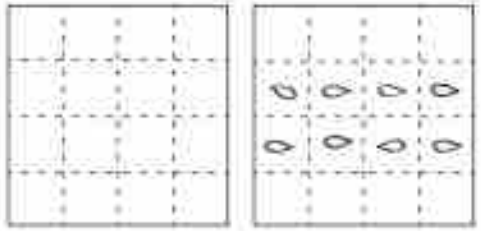


3" spacing = 16 plants / square foot



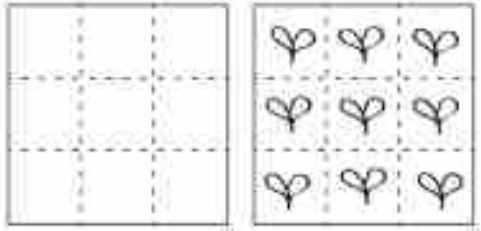
carrots
radishes
parsnips

3"(on trellis) = 8 plants / square foot



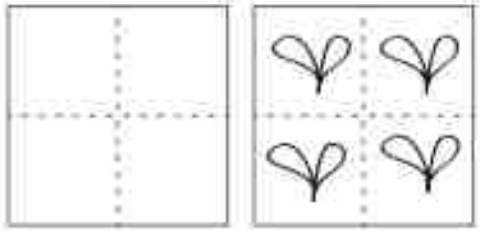
peas
pole beans

4" spacing = 9 plants / square foot



bush beans
spinach
beets, turnips
leeks, onions,
garlic, scallions

6" spacing = 4 plants / square foot



lettuce
swiss chard
corn
basil, thyme
quinoa

8" spacing = 2 plants / sq ft

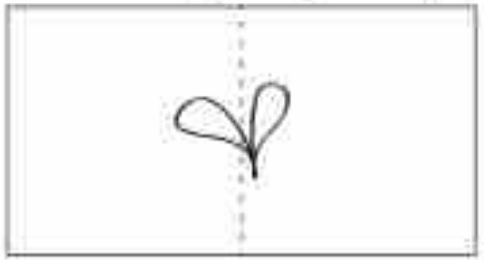
cucumbers (on trellis)
sweet potatoes
kale

12" spacing = 1 plant / sq ft

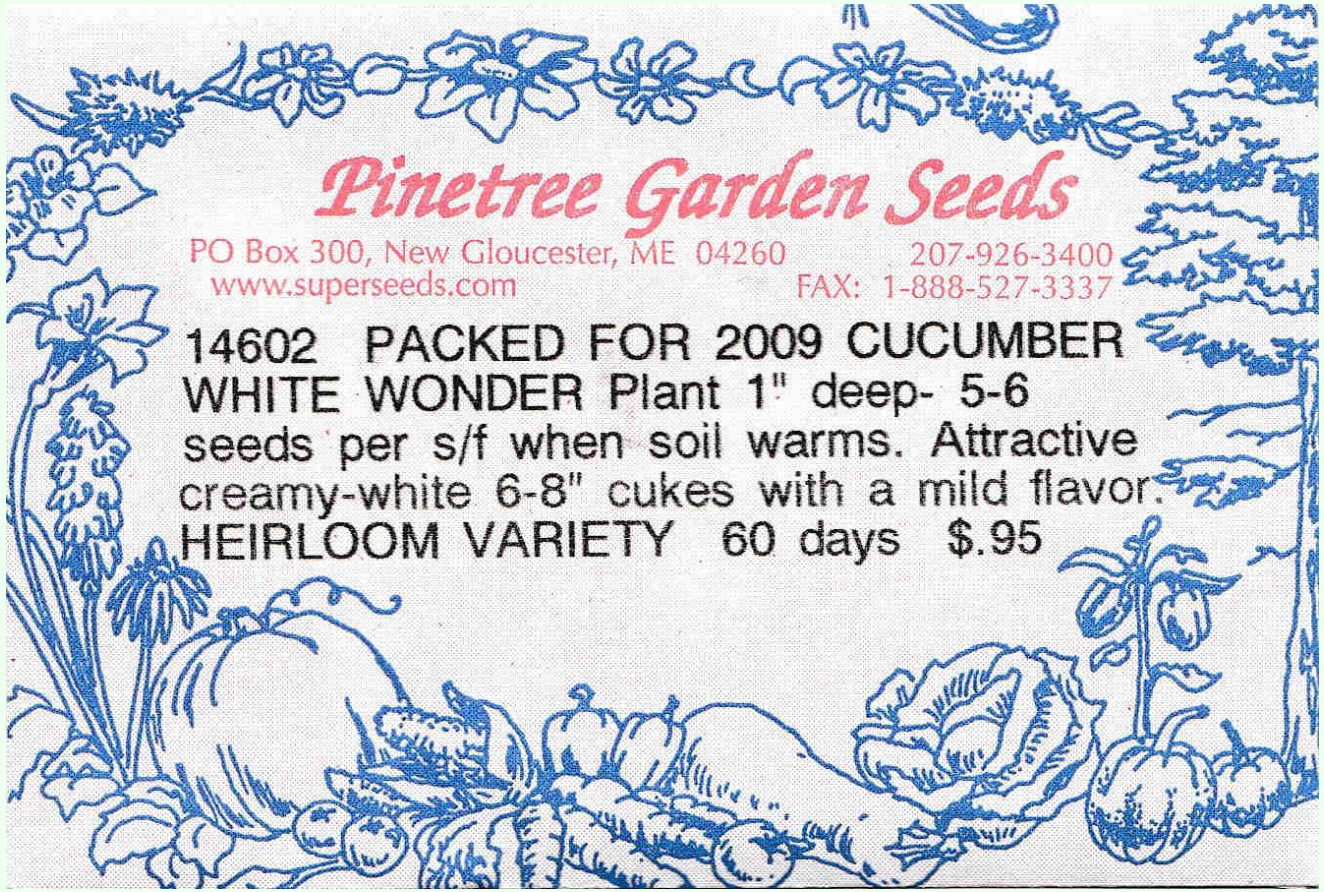
tomatoes
eggplant
peppers
celery
cauliflower
sunflowers

potatoes
broccoli
cabbage
most herbs
asparagus
okra

18" - 24" spacing = 2 sq ft / plant



summer squash
(zucchini, etc.)
winter squash
(pumpkins etc.)
melons
tomatoes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Seasonal Planting :

When do you start seeds indoors:

Read the seed packet – usually states planting prior to the average last frost date

Zone 7: the average last frost date is April 7th and the first frost date is November 15th (you can always ask you local extension center)

10 – 12 weeks: Onions

8 – 10 weeks: Tomatoes, Peppers, Celery

6 – 8 weeks: Most Herbs

5 – 7 weeks: Cauliflower, Cabbage, Brussels Sprouts

4 – 6 weeks: Leeks, Broccoli

2 - 4 weeks: Cucumbers, Squash, Eggplant, Melons, Pumpkins

Planting Seeds directly into the garden prior to last frost

3 – 5 weeks: Peas, Radishes, Turnips, Beets, Parsnip, Spinach

2 – 4 weeks: Swiss Chard, Mustard Greens, Kale, Collards, Kohlrabi, Turnips, Carrots, Lettuce (leaf and head)

After last frost date: Endive, Cucumbers, Melons, Green Beans, Sweet Corn, Squash, Okra, Pumpkins

Follow planting instructions for soil temperature, Corn and Bean seeds especially, but here are others that tend to rot if soil temperature hasn't warmed to a minimum of 50 - 60 degrees

PLANTING SCHEDULE FOR FALL CROPS

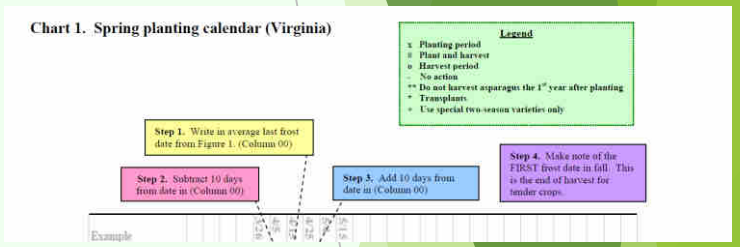
CROPS FOR A FALL HARVEST

SUMMER CROPS STILL GROWING (harvest continues until first frost)	NEW OUTDOOR PLANTINGS IN MIDSUMMER (5-10 weeks before first fall frost)	NEW OUTDOOR PLANTINGS IN LATE SUMMER (0-5 weeks before first fall frost)
Beans	Broccoli	Lettuce
Swiss Chard	Cabbage	Radishes
Corn	Cauliflower	
Cucumber	Beets	
Eggplant	Carrots	
Peppers	Lettuce	
Muskmelon	Spinach	
Winter Squash	Peas	
Tomatoes		

= Indoor Growth, started with seeds = Plants ready for transplanting

Virginia Tech Spring Planting Guide – visit the website for details

Example					3/26	4/5	4/15	4/25	5/4	5/15																	
Date																											
CROP	60	50	40	30	20	10	00	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130	140	150	160	170	180	190	200
asparagus **	x	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
beans, bush	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	#	#	#	#	#	#	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-
beans, pole	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	#	#	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-
beans, lima	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-
beans, wax	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	#	#	#	#	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-
beets	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
broccoli*	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	#	x	x	-	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	-
brussel sprouts*+	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	#	#	#	-	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	-
cabbage*	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	x	x	x	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	-	-
chinese cabbage*	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	-	x	x	x	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	-
carrots	-	-	x	x	x	x	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
cauliflower*	-	-	-	x	x	x	-	-	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	-
chard, swiss	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
collards	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	x	x	x	x	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	-
cucumbers	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-
eggplant*	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-
leeks	-	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
lettuce, bibb	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	o	o	o	o	-	-	x	x	x	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	-	-
lettuce, leaf	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	x	x	x	-	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-
muskmelons	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-
mustard	-	x	x	x	#	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
okra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-
onion (set)	x	x	x	x	#	#	#	#	#	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
peas, garden	x	x	x	x	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
peppers*	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	#	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-
potatoes	-	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-
pumpkins	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-
radish	x	x	#	#	#	#	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
rutabaga	-	-	F	A	L	L	-	P	L	A	N	T	-	O	N	L	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
southern pea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	#	#	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-
spinach	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
squash, summer	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-
squash, winter	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-
sweet corn	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	#	#	#	#	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-
sweet potato	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-
tomatoes*	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	#	#	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-
turnips	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
watermelon	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-



Source: Vegetable Planting Guide and Recommended Planting Dates, A. Straw, Extension Horticulturist, Southwest Virginia Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Publication Number 426-331, Revised December 2006. Accessed May 2009.

http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/envirohort/426-331/426-331.html

Chart 2. Fall planting calendar (Virginia)

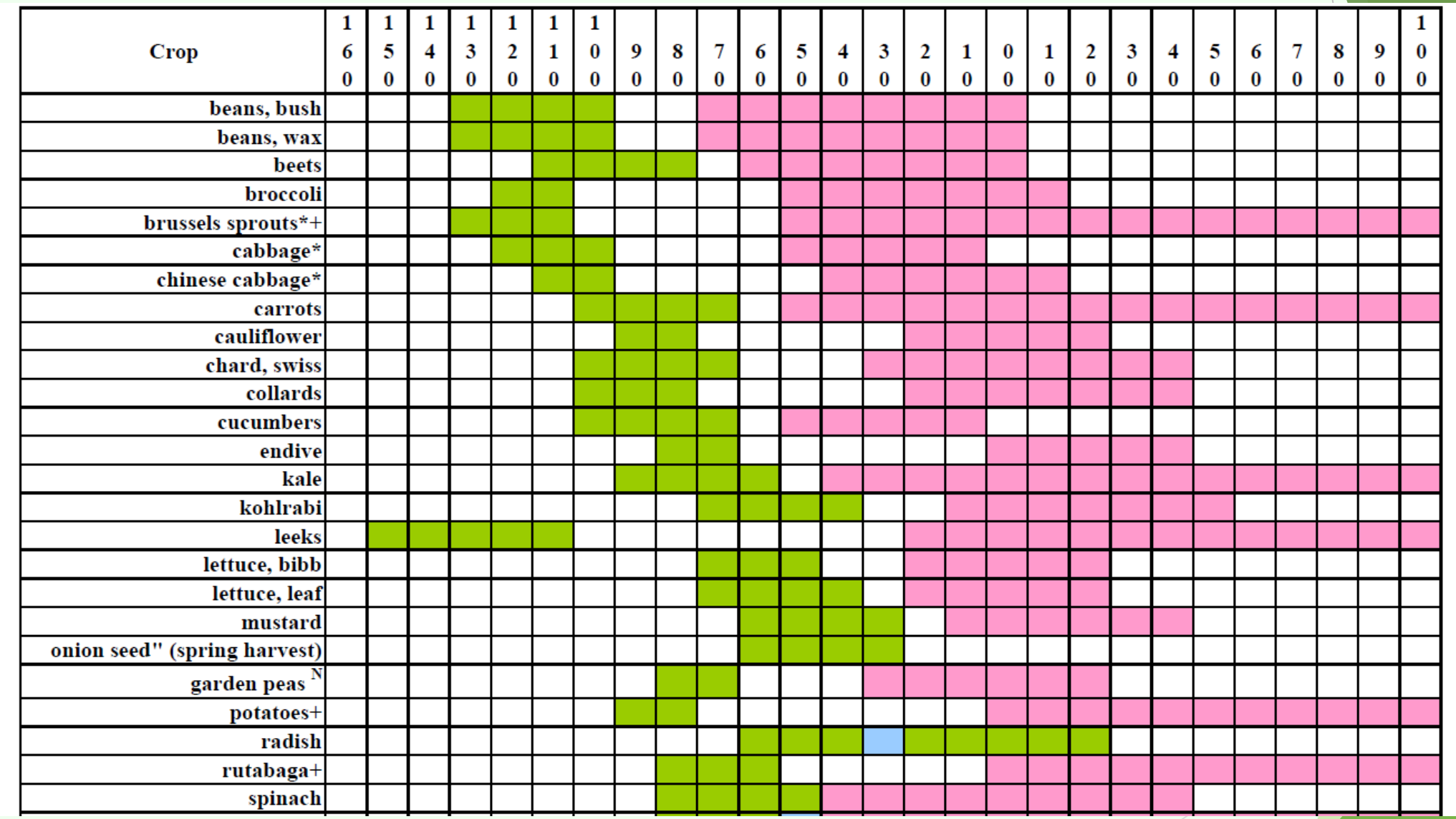
Legend

- Planting Period
- Plant and Harvest
- Harvest Period

* Transplants
\+ Use special two season varieties only
"Tidewater and Piedmont only
[N] Mountains only

Fall Vegetable Gardening, D. Relf, Extension Specialist, Environmental Horticulture Publication Number 426-334, August 1996. Accessed May 2009. http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/envirohort/426-334/426-334.html

Virginia Tech Fall Planting Guide – Visit the Website for details



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Fall Planting

Kale and Lettuce

The best time to plant kale is in early September.

It can be harvested by late October and through the entire month of November.

You can plant two separate fall plantings of lettuce The first goes in the ground around August 10 and can be harvested through most of September.

Put another crop of lettuce in the ground around September 10 for harvest through most of the month of October.

Spinach, Broccoli and Peas

Spinach you should be able to harvest two separate crops. The first is planted in very late August and should be harvested from late September through middle October.

The second batch of spinach goes in the ground just before the middle of September and should be harvested from the middle to the end of October.

The fall growing season for broccoli is much longer. Plant broccoli in the latter third of August and begin harvesting it in early October and through the early part of November.

Peas should be planted in early September and will be ready to eat the mid October.

Beets and Carrots you should be able to get two crops of carrots from your fall garden.

The first should be planted just prior to the middle of August and can be harvested from mid-September through early October.

The second carrot crop should be planted after the first week in September for harvesting during the latter two-thirds of October.

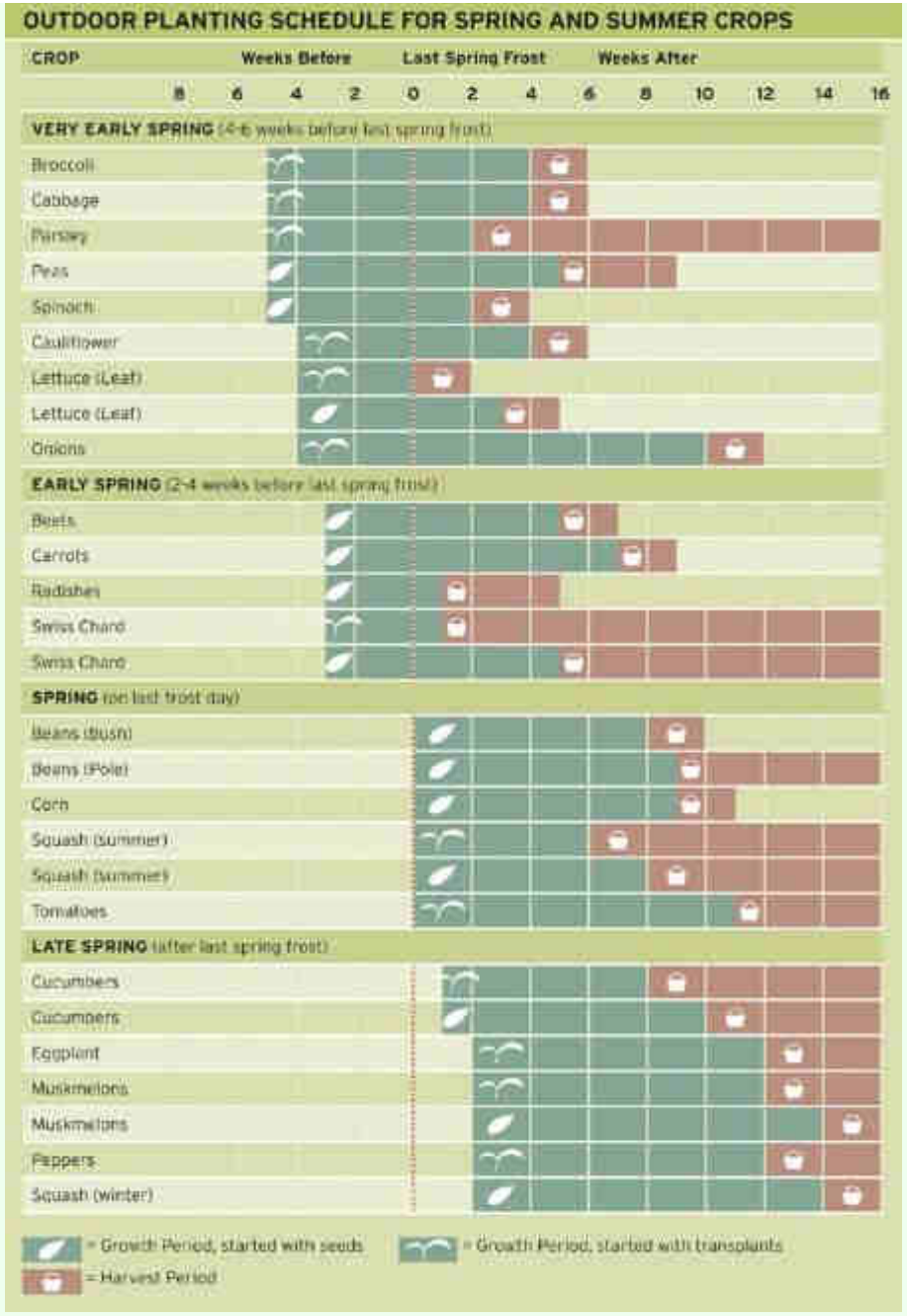
Beets can be planted during the first few days of September and should be ready for harvest after the first week of October and continuing through the rest of that month.

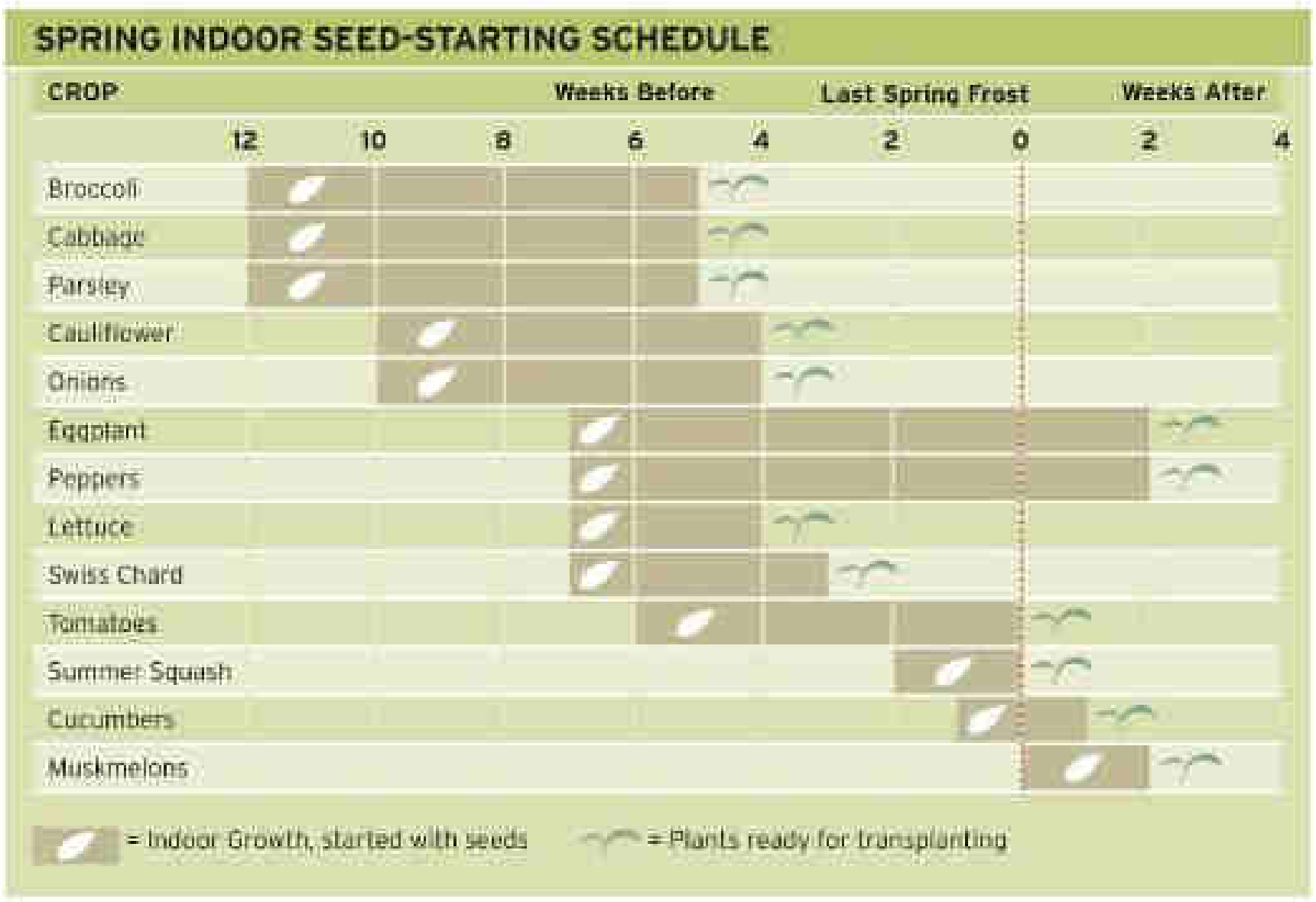
In the first few days of September—you can plant Swiss chard, kohlrabi, and transplant collards and cabbages.

Up to the middle of the month, sow Chinese cabbage, parsley (soak the seeds overnight in warm water to hasten germination), peas, and turnips, and set out seedlings of head lettuce.

Radishes and mustard greens will still have time to produce if you get them in by October 15.

OUTDOOR PLANTING SCHEDULE FOR SPRING AND SUMMER CROPS





When planting considering the following

a) Sunlight – Plant taller plants to the North

b) Support – vine plants need a trellis, put the trellis so you can get to both sides

c) Companion Plants - Vegetables and fruits grow better when they have companion plants that help attract pollinators, and prevent pests from eating various plants you have planted.

d) Plant in waves. Plant a half square of carrots or radishes every two weeks you'll have a harvest all season

e) Plant the plants you harvest often, like salad greens, around the edges where they're easy to reach

f) Train vining plants (tomatoes, squash and melons) up trellises

g) Plant one seedling or 2 – 4 seeds (in case some don't sprout) in each location

h) Remember to (update our garden journal) write down what is each square and the date you planted it

i) After you harvest a square, dig in compost and plant something different

Companion Planting

Companion Planting is the practice of growing plants for the mutual benefit of each other.

The best companion plants are those that do not compete for nutrients, water, sunlight, or root space, will provide beneficial protection from various pests and help attract insects and bees to pollinate other plants.

Square foot gardening, attempts to protect plants from many normal gardening problems by packing them as closely together as possible, which is facilitated by using companion plants, which can be closer together than normal.

There are many books on the subject, google it or visit your local library, besides using the information and charts in Mel Bartholomew's "2nd Edition, All New Square Foot Gardening"

A few are:

Companion Planting for Better Crops by Mary Beth Stenson

Louise Riotte wrote both Carrots Love Tomatoes and Roses Love Garlic

Companion Planting by Dale Mayer

There are also multiple chart formats to use as reference:

Type of charts:

VEGGIES	GOOD GARDEN COMPANIONS
Beans	Rosemary, celery, cucumbers, corn, marigolds (avoid onions, fennel, french marigolds)
Bok Choy	Potatoes, onions, celery, beets, nasturtium, rosemary, dill, sage (avoid strawberries,
Broccoli	Bush beans, lettuce, dill, tomato, celery, cucumbers (avoid bush and pole beans,
Broccoli (raab)	Tomatoes, cucumbers, onion, lettuce, chard, celery, bush beans, potatoes, beets,
Cabbage	Aromatic herbs, celery, potatoes, beans, onions, marigolds (avoid bush and pole french marigolds)
Cauliflower	Celery, aromatic herbs, spinach, chard (avoid bush and pole beans, tomatoes,
Celery	Almost everything except carrots, parsnip and potatoes (avoid carrots, parsnip,
Collards	Celery, aromatic herbs, spinach, chard (avoid radishes, oregano, strawberries)
Corn	Beans, pumpkins, cucumbers, melon, radishes, peas, potatoes, sunflowers (avoid
Cucumbers	Sunflowers, corn, peas, beans, radishes, lettuce, celery (avoid aromatic herbs -
Eggplant	Bush and pole beans, spinach, potatoes, tarragon, thyme, peppers, marigolds (avoid
Kohlrabi	Onion, dwarf beans (avoid pole beans, tomatoes, cucumbers)
Leeks	Carrots, strawberries, onions, celery (avoid tomatoes, pole beans)
Lettuce	Onions, cucumbers, carrots, radishes, strawberries, sunflowers (avoid beans, parsley)
Melon	Corn, radishes, nasturtium, pumpkins, oregano (avoid potatoes)
Okra	Sweet peppers and eggplant (avoid plants that shade)
Onion	Beets, lettuce, strawberries, tomatoes, cabbages (avoid peas, beans, asparagus)
Peas	Aromatic herbs, carrots, corn, cucumbers, radishes, potatoes (avoid onions, leeks,
Peppers - Hot	Tomatoes, carrots, onions, basil, parsley, marjoram, oregano, petunias, geraniums, kohlrabi, beans)
Peppers - Bell/Sweet	Tomatoes, carrots, onions, basil, parsley, marjoram, oregano, petunias avoid fennel,

Companion Planting Color Chart

Asparagus	Beet	Beans, Bush	Beans, Pole	Cabbage family
Asparagus	Asparagus	Asparagus	Asparagus	Asparagus
Beet	Beet	Beet	Beet	Beet
Beans, Bush	Beans, Bush	Beans, Bush	Beans, Bush	Beans, Bush
Beans, Pole	Beans, Pole	Beans, Pole	Beans, Pole	Beans, Pole
Cabbage family	Cabbage family	Cabbage family	Cabbage family	Cabbage family
Carrots	Carrots	Carrots	Carrots	Carrots
Celery	Celery	Celery	Celery	Celery
Corn	Corn	Corn	Corn	Corn
Cucumber	Cucumber	Cucumber	Cucumber	Cucumber
Eggplant	Eggplant	Eggplant	Eggplant	Eggplant
Garlic	Garlic	Garlic	Garlic	Garlic
Lettuce	Lettuce	Lettuce	Lettuce	Lettuce
Onion	Onion	Onion	Onion	Onion
Parsley	Parsley	Parsley	Parsley	Parsley
Peas	Peas	Peas	Peas	Peas
Peppers	Peppers	Peppers	Peppers	Peppers
Potatoes	Potatoes	Potatoes	Potatoes	Potatoes
Radish	Radish	Radish	Radish	Radish
Spinach	Spinach	Spinach	Spinach	Spinach
Squash, Summer	Squash, Summer	Squash, Summer	Squash, Summer	Squash, Summer
Squash, Winter	Squash, Winter	Squash, Winter	Squash, Winter	Squash, Winter
Tomatoes	Tomatoes	Tomatoes	Tomatoes	Tomatoes

Type of information found reference material:

Growing Cucumbers with Companions

Friends: Radishes, peas, corn, cabbage and beans are thought to help produce more vigorous crops and improve yield. Both Onions and radishes are thought to repel root maggots. Corn and broccoli are planted to help reduce the problems caused by cucumber beetles.

Chinese cabbage, lettuce and celery will happily grow in the light shade provided by trellised cucumbers. You could also interplant with cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower. These crops should be ready for harvesting just as the cucumbers hit their peak.

Enemies: traditionally cucumbers are never grown with potatoes, as it is believed that the potatoes are more likely to suffer potato blight. Gardening lore also suggests that the cucumbers and aromatic herbs are not happy bedfellows.

Growing Vertically

Why grow vertically

a) It's spectacular

b) It saves space

c) You grow better crops

d) It adds a third dimension to your SFG

e) It costs less than you think

f) It lasts for years

Vertical Planting spacing

Plants per Square Foot

Gourds (1)
Tomatoes (1)
Cucumbers (2)
Pole Beans (8)

Plants Per Two Square Feet

Melons(1)
Pumpkins (1)
Summer Squash (1)
Watermelon (1)
Winter Squash (1)

Protecting Your Plantings

Planting Protection & Support

CILANTRO

BOTANICAL INFORMATION

Family: Umbellifer

Height: 1 to 2 feet

Spacing: 1 per square

GROWING SEASON

Spring: late

Summer: yes

Fall: no

Winter: no

Seed to Harvest/Flower: 5 weeks (leaves), 12 weeks (coriander seeds)

Seeds Storage: n/a

Weeks to Maturity: 5 weeks

Indoor Seed Starting: no

Earliest Outdoor Planting: after last frost

Additional Plantings: 2-week intervals until early summer for continuous harvest

Last Planting: not needed

Description

The fresh leaf of cilantro is probably the most widely used of all flavoring herbs throughout the world. It is used in Middle Eastern, Indian, Southeast Asian, and South American cuisines. Cilantro is a pretty plant that looks somewhat like parsley. Use it like parsley in smaller quantities for a unique tang. When cilantro goes to seed, it becomes another herb altogether—coriander. Ancients used to chew coriander seeds to combat heartburn (probably after weeding their long single-row gardens). The seeds are sweet when they're ripe, but terribly bitter when immature.

Starting

Location: Full sun to partial shade.
Seeds Indoors: No.
Transplanting: Does not transplant well.
Seeds Outdoors: After last frost.

Growing

Watering: Weekly.
Maintenance: Shelter the plants from wind, otherwise cilantro needs little care besides watering.

Harvesting

How: Pick cilantro leaves as you need them, even if the plant is only 6 inches tall. For coriander seeds, cut whole plants and hang to dry, and then shake the dried seeds into a paper bag.
When: Harvest the cilantro leaves anytime after the plant has reached 6 to 8 inches. Harvest the seeds (coriander) after the plants have turned brown but before the seeds start to fall. Cilantro self-sows with abandon.

Preparing and Using

Cilantro leaves and coriander seeds are both used in curries and pickles. The strong, spicy leaves can be added to salads, fish, or beans, and it is found as an ingredient in many ethnic recipes.

Summary

1) Layout/Design – You can arrange your garden in squares, not rows.
2) Boxes – Build boxes to hold soil mix above the ground
3) Aisles – Space boxes 3’ apart to form walking aisles, working aisles…
4) Soil – Boxes are filled with Soil mix: 1/3 peat moss, 1/3 blended compost and 1/3 vermiculite
5) Grid – Make a square foot grid for the top of each box
6) Care – Never walk on your gardening soil. Tend your garden from the aisles
7) Select – Plant a different flower, vegetable, or herb crop in each square foot, using 1, 4, 9, 16 plants per sq ft
8) Plant – Conserves seeds. Plant 2 or 3 seeds per hole OR place transplants in saucer-shaped depression
9) Water - Water by hand from a bucket of sun-warmed water, drip irrigation or hand held hose
10) Harvest – When you finish harvesting an area, add compost and replant it with a new and different crop

Square Foot Gardening is:

1) 50% less expensive than regular gardening
2) 80% less space is required
3) 90% less water is used
4) 95% less seeds are needed
5) 98% less work

Square Foot Gardening does not require:

1) constant weeding
2) heavy digging
3) chemical fertilizers
4) buying new seeds every year
5) Harvesting vegetables all at the same time
6) Excessive Watering

The 10 Commandments of Square Foot Gardening

1. Thou shall not waste large space with a large row garden
2. Thou shall not use or dig up your existing soil
3. Thou shall not use a hoe, shovel or rototiller
4. Thou shall not waste seeds by planting and then thinning
5. Thou shall not remove your “SFG Grid”
6. Thou shall not use any fertilizer, insecticides or pesticides
7. Thou shall not plant more than you can harvest or take care of
8. Thou shall not waste water
9. Thou shall not fail to grow all your vine crops on a vertical support
10. Thou shall not fail to replant each square as it is harvested