The advantages to SFG are:

- The soil stays friable (easily crumbled or pulverized) because you never walk in the squares.
- You can harvest many more vegetables because you’re planting in blocks instead of rows.
- The squares are much easier to water because you aren’t wasting water between rows. The same holds true for fertilizer.
- You have less weeding to do because the garden has no rows between plants and every square foot is dedicated to vegetables.
- Pest control is easier.
- You rotate crops by square instead of location.
- The squares are more aesthetic and require far less work.
- You don’t need to till each spring.
- You can build trellises at the north ends of the squares to grow vining plants such as peas, beans and squash vertically, which saves even more space.
- This type of garden warms faster and drains better than traditional gardens.
The soil in square foot gardens should be a minimum of 6 inches deep, but 12 inches is better to accommodate root crops such as carrots, potatoes and parsnips.

**To construct a square foot garden** that is slightly above grade, obtain nonrotting wood (cedar or pressure-treated wood free of arsenic) that measures 4 feet by 12 inches by 2 inches and form a square. Then add the soil and add the divisions. The first SFG—16 square feet—is ready to be planted.

Designs can differ. This photo shows a square foot garden that’s 8 feet long, 2 feet wide and 29 inches tall, with rot-proof cedar siding. It also contains a false floor 10 inches from the top for root vegetable growth.

For those who don’t want to design their garden, at least one prominent mail order catalog offers a SFG package.

Here are examples of what you can plant in each square foot:
- 9 onions, beets, bush beans, bush peas, garlic or spinach
- 16 carrots or radishes
- 4 lettuce, chard, marigolds or kohlrabi
- 1 tomato, pepper, eggplant, broccoli, cabbage or corn
- 1 squash, cucumber or melon per 2 square feet
- 6 vining plants, such as beans or peas, on trellises

Here are examples of the quality of crops produced:
- Hardneck garlic
- Deliciously long carrots
- Tomatoes such as the Sweet Million

Another advantage of SFG is that the raised beds spare the gardeners’ back. SFG can allow seniors to enjoy freshly harvested vegetables much longer than they can with the more physically demanding method of conventional gardening. It also will inspire young people just getting started in gardening who have limited space and time to enjoy the good health that comes from consuming fresh produce grown in their own back yard.

To learn more about square foot gardening, visit www.squarefootgardening.com/.

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