

March 2014

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Diets and Wormeries - Spring focus on growing



Welcome to the Spring edition of our news letter. With Spring now upon us, gardening and growing plants moves up the 'to do list'. SusWoT is continuing to support first time gardeners as well as those with more experience by providing selected seeds and plants for the smaller gardens. Even if you believe you are short of space take look at the square foot garden approach on page 2 and grow vegetables for yourself.

A year ago SusWoT began to promote the benefit of having a wormery as an alternative way of reducing the costs of disposing of cooked kitchen food waste. For keen gardeners this will supplement existing garden composting and for non-gardeners a way of disposing of those small plant clippings and vegetable peelings

SusWot have already some wormeries under trial and want to find out which wormeries are effective and the easiest to use. We are hoping to increase the number of wormeries available to people over the next few months who would like to join the trial. If you would like to know more contact: suswot2050@gmail.com

How does a wormery work?

Composting worms differ from normal garden worms as they live near the surface and eat the decaying vegetation from gardens and forests. You will find them in manure heaps, compost bins and sometimes under bricks, stones and logs.

To give you some idea the 'Wormcity Wormery' (see picture above) has been specially designed to take advantage of their lifestyle.

Basically the wormery contains a series of composting trays, each one has small holes in the base. You start off with one tray that contains the worms and your kitchen waste. When this is full, you simply add the next tray on top and start filling it up and continue with the other trays.

The worms will eat the kitchen waste in the bottom level, and because they are surface dwellers, they will move upwards through the holes into the tray above, and start to consume the kitchen waste in this level - then move upwards again, leaving behind vermicompost which you can use on your garden.

When they eventually reach the top tray, the food in the lowest tray should be completely composted and can be used in the garden, and the empty tray replaced back on the top. It sounds complicated, but its really very easy and only takes a few minutes to manage each week.

Wormeries make fabulous and unusual presents. Children love them as they are great fun and Educational. So why not buy one for the keen gardener

Latest News

SusWoT has just been awarded a Neighbourhood Partnership grant to fund a further 10 wormeries. If you are interested in trying out a wormery please contact us as soon as possible.
suswot2050@gmail.com

And the Tiger Worms



When it comes to worms, **a plentiful amount of quality worms is better than a big quantity of larger, cheaper worms.** Start with **Tiger Worms** (*Eisenia Fetida*) with a stock of small-medium sized young (and therefore hungry). When starting a wormery remember the worms don't like the cold, especially if there is no waste or compost to live in.

After lengthy research and trials, these worms have proven to be noticeably the best native species for use in a Wormery and in over 20 years of using them, they continue to be the species of choice. **Tiger Worms** breed exceptionally well, are hungrier, and are more tolerant of a wider temperature, moisture and acidity range than their close cousins *Dendrobaena*

Diary Dates

Local Produce Market
9.00am – 1.00p
Saturday 22nd March
Saturday 26th April
Saturday 24th May

Community Fair
Saturday 10th May
Get Growing Trail

Saturday & Sunday
June 7th & 8th

Village Show
Saturday 6th September

Welcome to Square foot Gardening (SFG)

Gardening for all Grow something to eat

SFG advocates claim it produces more, uses less soil and water and takes just 2% of the time spent on a traditional garden. So what makes Square Foot Gardening special and why don't all gardeners use it?

SFG was developed as a reaction to the inefficiencies of traditional gardening. In 1975 Mel Bartholomew had just retired as an engineer and decided to take up gardening as a hobby. It was only natural that he would apply his analytical skills to the problems he encountered. In particular he found the average gardener was spending hours weeding the big gaps between long rows of plants, creating unnecessary work for themselves. It soon became clear that getting rid of rows and using intensive deep-beds could dramatically cut the amount of maintenance the garden required. Add a one-foot square grid on top and it became easy to space and rotate crops.

The Square Foot Gardening System

Over the years the SFG system has evolved into a precise set of rules:

Create Deep Raised Beds: Typically 4 feet by 4 feet, with a square foot lattice placed on top to visually separate the crops. Beds are between 6 and 12 inches deep which gives the plants plenty of rich nutrients, while maintaining good drainage.

Use a Specific Soil Mix: One third each of compost, peat moss and vermiculite. This starts the raised beds completely weed-free as well as being water retentive and full of nutrients.

Don't Walk on the Soil: This is now common practice with raised bed gardening but back in the 1970s it was revolutionary to suggest that you wouldn't need to dig your soil if you didn't tread on it.

Plant in Squares: To keep the planting simple there are no plant spacings to remember. Instead each square has either 1, 4, 9 or 16 plants in it depending on the size of the plant – easy to position in each square by making a smaller grid in the soil with your fingers. As an exception to this there are a few larger plants that span two squares. Climbing peas and beans are planted in two mini-rows of 4 per square.

Thin with Scissors: Instead of pulling up excess plants which can disturb the root systems of the plants you want to grow you snip them off with scissors.

Accessories: As well as details of all the above the '[All New Square Foot Gardening](#)' book has practical instructions for constructing various accessories including protective cages that easily lift on and off the SFG beds, covers to extend the season and supports for vertical growing.

A New Way to Garden in Less Space with Less Work

Price: £9.09 [Paperback] Mel Bartholomew

There's a purpose to each of these 'rules' and together they make up a powerful and almost fail-safe method for successful gardening. It's a great method for new gardeners, people who have little time, the elderly or disabled (SFG gardens can be built at a raised height to make them more accessible) and children. Many schools have embraced the SFG method because it's easy to install and maintain without becoming an additional burden for the teacher. However, there are some limitations:

Easy to Outgrow: Although many vegetables can be grown in SFG gardens it struggles to accommodate larger plants (squash, melons, main-crop potatoes etc), perennials (globe artichokes, rhubarb) and fruit bushes/trees. Once new gardeners experience the success of SFG gardens they often want to expand the range of crops they grow beyond the standard SFG crops.

Non-renewable Resources: There's no doubt that 'Mel's Mix' makes an excellent soil for vegetables. However, two of the three ingredients come from non-renewable sources. Peat takes thousands of years to develop and is a valuable natural sink for greenhouse gases. Vermiculite is mined and is therefore also a non-renewable resource with a significant carbon footprint. In common with many gardeners I won't use peat and would prefer not to use vermiculite.

Expensive for Large Gardens: Although SFG beds are cheap to maintain they are quite expensive to set up if you have a large area and want to fill it quickly.

None of these reasons prevent SFG from being a useful part of a garden though – you can use 100% recycled compost in the beds instead of Mel's Mix, gradually build up the number of SFG beds and combine it with areas of your garden which are set aside for fruit trees and larger crops. Many of the SFG techniques that were revolutionary in the 1980s are now commonly used for vegetable gardening – deep raised beds, not compacting soil, removable covers and plant supports etc.

The next page shows which seeds can be sown and when. Internet sites have plenty of ideas on how to plan the garden. Local micro-climate and soil conditions need to be considered carefully

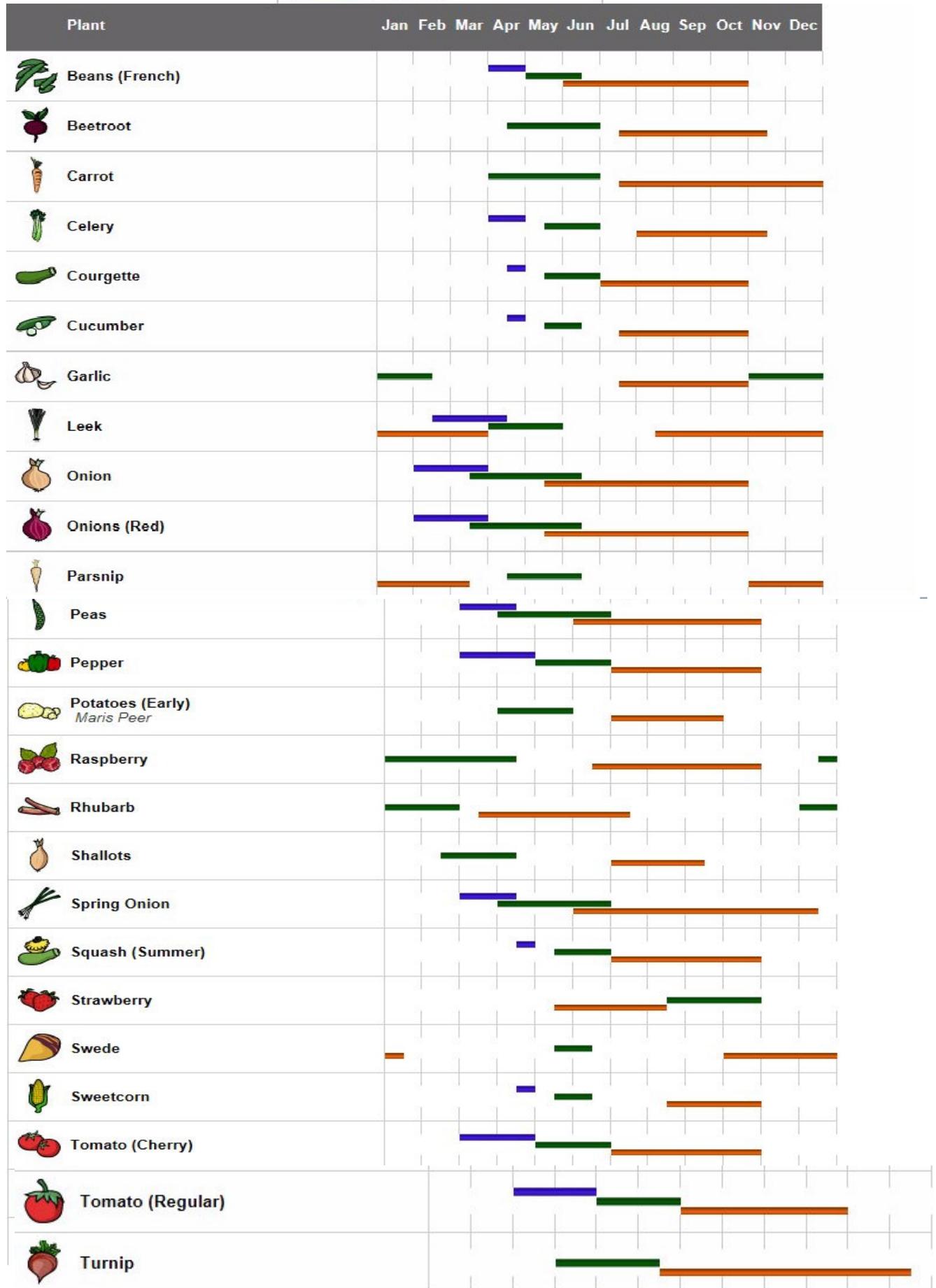
Square Foot Garden Kits

If you are interested in SFG but not constructing the beds, the Eden project sells 3 x 3 a square foot garden, that has a total of 9 square foot planting sections with 3 extra deep ones that can produce a surprising quantity and variety of vegetables in a season. The deeper sections are perfect for root vegetables and you can grow herbs, salads and strawberries in the others. These great products are created almost entirely from recycled plastic, including waste food containers and old computers. £110

www.edenproject.com/shop/Square-Foot-Garden



Getting the most from one square foot



Environmental Records Centre

Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC)

is the central repository for biodiversity and geodiversity data for the 'West of England' area: the same area as the former county of Avon.

View the [BRERC Recording Area map](#) for more detail.

BRERC's database has over 1.5 million species records

and extensive data on wildlife habitats, designated sites and geological sites. Our database is constantly being updated, with approximately 5000 new records added per month. All our data is [Validated and Verified](#) before it is made available for distribution.

To see what's in your area, use our [Interactive BRERC Maps](#).

This shows species record summaries for the whole BRERC area. (*Maps open in a new window.*)

BRERC data is used in many ways locally, regionally and nationally. These include: planning decisions, biodiversity action plans (BAP), determining the status and distribution of species and habitat, and reporting to government on biodiversity targets.

We are a not for profit organisation funded and supported by our partner local authorities, Natural England and Avon Wildlife Trust. We have a regional presence as part of the [South West group of records centres](#) and are a member of ALERC, the national Association of Local Environmental Records Centres

Big Green Week

We expect BIG Green Week 2014 to be even bigger as partners prepare for a year long programme of celebration in 2015, when Bristol is 'European Green Capital 2015' – the first ever UK city to win this award.

Online event registration (below) is now open for running an event in BIG Green Week 2014, closing on **Friday 28th March**.

To find out more and register your event please go to:
<http://biggreenweek.com/2014-event-registration/>

Apple Trees for Sale at the Conservation Volunteers' Tree Life Centre £15 each

Local heritage varieties on offer
Choice of rootstocks available
Grafted and cared for by volunteers
Delivery £1 per mile or collection

Contact Rachael Ford: tree-life-centre@tcv.org.uk,
07766421301

Tree Life Centre, Grimsbury Farm, Grimsbury Road,
Kingswood, BS15 9SE

**Don't forget to buy your
SusWoT tomato plants
at the
Westbury-on-Trym
Community Fair
May 10th 2014**

Top tips for wildlife gardening

Did you know that your garden is teeming with wildlife? Often hidden from view, even the tiniest creatures are vital to the functioning of your garden. Birds and butterflies add colour, grace and movement; bees, beetles and bugs pollinate flowers, recycle nutrients and feed larger creatures, while Hoverflies and Ladybirds eat aphids. And remember, the more wildlife you encourage and support the more interest and enjoyment you'll have.

Brighten your garden with flowers Flowers provide pollen and nectar for bees, butterflies and other insects all year round. Many garden plants are as good for wildlife as wild flowers are. These include aubrieta and flowering currant in spring; buddleia, lavender and thyme in summer; and sedum, Michaelmas daisy and hebe in autumn.

Have a variety of trees, shrubs and climbers or a mixed hedge These give food and shelter to wildlife. Good small trees for blossom and berries include rowan, crab apple and hawthorn. Ivy provides shelter for nesting birds, plus autumn flowers for nectar, and winter berries for birds and small mammals; moths love honeysuckle.

Look after mature trees Because these trees will look after the wildlife. Old trees are more important for wildlife than any other single factor. If your garden's too small for big trees, try to get some planted in the neighbourhood and protect any that are there already.

Create a pond Create a pond or just use an upturned bin lid or a sunken washing bowl filled with water. Make sure it has one sloping side to allow creatures an easy way out, and add lots of plants.

Leave a pile of dead wood in a shady spot Any wood will do, although big logs are best and can make a home for anything from beetles to other useful mini-beasts.

Build a compost heap Provide food and water for birds all year round Providing a mix of food such as peanuts, seeds, kitchen scraps and fat balls, plus natural food such as berries and seed-heads, will attract a wide range of birds.

Relax! Don't feel that you have to be too tidy. Leave some areas undisturbed, especially between March and May. Piles of leaves and twiggy debris in a hedge bottom, or out-of-the-way corner, will shelter frogs, mice and hedgehogs, and the seeds in dead flower heads can be valuable food. Let a patch of grass grow longer, as this encourages wild flowers, provides shelter for small mammals and food for some butterfly and moth caterpillars.

Garden in a sustainable way This helps to protect wildlife and the environment worldwide. Use fewer chemicals and no peat, choose wood from sustainable sources, recycle all you can and save water. Check the origin of any wood you buy for the garden. Wood products (including paper) with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label are from well-managed forests and will not contribute to the destruction of tropical rain forests.

Get active outdoors Being active outdoors improves your health and helps you to feel more energetic and less stressed. Every minute you spend in the garden is good for you both mentally and physically.

Find out more about exercise and the environment in

[Enjoying the natural environment](#)

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/advice/wildlifegardening/top_tip.spx