



Digging It!

April, 2013

Gardening that is less work for you (and your Back)!

There will be an increase in 12% of the number of backyard vegetable gardens in 2013 over last year. (GWA Stats)

If you are looking for a small but efficient garden, read on. The square foot method first popularized by Mel Bartholomew deserves to be revisited. (Check out his book or DVD as well as the PBS television series.)The practice combines concepts from other organic gardening methods, densely planted raised beds and creates a small, clearly defined area and yes, you could plant flowers or herbs instead of veggies.



Creative Commons

A smaller garden area makes sense for areas with poor soil, beginner gardeners or as an adoptive recreation for those with disabilities.

A raised box can be created for those who wish to garden without bending or squatting, making gardening accessible for wheelchair, cane or walker users. Heavy tools are not necessary as the soil is not compacted by stepping on it to water or weed. It remains loose and more easily workable. The densely planted crops can form a living mulch and often prevent weeds from establishing. If you do spot a weed it is

easily removable due to the light soil. Not to mention that you can sit on the side rail and enjoy a cup of tea while you are watching your peas grow.

Choose the location for your bed wisely, for sun for access to water and close enough to the house to be enjoyed.

If possible resist using pressure treated wood due to its toxicity unless you have a substantial liner to protect the soil. There is no apparent reason to have a wooden bottom as it is preferable to drain the garden naturally. A wide ledge on top that will support the weight of the gardener and manufactured soil 6" to 12" in depth. (This will accommodate deeper rooted vegetables such as carrots and asparagus.)

Being very stingy with the room in my raised bed, I grow potatoes in a plastic garbage container with holes cut out of the side for the foliage and no lid. Harvesting is a piece of cake....just lift the container and reveal your treasures.

It is suggested that your first square foot garden be no bigger than 4' x 4' or 16 square feet so that it is accessible from all sides.



Dreamstime

My bed is still under snow but will be all ready for planting in the spring. You can easily draw up a grid and start planning now.

Your bed should be divided out into one square foot units and marked out with sticks or twine.

Plan for one square foot for larger plants such as broccoli or basil, four plants per square for medium plants such as lettuce and nine plants per square for medium-small plants and sixteen per square for onions or carrots. Plants that normally take up lots of space running such as squash or cucumbers are grown vertically on sturdy frames, strings or nets.

Beds are easily covered by cloth or wire to protect plants from pests or sun. Alternately, fasten an old door to one side of the bed. It can be opened/raised or closed/lowered according to what conditions prevail. This turns your raised bed into a cold frame to extend the gardening season.

Natural insect repellent methods such as companion planting with garlic or marigolds become more efficient in a closed space.

This gardening method has been used successfully in a variety of regions. The state of the soils underneath the garden is not relevant when you can provide six inches of good soil topped up with a little compost each year.

Cherin Harris-Tuck,

Master Gardener

April To Do List

- Bring tools out of storage and examine them for rust or other damage. Clean and sharpen them if you didn't do it in the fall!
- Prune all late summer-flowering shrubs and old perennial growth.
- Divide perennials that bloom in mid-summer.
- Avoid walking on your lawn and garden as the ground starts to thaw. The soil is saturated with moisture and will compact very easily.
- Have a gardening question or need to identify a plant or pest, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).
- Rake lawn, repair damage and seed bare spots.
- Prepare garden beds for planting – dig in compost and other organic matter.

Tip of the Month:

Many plants can be started by putting seeds in the ground as soon as the soil can be worked. These include:

Spinach, Peas, Cabbage, Swiss Chard, Kale, Bachelor's Buttons, Calendula, California Poppy, Godetia, Love-in-a-Mist, Phlox, Poppy, Rocket Larkspur, Sweet

Other plants can be started indoors and transplanted to the garden when all fear of frost is past. For example: Tomatoes, Snapdragons and Spiderflowers

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Newsletter of the Simcoe County Ask a Master Gardener books containing answers to your most common gardening questions are available at any of these speaking engagements for only \$10 or Gardening Guides for only \$1. Valuable references for you or as gifts for a gardening friend!

Master Gardeners

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Editor Cherin Harris-Tuck



Master Gardeners of Simcoe County

Where to find us for free gardening advice!

Simcoe County Master Gardener Meeting,

White Pine Board Room, Midhurst, 7:00 pm, **April 16, 2013**

Climate Change? Free Master Gardener presentations;

April 10, 2013 Keswick Public Library 7 – 8:30pm

April 24, 2013 Holland Landing Public Library 6:30 - 8pm

May 2, 2013 Mount Albert Public Library 6:30 – 8pm

April 3/13 2:00 – 3:00

Painswick Library 48 Dean St., (Senior Social),
Joan Nieman-Agapas: Gardening for Zoomers

May 13/13 Afternoon

Painswick Library 48 Dean St.,
Charlotte Vorstermans: Clematis

May 15/13 2:0 – 3:00

Barrie Library,
Joan Nieman-Agapas: Gardening for Zoomers

May 21/13 7:00-8:15

Painswick Library 48 Dean St.,
Catherine Waffle: Top Five Gardening Mistakes

“April is a promise that May is bound to keep.”

Hal Boreland

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For information on arranging a lecture for your group please contact Tracy Bosley at 705-435-2608 or email her at tvbosley@rogers.com. For more information on Master Gardeners.