

Square Foot Gardens Lessons & Projects

Introduction

Square Foot Gardens are a low cost and easy way to add food diversity. While there are small farms in most sites, many villagers don't consider the value of growing different foods for their own use. This project provides an introduction to square food garden which allows for many different foods to be grown in a small area. Here are some project ideas, step-by-step instructions, and sustainability considerations for international settings.

Sustainability Considerations

1. Always consider if supplies can be replenished locally.
2. Determine whether the community has access to tools and supplies such as seeds, soil compost, water planter structure materials..
3. Identify where gardens can be planted. Most plants require a sufficient amount of sunlight. Also consider how the garden will be watered. Watering cans work well but the water source shouldn't be too far from the garden.

Supplies Needed

- Seeds that are native to the area.
- Supplies to create raised gardens. Wood pieces or large bags have been used successfully in the past.
- Flat wood pieces..
- 2x4 wood pieces
- Small shovels or trowels.
- Watering cans.
- Rope or thick string.
- Soil
- Compost or manure.

Lesson 1: Build the Raised Planter

Step-by-step setup:

For each wood container that provides nine planting spaces:

1. Cut four flat wood pieces 36 inches long.
2. Cut 2x4 pieces at lengths that are the same as the width of the flat pieces..
3. Using the 2x4 pieces as inside corners, nail the wood together to create a square box.

If wood isn't available, sturdy bags that are about 12 inches in diameter can be used. Simply make a 3x3 grid with 9 planting spaces instead of the "wood box" raised garden.

Lesson 2: Mixing the Soil and Filling the Planters

1. Evaluate the water retention of the existing soil. The goal is for the soil to absorb water enough that it will stay moist for a couple of days but not so wet that it appears muddy.
2. Combine organic material like compost or manure with the native soil so that it is soft enough to retain moisture without creating a muddy texture.
3. Fill the planters with approximately 8 inches of the mixed soil.

Lesson 3: Layout, Seed Planting, and Watering

1. Using the rope, or some other available supply, layout a 9x9 grid with approximately a foot of space in each spot.
2. Plant seeds according to instructions for the plant. water—important in areas with limited resources.
3. Water the garden enough that it moistens the soil but does not flood it.
4. Check daily to confirm the soils is staying moist without becoming muddy. The amount or timing of water may need to be adjusted depending on weather or soil conditions.