

Columbia Gardeners Fall Meeting
October 23, 2024

There was a social hour between 6-7 p.m. that gave gardeners a chance to mingle and enjoy refreshments. The business meeting and speaker followed the social hour.

Board members in attendance:

Betty Miller
Amod Bhide
Diane Stack
Cleve Chick
Ebele Onwueme
Joe Reyes
Betty Bense
Alice Jackson
Carole Graves
Guy DiRoma
Sara Kaman

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Betty Miller called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She introduced herself as the President of Columbia Gardeners and thanked everyone for coming. She explained that we would have a short business meeting, the election of officers, and a presentation by Kim Roman. Kim is a square foot gardening expert. She works with non-profits to help them implement gardening projects. She is a certified square foot gardening instructor who teaches classes and runs workshops on square foot gardening. Betty also mentioned that there would be a raffle before concluding the meeting.

Betty next turned the meeting over to Heather Richardson (Nominating Committee Chair from West Side) who conducted the election of Officers.

Election of Officers

Heather thanked the two other members of the Nominating Committee (Nancy Freeman from Elkhorn and Bess Caplan from Long Reach) for their help on the Committee.

Heather explained that each year, Columbia Gardeners elects a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and a Member at Large from each of the three sites at our annual Fall

meeting. She presented the requirements Board members and nominees must meet in order to serve on the Board. Specifically,

- Board members must attend at least seven of the eleven yearly Board meetings which are held on the second Tuesday of each month, except December.
- Board members must contribute to the operation and success of Columbia Gardeners, Inc. by fully participating in Board meetings, sharing views on the issues being considered by the Board, proposing solutions and voting on these issues.
- Board members must have access to email and read their email regularly to keep up to date on matters related to Columbia Gardeners.
- Board members and nominees must be in compliance with Columbia Gardeners Rules and Regulations and have no adverse rulings from Columbia Gardeners, Inc.

Heather presented the slate of officers that the Nominating committee put together. The slate included Betty Miller for President, Amod Bhide for Vice-President, Carol Cannon for Treasurer, Diane Stack for Secretary, Ebele Onwueme for Long Reach Member-at-Large, Carol Cannon for Elkhorn Member-at-Large and Kathy Jones for West Side Member-at-large. Heather pointed out that all of the nominees are currently serving Board members and that nominations for any of the elected positions can be made from the floor.

Heather asked for nominations from the floor but there were none. Voting was conducted by a show of hands. People were asked to raise their hand if they approved of the current slate of officers; then people were asked to raise their hand if they did not approve of the slate of officers. The slate of officers was unanimously unopposed. Thus, all elected members will continue in their current positions for another year.

Betty thanked the Nominating Committee for running the election of officers.

Information from our President

Betty Miller advised gardeners that the water at the sites was turned off this week.

Our expenses at the sites have gone up over the years. Gardeners were told to look for a raise in plot fees for 2025. The County increases our plot rental fees by 5% each year.

Betty asked if there were any questions from the floor. Someone asked if we have a lot of people seeking plots. Betty explained that we have a wait list for each site.

Another gardener asked for an update on the rat problem at Elkhorn. Betty explained that we are working on the problem and advised gardeners to clean up their plots so they don't become good nesting sites for rats. Gardeners should also cleanup along their fence lines.

Joe and some volunteers put down 120 rat traps. They seem to be working. We expect to see fewer rats as winter comes and the rats' food is reduced. When vegetables disappear, the rats tend to go into traps. We will reassess the rat situation in the winter and spring and hopefully the rat population will be down.

Presentation

Kim Roman gave our presentation. Kim is a square foot gardening expert. She works with non-profits to help them implement gardening projects. She is a certified square foot gardening instructor who teaches classes and runs workshops on square foot gardening. She has been doing square foot gardening since 2010.

Kim provided us with a link to her website (sfg4u.com) which has general information about square foot gardening and also advertises classes that she teaches. She also mentioned a book (All New Square Foot Gardening) which is coming out in its fourth edition very soon. The book (as well as its predecessors) is written by Mel Bartholomew who is the originator and inventor of the Square Foot Gardening method.

Square foot gardening is more efficient than traditional row gardening. It saves time water, work and money.

Kim presented ten BASIC PRINCIPLES for Square Food Gardening:

1. PLANT DENSELY. Don't waste space. You can grow a lot of produce in much less space than you dreamed possible. A huge row garden isn't necessary. Placing a few Square Foot Garden beds in a relatively small space can be more productive than a large row garden that occupies a good portion of your yard.
2. GROW UP. The greatest productivity comes by growing up, not out. A variety of easy-to-build trellis structures allows vining vegetables to use the vertical plane rather than sprawling out as they do in a traditional row garden.
3. MEL'S MIX™, NOT GARDEN SOIL. You don't need your old garden soil to grow great vegetables. The best results come if you make your own growing medium such as the fabulous formula Mel Bartholomew created, which we call Mel's Mix™.

4. GARDEN CLOSE TO YOUR HOME. Gardens are more efficient when planted close to your house, not in a distant plot. It's human nature to pay attention to what is close-at-hand, and Square Foot Gardens should be close to your house where you can admire them and tend them easily.

5. GROW SHALLOW. Raised beds don't have to be large and deep: a mere 6 inches of growing medium is all it takes for most crops. Gone are the days of laboriously digging and double-digging a row garden to mix in soil amendments to improve the soil.

6. FERTILIZER IS NOT NEEDED. Mel's Mix has a rich mixture of different organic composts, and provides all the nutrients that plants need. Just add fresh compost when you replant a square.

7. KEEP AISLES BETWEEN BOXES NARROW. Rather than long rows, a vegetable garden is most efficient planted in small boxes with aisles set about 3 feet apart. The traditional practice of planting long rows with wide, empty spaces between them just creates more ground in which weeds can grow. That's too much work!

8. BE STINGY WITH SEEDS. Rather than planting lots of seeds, then thinning them out to the desired spacing, Square Foot Gardening uses a simple 1, 4, 9, 16 spacing guideline. No wasting seeds or thinning. Seeds can last for two or more growing seasons when stored properly.

9. PLANT IN SQUARES. Planting in 1-foot squares is the most efficient way to plant. Mel viewed this as one of the very important basics of his method. The grids are key to planting efficiently and rotating in new crops when the first crop has produced its bounty. By planting with diversity—many different types of plants intermingled in a single box—you eliminate many of the disease problems that can plague a traditional garden.

10. ROTATE CROPS. Rotation planting is automatic in a SFG and gives the maximum yield from your garden. The yield from a single 4' x 4' SFG will surprise you, and the reason is that many of the squares can be planted at least twice in a gardening season— either with two successive crops of the same vegetable or swapping out a new crop for late-season produce.

Follow the Square Foot Gardening Foundation on Facebook www.facebook.com/squarefootgardeningorg and Instagram@squarefootgardening. For more information visit www.squarefootgardening.org. Learn the easiest, most productive method of gardening without the weeds, work, and waste of a traditional row garden!

Kim also presented eight steps of square foot gardening.

1. Plan your garden - Create a map of your garden by drawing a big square with 16 squares inside. Use pencil as you may want to adjust your planning. If you have the "All New Square Foot Gardening Method" Third Edition book handy, refer to chapter 3 to learn how to plan your boxes to grow the amount of produce you're likely to need. Tip: put plants that will grow the tallest on the North side of the box and plants that require more attention such as bush beans near the borders of the box.
2. Lay out the garden - A sunny location (6 -8 hours of sun) close to the house is the best spot. Use chapter 4 to plan the shape and configuration of the SFG boxes and map out where they will be located in your yard/area.
3. Build boxes and grids - A simple 4' x 4' box is the recommended layout for beginners. If you choose to do another configuration, just make sure you can walk all the way around your box and be able to reach into each square. Grids allow for visualization for planting and help prevent overplanting. Grids also maximize the harvest. Chapter 5 provides instructions about how to build the basic 4' x 4' box that is six inches deep, as well as other box shapes and sizes.
4. Build box accessories - Consider building trellises to get the most use of space, protective covers for pest and critter protection, or other accessories for maximum productivity and efficiency. Use half inch pvc pipe.
5. Create Mel's Mix™ - One of the most important factors in SFG is creating a special growing medium. To make Mel's Mix™ you will need a large tarp, particle mask for dust, shovel or rake, compost, coarse vermiculite, peat moss, and a water supply. Spread out tarp, empty the measured compost onto it, then add peat moss and mist lightly with a hose. Add the coarse vermiculite and mix well. Transfer mix to garden box, water thoroughly, and add your grid. It is recommended to follow the book for best results and chapter 7 explains the importance of using this mix. You can also get good compost from Veteran's Compost (443-584-3478). One idea is to use 2 inches of Mels' mix, lots of water, 2 inches of Mels' mix, lots of water, 2 inches of Mels' mix, lots of water.
6. Plant - Chapter 8 provides details about how to plant with no wasted seeds. If you decide not to use seeds, you can start your garden with "plant starts". These are the plants already started in cell packs that you find in your local nursery or garden centers. Divide your squares into either 1, 4, 9, or 16 holes for seeds/plants. Determine the number per square by thinking of the grown plant in sizes of small, medium, large and extra large. Use your fingers to evenly divide 1x1-foot squares into appropriate number

of holes, depending on the crops. One hole per square is needed for extra-large crops such as broccoli, cabbage, and peppers. Four holes per square is needed for large crops such as a leaf lettuce, swiss chard, or flowers. Nine holes per square is needed for medium crops such as bush beans, spinach, or beets. 16 holes per square are needed for small crops such as carrots, radishes, or onions

7. **Maintain** - In chapter 9 you'll learn techniques for watering and weeding your garden, as well as inspecting it and tending to any pest problems and diseases. Some tips include: hand water at base of plant. Avoid sprinklers! Overhead watering is wasteful and causes disease. Hand pick pests or cut away infected plant part with scissors. Wash scissors afterwards. Clean up any dead debris around plants. Vertical crops - weave in and out of netting weekly being careful not to break.
8. **Harvest and Replant** - With careful planning, your garden will have a good, long harvest season. Given the diverse planting pattern of a square foot garden, this pleasure occurs all through the gardening season and beyond.

After her presentation, Kim gave the audience a chance to ask questions. A few gardeners asked questions.

Door Prizes and Close of Meeting

A number of door prizes were awarded and the meeting ended around 8:40 p.m.