

Companion Planting

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Many gardeners know that a diverse mix of plants is a great recipe for healthy and beautiful gardens. This concept can be beneficial when garden plants are combined with others that provide a mutual benefit.

Vegetable gardens are a big opportunity for providing perks when using a companion planting approach. Sprucing up a vegetable garden with a mix of vibrant flower companion plants gives the garden personality and protection.

Use companion plants as backdrops and borders or intersperse them within your garden. If possible, native companion plants make a great first choice so that our beneficial native insects have suitable habitat. Designing with companions can also help protect the plants by growing taller plants where shade is needed to protect shorter, more sensitive ones.

Some beneficial companions include:

1. Tomatoes like basil, bee balm, cucumber, garlic, marigold, mint, nasturtium and parsley (add protection and flavor); but don't like to be planted near mature dill (retards growth), corn, fennel, rosemary or potatoes.
2. Basils like tomatoes, peppers, oregano, asparagus and petunias but don't like rue or sage.
3. Bell peppers like tomatoes, parsley, basil, geraniums, onions, petunias and okra but don't like fennel or kohlrabi.
4. Cucumbers like to be with just about everything except sage, rue and potatoes.
5. Marigolds naturally cleanse the soil and repel insects.
6. Yarrows repel insects and are a natural fertilizer. They attract predatory wasps and ladybugs.
7. Petunias are great companions to tomatoes but plant them everywhere because most things will benefit. They repel some aphids, tomato worms, and leafhoppers.
8. Nasturtiums are the real Girl Scout of the garden...a friend to all. The leaves, flowers, and seeds are edible and wonderful in salads.
9. Parsleys are good with just about everything but are a mint enemy. Keep these two away from each other.
10. The Three Sisters is a traditional planting combination of corn, pole beans, and either pumpkins or squash. Each of the three contributes something to the mix. Corn offers support as the beans pull nitrogen from the air and bring it into the soil, benefiting all three. Large squash leaves provide a living mulch of shade and coolness on the ground as well as a raccoon repellent as they don't like to walk on prickly leaves.

For more information, *Roses Love Garlic* by Louise Riotte and *The Complete Guide to Companion Planting* by Dale Mayer. A great website to check is Golden Harvest Organics www.ghorganics.com; and if you want to know what to plant and when in your zip code area, try www.sproutrobot.com. 🌱