

COMPANION PLANTING

Because Even Plants Need Friends

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by Tess Pennington

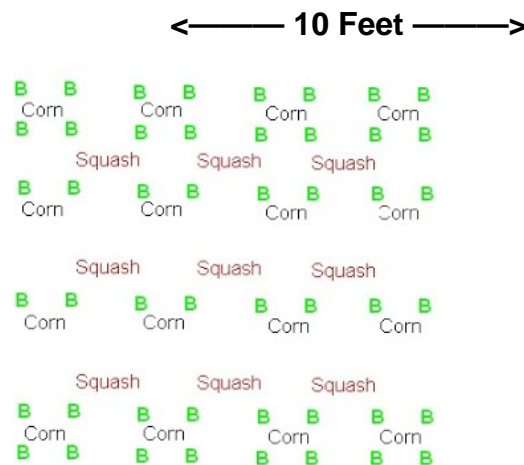
Companion Planting: Because Even Plants Need Friends
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Companion plants share a working relationship and equally benefit from being planted near each other. They may add nutrients to the soil, repel harmful insects, attract good insects or provide shade for other plants. This mutually-beneficial relationship is an effective fertilizing method that simplifies gardening and, in the process, minimize adding additional fertilizers and watering.

One method that I regularly use in the garden is to plant herbs and flowers that are drought-tolerant and prefer drier soil around the perimeter of the garden. Then, I plant vegetables and flowers that prefer moist soil in the middle of the perimeter.

A simple, yet well-known companion trio is the Three Sisters Technique that was grown by Native Americans. According to the Native American legend, the three sisters, also called “Our Sustainers” were sent down from the “Great Spirit.” The sisters are inseparable and all work together in order for each sister to thrive. This trio: corn, beans and squash, share a symbiotic relationship that helps sustain the crops and gives them maximum nourishment.

The corn stalk offers itself as a structure for the beans to climb on. While the beans supply the corn with needed nitrogen as well as well as improving the overall fertility of the soil. When the beans climb the corn stalk, it also provides the stalk with added stability from strong winds. The squash vines grow at the base of the bean and corn plants and provide a type of living mulch to help conserve water and provide weed control. The roots from the squash vines are shallow and will not invade the roots of the other plants.



Once the plants have been harvested they can be incorporated into the soil as organic compost, thus fertilizing the soil even more. In this approach, the efficiency of space is not only beneficial, but it is also very easy to achieve results.

THREE WAYS TO COMPANION PLANT

1. Sun and Shade

Arranging plants according to their size, and sun/shade requirements is a way of making the most of your garden space and soil nutrients. Plant shade-loving plants in the shadows of those that are tall enough to cast shade on the lower plants. Plant the shade-lovers on the north and east sides of taller plants, where they will be in shadow for most of the day. With this arrangement, cabbages, lettuce and spinach, which prefer shade, might be grown on the north or east sides of taller plants like tomatoes, peas and beans.

2. Mix in Flowers

Planting clusters of certain flowers within your vegetable garden will cut down on watering, as well as helping both types of plants thrive. For instance, I always plant marigolds around my vegetable garden because their strong scent naturally repels insects and also secrete a chemical into the soil for a natural bug repellent. Many believe that marigolds are beneficial to almost any plant, including: tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, broccoli, cucumber, pumpkins and squash. Further, nasturtiums are also a mutually beneficial flower to have around – and they are edible. This type of flower can even be planted around your fruit trees. Geraniums can be planted for their natural pest controlling properties. This will help cut down on insecticidal sprays.

3. Mix in Herbs

Pepper plants, which like moist soil, are helped by being planted amid a dense ground-cover plant like marjoram or basil. Basil repels aphids and mites, while borage and lemon balm attract bees to the garden to aid in pollination. Tarragon is good for the whole garden because it secretes beneficial nutrients into the soil.

LIST OF BENEFICIAL COMPANION PLANTS

Planting companion plants that benefit each other will help keep the plant healthy, repel bugs and promote healthier harvests. For example, pair lettuce or cabbage with mint-family plants -- mints, sage, lemon balm, hyssop and rosemary -- which help repel slugs and also prefer shade. Tip: If you have limited garden space, keep the mint plants in containers to prevent them from taking over the garden; you can place the containers within the garden. Here is a complete list of companion plants, herbs and flowers that will help benefit your crops.

Onions - fruit trees, nightshades (tomatoes, capsicum peppers, potatoes, brassicas, carrots)

Asparagus – tomatoes, parsley, aster family flowers, dill, coriander, tomatoes, parsley, basil, comfrey, marigolds, nasturtiums

Beans and legumes - Beets, lettuce, okra, potato, spinach, dill, cabbage, carrots, chards, cucumber, eggplant, radishes, peas, tomatoes, brassicas, corn, cucumbers, grapes, strawberries

Beets - Broccoli, bush beans, cabbage, lettuce, kohlrabi, onions, brassicas, passion fruit

Brassicas - Beets, onions, potatoes, cereals (e.g. corn, wheat), spinach, chard, aromatic plants or plants with many blossoms, such as celery, chamomile, and marigolds. Dill, sage, peas, peppermint, spearmint, rosemary, rye-grass, garlic, onions, geraniums, nasturtium, borage, hyssop, tansy, tomatoes, thyme, wormwood, southernwood, beans, clover

Broccoli – Lettuce, Mixture of mustard greens, pak choi, and rape, beets, dill, onions, tomato, turnip, clover

Cabbage – Beans, celery, clover, calendula/pot marigold, chamomile, larkspur, nasturtiums, dill, coriander, hyssop, onions, beets, marigolds, mint, rosemary, sage, thyme, tomatoes, lacy phacelia, lettuce or garlic with Chinese cabbage. Green onions with Chinese cabbage.

Carrots - Tomatoes, beans, leeks, lettuce, onions, passion fruit, alliums (chives, leeks, onions, shallots, etc.), rosemary, wormwood, sage, flax

Cauliflower - Beans, celery, spinach, peas, mixture of Chinese cabbage, marigolds, rape, and sunflower

Celery - Bush beans, brassicas, cucumber, Cosmos, daisies, snapdragons, leeks, tomatoes, cauliflower, and cabbage

Chard – Brassicas, passion flower

Corn - Beans, cucurbits, soybeans, tomatoes, sunflowers, dill, peas, peanuts, cucurbits, clover, amaranth, white geranium, pigweed, lamb's quarters, morning glory, parsley, and potato, field mustard

Cucumber – Beans, lettuce, kohlrabi, nasturtiums, radishes, marigolds, sunflowers, peas, chamomile, beets, carrots, dill, onions, garlic, amaranth, celery, Malabar spinach

Eggplant - Beans, peppers, tomatoes, passion fruit, marigolds, catnip, dill, redroot pigweed, tarragon, mints, thyme

Kohlrabi - Onion, beets, aromatic plants, cucumbers

Leeks - Carrots, celery, clover, onions, tomato, passion fruit

Lettuce - Beets, beans, okra, onions, radish, broccoli, Chinese cabbage, carrots, passion fruit, radish, dill, kohlrabi, cucumbers, strawberries, thyme, nasturtiums, alyssum, cilantro

Mustard - Beans, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, fruit trees, grapes, radish, Brussels sprouts, turnips

Nightshade Plants - carrots, alliums, mints (basil, oregano, etc.)

Okra - Sweet potato, tomatoes, peppers, beans, lettuce, squash

Onion - Beets, beans, brassicas, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, lettuce, cucumbers, peppers, passion fruit, strawberries. Green onions with Chinese cabbage, dill, marigolds, mints, tomatoes, summer savory, chamomile, pansy

Parsnip – Fruit trees

Peas - Brassicas, turnip, cauliflower, garlic, mints

Peppers – Okra, Beans, tomatoes, marjoram, geraniums, petunias, sunflowers, onions crimson clover, basil, field mustard

Potato - Brassicas, beans, corn, peas, passion fruit, horseradish, beans, dead nettle, marigolds, peas, onion, garlic, thyme, clover

Pumpkin – Corn, beans, buckwheat, jimson weed, catnip, oregano, tansy, radishes, nasturtiums

Radish - Squash eggplant, cucumber, lettuce, peas, beans, pole beans, chervil, and nasturtiums

Spinach - Brassicas, cauliflower, passion fruit, strawberries, peas, beans

Squash - corn, beans, okra, buckwheat, borage, catnip, tansy, radishes, marigolds, nasturtiums

Sweet Potato – Okra

Tomato - Brassicas, broccoli, cabbage, celery, roses, peppers, asparagus, basil, beans, bee balm (*Monarda*), oregano, parsley, marigold, alliums, garlic, leeks, celery, geraniums, petunias, nasturtium, borage, coriander, chives, corn, dill, mustard, fenugreek, barley, carrots, eggplant, mints, okra, sage, thyme

Turnips, Rutabaga – peas, broccoli, hairy vetch, peas

