

AN INTRODUCTION TO COMPANION PLANTING

Companion planting has been practiced for as long as man has been deliberately cultivating food crops. With hunger to sharpen lateral thinking it wasn't long before those early farmers noticed that some plants were healthier and more productive when grown under certain conditions. These observations would have covered all aspects of cultivation – watering, feeding, seasons, sun or shade, shelter, crop rotation – and what plants grew happily together or the reverse.

Companion planting at its best and simplest mimics what would happen in nature – a seemingly random mix of plants growing vibrantly together. Tall plants protecting smaller from wind and sun, deep-rooted plants, as well as breaking up clay soils, bringing up nutrients that the shallow-rooted plants can't reach, plants especially attractive to bees and other insects drawing pollinators to the less attractive, plants with strong essential oils disguising or repelling pests from neighbouring plants, root secretions from one plant benefiting another and promoting more vigorous growth or repelling soil borne pathogens. If plants are allowed to self-sow they will select a site suitable for them and flourish, sometimes to the gardener's chagrin.

Companion planting is a mixture of myth and reality – under the correct conditions most will work. By this I mean if your gardening practices are poor – not enough nutrients, water and general care – then planting companionably will have minimal effect or none at all. The resurgence in organic gardening practices during the last sixty (?) years has brought with it both a practical and a scientific interest in companion planting.

BORAGE is attractive to bees so plant with tomatoes and strawberries

CARROTS interplant with leeks, also lettuce, sage, chives, peas, viola and rosemary

CHAMOMILE will revive ailing plants and increase plant growth generally and in particular, cabbages & mint

COMFREY being deep rooted acts as a barrier to grass, and is also a compost activator

CORN grows well with early potatoes, cabbage, broad beans, pumpkin and lettuce

FENNEL will inhibit growth of nearby plants – however, dill, feverfew and eau-de-cologne mint cope with it

FEVERFEW has insect-repellent properties and has an attractive daisy flower as well

GARLIC will help to protect peach and apple trees, tomatoes and roses; but don't plant too close to strawberries, cabbages, peas or beans

NETTLES (*Urtica dioica*) promote strong growth and protect against aphids, black fly and mildew, and are particularly helpful under fruit trees and with potatoes

PELARGONIUMS and grapes grow well together

POTATOES don't mind sunflower, cucumber, green beans, peas or broad beans; tomatoes are Ok close by but not growing next to

PUMPKIN with corn and citrus trees (acts as a living mulch) but not with potatoes

ROSEMARY grows well with sage, cabbage, beans and carrots but not with potatoes or tomatoes

THYME is a good neighbor generally and helps to repel cabbage worm

TOMATOES grow well with asparagus, parsley, beans and cabbage and, of course, basil

YARROW increases plant health and vigour and is known as a plant doctor

These are just a few of the multitude of possibilities for companion planting in your garden. Give it a go.

Listed below are just some of the books available with further information on this subject:

Jackie French's **GUIDE TO COMPANION PLANTING IN AUSTRALIA & N.Z.**

A-Z OF COMPANION PLANTING Pamela Allardice

COMPANION GARDENING IN AUSTRALIA Judith Collins

Penny Woodward's **AN AUSTRALIAN HERBAL**

ORGANIC GARDENING IN AUSTRALIA Jackie French

SUCCESSFUL ORGANIC GARDENING David Murray

HERBCRAFT Nerys Purchon & Dhenu Jennifer Clary

HERB	LIKES	DISLIKES
Basil	Tomatoes, asparagus, parsley, apricots,	rue
Borage	Improves growth/flavour of strawberries, squash, tomatoes, pumpkin	
Chamomile	Anything; promotes better onion crops; tea minimizes damping off; improves growth/flavour of cabbages	
Chervil	Radishes, dill, coriander	
Chives	Roses - repels aphids; parsley, cucumbers, carrots; under apple trees - minimises scab	Peas, beans, legumes
Coriander	Anise, dill, chervil, cabbages, carrots. Assists growth/formation of anise plants	fennel
Dill	Celery, cucumber, potatoes, corn, tomatoes, coriander, chervil, carrots	
Fennel	Dill. Inhibits growth of most plants - isolate.	Coriander, wormwood
Foxgloves	Fruit trees - increases resistance to disease; potatoes, tomatoes; stren hens other lants	
Garlic	Rosemary, apple and peach trees; increases fragrance of roses when rown nearby	Peas, beans, cabbages, strawberries
Horseradish	Potatoes, fruit trees	
Hyssop	Grape vines, cabbages	radishes
Lavender	Garlic, silverbeet; plant near vegies as it improves their flavour	
Lemon balm	Fruit trees. Benefits nearby plants	
Lovage	Chives; improves vegetable crops planted nearby	
Marigolds	Beans, lettuce, potatoes, tomatoes. Plant randomly throughout the garden (<i>Calendula officinalis</i>)	
Marjoram	Has a good effect on plants around it - especially vegies. Improves most flavours.	
Mint	Cabbages, tomatoes. Use clippings as a mulch around cabbages, cauliflower, broccoli - repels cateplars	Parsley
Nasturtium	Apple trees, radishes, cabbages, cucumbers, beans, potatoes, tomatoes, broccoli, fruit trees generally	
Oregano	Cabbages, cauliflower, grape vines; aids all vegies generally	
Parsley	Chives, roses, tomatoes, asparagus	
Pelargoniums	Grape vines	
Pyrethrum	Strawberries	
Raspberry	Rue, tansy	
Rosemary	Sage, garlic, cabbage, beans, carrots	Potatoes, tomatoes
Rue	Roses, raspberries	Basil, sage
Sage	Rosemary , carrots, cabbage	Rue, cucumber
Santolina	Roses	
Savory	Improves flavour/ growth of beans and onions	

HERB	LIKES	DISLIKES
Southernwood	Cabbages; fruit trees - cleaner, healthier fruit	
Tansy	Fruit trees, cabbages, roses, raspberries, grapes. Concentrates potassium in the soil.	
Tarragon	Benefits most plants	
Thyme	Cabbages, most plants	
Wormwood	Radishes	Fennel, sage, caraway, young plants
Yarrow	Benefits all nearby plants and vegies. Make a tea and pour around ailing plants.	