



Companion Planting



Companion Planting: Planting multiple crops in close proximity so that they may benefit the growth of one another. Companion planting is a form of *Polyculture*, which is a central principle of organic gardening.

- **How can we use plant companions in our garden?**
 - **Fertilizers** – Plants in the legume family have the ability to take nitrogen from the atmosphere and fix it into the soil into a form that is useable by plants.
 - Warm season legume crops – Bush bean, pole bean, tepary bean, cowpeas, peanuts
 - Cool season legume crops – Peas, fava beans, vetches
 - **Repelling Pest Insects** – Plants with strong aromas are great at repelling garden pests. Annual and perennial herbs as well as plants in the onion (*Allium*) family work great. Plant herbs in pots and place all around the home and garden. Some of the best are:
 - Herbs – Basil, Catmint, Citronella, Lavender, Lemongrass, Rosemary, Rue (great for repelling cats), Sage, Thyme, Wormwood (*Artemisia*.)
 - Alliums – Chives, Garlic, Leeks, Onions, Shallots. Scatter plantings throughout garden or along edges of beds.
 - **Attracting Beneficial Insects** – Many annual, perennial and biennial vegetables and herbs also excel at attracting beneficial insects such as bees, lady bugs, lace wings, and predatory wasps.
 - Plants in the carrot family (*Apiaceae*) are the best. If possible, have a small section of your garden dedicated to these plants all year round. Use a bug mix such as “good bug blend” or make your own.
 - Carrots, Cilantro, Dill, Fennel, Parsley, Radish all do well. Keep fennel separate in small spaces as it is known to inhibit the growth of other plants. Not necessary in dedicated beneficial insect gardens. It is



important to have flowering plants at all time of the year.

- **More Companion Planting Principles**

- **Trap Cropping** – Using certain plants that are more attractive to pest insects to lure them away is a great example of companion planting. Trap crops should be planted away from the garden and pulled from the ground and destroyed once they are infested. Either burn the plant or freeze it and dispose of it in a plastic trash bag.
- **Nurse Cropping** – In home gardening, nurse cropping is when we use the physical properties of plants to aid in the growth of other crops.
 - Planting tall growing plants, such as corn, sunflowers, or trellised vining crops on the South and West sides of the garden to create shade for other plants.
 - Planting heavily with a cover crop such as alfalfa, or buckwheat to suppress weeds.
 - Using tall growing plants such as corn, okra, and sorghum to support vining plants such as cowpeas and pole beans
 - Using sprawling vining plants like squash to shade the soil
 - Planting intensively to suppress weeds or to create a micro climate.
- **Diversity For Pest Suppression** – Simply planting two different varieties of the same crop has been shown to reduce pest insect populations. Avoid Monocultures whenever possible and instead use “Intercropping” techniques.
- **Spacing Requirements** – Certain plants make good companions because of the way that they grow. The roots of beets and kohlrabi, for example, occupy different areas of the soil and therefore do not compete for space and nutrients.

