

An Introduction to Companion Planting

What is Companion Planting?

Companion planting is practiced in the organic and biodynamic approach to growing nutritious food growing different types of vegetables, flowers and herbs together to enhance each other's growth.

It also benefits the soil health, can be used to manage pests and diseases.

Furthermore, it maximizes the space available in a small growing area by increasing the productivity up to 50% higher yields by using the beneficial influences various plant species have on each other.

What do you have to consider, when practicing Companion Planting?

The main considerations are:

- Chose plants which are compatible
- Use cultivars with different feeding requirements
- Chose cultivars from different plant families
- Select plants with complementary growth habits
- Mix plants with deep and shallow rooting habits
- Grow plants together with leaves which are solid and others with feathery or thin leaves
- Sow plants together with slower and faster growing habits
- Benefit your cultivars with legumes, to fix nitrogen and encourage higher yields
- Accompany cultivars with plants that raise washed out nutrients
- Associate plants that keep each other's pests and diseases away
- Grow plants together which taste well when cooked together
- Plant herbs and flowers, which attract pests to themselves and away from cultivars

Beware of not growing together antagonists which inhibit each other through root exudations or their volatile aromas and scents.

Some Examples of Antagonists to be aware of

- Onion family harms Legume family
- Cabbages and Mustards harms Legume family
- High numbers of Chamomile inhibit growth of Onion family
- Onion family inhibits growth of Legume family
- Sunflowers and Jerusalem Artichokes inhibit growth Potatoes (though beneficial as inhibit subsequent weed seed germination)
- Buttercups inhibit all Legumes and Clover
- Strawberries harm Cabbage family
- Potatoes harm Cucumbers
- Sunflowers inhibit growth of Lettuces
- Tomatoes inhibit growth of Cabbage family

Some Examples of Vegetables which benefit each other

Benefits through root exudations:

- Celery and Leeks
- Carrot, Peas and Lettuces
- Beans and Sweet Corn
- Lettuce and Chervil
- Carrots and Dill for germination, but needs to be harvested before bolting to prevent carrots form bolting

Benefits through enriching the soil with certain nutrients:

- Legumes. N
- Lupins N, P & Ca
- Buckwheat Ca & K
- Phacelia P & K
- Peas N & Ca
- Tobacco K

- Corncockle & cornflower P, etc
- Agricultural Chicory P
- Onions Si & S
- Stinging Nettle Si Ca &
- Chickweed N & Mg
- Comfrey N & K
- A few chamomile plants make onions grow better

Most herbs and flowers enhance the growth of vegetables, improve the flavour and nutritious quality. Most of them keep pests and diseases away from your cultivars.

Some flowering plants like nasturtiums attract blackfly and ornamental tobacco even kills aphids and whitefly.

Most herbs and flowers attract predator insects like hoverfly, predator wasps and enhance the biodiversity of butterflies which keeps cabbage white butterfly away.

Wishing you lots of joy and fun making your garden a richer and more enjoyable place.

Happy gardening,

Hans-Günther

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