

# Companion Planting

## What is it and why do people do it?

Long ago, farmers realised that certain plants do well when they are grown together – they are good companions.

This might be because they: -

- Deter pests, for example by producing a strong smell that prevent the pests from detecting your crops.
- Attract beneficial insects, such as hoverflies whose larvae eat aphids and other pests.
- Attract pollinating insects.
- Lure pests away from your crops.
- Provide shelter for more delicate plants

It is generally a good idea to mix plants together rather than having huge swathes of a single variety as it gives pests less opportunity to devastate your whole crop.

There are also plants that make poor companions for various reasons and this is also worth bearing in mind.

## Examples of Good Companions:

Onions or garlic grown around carrots can throw carrot fly off the scent. Garlic chives are fantastic for this – they confuse the carrot fly which can normally detect the smell of carrots from up to a mile away.

French marigolds (Tagetes) near tomatoes mask their scent from potential pests. Orange flowers such as calendula, nasturtium and French marigold are a magnet to hoverflies. Their larvae feed on aphids.

Parsley and its relatives attract lacewings who also feed on aphids.

Calendula repels whitefly from tomatoes and can lure aphids away from beans.

Poached egg plant (Limanthes) is great for attracting beneficial insects and if left to self seed it will come up each year.

Early flowering plants such as rosemary produce nectar to attract the bumblebees that pollinate broad beans and soft fruits.

Lavender can be used to help put pests off the scent of leeks and carrots. It also attracts many pollinating insects including butterflies and bees.

Wormwood is known to deter flea beetles from crops such as radishes, rocket and turnips. Its flowers attract pollinators.

Sage helps to deter the pests that affect brassicas (the family of plants including cabbage, cauliflower, sprouts and broccoli). It also has good flowers for attracting pollinators.

Borage is said to improve the flavour of strawberries if planted nearby.

The scent of thyme can to deter black fly.

Nasturtiums attract caterpillars away from cabbages.

## Combinations of Plants to Avoid:

Bad combinations can be plants that compete for nutrients, spread pests and diseases to one another, or some people think they exude chemicals that inhibit each other.

Garlic or chives are sometimes said to stunt the growth of peas or beans. Sweet corn and tomatoes are said to be bad partners. Potatoes and tomatoes share diseases.

In summary, there is a great deal written about companion planting Try out the ideas that appeal to you and stick with them if they work.