



Companion Planting: Easy Read Summary

What is Companion Planting?

Companion planting is the practice of growing different plants together that benefit each other in some way. Think of it as creating plant friendships in your garden - some plants help each other grow better, stay healthier, or even taste better when they're planted side by side.

Why Use Companion Planting?

Natural Pest Control

- Some plants repel insects that would harm their neighbors
- Reduces need for chemical pesticides
- Creates a more balanced ecosystem in your garden

Improved Growth & Yield

- Certain plants help others absorb nutrients better
- Some provide shade or wind protection for more delicate plants
- Can increase overall harvest from the same space

Soil Health

- Different plants use different nutrients, preventing soil depletion
- Some plants (like legumes) are pros at adding nitrogen to the soil
- Deep-rooted plants bring nutrients up for shallow-rooted neighbors

Space Efficiency

- Maximize your garden space by growing complementary plants together
- Tall plants can shade shorter ones that prefer less sun
- Ground covers can suppress weeds around larger plants

When to Plant Companions

Timing Matters

- Plant fast-growing companions (like lettuce) with slow growers (like tomatoes)
- Start cool-season crops first, then add warm-season partners
- Consider harvest times - you don't want to disturb roots when harvesting



Seasonal Planning

- Spring: Focus on cool-weather combinations (peas + lettuce)
- Summer: Establish warm-weather partnerships (tomatoes + basil)
- Fall: Use succession planting for continuous harvests



How to Do It Well



Start Simple

- Begin with proven combinations rather than experimenting
- Choose 2-3 companion relationships to focus on your first year
- Observe what works in your specific growing conditions



Plan Your Layout

- Sketch your garden before planting
- Consider mature plant sizes and spacing needs
- Place taller plants where they won't shade shorter sun-lovers
- Group plants with similar water and soil needs



Research Plant Needs

- Check that companions have similar growing requirements
- Ensure they won't compete too heavily for the same resources
- Consider root depths and growth habits



Classic Companion Plant Combinations



The Three Sisters (Native American Tradition)

- Corn provides support for beans to climb
- Beans add nitrogen to soil for corn and squash
- Squash leaves shade soil and deter pests with prickly stems



Tomatoes + Basil

- Basil may improve tomato flavor
- Both enjoy warm weather and regular watering
- Basil helps repel aphids and hornworms



Lettuce + Radishes

- Radishes mature quickly while lettuce is still small
- Radishes help break up soil for lettuce roots
- Both prefer cool weather



Carrots + Onions

- Onions repel carrot flies
- Carrots don't compete with onions for space
- Both store well together after harvest



Marigolds + Almost Everything

- Beautiful flowers attract beneficial insects; hoverflies, ladybugs, and parasitic wasps as well as bees and butterflies
- Natural pest deterrent for many garden pests; French and African varieties suppress nematodes that eat roots when they are mulched into the soil
- Compact size fits between most vegetables

✗ Plants That DON'T Play Well Together



Common Problem Pairs

- Tomatoes + Brassicas (cabbage family) - compete for nutrients
- Onions + Beans - onions can inhibit bean growth
- Fennel + Most vegetables - fennel can be allelopathic (toxic to others – container plant!)
- Walnut trees + Tomatoes - walnut roots produce juglone, toxic to tomatoes



Getting Started: Your First Companion Garden



Beginner-Friendly Combinations

- Plant marigolds throughout your vegetable garden
- Try the Three Sisters in one section
- Interplant lettuce between slower-growing crops
- Add basil near your tomatoes
- Use our [Garden Companion Guide](#) to help you identify some other easy combinations, such as adding chives into the tomato/basil mix.



Essential Supplies

- Quality seeds or seedlings
- Basic gardening tools (trowel, watering can)
- Measuring tape for proper spacing
- Garden journal to track what works

Success Tips

- Start small and expand each season
- Keep records of what combinations work best in your climate
- Pay attention to plant spacing recommendations
- Water and fertilize based on the neediest plant in each group

What You Need to Know for Success

Soil Preparation

- Most companion plantings benefit from rich, well-draining soil
- Add compost before planting to support multiple plants in one area
- Test soil pH if growing diverse plant combinations

Observation is Key

- Watch for signs of competition (yellowing, stunted growth)
- Notice which combinations attract beneficial insects
- Track harvest yields compared to single plantings

Be Patient

- Some benefits (like soil improvement) take time to show
- Natural pest control may take a season to establish
- Keep experimenting - every garden is different

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Overcrowding plants (just because they're companions doesn't mean spacing doesn't matter)
- Ignoring individual plant needs for water and nutrients
- Expecting immediate dramatic results
- Planting aggressive spreaders with delicate plants



The Bottom Line

Companion planting is both an art and a science. While some combinations are backed by research, others come from generations of gardening wisdom. The best approach is to start with proven partnerships, observe carefully, and adapt based on what works in your specific garden conditions.

Remember: a healthy, diverse garden ecosystem is more resilient than a monoculture, even if every plant relationship isn't perfectly optimized. Focus on creating a balanced, thriving garden environment, and many beneficial relationships will develop naturally.

Happy gardening! 🌻🥕🍅

Root Delight Gardening Guides - Important Disclaimer



Please Read Before Implementing Any Gardening Advice

Educational Information Only

The information provided in Root Delight gardening guides is for **educational and informational purposes only**. These guides are designed to share general gardening knowledge and techniques but are not intended as professional agricultural, horticultural, or scientific advice.

Regional Variations Apply

Gardening practices, plant varieties, pest management strategies, and soil conditions vary significantly by:

- **Geographic location and climate zone**
- **Local soil types and conditions**
- **Regional pest and disease pressures**
- **Local regulations and restrictions**
- **Seasonal timing and weather patterns**

Always consult local resources such as your county extension office, local master gardeners, or regional gardening experts for advice specific to your area.

Individual Results May Vary



Every garden is unique. Factors that affect your results include:

- Existing soil conditions and history
- Microclimate and sun exposure
- Water availability and quality
- Plant varieties and sources
- Timing of implementation
- Local ecosystem conditions

What works in one garden may not work in another. Use these guides as starting points for experimentation rather than guaranteed solutions.

Safety Considerations

Plant Safety:

- Some plants mentioned may be **toxic to humans, pets, or livestock**
- Always research plant safety before introducing new species
- Be aware of plants that may become invasive in your region
- Some people may have allergies to certain plants or organic materials

Product Safety:

- Always read and follow label directions on any gardening products
- Even "organic" or "natural" products can be harmful if misused
- Wear appropriate protective equipment when recommended
- Store all gardening materials safely away from children and pets

Physical Safety:

- Gardening involves physical activity and potential hazards
- Use proper lifting techniques and take breaks as needed
- Be aware of sun exposure, insects, and weather conditions
- Seek medical attention if you experience any adverse reactions

Environmental Responsibility

- Research local regulations before applying any soil amendments or pest control methods
- Be mindful of potential impacts on beneficial insects, wildlife, and water sources
- Consider neighboring properties and sensitive ecosystems
- Some techniques may not be appropriate for all environmental conditions

Professional Consultation Recommended

Consider consulting qualified professionals for:



- **Soil testing and analysis**
- **Serious pest or disease problems**
- **Large-scale or commercial applications**
- **Projects near water sources or sensitive areas**
- **Situations involving property boundaries or HOA restrictions**

No Guarantees

While these guides are based on established gardening principles and practices:

- **No specific results are guaranteed**
- **Success depends on proper implementation and local conditions**
- **Natural systems require time to establish and may need adjustments**
- **Weather, pests, diseases, and other factors beyond your control can affect outcomes**

Limitation of Liability

The creators of Root Delight guides assume no responsibility for:

- Any adverse outcomes from following these recommendations
- Damage to property, plants, or ecosystems
- Personal injury or health issues
- Financial losses related to gardening activities
- Conflicts with local regulations or restrictions

Continuous Learning

Gardening is both an art and a science that involves continuous learning and adaptation. These guides represent current understanding and best practices, but:

- **New research may update recommendations**
- **Climate change may affect traditional practices**
- **Local conditions may require modifications**
- **Personal experience will guide your specific approach**

Additional Resources

For the most current and location-specific information, consult:

- **Your local Cooperative Extension Service**
- **Regional universities with agricultural programs**
- **Local master gardener programs**
- **Native plant societies and gardening clubs**
- **Professional soil testing laboratories**
- **Licensed pest management professionals when needed**



Final Thoughts

Gardening is a wonderful journey of discovery, and these guides are meant to inspire and inform that journey. **Start small, observe carefully, and adapt based on your unique conditions and experiences.**

The most successful gardeners are those who combine knowledge with careful observation, patience, and a willingness to learn from both successes and failures.

Happy gardening, and garden responsibly! 

Last updated: 07/2025 | Always verify information with current local sources