



Companion Planting: Friends in the Garden

If you are interested in doing a vegetable garden you need a plan. A garden plan will save you time, money, work and space. The length of the harvest season will increase as will your yields. You will also be able to harvest a good amount of high-quality produce at the time that you choose.

Some of the things you should consider doing as a part of this plan is to select a good site, soil test and know what it is that you would like to grow. One other thing that I would like for you to consider is companion planting in the garden. Dr. Annette Wszelaki, University of Tennessee Extension Commercial Vegetable Specialist, will speak to this as our guest contributor to Chris' Corner this month.

Dr. Wszelaki writes:

You might not know it, but plants have friends, too. And some crops fare better when planted next to or near their friends. Companion planting refers to the establishment of two or more crop species in close proximity so that some cultural benefit is derived. Most often used in home gardens, the cultural benefits of companion planting can include pest control and increased yield.

Interactions between plants can take several forms; they may be either beneficial or detrimental. For example, growing basil and tomatoes together may improve the flavor or yield of tomatoes, but using ryegrass as a mulch can suppress weeds as well as the growth of neighboring small-seeded crops. The latter is an example of "allelopathy," which refers to the release of chemicals by one plant that inhibits the growth of another plant.

Plants may also interact with other organisms. Some plants repel pests. When onions and leeks are grown alongside carrots, they can act as a repellent to the carrot fly. Other plants attract beneficial insects that help manage pest populations or enhance pollination.

Flowers and perennial plants may provide habitat and food sources to predatory beetles and attract bees and butterflies.

I would like thank Dr. Wszelaki for that timely information as many gardeners in the area are planting their vegetable gardens. Give companion planting a try! Who couldn't use pest control and increased yields in the garden. Until next time, happy gardening!



Christopher Conzel