



University of Nevada
Cooperative Extension

COMPANIONS IN THE GARDEN

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The secret to garden defense against an annual insect invasion is a good offense. This doesn't mean bombarding your plants with insecticide dusts, sprays, and oils at the first sign of a hungry, six-legged critter. Instead, use good cultural practices, common sense and pay attention to past experience, both yours and other good gardeners.

Natural predators may take care of a potential insect problem, handpicking may suffice, or you might want to discourage insects from entering your garden in the first place by "companion planting".

What is companion planting?

Although the hard scientific evidence is often lacking, certain plants are healthiest when grown in close combination with others. This is not simply because shade and protection are provided by plant neighbors. Such things as insect repellency and poisoning properties are at work in certain combinations. The technique of companion planting is actually interplanting (the practice of growing two or more crops at the same time in the same field or bed) with plant-to-plant relationships in mind. By avoiding a "monoculture" (a large area planted in one crop), vulnerable plants lose their identity in the forest of other plants, thus losing their attractiveness to the insect pest. Companion plants may also serve as "trap" plants by attracting insects and thus

keeping them away from more desirable plants.

The following table lists combinations of vegetables, herbs and flowers that are beneficial according to reports of gardeners and companion planting traditions. As well as their insect deterrent or trapping properties, you might find that certain combinations of plants actually seem to increase the vigor of one another.

Insect Deterrent Plants

ASTER – Most insects.

BASIL – Repels flies, mosquitoes, and tomato worms

BORAGE – Deters tomato worm, improves growth, flavor of tomatoes.

CALENDULA – Most insects.

CATNIP – Deters flea beetle in eggplant, tomato and potato.

DILL – Trap plant for tomato worms, deters cabbage looper.

GARLIC – Deters spider mites, cabbage maggots, codling moth, and aphids.

GERANIUM - Repels cabbage maggots.

LEEK – Repels carrot flies.

MARIGOLD – Workhorse of pest deterrents. Plant throughout garden to discourage nematodes, cucumber beetles and others.

MINT – Deter cabbage moth.

NASTURTIUM – Deters aphids, squash bugs, cucumber beetles.

ONIONS – Deters most pests.

OREGANO – Deters cabbage moth.

PARSLEY – Repels carrot flies.

PENNYROYAL – Deters ants and aphids.

PEPPERMINT – Planted among cabbages, it repels cabbage moths.

PETUNIA – Protects beans from pests.

RADISH – Especially deterrent to cucumber beetles.

ROSEMARY – Deters cabbage moth, bean beetle and carrot flies.

SAGE – Deters cabbage moth and carrot fly.

SALSIFY – Repels carrot fly.

SUMMER SAVORY – Deters bean beetle, increases bean vigor.

TANSY – Deters flying insects, striped cucumber beetle, squash bugs and ants.

TOMATO – Asparagus beetle.

THYME – Deters cabbage worm, cabbage looper and whiteflies.

TURNIP – Repels aphids, flies, and spider mites.

ZINNIA – Repels cucumber beetle and tomato worm.

The listing of companion plants is based on gardeners' successes as well as folklore. What is reported as working in one garden may not work in yours. Then too, you may hit on a beneficial pairing not yet reported. Either way, the experimentation done in your garden can be an adventure your whole family will enjoy.

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