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## Tiptoeing into Companion Planting via a Three Sisters Garden

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These are fun days for garden planning and for many of us planting. If you've never experimented with companion planting before, a great way to tiptoe in is with a Three Sisters Garden where the sisters refer to the three main agricultural crops of various Native American groups in North America: squash, corn, and climbing beans (typically tepary beans). The square foot method diagram for a 4 foot x 4 foot plot above shows you one way to lay out your crops. It shows 4 squash plants but you may want to cut the number back to 2 or even 1 depending on the size and type of squash you're growing.

The idea behind this plan and all plans involving companion planting is that the crops benefit from each other. The pole beans don't need poles because they can climb up the corn stalks. The beans "return the favor" by adding nitrogen to the soil for the corn which is a heavy feeder. The squash and its prickly leaves deter pests and prevent weeds from growing. Basically, it's a real world horticultural example of how the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. If you give it a try this growing season, let us know how it turns out for you.

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