



Companion planting

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This year I have spent some time planting companion plants alongside my vegetables.

I know there is some scientific research for plants like marigold, mustard and maybe camomile but there seems to be very little research on any of the other recommended plants.

The lists seem to be repeated from web site to web site and book to book with very little passing through peoples brains.

The lists of pests they are reported to be effective against read like the old quack cure all medicine remedies.

Is there anyone that can suggest some good research that has been done on companion planting?

I am always amazed at what academics research because they seem to go for stuff that is not very good for everyday life. In horticulture research, I think that the funding comes from industry so research will be focused on what they think is important. Companion planting does not seem to come high on their list unfortunately. Or is it that research has been done and nothing has been found to be effective?

My main worry is the thoughtless copying of long lists of companion planting that I have seen in many books and websites. I find it very difficult to rely on old wives tales about gardening techniques because I have found that many of them do not work. The 'plant onions or garlic with carrots to keep away carrot root fly' does not work for me and I have tried it for years.

Now I have read that planting potatoes next to raspberries encourages blight. What is that all about? I have been reading gardening books and research for years and have not heard about that one. *Rubus idaeus* the raspberry and *Solanum tuberosum* the potato both totally different species from different parts of the world. Not only that, I am growing potatoes right up to my raspberries this year. I can't put them anywhere else because it would mess up my rotation.

What fascinates me is that there are very few non cultivated plants within the lists. If there is something in companion planting, and I think there is, then surely the fact that a plant is cultivated cannot be the important fact.

The fact may be that native uncultivated plants, weeds for short, probably have a greater affinity for native mychorrhizal fungi and may give a greater help to crop plants than the list companion plants. Mychorrhiza will be able to transfer any beneficial chemicals to partner plants much quicker, easier and more effectively than diffusion through the soil.

It may be true what people say,

But I keep wondering anyway?

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