



PLANTS FOR A PURPOSE

Vegetables for alkaline soil (as in KHWG)

Artichoke (globe)	Endive	Peppers
Aubergine	Florence fennel	Pumpkin
Beetroot	French bean	Radicchio
Cardoon	Garlic	Radish
Carrot	Hamburg parsley	Runner beans
Celery	Leeks	Salsify
Celtuce	Marrow	Scorzonera
Chicory	Okra	Seakale
Chilli	Onions	Squash
Corn salad	Orache	Spinach
Courgette	New Zealand spinach	Spinach beet
Cucumber	Parsnips	Sweet potato

Flowers to attract beneficial insects

Some flowers attract insects that will demolish the pest population. The best known of these are ladybirds and lacewings whose larvae mop up aphids in massive quantities. Then there are tiny parasitic wasps (Fear not! They are harmless to humans). They lay their eggs on the larvae of aphids, cutworms and other insects to provide them with ready meals when they hatch out. Bees, of course, are invaluable for pollination. All the beneficial insects adore anything in the daisy family. Many of the vegetables and herbs that you grow anyway – all the brassicas, beans, borage, sage, lavender, rosemary, marjoram, all the mints and thymes – are attractive if you leave the odd one to flower. Bees go wild for the flowers of parsnips and artichokes as well as fruit blossom. Nasturtiums, marigolds and the poached egg plant (*Limnanthes douglassii*) are known to increase the population of beneficial insects. The best flowers are the old fashioned cottage garden flowers with single rather than double blooms.

Companion planting

Companion planting has been long practised but little researched. It is all about helpful interaction between plants.

For example:

Sacrificial crops

This works by giving pests an even more exciting option to your main crop, e.g. leaving some vegetables to rot as snails and slugs prefer rotting vegetation to fresh, or letting a Chinese cabbage go to seed to draw them away from your other cabbages. If you should suffer from wireworms boring holes into your crops, a solution is to plant a few rows of wheat. The wireworms will home in on it and then you can remove them both.

Symbiotic nitrogen fixing

Leaving the roots of legumes in the soil to rot down and release nitrogen for the next crop.

Biochemical pest control

Some plants contain chemicals which repel pests from their roots. The African marigold exudes the chemical thiopene which repels nematodes.

Nurse cropping

This is where one plant supports another, e.g. sweet corn offering itself as a climbing frame for a bean, or some welcome shade to lettuce in high summer.

Beneficial habitats

A good covering of ivy will offer many habitats to mini beasts as well as birds and small mammals.

Trials have shown that growing carrots and leeks together reduces the levels of rust on the leeks and carrot fly on the carrots. Growing tomatoes with French marigolds has the effect of less spider mite and whitefly. Chives planted by roses reduce blackspot and garlic deters aphids. Southernwood (*Artemisia arbotanum*) was traditionally used to deter moths and Wormwood (*Artemisia vulgaris*) is not known as the 'midge plant' without reason. *Tagetes minuta*, a relative of the French marigold, is nicknamed 'Stinking Roger' and has much the same effect. Lavender, rosemary and cotton lavender let off powerful essential oils that few pests would choose to cross. Onions and garlic have a sulphur smell unpleasant to pests, and mint and oregano are said to put off the larvae of the cabbage white butterfly.

The best practice is to plant many different types of plant. This will camouflage your crops from pests that go by sight or smell and be good for biodiversity. A monoculture is like putting up a billboard for the pests that reads 'Come and get me!'

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