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The best partners, he says, bloom exactly together or closely overlap. “The joy is in pairing flowers that play off one another when seen side by side in full bloom. The goal is to heighten peak bloom experiences. Extending the bloom season is a different exercise.

Here is a short list of his recommended rose partners.

When it comes to vegetable companions, we have a long list of allies and enemies. General rules advise avoiding planting in long rows or big patches to deter the pests. Instead, interplant with flowers and herbs to confuse the predators and attract the beneficials.

Marigolds are the workhorse of any vegetable planting as they discourage beetles and nematodes. The presence of calendula in any garden is a plus repelling nasty insects while the roots clean the soil by establishing active relationships with soil-borne fungi. Nasturtium, chives and garlic keep away aphids. Dill improves growth and flavor in all plants of the cabbage family including kale while mint will deter ants and cabbage moth and improve the flavor of peas. However, dill will retard the growth of your carrots. Parsley, carrots and parsnip attract praying mantis, ladybugs and spiders that dine on pests. Beans, peas and clover make nitrogen that enrich the soil.

Never plant corn and tomatoes near one another as the identical worm attacks both. If you want potatoes, plant horseradish in the four corners as protection and refrain from including squash, cucumbers or sunflowers in the same location as they all suffer from the same blight. If you are growing strawberries, prevent worms by creating a border of thyme and strengthen resistance to disease and insects with borage. Oregano provides general pest protection while basil ward off flies and mosquitoes while improving (no surprise) the flavor and growth of tomatoes.

Before you start your spring planting, consider the community you will be creating. The rains are continuing, the crabapples are blooming, and the willow buds are set to burst.

Fred Rogers said that maybe heaven is the connections we make while on earth. In gardening as in life, it takes a village.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



California King snake enjoys living in Cynthia's vegetable garden.



Blue-Eyed Grass is a native nectar plant for the Mission blue butterfly and a great companion for roses, clematis, and New Zealand flax.



Candytuft is a great border plant.

Photos Cynthia Brian