

Digging Deep for May

By Cynthia Brian

BFFs (Best Friends Forever)

“Be careful the environment you choose for it will shape you; be careful the friends you choose for you will become like them.” – W. Clement Stone



Nasturtium is a supportive flower to many other flowers and vegetables. Photos Cynthia Brian

People have acquaintances, friends, and best friends. We may like or dislike our acquaintances, get along with our friends, and really love our best friends. In fact, when it comes to our best friends, we sometimes feel that we couldn't live without them. Most of the time, we discover that we are different than our BFFs, yet complementary. In the world of nature, plants have favorite companions as well as ones that they wish they'd never encounter. By planting our gardens in potagers that include herbs, fruits and flowers instead of in rows, we gain destructive insect-repellent properties, beneficial insect attractors with benefits of higher yields and healthier plants.

As we start digging in our enriched earth this spring to plant our veggies, it is useful to know what specimens are compatible and which ones repel one another. Like humans, plants encounter other plants that they don't like, and when planted near one another, neither thrives. The idea behind companion planting is to mix flowers and herbs in a patch together. Herbs have high concentrations of aromatic oils that protect vulnerable plants from insect attacks, and many gardeners find that growing certain plants together actually increases flavor in fruits or vegetables and fragrance in blossoms.

Some of the helpful herbs are rue, tansy, lavender, chamomile, Artemisia, savory, dill, rosemary, catnip, sage, thyme and pennyroyal. Supportive flowers are marigold, nasturtium and nicotiana. Garlic and chives are happy bedfellows with roses and several other plants, giving off an odor that deters aphids and blackspot. A brew of garlic tea sprayed on plants keeps pests at bay. Chamomile has often been called “the plant's physician” because it has a reputation for improving the health of surrounding flowers and herbs. Pennyroyal keeps ants away, and marigolds deter beetles, white flies, and maybe even rabbits. Nicotiana works on a trap principle where it will attract a predator, which are then caught in the sticky stems and leaves. Nasturtium is repulsive to many bugs, beetles, and moths and improves flavors while providing a cascade of edible flowers with long blooming times.

It is fascinating that while one plant may be beneficial to many plants, it could be harmful to some. Experiment companion planting with some of these popular home-grown vegetables and see if you experience a difference in quality, quantity, flavor and pest resistance.

BEANS: Friends of beans include eggplant, beets, potatoes, peas, radish, chard, cucumber, everything in the cabbage family, and marigolds. Enemies of beans are garlic, onions and chives as they stunt growth.

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Plant beans and kale or other cabbage family plants together.



Calendula, AKA “poor man's saffron” and fennel are great together to fend off plant enemies.



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California Trees

Darren lives his life with passion, and trees have been his passion since he was a kid, working with his father in the tree care company, he is a firm believer in the power of planning, and in the importance of giving back to those aspects of life that sustain you.

California has a rich horticultural history and many extraordinary specimens of trees can be seen in nearly every community here. Each of the many tree species provides unique form, texture, color and often aroma. These are the trees that provide shade, help to conserve energy, improves property value, reduces storm-water runoff, sequester CO2, mitigate air pollution, and make urban living healthier and more peaceful. “We all have a role to play in planning for the future of our trees”. So invest in the future and plant the correct type of tree in the proper location.

So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by a Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping

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