



Companion Planting Guide

Composited off the Internet

By Gareth Richards

Companion Planting Guide UK

Companion planting guide for UK gardens. Covers the best plant pairings, what to avoid, pest control combos, and a planting chart for vegetables.



Companion planting is the practice of growing specific plants together for mutual benefit. Some combinations repel pests. Others attract pollinators or improve soil fertility. A few are grown as sacrifice crops, deliberately drawing pests away from valuable plants.

How does companion planting work?

Companion planting uses four main mechanisms. Understanding these helps you choose effective combinations rather than relying on folklore.

Pest confusion

Many pest insects find their host plants by scent. Growing a strongly scented plant alongside the target crop masks or confuses the pest. Carrots and onions are the classic example. Carrot fly finds carrots by scent. Onion scent masks the carrot, and vice versa. Growing them in alternating rows reduces damage from both carrot fly and onion fly

Trap cropping

A trap crop is a plant that pests prefer over your main crop. Nasturtiums attract blackfly away from broad beans and French beans. The aphids colonise the nasturtiums instead, leaving the beans clean. You sacrifice the nasturtiums (or blast the aphids off with water) while your crop stays protected.

Beneficial insect attraction

Some companion plants attract predatory insects that eat pests. Marigolds (*Tagetes*) attract hoverflies, whose larvae consume up to 50 aphids per day. Dill, fennel, and yarrow attract lacewings and parasitic wasps. A border of bee-friendly plants alongside the vegetable plot provides a reservoir of beneficial insects.

Nitrogen fixing

Legumes (peas, beans, clover) host nitrogen-fixing bacteria in root nodules. These bacteria convert atmospheric nitrogen into a form plants can use. Growing legumes alongside or before nitrogen-hungry crops like brassicas, sweetcorn, and squash reduces the need for fertiliser.



The best companion planting combinations

Tomatoes and basil

The most famous pairing. Gardeners report that basil improves the flavour of nearby tomatoes. Scientific evidence for flavour improvement is limited, but basil does attract pollinators to tomato flowers and its strong scent may deter whitefly. Grow basil in the same greenhouse or at the base of outdoor tomato plants.

Carrots and onions

Grow in alternating rows. Onion scent deters carrot fly. Carrot scent deters onion fly. Both crops grow at a similar pace and harvest at similar times. This is one of the most reliable companion pairings with consistent results in UK trials. See our guides to growing carrots and growing onions for full details.

Sweetcorn, beans, and squash (the three sisters)

A three-layer growing system that uses space efficiently and improves soil.

How to plant: In late May, sow sweetcorn in a block (not a row) with plants 45cm apart. Two weeks later, sow two climbing bean seeds at the base of each sweetcorn stem. Sow a squash or courgette plant between every fourth sweetcorn plant. The beans climb the corn, fix nitrogen, and the squash leaves shade out weeds. For more on growing sweetcorn, see our sweetcorn guide.

Brassicas and nasturtiums

Plant nasturtiums around the edges of your cabbage, broccoli, and kale patch. Cabbage white butterflies lay eggs on nasturtium leaves, and blackfly colonises them in preference to brassicas. Check nasturtiums regularly and remove heavily infested leaves. Our broccoli and kale guides cover growing these crops in detail.

Roses and alliums

Ornamental alliums and garlic chives planted around roses are reported to deter aphids and reduce blackspot. The strong allium scent may confuse pests. At minimum, alliums fill the bare soil between rose stems and provide an extra layer of flower interest. See our rose growing guide for planting advice.

Companion planting chart for UK vegetables

Crop	Good companions	Bad companions
Tomatoes	Basil, marigolds, parsley, carrots	Potatoes, brassicas, fennel
Carrots	Onions, leeks, rosemary, sage	Dill, parsnips

Crop	Good companions	Bad companions
Potatoes	Horseradish, beans, sweetcorn, marigolds	Tomatoes, squash, sunflowers
Peas	Carrots, radishes, turnips, mint	Onions, garlic, leeks
Beans (runner /French)	Nasturtiums, sweetcorn, squash	Onions, garlic, fennel
Brassicas	Nasturtiums, dill, chamomile, onions	Strawberries, tomatoes
Lettuce	Radishes, chervil, carrots, strawberries	None significant
Courgettes	Sweetcorn, beans, nasturtiums, marigolds	Potatoes
Onions	Carrots, beetroot, lettuce, chamomile	Peas, beans
Beetroot	Onions, lettuce, brassicas	Runner beans
Strawberries	Borage, lettuce, spinach, thyme	Brassicas



Herbs as companion plants

Herbs are among the most useful companion plants. Their strong scents deter pests, their flowers attract pollinators, and you can harvest them for the kitchen too.

Basil, Plant alongside tomatoes and peppers. Repels whitefly and aphids. Needs warmth, so suits a greenhouse or sunny sheltered spot.

Rosemary, Plant near carrots, brassicas, and beans. The strong scent deters carrot fly and cabbage moth. Evergreen, so provides year-round benefit.

Thyme, Plant at the edges of beds. Attracts bees and hoverflies. Low-growing habit suppresses weeds. Partners well with brassicas and strawberries.

Chives, Plant around roses and fruit trees. Deters aphids. The flowers attract pollinators in May and June. Easy to grow and comes back every year.

Mint, Deters flea beetles and aphids when grown near brassicas. Always grow mint in a pot sunk into the ground, it spreads aggressively if planted directly. See our herb growing guide for more.

Dill, Attracts ladybirds, lacewings, and parasitic wasps. Excellent near brassicas. Let it flower for maximum benefit. Avoid planting next to carrots as they cross-pollinate.

Plants to keep apart

Some combinations cause problems. These are the main ones to avoid in UK gardens.

Potatoes and tomatoes, Both susceptible to potato and tomato blight (*Phytophthora infestans*). Spores spread between them. Keep at least 3 metres apart.

Beans and alliums, Onions, garlic, and leeks inhibit the growth of peas and beans. Plant them in separate areas of the plot.

Fennel and almost everything, Fennel releases substances from its roots that inhibit the growth of nearby plants. Grow it in a separate container or at the edge of the plot, away from other crops.

Walnuts and everything below, Walnut trees produce juglone, a chemical that suppresses growth of tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, and many other plants beneath the canopy.

How to plan companion planting in a small garden

Companion planting works especially well in small spaces where crops grow close together. Raised beds and container gardens concentrate the benefits.

Border the bed with flowers. Plant a row of French marigolds or calendula along each edge. These attract beneficial insects and create a scented barrier against pests.

Interplant herbs. Tuck basil, parsley, and chives between larger crops. They use the space between rows productively and add pest-confusing scents.

Use vertical space. Grow climbing beans up a sweetcorn stem or obelisk with nasturtiums at the base. Three crops in one square metre.

Rotate each year. Move crop families around the bed annually to prevent pest and disease build-up. Follow legumes with brassicas to benefit from the nitrogen they fixed. See our vegetable planting calendar for rotation planning.



Now you've mastered companion planting, read our guide on organic pest control for more chemical-free methods to protect your crops. Comfrey and nettles are excellent companions to grow alongside your vegetable plot, our guide on making comfrey and nettle liquid feed shows how to turn them into one of the most potassium-rich feeds available.

How to Contact the Editor

If you have comments or you know I have given wrong advice then please contact me by email at

gareth.richards@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

If you have something to contribute or have a say on allotment life, then please use my email to send your contributions.

I am going to process the magazine issue once a month, so if there are comments you would like to make they can be answered in future editions.

I would like to add that most of the articles are taken off the web and some well known gardening and allotments magazines have been read in the making of our magazine content.

We also have our own website at :

www.yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

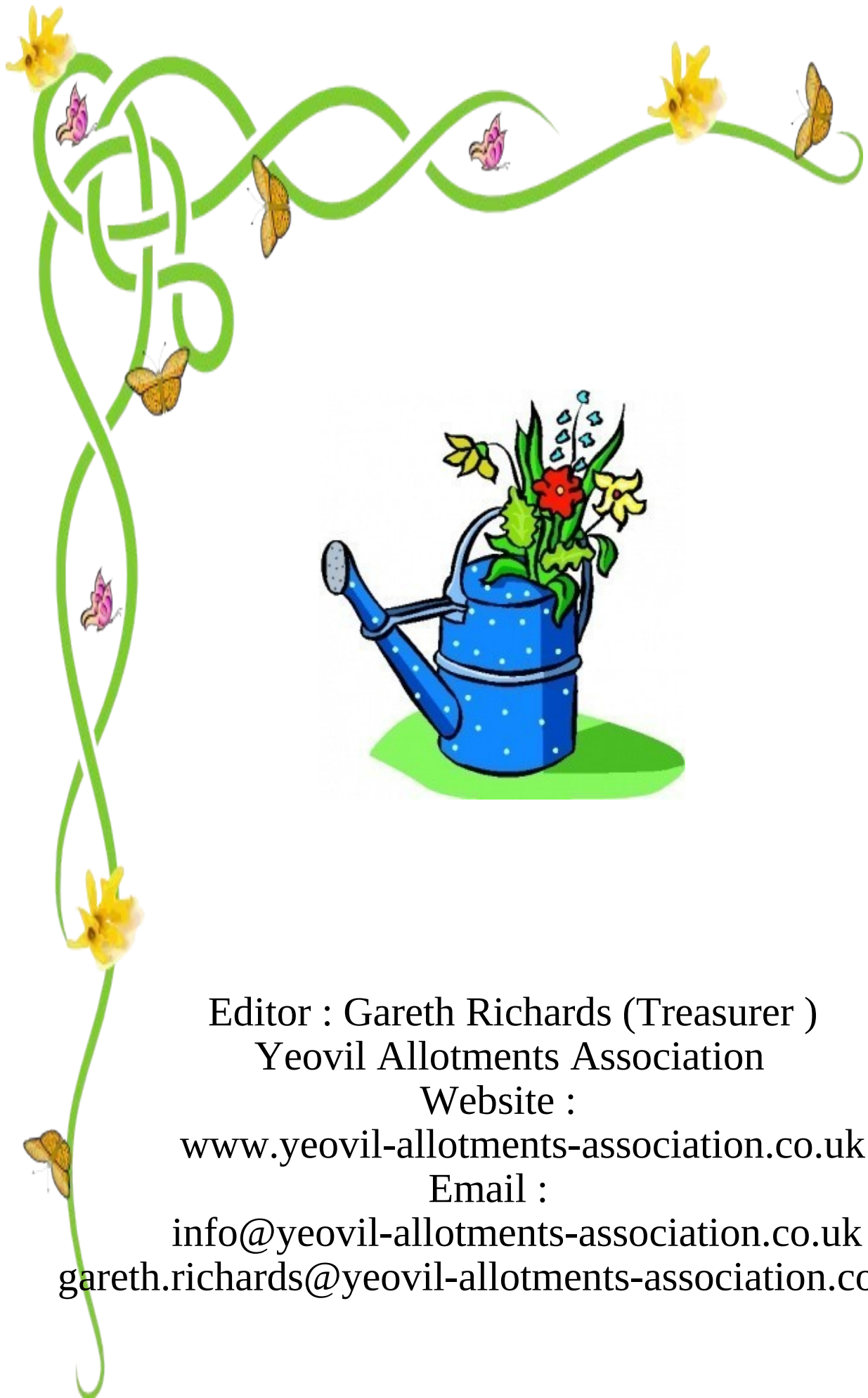
where you can find this magazine as well as a catalogue

Happy Allotmenting and best wishes,

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