



Companion plants

Some plants are known to benefit each other when they grow together. Also, some plants are known to be bad companions, so try to avoid having them near your fruit trees – e.g. grass.

Planting 'good companions' under your fruit trees will mean less work for you, as your trees will be healthier.

How good companions help

1. They provide food for:
 - bees to pollinate the blossoms
 - predatory insects to eat the pests
 - birds to pollinate the blossoms and eat pests.

Examples:

- yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
- sweet cicely (*Myrrhis odorata*)
- sage (*Salvia*)
- lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)
- borage (*Borago officinalis*).

2. They collect nutrients for other plants in two ways:

- Their deep roots bring up minerals and nutrients to their leaves, which end up rotting on the soil's surface and then the tree's roots can absorb them.

Examples:

- comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)
- chicory (*Cichorium intybus*)
- dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)

- They absorb nitrogen from the atmosphere and when they die, other plants can use it.

Examples:

- red clover (*Trifolium pratense*)
- lucerne/alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*)
- peas and beans.

3. Groundcovers protect the soil and plant roots from the sun and heavy rain.

Examples:

- oregano (*Origanum vulgare*)
- nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum majus*)
- roman chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis*)
- strawberries (*Fragaria*).

The top 10 companions

Think about:

- what herbs you like using
- what flowers you like
- what other plants like the same conditions as your tree.

Then choose some of these examples:

- Bergamot (*Monarda didyma*) for bees
- Bulbs (eg snowdrops, daffodils, jonquils, garlic, chives) to help with soil nutrients
- Calendula/marigold (*Calendula officinalis*) for insects, and as a herb
- Fennel (*Foeniculum*) for insects, and as a herb
- Lavender (*Lavandula*) for insects – good in drier soils
- Lovage (*Levisticum officinale*) for insects, and as a herb
- Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) for bees, and as a herb – good in drier soils
- Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) as a groundcover, vegetable
- Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) for insects
- Violet (creeping – (*Viola odorata*) for bees, and as a groundcover

Ideas for specific companions for each type of fruit are given in the section 'Part 3 – Essential Plant Info'. For more information about Companion Planting, look at:

www.urbanorganics.org.nz/node/36