



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service

Leader Training Guide

Title

“GARDENING TO FEED THE BODY AND THE SOUL” COMBINING FLOWERS AND VEGETABLES

Objective:

Participants will learn about companion planting of flowers and vegetables and the benefits to both plants and gardeners.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

Companion planting of flowers and vegetables is a method of gardening that promotes benefits for plants. This lesson will show how to combine plants for suitability and good gardening results.

Lesson:

There is a rich history of gardening that combines flowering plants and fruits and vegetables. Ancient Persian gardeners, Medieval monks and later English estate gardeners all combined vegetables, fruits, herbs and edible flowers. Victorian era gardeners of the elite class grew fruits, vegetables and flowers as a fashionable hobby. During the 1800's gardeners planted tomatoes as ornamental plants before they even knew they were edible. “Victory” gardens provided key sustenance to women and children whose men were off at war.

Today, people want greater control over the food they eat. They want organic foods, untouched by pesticides and other chemicals. They also want to save money on produce and rediscover the joy of eating something they have grown themselves.

Planting flowers with vegetables has benefits for both. Flowers attract beneficial insects, deter pests and, as blooming cover crops, improve soil conditions. Flowering plants can improve the quality of produce by attracting pollinator insects. The aroma of the flowers attracts bees and butterflies among other beneficials. (Be aware that butterfly larvae are pests to vegetables, specifically Parsley Worm and Imported Cabbageworm.) Vegetable foliage in different shades of green can really set off the colors of the flowers. And if you choose the right flowers, you can eat them too!

Gardeners can maximize their smaller garden spaces by companion planting. One hundred square feet of garden space can produce many pounds of fruits and vegetables. Most importantly, companion gardening creates a beautiful, colorful garden. Vegetables provide a variety of shapes,

heights, textures and foliage in flower beds. They act as a foil for flower colors. One fourth to one third of a landscape plan's plants can easily be edible. So, how do you plan your own potager (A fancy French word for a garden containing vegetables, flowers and herbs.)?

First, decide if you want a separate garden spot with perhaps divided, raised beds, or maybe a long border bed or island bed. You might even want a happy cottage garden mix in all of your beds. Whichever plan you choose, be sure to base plant combinations on soil, sun and water needs. Also, choose flowers and vegetables that combine visually and attractively in size, shape and colors. You can use shrubs, trees and perennial plants as the foundation for your garden – the background to plant against. But, if perennials are used, be careful not to disturb them when you add new plants each year.

Annual flowers will generally give you the most flexibility in planting. Fences, a trellis or pergola can add interest to the garden and allow you to increase growing space. A tuteur (Another fancy French word. This one means a tower-like trellis.) can be used to support climbing vines like cucumbers. Grow peas or climbing beans on a trellis in the back of beds. Then fill the middle of the bed with edible and ornamental plants. Let trailing herbs spill over the edges of the bed. Fruit trees can be used instead of ornamental trees not only to provide fruit but to provide shading for more delicate plants. However, remember that tree roots are extensive and can compete with other plants for nutrients and water. Containers of vegetables or fruits (think strawberries, blackberries, kiwi) can be combined with containers of flowers to add colorful accents in any garden.

But which plants will do well together?

Plant beans, eggplant, broccoli, squash, onions, and tomatoes with full sun plants like geraniums, bachelor buttons, zinnias, dahlias and nasturtiums. Plant salad greens, sugar snap peas, beets and cauliflower with early season, partial shade plants like pansies, begonias, alyssum, violets and tulips. Tall okra with its leafy foliage and hibiscus like flowers looks great in the back of beds to anchor plants. Strong architectural plants like collard, cabbage and turnips are beautiful accent plants. Squash plants with their bold yellow flowers and dramatic foliage can be used to border garden paths.

If no other nematode hosts are present, marigolds will limit feeding of nematode larvae so they die. Use sunflowers to attract beneficials and birds and to shade other plants from afternoon heat.

Planting the following near to each other attracts beneficials and pollinators.

Borage – tomatoes
Catnip – squash
Marigolds and astors – asparagus
Nasturtiums – broccoli
Chamomile – lettuce
Sunflowers – cucumbers
Geraniums – cabbage

Flowers that are edible.

Cornflowers	English daisies	Chrysanthemums	Dandelions
Daylilies	Calendulas	Carnations	Marigolds
Borage	Pansies	Violets	
Nasturtiums	Roses	Garlic and Chives	
Squash	Arugala	Zucchini	
Corn	Broccoli	Asparagus	

NEVER USE PESTICIDES ON FLOWERS YOU PLAN TO EAT!

Companion planting produces beautiful gardens that provide vegetables for dinner and flowers for the table.

Lesson Summary:

Planting vegetables and flowers together can be beneficial to both and provide beauty and provision in the garden.

Suggested Activities:

Think of vegetable plants that would provide unusual background foliage and color for flower gardens. Come up with lists of flowers that would complement various vegetables. Think of vegetable plants that could provide architectural interest in a flower garden. Enlist the aid of gardeners in your club to help other members with garden plans combining flowers and vegetables.

Suggested Materials:

Use garden magazines and books for plant suggestions and inspiration in your garden. See HGIC 1152 - "Growing Annuals" and other HGIC fact sheets.

<http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/flowers/hgic1152.html> or <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/>

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