



COMPANION PLANTING / EVIDENCE FIRST

Good neighbours.

Companion planting for a useful, diverse UK kitchen garden

Start with space, light and healthy soil. Mixed planting can support useful insects and make a bed more productive, but no pairing guarantees a pest-free crop. The examples below separate practical uses from results shown in particular trials.

PAIRING	WHY TRY IT?	HOW TO USE IT
Lettuce + widely spaced brassicas Practical use of space	Harvest a quick salad crop while the larger plants are still small.	Keep the brassicas' full spacing. Remove lettuce before leaves overlap heavily. Both crops still count in your rotation.
Vegetables + open flowers Habitat support	Flowering coriander, calendula and poached-egg plant provide food for useful insects.	Use an edge strip or nearby pots. Aim for flowers over several months. More insect visits do not automatically mean less crop damage.
Tomato + French marigold UK trial evidence	Glasshouse trials found slower population growth of glasshouse whitefly.	Grow <i>Tagetes patula</i> alongside tomatoes from early in the crop. This is specific evidence, not proof against all pests or a rescue for a heavy infestation.
Vegetables + flowering herbs Practical habitat	Nearby herb pots add flowers without taking space from crop roots.	Let some dill or coriander flower, and keep others for leaves. Put pots where they will not shade crops or block paths.

Keep the basics working

Room to grow: allow mature crop spacing and good airflow, especially in damp weather. **Protection:** use suitable insect mesh where a crop needs it. **Observation:** check leaf undersides, new shoots and companion plants regularly.

Choose the right marigold

French marigold is *Tagetes patula*. Pot marigold is *Calendula officinalis*. Both can be useful garden plants, but the tomato-whitefly trial used French marigolds.

COMPANION PLANTING / WHAT TO EXPECT

Useful, with limits.

Traditional pairings, practical layouts and a simple garden trial

TRADITIONAL IDEA	WHAT THE EVIDENCE ALLOWS
Carrots + onions "Stops carrot fly"	Results are inconsistent. Grow them together if the layout suits you, but use well-fitted insect mesh when protection matters.
Tomatoes + basil "Improves tomato flavour"	Treat this as a kitchen pairing, not a dependable flavour treatment. Both enjoy warmth; keep enough root space and light for each.
Beans + nasturtiums "Diverts blackfly from beans"	Trap planting is not a guarantee. Nasturtiums can host aphids too: inspect both plants and do not rely on diversion alone.
Sweetcorn + beans + squash The Three Sisters	A traditional system with crop, variety and timing requirements. It can be difficult in cool, short UK summers. Give climbing beans their own strong supports for a simpler first attempt.

Three ways to start small

Allotment: keep a narrow flower strip beside your vegetable rows, with access for weeding, picking and netting.

Raised bed: use young lettuce in temporary gaps between larger crops; clear it before competition starts.

Patio: place separate herb or flower pots near the vegetables. Match watering needs if sharing a container, and keep drainage holes clear.

Try one change and keep a record

Compare similar plants of the same variety, with and without the companion. Keep watering, feeding and spacing similar. Each week, note pest numbers, damage and harvest. One good season suggests something to try again; it does not prove the pairing caused it.

UK timing: harden off tender plants and wait until frost risk has passed locally. In cool or exposed gardens, prioritise crop light and warmth over squeezing in extra neighbours. Keep flowers outside insect mesh so pollinators can reach them.