



## Interplanting

One way to grow plants together for their mutual benefit is a technique called interplanting. Interplanting uses the plants natural growth pattern to match crops together and maximize the space in the garden. Farmers have used interplanting systems for years to increase production and decrease erosion. For example, corn and soybeans are often grown either in strips or even together to increase yields. Interplanting also can be used to attract beneficial insects to the garden to help ward off harmful insects. In general, the more diversity of plants in your garden, the fewer problems you'll have with pests.

In the home garden, you can use interplanting, not so much to maximize yields, but to save space and plant more vegetables. Often it's a matter of matching a slow growing, large vegetable plant with a faster growing, smaller crop. The slow growing, large crop requires wide spacing between plants to accommodate its eventual size. Small, fast growing crops can be grown in the spaces between individual large plants, maturing before the larger plants shade them out. Some examples of slow and fast maturing vegetables are listed below.



Kale is a fast maturing, cool season vegetable that grows well intercropped with pole beans or tomatoes.

**Larger, Slow Growing Vegetables:** Peas, onions, parsnip, corn, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, cabbage, broccoli, pole beans, and Brussels sprouts.

**Smaller, Fast Maturing Vegetables:** Lettuce, mesclun, spinach, beets, kale, Swiss chard, radish.

Some examples of combinations that you might try include:

- **Radish and Carrots:** Plant radishes in with carrot seed. The radishes will germinate first, helping break the ground for the later germinating carrots and will mature sooner. As you harvest the radishes you're naturally thinning the carrot stand, making more space for them to grow.
- **Spinach and Tomatoes:** Spinach is a cool season crop, while tomatoes love the heat. Plant spinach in between tomato plants and it will mature before the tomatoes get large enough to shade it. This same concept works for any type of greens, such as lettuce, Swiss chard, and mesclun, interplanted with cabbage-family crops, such as cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts, or tomato-family crops, such as tomatoes, peppers and eggplant.
- **Onions and Cabbage:** Onion sets can be grown in between cabbage plants. By starting with sets, your onions will grow faster and mature before the large-headed cabbages crowd them out. As the cabbage gets larger it will shade the onion bulbs, keeping the soil cool and moist. The leaves may also deter onion maggots from finding your onion crop.