

Jardin Potager: The Kitchen Garden Part II
Garden Column 01-04-2012
Christina Lacie

With the site selection and basic potager design complete, the next step is plant choice. Understanding that some plants need more nutrients and others attract more pests makes crop rotation and companion planting an important aspect of the kitchen garden.

First, let's consider companion planting. Specific plant families require similar needs: soil conditions, amendments, etc. Once you've decided the type of veges your family enjoys, divide them into planting groups for easy crop rotation. **Group 1:** Legumes: beans, peas. These plants are light feeders and need similar soil conditions but they are not the best of neighbors. Plant annual herbs: [rosemary, summer savory, parsley] between the two. **Group 2:** The Brassicas: (bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbages, cauliflower, collards, cress, horseradish, kale, kohlrabi, mustard greens, radish, rutabaga, turnips) and Tomatoes. These are the heavy feeders and need good compost and appropriate amendments. Geranium, dill, rosemary, marigold and nasturtiums are good additions to this section. **Group 3:** Potatoes and cucumber family: zucchini, cucumbers, peppers, potatoes pumpkins, squashes (add annual herbs [parsley, thyme, basil] or flowers [marigolds, nasturtiums] in between to attract pollinating insects). **Group 4:** Onions and root vegetables (beets, carrots, celeriac, fennel, garlic, leeks, onions, parsnips), most of these plants are light feeders (except celeriac and leeks). Sage, catnip, mint and rosemary are beneficial herbs to mingle with this group.

Varying garden crop plantings from year to year dates back to ancient times. It is a way to avoid nutrient depletion while maintaining productivity. This is an example of a 4-year cycle of crop rotation. **Year 1:** Section 1: Legumes; Section 2: Brassicas; Section 3: Potatoes; Section 4: Onions and roots. **Year 2:** Section 1: Brassicas; Section 2: Potatoes; Section 3: Onions and roots; Section 4: Legumes. **Year 3:** Section 1: Potatoes; Section 2: Onions and roots; Section 3: Legumes; Section 4: Brassicas. **Year 4:** Section 1: Onions and roots; Section 2: Legumes; Section 3: Brassicas; Section 4: Potatoes.

The intent of a potager is not only to add a bit of home grown self-sufficiency, but to supply the kitchen with fresh vegetables and herbs all year. Manage your potager well, and the rewards will be boundless. Bon jardinage.

NOTE: Yard and Garden Lectures begin 01/14/2012. Master Gardener class begins in February. Go to: <http://mg.jefferson.wsu.edu> for more information.